

Reaching Out

NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BERKSHIRE, NY

Volume 31

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Number 06

Church Family Praises

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Missionary news

by Anthony Petrillo

[Editor's note: We (our church) have been supporting Anthony and Nancy Petrillo for about twenty-six years. The organization he is affiliated with has changed names throughout those years and is now called TEN3. This article is taken from what Anthony provided to his supporters in early April.]

I have the privilege to be a key speaker at a large conference in August 2011.

This is the biggest window of opportunity we have had in years with the potential of reaching hundreds of educators. At the same time we are facing financial stress that could close down this ministry. I'd appreciate it if you'd read through this message so that I may explain the situation, what we hope to do and how you could help. I think you'll be encouraged because the answer isn't for you to just give more money for you are already doing so much.

There are two major factors affecting the finances. The first you are well aware of as we face difficult economic times. We are feeling this together. With the times, you have had to change your budget. Some of you have even lost jobs, so you are unable to give. Other supporters have gone to heaven. This first factor is small considering the heartbreak of the second factor. Several years ago my friend, Dr. Jim Szymanski, shared with me the fact that 75 out every 100 churches in America are dying. Of the 25 that are growing, 24 of them are growing via people from the dying churches going to them,

which leaves 1 out of 100 churches in America that is actually growing through evangelism. The root cause is that American Christians do not take Christ at His word and they do not obey Him in all things. It is the great commission verse that makes this so clear.

Then Jesus came to them and said, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* Matthew 28:18-20

It is true that we are to make disciples, to evangelize, but notice that we are to teach people to OBEY EVERYTHING that Christ has commanded. It is when we rely on the grace of God to help us obey His commands, that we find transformed lives. John Wesley made it clear that transformed lives transform society. Our society is growing in decadency because we the believers are not living transformed lives. I learned years ago when you point a finger, three point back and I consider my own walk with the Lord much less than I desire. I hunger for Christ to be the breath I breathe, the very deepest passion of my heart. And I know that as I seek to love Him more I will be transformed and hence more useful to His Kingdom.

Now what does that have to do with finances? It explains how things have turned around and has changed how things function within our society and within the Church. But we (you and I) are not of those who shrink back as Hebrews 10 says, but of those who have faith and are saved. We will press on during these times. The financial situation does not define what we should be doing. That was clearly given to us by Christ. We are to be part of the great commission in any way that we can.

For me, this means to continue to try to share the Gospel and to train others through TEN3. Because things have changed, we at TEN3 will be trying to adjust so that we can continue our ministry.

In addition to the normal building of a missionary team as we have done since 1984 with SIM, TEN3 will be working to develop alternative funds to help. This is still under discussion on how exactly we will do it, but we are committed to seeing young people have Christian materials in their schools.

Alternatives we are considering and would appreciate your prayers on are:

Second full-time job: As you know, I've been working more than one job and have even looked for a second full-time job. The Lord has not opened that door but has provided through you. I am really grateful for this because doing two full-time jobs would be very difficult for me.

Projects for a larger audience: We will be sharing with a larger audience the major projects TEN3 is doing. This will allow more people to become involved.

Income: We have started to introduce additional fees for our workshops to help the TEN3 missionaries. We also plan to generate income from some of our other offerings.

It may take a few years to see these efforts have an impact. This is not meant to replace you, who have carried this ministry so long, but to eventually bring in funds so that the extra help you are giving would not need to continue forever.

An important part of expanding those who can be involved in TEN3 is to share the vision. I do hope you'll take the video I've sent and will show it to others. You've been part of the process to see these doors open and I'm hoping you'll be excited to share it with others. It has been your faithfulness that helped to make this possible.

Thank you so much for taking time to hear what is on my heart concerning the financial situation.

