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Ask, and it will be given you: search, and you will find: knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

Matthew 7:7-8

Dear Friends,

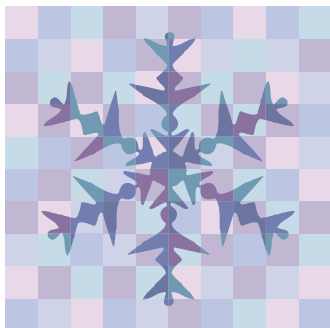
I'm sure that all of you had the experience of people coming to your door and wanting to share with you their religious beliefs and wanting to convert you to their belief. I usually hide when I see these people coming. I know that I always hesitate to tell anyone that I am a minister, for I am sure to receive a lengthy sermon, that I am neither interested in, nor makes any sense to me given my theological education.

Being a resident of New England for so long I have come to realize that in New England it is best to mind one's own business. I certainly have no business telling others outside of our church about our faith. For one thing, I

am sure they are not interested in it and for another it just seems in bad taste to do so. However, I ask myself, how are we going to bring new people to our church if we shy away from talking about what our faith and our church mean to us? So today I am going to go out on a limb and speak about, "that which must not be named." This letter is about the E word. The E word in this day and age and in our congregations has replaced the words sex and money as the word that should not, under any circumstances, be spoken.

Evangelism! Does this word scare you? Do you have visions of parading up and down the street bothering your neighbors with pamphlets, crossing your own boundary issues to speak the unspeakable? If you feel this way, you are not alone. Most people do feel this way, including many pastors and ministers in our congregations. It is interesting, in fact, that the United Church of Christ which has a big movement toward evangelism, in all seriousness calls it the E word.

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Storm Cancellations/Parking Reminders

WBZ radio 1030 and WBZ-TV list cancellations twice per hour during storms. If worship is cancelled, you'll hear it on WBZ. Neighbors have been reminded we still get parking next to the church on Sundays mornings. If a shoveled spot has a place-holder, please cooperate by replacing the old chair or orange cone when you leave.

January – February 2011

Saturday, January 1, 2011

New Year's Day

Sunday, January 2, 2011

11:00am Rev. Rose

Wednesday, January 5, 2011

11:30am ElderSpirit

Saturday, January 8, 2011

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, January 9, 2011

Sandwiches for Outdoor Church

11:00am Rev. Sandra Dorsainvil

The Rev. Sandra Dorsainvil will preach about the situation in Haiti and lead a conversation after worship at 12:30.

12:30pm Haiti Mission Event

Saturday, January 15, 2011

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, January 16, 2011

11:00am Rev. Rose

12:30pm Study group

Final meeting. Covers Kraybill ch. 7-12.

Reading schedule

December

12 Kraybill ch. 7

19 Kraybill ch. 8

26 Kraybill ch. 9

January

2 Kraybill ch. 10

9 Kraybill ch. 11

16 Kraybill ch. 12

Monday, January 17, 2011

Martin Luther King, Jr's Day

Saturday, January 22, 2011

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, January 23, 2011

11:00am Tom Hathaway

Saturday, January 29, 2011

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, January 30, 2011

11:00am Rev. Rose

Wednesday, February 2, 2011

Groundhog Day

11:30am ElderSpirit

Saturday, February 5, 2011

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, February 6, 2011

11am Rev. O'Brien

Saturday, February 12, 2011

Lincoln's Birthday

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, February 13, 2011

Sandwiches for Outdoor Church

Monday, February 14, 2011

Valentine's Day

Saturday, February 19, 2011

10:00am Craft Making

Monday, February 21, 2011

Washington's Birthday (Presidents' Day)

Saturday, February 26, 2011

10:00am Craft Making

Wednesday, March 2, 2011

11:30am ElderSpirit

Saturday, March 5, 2011

10:00am Craft Making

Wednesday, March 9, 2011

Ash Wednesday

ElderSpirit to Be Rescheduled



The date is not yet fixed, but the plans are in place for a fun ElderSpirit event. Come join us for prayer, luncheon, sharing and fellowship in our next ElderSpirit get-together. Get your baking pans out and dust off your best recipes because we are going to have a cookie swap. If you don't have time to bake - or simply don't bake - come anyway and share in the fun as well as the cookies. Please make two dozen cookies and package them two to a Ziploc bag. Baggies will work just as well. We will pass them around so that each person goes home with a delicious assortment. So that we don't have 144 or more cookies of the same recipe, please don't make toll house cookies, although I know we all love them. Make one of your favorite recipes or be adventurous and try something brand new. If you go to www.northpole.com/kitchen/cookbook, you'll find more cookie recipes than you can imagine. Happy baking!

Monthly Hymn-Sing Continues

What would it take to get you to church well before worship begins? Okay, we know pancakes are a big motivator. For many, a chance to sing their favorite hymns, accompanied on the piano by Bryce Sady, has inspired them to arrive closer at 10:30 once a month. They begin promptly at 10:40, calling out numbers from the old Pilgrim hymnal, and by singing just two verses of each hymn, they usually get around to all the oldies people are longing to hear again. It's lots of fun, the choir is there to help out, and there are plenty of singers for those who are timid and need a crowd. Next dates: February 13 and March 13.

