



Cross and Spire

Newsletter of the First Baptist Church

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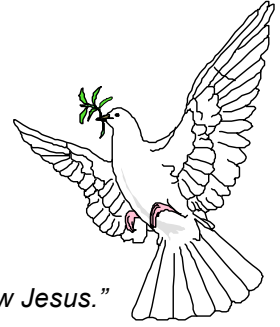
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"Not a perfect church, not a perfect people, just a simple desire to follow Jesus."



Laurie, Where Are You?

Laurie Edwards

"Where's Laurie? I missed seeing her today." The words hit my brain within about 30 seconds of my decision to skip my quiet time one morning. Whoa! Could that be God speaking? Just in case, I figured I probably ought to listen. I was suddenly jolted into the realization that God misses me when I don't show up. Yes, He knows my heart; yes, He understands; yes, He's forgiving. But He misses me. He takes joy in spending time with me, and with my spending time with Him. And why would I choose to skip out on an opportunity like that? It wasn't just a "duty" I was neglecting, it was an opportunity I was missing – together time with the One who loves me like nobody else ever will.

It wasn't more than two days later that I was sitting in the student service up at Dartmouth and they sang this song I'd never heard: "Father, I can't explain this kind of love, this kind of grace. I know I still break Your heart, and yet You run to welcome me." The chorus continued with the words, "from the moment my life began, You have been faithful." Again I felt as though God were speaking directly to me. I had this vision of the Father of the prodigal son running out to meet his wayward boy. No resentment, no recrimination, just welcoming, pure and joyous love beckoning to him with open arms. How much did the prodigal son wish he had swallowed his pride and turned back home sooner? How much did he wish he had never left home at all?

With the Edwards' children away at college, I'm learning more and more about parental love. I realize how fleeting and valuable our time with our kids is. If one of them feels like sitting up until 2:00 AM

talking, I'm going to do my best to make myself available. Why? Because I love my kids, and time spent with them is more precious and valuable than I ever realized before. God is our Father, our "Abba." I figure my own selfish, human love for my kids can't even begin to compare with Abba's love for me. He loves and wants to spend time with me. How much of an effort do I make to spend time with Him?

Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after they'd eaten the forbidden fruit, God calls out to us, "Where are you?" Even when we are hiding in shame because of our sins, He comes looking for us, calling our name.

I've been reading a book called *Seeking God Together* by Alice Fryling. In the first chapter she quotes John Milton: "Loneliness is the first thing which God's eye named 'not good.'" (page 15). God looks at Adam and decides "It is *not good* that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." Fryling goes on to say, "God not only gave Adam a companion; the Creator God actually *became* a human companion in the person of Jesus Christ in order to communicate divine love to all people." (p. 15).

I have a new phrase I use to remind me to spend time alone with God in the morning: **Bible Before Breakfast**. It sounds silly, trite, childish even. And though I'm embarrassed to admit I sometimes need it, the truth is I do. Sometimes I'll catch myself reaching for the oatmeal, and that still small voice will be there in my ear, "Bible Before Breakfast." And for me it works, so that's why I'm sharing it with you. Because I suspect that in the frantic pace of life we're living, I'm not the only one of whom God sometimes says, "I missed seeing that child today."

AGAPE WORLD
Reflections on 1 John
First Baptist Annual Retreat
6:30 PM Feb. 19 – 6:30 PM Feb. 20
At Gove Hill Retreat
A 24-Hour Time to Rest, Learn
& Fellowship with God & Others
Register Now!

RETREAT 2010: AGAPE WORLD

Our annual retreat will be held February 19-20 at Gove Hill Retreat Center in Thetford, VT. This year's theme is "Agape World: Reflections on 1 John." The retreat will run from 6:30 PM Friday to 6:30 PM Saturday. The retreat is open to adults and high school students. The cost per person is \$75 and includes all program sessions, Friday night snack, 3 delicious meals on Saturday, and overnight dorm-style accommodations. There is also a sleep-at-home option at a cost of \$40. Registration forms available at the church!

RETIRED MINISTERS OFFERING

It is that time of year when we collect the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering here at First Baptist Church. The RMMO provides emergency financial assistance as well as an annual Thank You check to retired American Baptist ministers and missionaries and their widowed spouses. Former pastors of First Baptist benefit directly from this offering, along with their retired colleagues. The annual Thank You check is a way we can tell these faithful servants "We have not forgotten you, we are grateful for your ministry, we care about you." Please prayerfully consider your gift to the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering. An offering envelope is enclosed with this newsletter for your convenience.

ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE!!!

Attention all board chairs/secretaries and church officers: Annual Reports need to be turned in to the church office no later than Sunday, January 17 for inclusion in the Annual Report. If you have any questions, please speak to Laurie Edwards. And don't forget to mark your calendar to attend the Annual Meeting on Sunday, Jan. 31!

