

Cross and Spire

Newsletter of the First Baptist Church

11 School St., Lebanon, NH 03766

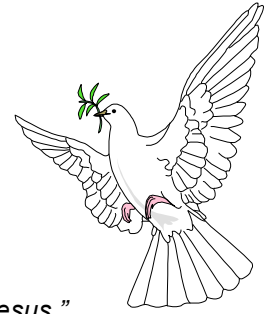
Pastor: Rev. Dale Edwards

Phone: 603-448-5618 Email: soulman@lebfirstbaptist.com

www.lebfirstbaptist.com

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"Not a perfect church, not a perfect people, just a simple desire to follow Jesus."



WHERE'S WALDO?

By Laurie Edwards

Waldo is the dog we never had. He plays fetch. He drools. He rolls over on his back to have his belly rubbed. He has smelly gas. He follows us around the house in need of constant attention. He gets into food if you leave it out on the table. He chews on stuff. Like I said, he's the dog we never had, and he'd make a great dog. There's just one problem: Waldo is a cat.

Waldo came into our home last summer – the result of one of those “let’s go visit the humane society just to look around” trips that led to a moment of parental weakness and inability to say no to “cute” that led us to becoming the proud owners of a cute new cat who thinks he’s a dog. We love Waldo, we really do. But like all pets (and people!), he came with his own set of issues.

About Waldo’s issues. First off, Waldo came with a parasite called giardia. You don’t want to read all the unpleasant details here – suffice it to say it required constant cleaning of the cat box and three rounds of antibiotics, and we’re still left with this, uh, gas problem. Oh, and did I mention? Waldo’s not too bright.

Waldo watches TV – and he paws at the screen as if he’s trying to get to whatever he sees in there. And Waldo’s discovered a new game. He enjoys playing with plastic shopping bags. There’s just one problem. Twice in the past week he’s gotten his head caught in the handle of a grocery bag. Now, please trust me - Waldo was never in any real danger, his head was through the handle and not inside the bag. But he freaked out and ran flying through the house with this shopping bag hanging from him. At first it was pretty comical, until he stopped running

and we couldn’t find him. We searched the downstairs and then the upstairs, calling out “Waldo, Waldo, where are you?” To finally find him cowering in the dark, under Daniel’s bed. He wouldn’t come out when I called, and even crept further away into the dark corner with the shopping bag now stuck around his waist. It was like he didn’t understand that I was there to help him. When I finally got to him by pulling the bed away from the wall, I ripped the bag off and he slunk away, as if he’d suddenly discovered that the world isn’t the totally wonderful, friendly place he’d thought it was. By evening, he was back to his old friendly, dog-like self. But then yesterday he did it again. Started playing with a bag, got his head stuck in the handle, then freaked out and ran flying through the house, to be found once again cowering in the dark beneath a bed with this bag hanging off him. It was our bed this time, and Dale and I both tried to coax him out. Once again we had to pull the bed away from the wall and reach down to rescue him as he pulled away from his very source of help. You’d think he would have learned . . .

I’m reminded of Adam and Eve after they’d disobeyed God. Did they run into the arms of the only One who could help them? No, they ran to hide. And God had to come calling, “Adam, Adam, where are you?” And Adam had to admit, “I was afraid, so I hid.” And how often when I disobey do I run away, fearful, hiding from God, my only true source of help? And how often do I repeat the same mistakes, only to find myself in the same predicaments I’ve been in before – needing once again to come before His throne of grace. And it is God who seeks me out, rather than the other way around. And He picks me up, forgives the sin which so entangles me, and sets me back on my feet again. *(continued..)*

(Waldo continued from page 1)

On a cold, winter night over two thousand years ago, God reached into the darkness of our world in the form of a helpless Baby. "And in Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." (Jn. 1:4-5). And even when we know that Light, sometimes we forget or we still don't understand. And so we need to be reminded again and again that "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him." We need to run into the arms of the One who was cradled in the arms of Mary on that winter night so long ago.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT DECEMBER 12TH!

