

First Things

A Newsletter of the First Baptist Church of the City of Trenton

MARCH 2014

From the Reverend Elizabeth B. Congdon, Senior Pastor

The Meaning of Lent, The Practice of Peacemaking

Lent is well known as a special time in the Christian year, lasting from Ash Wednesday to Easter. What is the purpose of Lent? We propose that in its full reach, Lent is to remind Christians of their vocation to be peacemakers in the world at all times and in all places.

Self-repentance. Ordinarily during Lent, Christians are expected to engage in critical reflection about themselves---their shortcomings, their limitations, their sins. They often commit themselves to give up something they cherish---a favorite food, a pleasurable pastime, an annoying habit. They participate in studies and services to guide them in a process of self-repentance.

Self Transformation. At its best, however, self-repentance is but a beginning step toward a transformation of self. Too often we think of ourselves narrowly as independent individuals, neglecting the deeper reality that our lives are conjoined with the lives of many, ultimately the lives of all. We are interdependent. We need to extend our narrow sense of self, broadening it to encompass the entire community of God's creation. We belong to each other.

Radical love. As we belong together, so we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. That love is the root motivation of the transformed self, a love that extends to the whole community of life. That love is expressed in actions responsive to needs of all creatures in their life together, particularly those whose lives have been diminished through exploitation and oppression.

Peacemaking. The intention of radical love is to further the cause of peace throughout the world. Peace as a quality of relationships requires that violence of all kinds---psychological and physical, economic and military---be overcome. It requires that justice and mercy permeate all our associations. Peacemaking is, in this sense, the central vocation of Christians, a vocation rooted in radical love and expressive of our more encompassing sense of self. That vocation, we declare, is the ultimate meaning of Lent in our lives. (Adapted from *PeaceWay*, A Christian Ministry of Non-violence, Lewisburg, PA)

Today I Take a Stand

Like a baby colt just birthed by his mother

There are times when I really struggle to stand

Sometimes the weight of life is too heavy for me to carry

A burden sometimes too heavy for any woman or man

Life experiences more than anyone could bear

One that I tried to change only to remain the same

Leaving me with nothing but feelings of despair

And a darkened spirit filled with decay

Somehow I needed to gain strength again because my hope is growing thin

Too much time has passed and no longer can I afford to sit in defeat

I must pull myself up and climb that rugged rope of life placing hand after hand

That way I'll be able to rise above the odds that come against me

Lord knows I need some help

I know I can't make it on my own

So I must look to the hills where Power dwells

Because that's where my strength is drawn

So now I'm drawing from the pinnacle of the hill

Getting stronger and gaining more strength everyday

Now I'm ready to take a stand which is now my will

Thanks to the One we call Lord, God, Jehovah, Yahweh

C Nadir Powell

March Sermons

3/2	Matthew 17:1-9	“Six Days Later”	Pastor Liz
3/9	Matthew 4:1-11	“Tempted”	Pastor Liz
3/16	Psalm 23	“In the Presence of My Enemy”	Pastor Liz
3/23	John 4:14	“The Water I Give You”	Pastor Liz
3/30			Tyler Davis

FACEBOOK

“Like” us on Facebook. Enjoy our Facebook page at [FirstBaptistTrentonNJ](#)

Congratulations to our Students

As part of the Karen New Year celebration four (4) of our students were recognized. Sai Shwe and Mu Thu Kei were recognized for graduating from high school. Kheelar Paw and Kahmiya Htoo were recognized for straight A’s. The celebration was held at the ABCUSA Mission Center in Valley Forge, PA on 1/18/14. Almost 400 from the Karen communities of the mid-Atlantic USA attended. Homage was also paid to the Karen Elders. I (Pastor Liz) was included. It was the first time I ever received an award for being old.

Thank You!

Janice B. Doughman, Executive Director of Riverview Estates, the Baptist Home of South Jersey, wrote to thank us for our donation of \$500. They are most appreciative of our generosity. Our gift will be used to help seniors who depend on the care they receive at the Home.

Carolyn Biondi, Executive Director at the Crisis Ministry of Mercer County, wrote to thank us for our donation of \$200 as well as the food and toys. The support is used for families and individuals who turn to them during times of housing instability, seeking access to heart-healthy food, or working to improve their employment prospects.