CASTING CROWNS IN CONCERT

In Portland, ME on Sunday, Feb. 21 at the Cumberland County Civic Center. For tickets call 978-345-4577 or go to thesoulfest.com or ticketmaster.com. Use coupon code CROWNSGATE to save \$4.50 on tickets.

2010 OFFERING ENVELOPES ARE IN

If you would like to use offering envelopes for the New Year, boxed sets are available on the table at the back of the sanctuary. Please fill out the pink slip from the box and place it in the offering plate.

IMPORTANT YOUTH GROUP NEWS

The junior & senior high youth groups will be going to Deep Freeze retreat at Camp Berea February 26-28. Registrations need to be turned in to youth leaders by January 17 so enough beds can be reserved! About 20 youth attended our Christmas party at the church on December 20th. Cornish hen bowling and the trash can game were among the highlights of the evening! Youth group is open to all youth in grades 6-12. Meetings are on Sunday evenings from 6:30-8:00 PM.

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

First Baptist enjoyed a blessed Christmas season. The Sunday School put on a funny & meaningful Christmas pageant on December 13th. Special thanks to the Christmas Bells Linda Preston, Merry Eignor and Brittany Hawks for their great performances. A very special thank you to Susan Cole for directing this year's pageant! Our Christmas Eve services saw about 300 people in attendance.

NOTE OF THANKS

Dear 1st Baptist Members,
Thank you so much for the beautiful Christmas poinsettia. It brings beauty to our table and reminds us to feel the real joy of Christmas and the true meaning of the Day. Wishing you all a Happy and Meaningful New Year. Bless all of you.

Sincerely, Mazie B. Norton
(Nancy Bailey's Mom)

THANK YOU FROM THE EDWARDS!
Thank you to everyone for the wonderful outpouring of love and gifts we received over the holidays, and throughout Dale's bout with the swine flu! We truly appreciate having such a loving and generous church family.

Sincerely,
Dale, Laurie, Daniel & Beth

GIVING REPORTS

Just a reminder that due to computer problems, the financial secretaries will be delayed in sending out giving reports for 2009. If you are in a hurry to receive your report, please contact the church office at 448-5618 or office@lebfirstbaptist.com. Thanks again for your patience and understanding!

GIVING TREE NOTE OF APPRECIATION

"Thank you! It has been a challenging year for everyone and the holidays looked bleak to many Upper Valley families. Parents were overwhelmed with worry and wondered how they would provide a special and memorable Christmas for their children. But thanks to your contributions and efforts, wishes for a wonderful holiday came true for these families. . . From everyone at Listen Community Services, our board, staff and clients, we wish you a peaceful and joyous New Year."

GENEROUS GIVING IN DECEMBER

The church's Food Pantry program saw a wonderful outpouring of gifts of food and money during the month of December. Donations came from our own members and members of the community at large. Thanks to all for their continued support! The pantry received about 110 visits during December, and we see new people nearly every week who are struggling to make ends meet. Food items that are always needed are: tuna fish, canned pastas, spaghetti & sauce, canned fruit, hash, chili, macaroni & cheese, cereals, meals in a box. Thanks to all!

VALENTINE'S DAY DINNER

The youth groups will be hosting a Valentine's Day Dinner on Sunday, February 14. Funds raised will help send our youth to Deep Freeze. Be on the lookout for further details!

NEED MORE VARIETY IN YOUR LIFE?!
Plan on coming to the First Baptist Variety Show and Dessert Potluck! Can you tell a joke, play an instrument, sing, dance, do magic tricks, play in a skit, do something unique and unusual? Share your gifts at the FBC Variety Show! Come for the show, come for dessert, come for the fun! Saturday, March 20th at 7:00 PM. Sign up your act on the sanctuary bulletin board! Hosted by Dale & Laurie Edwards (please note there will be no parsonage open house this year).

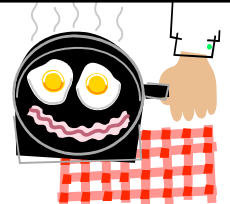


Concert of Prayers
Saturday, Jan. 23
8:30am - 12:30pm
Join Us in Prayer for
others, ourselves, our
church, our community,
our world!

ANNUAL MEETING
Sunday, January 31
After Church!
All Members Needed!
Discuss & Vote on 2010
Budget, Officers & Boards



MEN'S BREAKFAST
Saturday, January 9
7:30 AM
ALL MEN WELCOME!!



*Women's Fellowship
Potluck Dinner*
Tuesday, Jan. 19 @ 6:00 PM
At Marge Olson's
30 Dorset Lane, Lebanon
Sign-up & Directions on
Sanctuary Bulletin Board
**ALL WOMEN
WELCOME**