

Reaching Out

NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BERKSHIRE, NY

Volume 30

March, 2010

Number 03

Church Family Praises

March Birthdays					
Bill Morris	2	Mike Sheldon	29	Diana Burke	18
Chris Kunik	3			Edna Moulton	19
Renée Kozak	4	March Anniversary		Sarah Albrecht	20
Liberty (Patterson) Hall	5	Frank and Jenn (Akins)		David Callahan	24
Michael Albrecht	6	Patterson	18	Timothy Michaud	25
Joan Stoughton	7	April Birthdays		Jay Kozak	29
Robert Wait	8	Dorothy Klinge	1	Karen Willard	30
Mike Moulton	13	Grace Gardner	4	April Anniversaries	
Marianne Wiesing	18	Crystal Foux	4	Gary and Marianne Wiesing	22
Hunter Morgan	18	Kristin Stoughton	4	David and Kit Michaud	26
Debbie Luszczek	27	Kit Michaud	8		
Eric Michaud	27	Betty Payne	11		

Retirement Open House Coming Soon

After more than forty years of service here in Berkshire, Pastor Jim will be retire on April 30, 2010.

On Saturday, April 24th, there will be an Open House from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at this Red Brick Church in Berkshire to honor Jim's love, service and dedication to the people of our church and the surrounding communities.

We cordially invite everyone to celebrate his retirement with us at the Open House. So, bring your friends and neighbors, too! Tell everybody!

For more information or to submit a letter or other memory, contact one of the following:

Ken and Carol Mott, call 607-657-8392 OR Joan Stoughton, call 607-657-2501

email kcmott@frontiernet.net

email jdstoughton@juno.com

26 Perry Road, Richford, NY 13835

294 Ford Hill Road, Berkshire, NY 13736

Question: Why can't a woman ask for help from her brother?

Answer: He can't be brother and assist her, too.

From the Pulpit Committee

The Pulpit Committee is charged by our Constitution with finding and then recommending to the membership a man we feel is best qualified to lead us as our pastor. The final decision rests with the membership, and it is up to the membership to actually call this person to be our next pastor. The Pulpit Committee does not have this authority.

You may be wondering, "What is an intentional interim pastor, and why do we need one?" And the related question, "Can't we simply look for and call a new pastor to start on May 1st?" Yes, we could do that. But the experiences of other churches tell us that, after forty years with Rev. Willard, we are going to undergo a period of what is essentially mourning the loss of a loved one. On top of that, it will be so easy to even unconsciously compare the new pastor with Rev. Willard, which is unfair to any new pastor. So our denomination and many other experts recommend having an interim pastor, one who intentionally will NOT be staying, come in, help us get used to the fact that Rev. Willard is gone, help us take

stock in ourselves in order to find just the right person God already has in store for us, and prepare us for the changes that are bound to come with that new pastor.

We have two qualified candidates lined up to be guest speakers here in the near future.

We will follow up with the details on the visits and how you will be making a final decision very soon. Meanwhile, please continue to pray for us, the Pulpit Committee, for Pastor Jim as he prepares to enter into a new phase of his life, for the Trustees as they prepare the Parsonage for our interim and permanent pastors, and for the Berkshire Congregational Church as a whole, that we all receive God's wisdom in the decision making process that is ahead.

If you still have any questions, please ask any of the members for clarification or details.

The Pulpit Committee is listed here: Ede Adams, Carl Akins, Scott Albrecht, Joan-Ann Howland, John Knieriem, Paul Kunik, Joan Stoughton, John Stoughton, Bob Wait, Darlene Wait

Trustees ask for Prayers

by Mark Friebe

The Trustees need your prayers and support this year. On Monday, March 1st, the Board of Trustees met for their regular monthly meeting and by the time it was over, we began moving forward on a very major item that will consume a fair amount of resources.

As we all know, the parsonage is now empty and it is a priority that we get this home ready for an interim pastor and his family and then, as the Lord provides, an new pastor and his family. The parsonage, although overall in very good shape, has three items that need some serious attention.

- 1) A portion of the rear foundation has been slowly bowing in for a number of years and is now to the point that it must be repaired or it will extend the damage to the structure itself.
- 2) The kitchen cabinets, counters, plumbing fixtures, and most of the appliances either don't work or are in very poor condition. So a fairly extensive renovation of the kitchen is in order.
- 3) And lastly, the upstairs bathroom will require some renovation of the bathtub and surround.