News from the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey (ABCNJ)

The Rev. Dr. Lee B. Spitzer writes that 2013 was a great year. At the beginning of the year, ABCNJ ministered to dozens of churches and hundreds of families after Hurricane Sandy, and, at the end of the year, our region partnered with International Ministries to do similar relief ministry in the Philippines. We bolstered our ministry team and graduated our first class of ABCJ Academy “Excellence in Ministry” pastors. At the Annual Session, we had about 700 participants. Two churches joined our ranks. In September we launched the Cedars of Lebanon 2020 campaign to ensure that future generations of children will have a spiritually significant camping experience. Twenty churches have responded to the region’s Sacred Safe Spaces initiative, while twenty-eight of our members participated in the first Fresh Expressions learning community. New Church Development and Women in Ministry hosted their largest events ever in 2013. As a region, we sponsored mission trips to the Philippines and Haiti. With continued support and prayers, we believe that 2014 will be another year of spiritual health and faithfulness for our region, its churches, and its pastors.

Introducing **Cedars of Lebanon 2020**

At the Annual Session, the ABCNJ unveiled a most ambitious and visionary endowment campaign – the **Cedars of Lebanon 2020**. It calls for the region’s churches and friends to raise \$2,020,000 by the end of 2020, the endowment created will provide Baptist Camp Lebanon with the needed income to offset its systemic deficits and ensure that future generation of young people will encounter God in Christ each summer.

Baptist Camp Lebanon changes people’s lives. Each summer, hundreds of children and adults attend activities at camp, with dozens accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Others grow in their faith, meet life-long friends and spouses, and hear God’s call to become leaders. However, it is not possible for Lebanon to charge what it costs to have a young person attend camp.

At our Annual meeting the First Baptist Church of Trenton pledged \$5,000 to **Cedars of Lebanon 2020** by pledging to give \$500 each year for the next ten years. (This is in addition to \$1,500 we give yearly.) We are making a difference!

The Karen and Karenni (of Burma) Cultural Differences

This article is meant to give helpful cultural information to school workers, hospital staff, and community members on important cultural differences to keep in mind when working with the Karen and Karenni. This article focuses on the Karenni culture.

While there are many cultural similarities between the Karen and Karenni, such as dietary practices, family structures and religious traditions, there are also significant differences. **One of the most important is language.** Karen State and the Karenni state, known as Kayah State, are separate states within Burma, “almost like their own country.” The Karen language is completely different than the Karenni language, known as Kayah. These languages are for the most part mutually unintelligible.^[1] There are many different dialects within the Karen and Kayah languages. The official language of Burma is Burmese, but many refugees do not want to speak this language due to their feelings towards the Burmese government.

The majority of Karenni refugees are Christian, attending churches, though often praying at home in their own languages. As part of their religious tradition, they celebrate the major Christian holidays of Christmas and Easter. **Christian Karenni will go caroling around the Christmas holiday, visiting neighbors and praying together.** Some Karenni practice traditional animist religions, with the natural world and spirits playing an important role. It is difficult for them to practice their religion, as some traditions must be done in the jungle.

There are no religious dietary restrictions for Christian Karenni, who share a common diet with other ethnic groups of Burma that centers on rice, curry, vegetables and meat. Most Karenni eat three meals a day with breakfast being the biggest meal.

When asked what may be important to know, it was highlighted that knowledge of what language Karenni parents speak and a reminder that Karenni people tend to avoid confrontation. **Conflict avoidance may be shown by simply remaining quiet.** Also in a meeting, as a way of greeting and showing respect, Karenni parents may enter the room and walk in front of personnel bowing and walking low before finding their seat.

Some American medical practices may be foreign to Karenni refugees. In Burma, only women deliver babies. During the delivery, the husband is nearby, but not in the room. Also, in Burma medicine is often given directly by the doctor or hospital following a visit. It is not common to be given a prescription, which needs to be filled somewhere else. Some refugees may get confused and say that the doctor did not give them the medicine.

Two special holidays celebrated in Karenni State in Burma include Dee Ku and Kathooboo. Dee Ku is festival celebrated in September or October where Karenni will gather together, sharing meals of sticky rice and chicken. It has been described as a kind of harvest festival and other articles described it as a **day of unity for all Karenni.** Kathooboo is celebrated in May and acts as a kind of New Year celebration. During the celebration a tree is painted white and men will dance around the tree while women are sprinkling water as a way to be clean for the upcoming year.

The Karenni people are a resilient and gracious people, learning to adjust from their homes in the jungles of Burma or the refugee camps in Thailand to life in the city.

[1] Barron, Sandy et al., “Refugees from Burma: Their Background and Refugee Experiences.” *Center for Applied Linguistics* (2007).