Oh! Almighty and Everlasting God, Creator of Heaven, Earth and the Universe: Help me to be, to think, to act what is right, because it is right; make me truthful, honest and honorable in all things; make me intellectually honest for the sake of right and honor and without thought of reward to me. Give me the ability to be charitable, forgiving and patient with my fellowmen - help me to understand their motives and their shortcomings -- even as Thou understandest mine! Amen, Amen, Amen.
--Harry S. Truman

Ministry During Worship

June 5

Greeters: Paul Kunik and Bob Wait
Ushers: Carl Akins and Mike Wells
Reader: John Stoughton
Nursery: Tessie Smith

June 19: Picnic at Trout Ponds

Greeter: Mike and Sheryl Kunik
Ushers: Mark Friebe and Paul Kunik
No Reader scheduled
No nursery scheduled

June 12

Greeter: Sandy Kasmarcik and Kit Michaud
Ushers: Bob Wait and Dave Michaud
Reader: Paul Kunik
Nursery: Sandy Kasmarcik

June 26

Greeter: Jim and Jenn Willard
Ushers: Mike Kunik and Bob Maynard
Reader: Ede Adams
Nursery: Judy Loeffler

In the Library

by Emily Sheldon, librarian

There is a purple three-ring binder in the library that is intended to take the place of the card catalog files. There are sections for Title, Author, and Subject. Also, there's one section marked "recent additions," because the whole thing can't be reprinted every time items are added to the library.

I hope there will be a library page on our website soon, as well. I have a searchable pdf ready to hand off to the webmaster. This is something that would be much more easily updated than the paper copies. (And much, much easier than a card catalog to use!)

It Came From Within!

A book review by the Librarian

Written by Andy Stanley (yes, his father is Charles Stanley), this book discusses what's truly in our hearts and what we can do about it. He discusses guilt, anger, greed, and jealousy (envy) and how these "monster" traits have become habits. This is a very readable book; one without a lot of technical jargon getting in the way of the author's ideas. Chapters generally start out with a quote from some monster movie and also a quote from a Christian leader or speaker.

Mr. Stanley points out that most of us harbor all four of these hurtful habits at one time or another in our lives. Some even cling to one or more of these habits for various reasons that he explains in this book.

Beyond just pointing out our shortcomings, Andy offers solutions to our heart issues. He points out in Chapter Nine that "It takes a habit to break a habit." He then proceeds to show us how to deal with our monster habits and eliminate them.

As the back cover of the book says "You can't run from what lurks within!"

"Liberty must at all hazards be supported. We have a right to it, derived from our Maker. But if we had not, our fathers have earned and bought it for us, at the expense of their ease, their estates, their pleasure, and their blood."
--John Quincy Adams

... And Another Thing...

by Tom Briggs

This Flag Stands For Freedom. Part 3

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 (KJV): “ *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.* ”

Blessed, indeed, is God the Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for they offer unbounded comfort in the midst of our personal trials, tribulations and troubles. Whatever afflictions we may need to endure in this world, when we come into the Kingdom of God, we will suffer no more. We know this to be true because we have the promise of God.

As I wrote earlier in this essay, the title comes from the Lee Greenwood song “**God Bless the USA.**” The chorus of the song is: “*I’m proud to be an American / where at least I know I’m free, / And I won’t forget the men who died / who gave that right to me, / And I gladly stand up next to you / and defend her still today, / ‘Cause there ain’t no doubt I love this land / God Bless the U.S.A.*”

Casey may not have lost his life ON a battlefield, but he lost it BECAUSE he was on a battlefield. He, like so many involved in combat operations, see things people probably shouldn’t ever have to see. There are injuries that can occur that are other than physical. It may be that the worst thing about the battlefield is not that young men come home with their flesh torn, but rather that they return with their souls torn, even if they don’t realize it, and in turn, it sometimes turns out that their families end up with their hearts torn out, as ours did. We can try our best to prepare for

bad news from a war zone, but once our soldier returns home to the friendly confines of this nation, we let down our guard, thinking that everything will be all right until the next deployment, when we will begin anew that internal struggle to maintain composure and some semblance of sanity. The worst we expect here in the United States is that our service member will be heckled or discriminated against by those ‘enlightened’ people who often demand tolerance and acceptance of others but are unwilling to accept that others may hold different viewpoints, let alone choose to express those differences. We were not prepared to receive the news we did. The bitter, unfortunate truth is that our story is not unique.

The flag in that beautiful flag case on our office wall stands for him! We are free because of people like him who are willing to defend this land, and he is now free because we have a loving and gracious God. There is no doubt in my mind that I would stand up next to my son and my Dad, a WWII veteran, anytime.