Over and above these three items there is new carpeting needed in some rooms, minor wall and ceiling repairs and a new washing machine and dryer, and painting throughout. The house is also completely unfurnished at this point.

We estimate at this time that the total cost of renovations will be somewhere between \$15,000 and \$20,000 and we approved the expenditure of the first \$10,000 of that to begin on the walls, kitchen, bathroom, and floors. As we go through this process we are going to be looking for opportunities for savings along the way, so I ask you all to please pray for the Lords guidance and blessing as we work.

Sunday School News

by Jenn Willard

Just a reminder about the time change for Sunday School!

Through March 31st, times are from **9:00 am to 10:40 am**, so mark your calendars and set your alarm clocks to go off a half-hour earlier than usual!

We are learning about gratefulness, being

grateful to God about all things, all the time. We also visit with a new friend by the name of Penny Dollarsworth. She's a rather silly and spoiled young woman in need of some Godly guidance.

Come and join the fun! Classes are available for ALL ages!

Living Healthy Workshop

from Rural Health Network

Do you have arthritis, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, asthma or other chronic condition? Are you providing care for someone who does? Come join us for LIVING HEALTHY, a FREE six week workshop. The workshop is for individuals and caretakers of someone with a chronic condition.

This Stanford University Patient Education Workshop empowers participants to take charge of their health condition. Participants will receive a free workbook and relaxation CD. There is a healthy snack provided during the break. The course is sponsored by rural Health Network under a grant; there are no age, income or insurance restrictions in order to enroll.

Living Healthy is offered by Rural Health Network of South Central New York, Inc.

Meeting Dates: March 3, March 10, 17, 24, 31, and April 7 (Wednesdays) Time: 1:00PM - 3:30PM

Location: Lourdes Hubbard Center, 13292 Route 38 Richford NY, 13835

For more information or to register please call Joy at 607-692-7669, ext. 11

...And Another Thing ...

by Tom Briggs

A Casualty of War, Part 3:

A Better Man

Job 1:20-21 (KJV): "Then Job arose, and rent his garment, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD".

There has been a dichotomy of time since our son passed away. On one hand, it seems like ages ago, and on the other hand it seems like yesterday. I keep replaying those days in my mind. The horror of finding out he was in the hospital; the helplessness of watching him in that bed not being able to help him (Parents are, after all,

supposed to help their kids when they are hurt.); and the total, heart wrenching anguish of standing at his bedside watching the final few minutes of his life.

We serve such an awesome and generous God, but there are so many things about this story I still don't understand. Why would He let this happen to someone who had so much potential? We all belong to God and as Job said, He brought us into this world and, at His option, He can take us out again. But why someone so young with such a bright future? I have asked the Lord so many times "why," but as yet have received no reply. Maybe it is not for me to know. As Isaiah 56:8-9 (KJV) says: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the

earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts.” While this is true, being ever so human, I will keep asking “why” throughout this life I have left. I know, too, that when I do see Casey again, the “why” of it all will not matter. It will be such a joy to see him. We also know through Romans 8:28 that “Also we know that all things work together for the best unto them that love God, even to them that are called of his purpose.” I do love God and, certainly, I trust in Him, but I still don’t understand. I know God is in charge, but I can’t see at this point how my son’s death can be for the best to anyone.

We thanked God nearly every day over the years for having lent our kids to us to raise. We acknowledged that they belonged to Him and not to us. We asked for His Will to be done in their lives. Yet, when He decided to take one home, we ask “why.” I’ll be honest here and tell you that I have tried, and tried very hard, to be angry with God over this. But it hasn’t worked. I haven’t been able to get mad at God. I don’t understand that fully either. There have been many times I have found myself getting mad at Casey for putting us through this. Not only, as our only son, did his death put an end to the Briggs family line, but he put us through all the pain, the heartache, and the headaches, not to mention all the paperwork we have to do. Since he was young and strong, he was invincible, and therefore didn’t have a will. Sometimes, the things we don’t know and the things we don’t do can come back to bite others hard. After realizing I am getting so mad at Casey for putting us through this, I get angry with myself for doing it. It is pure and total selfishness on my part. We will not get over this, but we will, with God’s help, get through it. Casey and I had many projects planned. Some died with him, but others will continue in his honor, including an ammunition reloading bench we had nearly finished. It was a labor of much love and of a great many laughs.