Trustees Corner

At the last meeting of the Board of Trustees three contracts for building improvements were approved. During the next several months you will see some contractors working in the big Sunday school room at the church. The lighting will be updated with high efficiency, high output bulbs. The ceiling tiles which have long been in need of repair will be replaced by our painting contractor Jerry Nasile. Once that work is completed we will be having the carpeting throughout the Sunday school wing replaced with new and upgraded carpeting. A work crew will be needed in March or April to move some furniture or articles to allow the carpet contractor access to the space. During these work times there may be a need to close the room for the work to be done or the safety of people that might walk through the area. We hope to get the work started as early as the beginning of March so stay tuned for updates and watch for signage to direct you away from work area.

FREE TO GOOD HOME - - - There are two pianos in Vannest hall that must be removed for the carpet installation to be completed in that room. Anyone that wishes to claim a piano for themselves or knows of a good home is urged to arrange for their removal no later than March 16th as they will be discarded if they are not claimed and moved by that date.

[Pray for Kit Ripley, helping free girls and women from human trafficking through the ministry of New Life Center in Thailand.](#)

Kit's primary ministry involvement is with the New Life Center Foundation in northern Thailand. The NLC works with tribal minority girls who have come out of exploitative labor situations or are at risk for becoming victims of labor exploitation. Her work there includes teaching residents therapeutic art classes and personal budgeting classes, directing the Business for Tribal Women program, guest relations, and administration. She also provides pastoral care and leadership development for New Life Center staff. Additionally, Kit serves on the Leadership Team at the Chiang Mai Community Church, and offers art and prayer retreats for women in the community.

She writes: In the global effort to end human trafficking, it is important to have clear and accurate data about the most recent trends in the constantly shifting nature of this underground crime. Human trafficking involves forcing someone through abduction, fraud or coercion into a situation of forced labor, debt bondage, sexual exploitation or slavery. It is widely believed to be the third most lucrative crime in the world, after illegal arms smuggling and drug trafficking. At the New Life Center Foundation, we work with victims of sexual abuse, domestic violence, labor exploitation and trafficking, and girls at risk of exploitation. Today, 74 girls are in our residential care, receiving life skills training, and therapeutic services.

Read the personal story of one of the girls who recently came to the New Life Center in Kit's most recent journal at <http://www.internationalministries.org/read/49207-the-color-of-hope> .

- Praise God for our competent and dedicated team of staff at the New Life Center. They truly are gifts from God. Please pray for God's continuing leading, guidance and protection for these staff in serving the 74 teenaged girls under our care.

[Pray for Dr. Tim and Kathy Rice, endorsed to serve As medical missionaries at the Vanga Evangelical Hospital in the Democratic Republic of Congo.](#)

Tim and Kathy are from Saint Louis, MO, where Tim is on the faculty of the School of Medicine at Saint Louis University. Through the ministry of their Presbyterian church, the New City Fellowship and then through making the acquaintance of Dr. Dan Fountain and IM missionaries in the Congo, Tim and Kathy have already served short-term at Vanga. They now look forward to long-term service contributing to the training of nursing and medical students for Christ-centered, whole person care.

Vision: To train the next generation of Congolese doctors and nurses in Christ-centered, whole-person care, empowering them to use the limited resources available to restore life and health across the Democratic Republic of the Congo. (DRC) Our desire is to facilitate worldwide

partnerships, enabling health professionals to participate in mutual exchange of expertise at the Vanga Evangelical Hospital and elsewhere in the DRC.

They write: "Those are the Dan Fountain hippos," said our guide Tata Babylon as he canoed us around the bend in the river. I smiled to myself at the interesting way of paying tribute to Dr. Dan Fountain. Hippos are the only large African wildlife around the Vanga area.

Later, we found out the rest of the story... You see, it wasn't actually a way of paying tribute....it was an expression of the animistic culture to which we will be going. When something unexpected or unexplainable happens in the villages, the obvious interpretation is that either someone became an animal and caused the event OR someone has put a curse on their enemy. For example, when the Ebola outbreak occurred in 1995, the epicenter was 75km upstream from Vanga. It was widely believed that Dr. Fountain had become a hippo, swam up the river, and caused the outbreak.

Cancer or a Curse or Both? While we were in Vanga during a medical missions trip in October, Dr. Alleluia, one of the residents in the family medicine residency program became deathly ill with multiple myeloma, a kind of blood cancer. The medical students from the hospital went to Dr. Alleluia's village to demand that the chief find out who put the curse on Dr. Alleluia and to ask him to remove it.

Our Need for Prayer

Most of the cultures around the world place a high importance on the spiritual realm. The culture and worldview of much of the Western world is at a great disadvantage because we fail to even consider the role of the spiritual dimension in life. We can learn from the Congolese to consider the Biblical view of the spiritual foundations of health and disease.