"Bethlehem . . . Nothing Ever Happens Here!" That's the title of this year's Christmas Pageant planned for Sunday, Dec. 12 at 10:00 AM. The event will include children from the Sunday School and folks from the congregation. Rehearsals will be Sundays, Dec. 5 & 12 at 9:00 AM (during Sunday School). If you have any questions, please contact Susan Cole, 448- 2255.



CHRISTMAS MUSIC ★ NIGHT DEC. 19TH!

★ Come and share
★ your talent on
★ Sunday, Dec. 19 from
6:30-7:30PM at our

Christmas Music Night!
There'll be special music
from the North Country

Chordsmen, along with some of First Baptist's own talent. If you'd like to sing, play an instrument, or have some other talent to share with a Christmas theme, please contact Karen Liot Hill (448-2105) or Pastor Dale (448-5618).

SABBATICAL NEWS

We're excited to report that the congregation voted unanimously to accept the Sabbatical Proposal presented by the Sabbatical Committee at the special meeting on Nov. 21! A huge thank you to all the members of the Committee who have worked so hard over the past year to put the proposal together. The sabbatical is to honor Pastor Dale & Laurie's 25 years of service here at First Baptist and is being planned for next summer, 2011.

GREAT DAY FOR CHRISTMAS BAZAAR!

We had a wonderful Christmas Bazaar on November 6th and raised about \$1900 for the church's Food Pantry! Thank you to everyone who gave of their time and talents to make this year's Bazaar a success, and a special Thank You! to Terry Bolduc for once again organizing the Bazaar!

A FUN FAMILY FUN NIGHT!

About 35 people came out to our very first Fall Family Fun Night on November 19th. Thanks to Nathan Bundy and Carol Rataj for making stacks and stacks of delicious pancakes, and to all the members of the C.E. Board for planning the event! Several teams showed their creativity in making their own scarecrows. A fun evening for all!

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

We are planning two Christmas Eve Candlelight services this year, at 6:00 PM and 8:00 PM. Please join us for a time of caroling, worship, and celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ!

SCOUTS FILL FOOD PANTRY!

The Boy Scouts Scouting for Food campaign yielded a great harvest of canned and other food items for our Raven Box Food Pantry program on Nov. 13th. They filled the shelves with the bounty of their labors. Thanks to the scouts and all who supported their food drive!

CHURCH BUSINESS MEETING DEC. 12TH

There will be a brief business meeting after church on Sunday, December 12 to vote on names for church membership and other matters of church business.



PRAYER, PRAISE & FELLOWSHIP!

Join us Thursday, December 16 from 6:30-8:00 PM for a time of Prayer, Praise and Fellowship leading to Christmas week. Come and pray for one another, our church, and beyond.

IRON SHARPENS IRON EVENT

Five men from First Baptist attended the Iron Sharpens Iron Men's Leadership Training event in Rochester, NH on Nov. 20th. It was a great of fellowship and learning with other Christian men.

COMMUNITY DINNER NEWS

Our Community Dinner program is picking up steam again with 40-plus people attending each Wednesday night. Thank you to everyone who volunteers and helps to provide food for the dinners. Over 60 people enjoyed a delicious turkey dinner on Thanksgiving Eve, thanks to Tim Nunn and Tammie Jarvis and others who worked and helped to provide food. If you'd like to get involved in the Community Dinner program, please contact Sharon & Don Weightman at 298-6554. Thank you!

CHRISTMAS MEMORIAL POINSETTIAS

If you would like to have a poinsettia placed on the altar in memory or honor of a loved one on Christmas Sunday, December 19, please fill out a green order slip from the Sunday worship bulletin and return it with payment to the offering plate or the church office no later than December 12th. Cost is \$7 per plant.

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

If you would like to make a special Christmas offering to the church, a Christmas offering envelope is included in this newsletter for your convenience.

GIVING TREE NEWS

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Giving Tree! We were able to provide Christmas gifts and food gift cards for three families and three senior citizens – about 90 gifts! A special thanks to Dorothy Judd for helping to organize the tree this year!