Casey’s demons are gone now. Oh, how they must have persecuted him, especially in those last

days. I shudder to think of what he went through. I find myself being tortured with so many questions like wondering if there was anything I could have done that might have made a difference that would have spared his life. Could I have been a better father or mentor through the years? Is there something I missed in those last days that could have kept him alive? He is in a better place, one to which we all aspire. He is with God, Jesus, many relatives he never met, like Jennifer’s Mom and my Dad, and other relatives and some Army buddies who have gone before. There is comfort in knowing that he is now at peace. God may have wanted him in His Army because He needed a good platoon sergeant, which Casey was, indeed.

As I was starting to compile my thoughts for this essay, one of the things that came to mind early in the process was the last stanza of the great 1892 poem by Rudyard Kipling, *Gunga Din*: “Though I’ve belted you and flayed you, / By the livin’ Gawd that made you, / You’re a better man than I am, *Gunga Din!*”

If the sum total of a man’s life can be measured by the positive impressions that he leaves on the lives of others than I can say without hesitation “You’re a better man than I am, Sgt. Briggs.” If Clarence Oddbody (from “It’s A Wonderful Life”) was right in saying that no man is a failure who has friends, then Casey was truly a success. He touched a great many lives.

My son, my soldier, my friend, my hero. By the assurances of Almighty God, and through the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I know I will see you on the other side. I look forward to swapping lies and tall tales with you again, to the go-cart races and spending time doing our long range speed and accuracy drills on the rifle range with you and in the presence of God. Heaven is a better place because you are there. God truly blessed us with twenty-three years together. I am a much better man for having known you. May you rest in peace, Casey. I am intensely proud of you. I love you and miss you so very, very much.

America was founded by people who believed that God was their rock of safety. He is ours. I recognize we must be cautious in claiming that God is on our side, but I think it’s all right to keep asking if we’re on His side. – Ronald Reagan