As we move to Vanga, we keenly sense our total dependence on God to guide us in bringing the light of Truth and the power of the Gospel into situations such as these. We covet your prayers as we engage with those whose world view is so different from ours.

American Baptist International Ministries (IM) was organized in 1814 as the first Baptist international mission agency in America. It began its pioneer mission work in Burma and today works in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and the Americas serving more than 1,800 long-term and short-term missionaries. Its central mission is to help people come to Christ, grow in their relationship with God, and change their worlds through the power of the Spirit. It works with respected partners in over 70 countries in ministries that meet human need.

1.800.222.3872 www.internationalministries.org P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482

Board of Christian Education Update

The Christian education program continues with many activities. Sunday school meets each week at 10 AM and we are hoping you can join us. During the month of February Tyler Davis led a rousing study of the book of Acts while March brings new teaching talent to the big table when Emily Davis picks up the leading of those studies. Mary Mild is working with the children in the primary and junior classes while Emily and Tyler take a month each at the helm of the adult class.

Emily's class has been studying Jesus at the temple from Luke 2:39-52. Their theme is Jesus grows and learns and we grow and learn. The key verse is Luke 2:52, "Jesus matured in wisdom and in years, and in favor with God and people." They made Valentine's Day cards, have been memorizing different Scripture verses, and will be studying Jesus' baptism starting February 23rd.

Elisabeth Kang's Christian worship group meets each week and always ends their program with yummy snacks. MMMMmmm!!

Be sure to see Lyn Wood if you are interested in attending the C.O.A.L event sponsored by ABC-NJ that is being held on March 22nd at the Shiloh Baptist Church. Several people participated in the past

and found the day to be rewarding. Registration is recommended.

Several readers of this newsletter participated in the game/puzzle from last month's newsletter. They received a prize for their participation on February 23rd. Look for the WORD SEARCH and return a completed copy to Lyn by March 23rd to claim your prize

'NEWSY NOTES'

We are always so happy to see our most senior members each Sunday and they only miss on the snowiest of days. Stay well seniors

Choir meets regularly and our youngest member, Grant, keeps us entertained between songs. He loves to explore and always finds things to examine more closely. He especially likes pencils which makes all the grandma's in the choir nervous to watch.

We have welcomed some newcomers in services. Richard rarely misses a service and Ray continues to participate in Sunday school activities as well.

With the installation of our new sound system there are no more 'squeeks', 'squeels' and 'crackles' from the microphones and speakers. We can easily hear every word and Rev. Powell enjoys the freedom the wireless mike brings while leading our opening praise hymns. Thanks go out to James Kang and Jack Soe for their design and installation of the system.

Chess club has new dates:

Friday 3/28 6-7:30 PM

Sundays 4/6 – 4/13 – 5/18 3:00 – 4:40 PM

Saturdays 5/31 – 6/7 – 6/14 4:30 – 6:00 PM

Lord's Prayer Word Search

A N L N S S E N E V I G R O F
N T A L K T D A N L H V O R P
Y E V E I L E B N H P A E Z R
T Y A R P B U H E Y E M N Q A
I L I S T E N S C Y W A A D I
M U F E E L P M I S E H V X S
E T E M P T A T I O N S E E E
C O M M U N I C A T E A S R N
S R A E H P O W E R G Y S X E
D A I L Y F I Q Q Y M G U K X

anytime	hears
anywhere	heaven
ask	listens
believe	power
communicate	praise
daily	pray
example	simple
eyes	talk
forgiveness	temptations
hands	



Monthly puzzle. Please be sure to bring this completed puzzle to Carolyn Wood on March 16th to claim your gift

March Calendar

Sundays

9:00 Karen and Karenni Worship

9:00 Children's Worship

10:00 Sunday School for all ages

11:00 Worship

11:15 2nd Hour

12:15 Fellowship

12:30 Meetings

3/2 Board of Christian Education

3/9 Outreach Ministry Team

3/16 Trustees

3/23 Deacons

3/5 Beginning of the Lenten Season

Mondays Tuesdays and Wednesdays South Trenton Soup Kitchen (STSK)

First and third Wed. Poetry Group

Thursdays Choir Practice

Saturdays 9-12 ESL & Tutoring, 12-2 Bible Study and youth choir practice

Newsletter information and articles due no later than March 16th

If anyone is wishing to submit a human interest article, poem, short work of prose please be sure to have it on the pastors desk by the date above.

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

128-140 Centre Street

Trenton, NJ 08611