We have, this past year and change, leaned heavily on the words of the 23rd Psalm (KJV): “*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*” Our God is the God of all comfort. We have his promise in Matthew 5:4 (KJV) “*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted*” and He has been faithful to that promise. We have received much comfort through Him. The Man who was able to calm the tempest and bring peace with His voice can, and has, brought comfort and peace and calmness to us. We have received comfort from others He has

sent into our lives, especially those in the support group we belong to over in Gettysburg, people who have all lost children or grandchildren themselves. And, as God and others have been able to give us great comfort, we pray that we, also, may be able to comfort others who find themselves in our situation, torn apart by the loss of a child. It is truly a group that no one wants to belong to.

This essay has started out to be a simple Thank You note but has gone somewhat far afield. Sometimes God fills my mind with far

more thoughts than I had originally intended to have in there. To bring this back to the original purpose (and conclusion), please allow me to say that we see that beautiful flag case on our office wall at home as a physical extension of your love for Casey and for us. It is reminder of the closeness of God's family. We still, and often, reflect upon the prayers sent up for Casey and us from that Red Brick Church, and are eternally thankful. Thank you again. It means so very, very much to us.

VBS is Coming in August!

by Jenn Willard

Take a walk on the WILD side at Vacation Bible School this summer during PandaMania! Sunday August 7th thru Friday August 12th from 6:00-8:30pm, we'll gather together to explore Psalm 139 and learn that: God is Listening to us, God is Watching over us, He made us, He gives us good gifts, and He loves us no matter what! There are classes for all ages, from 2 years through adults. During our fun we'll meet some new jungle friends like Boomer the Panda and Lulu the Monkey, who will help us remember that God is WILD about each of us! We hope you'll join us for awesome music, great crafts, yummy snacks, fun games, and life-changing lessons.

If you are interested in helping us during VBS please contact Jenn Willard, VBS Director at 657-2578; you may also preregister your child for VBS if you'd like. We're looking forward to having a bamboo blast with everyone!

Mark Your Calendars!

Saturday, June 18: Open Meeting for review of the proposed changes to the Constitution and By-laws

Sunday, June 19: Picnic at the Trout Ponds in Newark Valley. Starts at 10 am.

Bring your own table service and a dish to share.

NOTE: This also is the start of summer worship hours.

Thursday, June 30: Cabinet Meeting at 7 pm.

* 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.

* Christian Basics classes 7:30 pm Sundays

* Men in Ministry 7 to 8 pm on Mondays, except the first Monday of each month.

* Ladies' Bible study is on Friday afternoons from 2:30 to 4:00.

* Summer Chess Club on Tuesday afternoons from 3:00 to 4:30.

* Youth Praise Band Practice on Tuesday evenings at 7 pm.

* Trustees usually meet the first Monday of each month at 7 pm.

* Contact Ruth Stoughton at 657-4479 for information about the Diabetic Support Group.

They usually meet the last Tuesday of the month.

* Women's Fellowship and Monday evening Women's Bible study: call Darlene Wait at 657-2539.

"Fact is the unsaid part of what you think."

— Winston Churchill

A Final Word

by Emily Sheldon

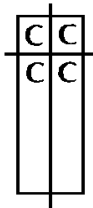
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, *“There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven ~ a time to give birth, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot what is planted. A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to tear down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to shun embracing; a time to search, and a time to give up as lost; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear apart, and a time to sew together; a time to be silent, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.”*

There was a time for me to serve you as editor and, alas, now it is time for me to step aside. Please know that I have fully enjoyed serving in this capacity and this has been, by no means, an easy decision. I want to thank each and every one of you who have supported me in the past five years with your prayers, your input, and your kind words of encouragement. Thank you and may our God and Father in Heaven richly bless you.

Reaching Out Editor:(reachingout@redbrickchurch.org)

Church Calendar: Amanda Wait, 657-2891 (jeffmandy34@yahoo.com)

Email Prayer Chain: Donalyn Ketchum, 765-8345 (donalyn.ketchum@gmail.com)



R E A C H I N G O U T

Berkshire Congregational Church

Dr. Charles Horvath (Pastor Chuck)

P.O. Box 196

Berkshire, NY 13736

Responsibilities and privileges of members:

Times change during the month of June.

Summer hours are in effect as of June 19th.

(See page 5)