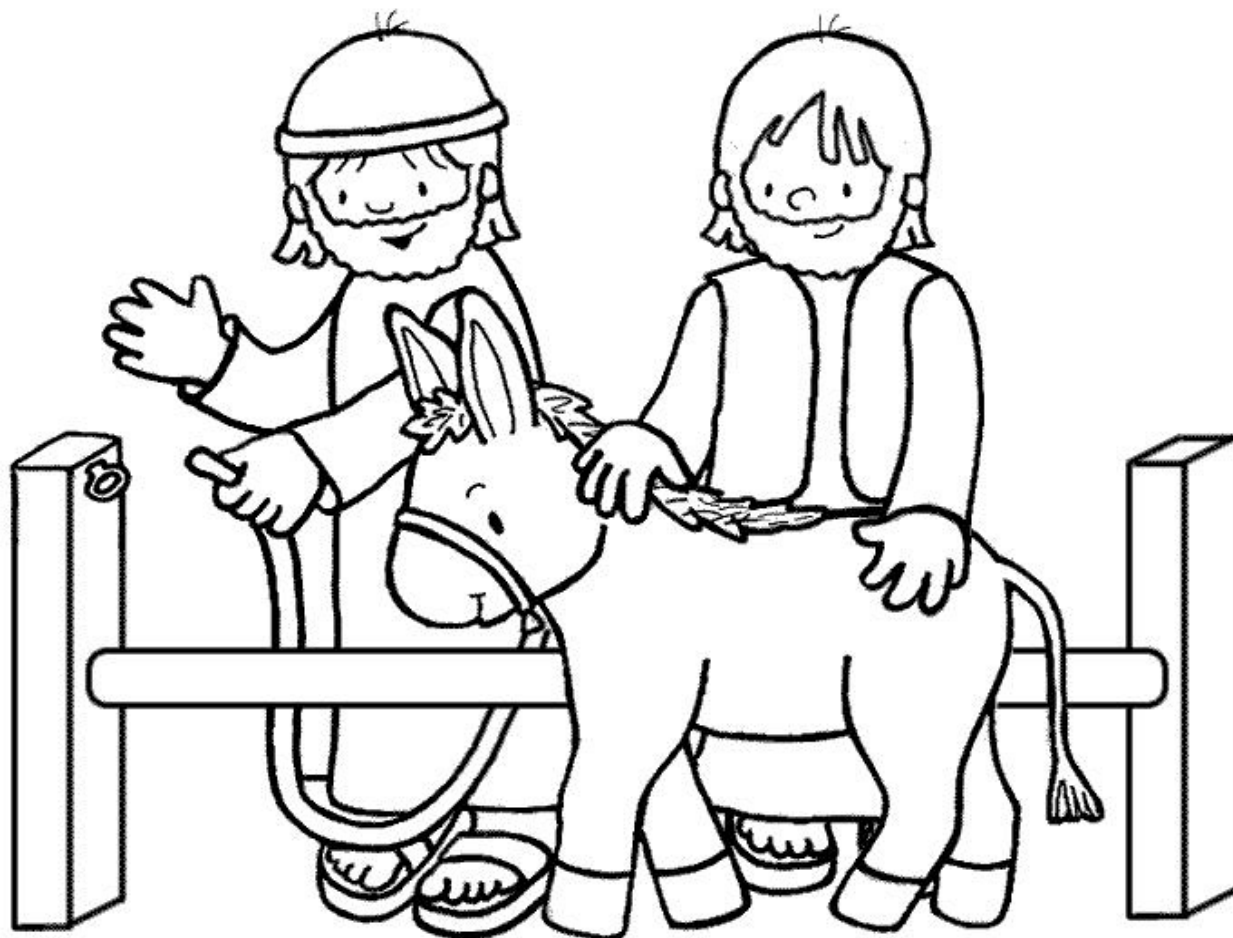
Kidz Korner

From Luke 19:29 - 36

"As He approached Bethpage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, He sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'"

Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They replied, "The Lord needs it."

They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As He went along, people spread their cloaks on the road."



Color the picture of the two disciples untying the colt of a donkey. Talk with your mom or dad about what Jesus might ask you to let Him use. Could you be as willing to share as the owner of the colt?

Upcoming and Regular Events

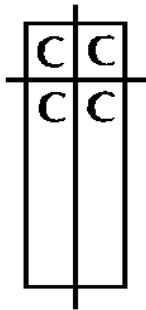
March 13 - Concert by Kurtis Parks, former American Idol finalist
March 18 - Women's Fellowship at 7 pm in the fellowship hall
March 20 - Ladies' Breakfast at 9:30 am in the fellowship hall
March 28 - Palm Sunday, Hot Cross Buns coffee hour after morning worship
April 1 - Maundy Thursday Service, begins at 7 pm
April 2 - Prayer Vigil, sanctuary will be open from noon to 7 pm
April 3 - Sunday School Easter Party from 10 am to noon
April 4 - Easter Sunrise Service in Walker's field on Parsons Road. Breakfast immediately following that at the Richford Congregational Church. No Sunday School on Easter Sunday.

- * To help with the Helping Hands Food Pantry, please call Emily at 657-8158, Joan at 657-2501 or Donalyn at 765-8345. The Pantry is open Monday evenings from 6:30 to 7:30 and Thursday afternoons from 2 to 4, except on holidays.
- * Contact Ruth Stoughton at 657-4479 for information about the Diabetic Support Group. They usually meet the last Tuesday of the month.
- * Trustees meet the first Monday of each month at 7 pm.
- * Cabinet Meeting is scheduled for the fourth Tuesday of the month at 7 pm.
- * Women's Fellowship and Monday evening Women's Bible study: call Darlene Wait at 657-2539.
- * Wednesday evening Men's Bible study: call Pastor Jim @ 657-8039.
- * Thursday daytime Women's Bible study: call Karen @ 657-8039.

Reaching out Editor: Emily Sheldon, 657-8158 (reachingout@redbrickchurch.org)

Calendar: Kit Michaud, 657-2797 (mkitsky@aol.com)

E-mail Prayer Chain: Donalyn Ketchum, 765-8345 (dmketchum@htva.net)



R E A C H I N G O U T
Berkshire Congregational Church
Rev. James T. Willard, Pastor
P.O. Box 196
Berkshire, NY 13736

Responsibilities and privileges of members:

- * Worship Service: Sunday mornings at 11:00
- * Sunday School: Sunday mornings See page 3!
- * Youth Group: Most Sunday evenings
- * Choir practice: 7:30 pm Wednesdays