28 SHOEBOXES FILLED!!!

The children of our Sunday School filled twenty-eight shoeboxes with gifts for children on the mission field this November. Thank you to everyone who donated gift items for this wonderful project!

PLEASE NOTE: There will be no Women's Fellowship Dinner in December.

THE NEW YEAR is just around the corner!
ATTN: Board Chairs and/or Secretaries - Annual Reports are due to the church office by Sunday, January 9th.

ANNUAL MEETING

The church's Annual Meeting is Sunday, January 30th after the worship service!

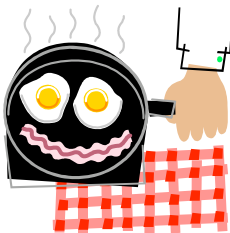
YOUTH GROUP GOING STRONG!

The youth group is having a great year! About 20 young people come out on Sunday evenings for fun, fellowship, and focus on Christ. Youth group is open to all young people in grades 6-12. Join us!



**Bethlehem...
Nothing Ever
Happens Here!
A Christmas
Pageant
Sunday, Dec. 12
10:00 AM**

**Christmas Eve
Candlelight Services
6:00 & 8:00 PM
Bring the Family –
Invite Your Friends!**



**MEN'S
BREAKFAST
Sat., June 13 Dec.
11
7:30 AM**

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned . . . For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.” Isaiah 9.

THE PROBLEM WITH SELF

The word “self” seems to find many places to live – with a hyphen succeeding itself, with another word of import succeeding the hyphen. We talk of “self-esteem,” “self-fulfillment,” “self-actualization,” “self-understanding,” “self-taught,” “self-worth” and “self-directed”. These hyphenated words have both good and bad content, proper places and extremes. But I wonder where all this talk of self fits into a relationship with Jesus Christ? How long does one pursue the “self” and not find one’s self in the state of selfishness? Recently someone told me that a healthy person is one who is “mindful of the self”. I think I know what that means – it is that a healthy person is one who stops long enough to see and know one’s self. And I would find great value in that. But if that stopping ends prematurely, and I think I know myself *without* knowing *Christ*, then knowing myself easily becomes an illusion. And an illusion of myself easily slips into self-idolatry.

What do I do with “self” when Jesus teaches so clearly about servanthood and sacrifice? Where is the value of “self” in servanthood and sacrifice? Why are all those words that begin with “self” about esteeming and protecting and preserving the self, honoring and respecting the “self”? My “self” is important to me – very, very important. Then Jesus says, “Whoever saves his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake shall find it. What advantage (or profit) is it for someone to gain the whole world and lose their own soul?” I can hang onto my own soul so tight that I strangle it to death, all in the pursuit of “self”. In the words of Thomas Merton, “If I am only crying out to my own soul, then all I am receiving back is a hollow echo.”

So what now? I believe Christians are called to journey out of the “self”. The classic word to describe this is “pilgrimage”, and the theological word is “sanctification”. As the apostle Paul writes, we are to leave behind a life of the “flesh” and pursue a life of the “Spirit”. And this journey out of the “self” begins and restarts again and again, by continually placing the self prostrate before Jesus: hands open, arms spread wide, heart exposed, soul transparent. The more I hang onto the self, the more the soul shrivels without Christ. I have to relinquish the self to live in a place of servanthood with Jesus. The way of the cross is learning how to love God in such a way as to experience the old self crucified with Christ, and by grace being raised to a new, authentic life in relationship with Jesus. In the 1600’s, Madame Jeanne Guyon writes in *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ*, “The more clearly you see your true-self, the clearer you also see how miserable your self-nature really is; and the more you will abandon your whole being to God.” I have no doubt it is the Holy Spirit’s presence in my life who, helping me gain clarity of soul, helps me deny the false-self and grows the real-self’s love for Jesus Christ. The problem of “self” is only resolved when the “self” day after day knows the welcome home embrace of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Dale Edwards