Ash Wednesday ~ March 9



Each year, Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, the season of prayer and penitence leading up to the celebration of Holy Week. Many Christian denominations across the globe hold services on this day where the faithful get ash crosses drawn on their foreheads. In biblical times ashes were a sign of mourning so when Christians receive these ashes on Ash Wednesday, they are expressing sorrow for their sins. In this way, Ash Wednesday calls us to acknowledge and to repent of the many ways we stray from God. As is our custom, we will celebrate Ash Wednesday this year (March 9) with a short service followed by a soup dinner. While we will not impart ashes on foreheads at this service, we will all mark in our hearts with penitence and thanks for the opportunity to change. Details about the service will be forthcoming

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There is a new way of looking at evangelism. It is not about going door-to-door handing out pamphlets. In a recent study called the Mainline Evangelism Project, which interviewed over a thousand church members and did a statistical study of the beliefs, motivations and actions of 150 of the mainline churches that are doing the best job reaching people through effective evangelism, the following is what they found. "Our most important discovery is that a vivid relationship with God lies at the heart of real evangelism. People who share their faith, love God, and believe that other people's lives would be better if they were in relationship with God, too. They know why they are doing evangelism: they want to share a driving force in their lives. These Christians are growing in their own faith. They learn to talk about their faith. Their churches put a high priority of evangelism - faith sharing."

At this point, you may be thinking, oh, no, I'm supposed to talk to my friends about my faith? The answer to that is yes and no. But the most important thing is to understand that there is a new way of doing evangelism that is probably not what you have come to know through unpleasant experiences. In her very fine book, *Unbinding the Gospel*, Martha Reese tells us that evangelism is being done the best, "When it is held together by three precepts of honest, loving relationships with God, within the congregations, and with people outside the church." In other words, "The heart of evangelism is being in love with God, being part of a church you love and caring about other people who do not know that faith. Faith sharing focuses on relationships."

Learning to do evangelism is a process and must start within our church with an understanding among us about what evangelism has meant to us in the past and what it could mean to us as we move forward. Let's face it, most of the things we think about when we think of evangelism are models of bad practices. So we have to start from a new place. We need to identify for ourselves, what positive evangelism could look like and how to put it into practice.

Take a moment and ask yourself what God and our church means to you. Ask yourself: in what ways does being part of the church impact your life in good ways? Think about why it should matter to want to share this with anyone. Annie Dillard wrote, "Does anyone have the foggiest idea of what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. With that perspective, here's the question: what difference does it make in your life that you are a Christian?" Being a Christian is powerful business.

Where do we begin to build our church through evangelism? A good place to start is to pray about this. As a church, perhaps we should set a time that we can sit down together and pray for guidance. We could talk about our experiences with evangelism and share with one another our feelings about evangelism in the past and how it may be done in the future. We need to understand our own feelings about evangelism and why evangelism is important before we can proceed to do anything about it. This may not happen with just one meeting but may go on until the Holy Spirit moves us.

Another place to begin could be in a conversation with a friend who is having a difficult time and has come to talk with you. Listening very carefully to what she is saying is very important and perhaps sharing with her an experience of how your faith has helped you through a difficult time could just be enough to plant the seed. You could leave it there, or, if it seems fitting you could even ask the person if she would like to come with you to visit our church next Sunday to see if it might help. You do not have to give her a sermon or tell her that it is important to believe in God. You just have to be there and be willing to share in community. If we are having a special music service, invite a friend. The movement of the Spirit will happen on its own in regard to faith.

There are important considerations for how we engage with visitors to our church. There are very concrete things we can do when people come to our church. We should make sure that they are made to feel welcome. Although it is sometimes difficult to come out of ourselves and talk to new people, think about how it is

for them to come into a new place where they know no one. And perhaps they are spoken to by only one person in our congregation and ignored by everyone else. If this happens it looks to the new person that it is a church filled with small cliques in which the members are only interested in talking to each other. If visitors see us as a community that cares about them, the chances of them coming back are much more likely. We should never let anyone leave our church without having made enough of a good impression that they will be willing to give us their contact information. We should follow this up with a phone call or note telling the visitors that we enjoyed meeting them and asking them to join us again.



Then there are the cardinal rules about new people in churches. Do not immediately ask them to head up the next potluck. Do not ask them to join the choir. Do not ask anything of them; just be there for them and offer them the love of God and a community that cares about their well-being and their relationship with God.

I will begin my evangelism by saying: I love God and I love my church and all that it is to me as I live my life. My relationship with God has been my saving grace throughout my life, through good and through bad times. Our church community is one of the great joys of my life. Everyone whom I have met in our community has touched my life in a positive way and brought meaning to my life. Each Sunday, I look forward to seeing everyone, but most of all, I look forward to worshiping together. All of these things are wonderful. Why would I not want to share these thoughts and experiences with others in this world which is so in need of God's love and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Blessings,
Corey



Folks,

Don't forget all those people who are out of work or under-employed and trying to feed themselves and their families. The local food pantry helps them, but they can't do it without the help of folks like us who have plenty. Non-perishable foods and packages of disposable diapers should be left in the big green bin in the front hall. While you're purchasing those munchies for the Super Bowl game, please keep in mind those who need cereal, rice, bean and tuna fish. Many thanks!

Haiti Remembered Light

by Penny

In the spring of 2010 I attended a day of United Church of Christ sponsored workshops on issues of justice worthy of the support of congregations. One of the workshops I attended was on conditions in Haiti, where the devastating earthquake had occurred (in thirty seconds) a few months before. Among the three eloquent presenters was Minister Sandra Dorsainvil, who spoke of the effectiveness of aid going directly to a specific institution or community. I was moved by strong respect for her and took her contact information, hoping we might invite her to bring her message to our congregation.

The Reverend Dorsainvil did indeed visit us on Sunday, January 9, almost the anniversary of the earthquake. The scripture for the day, read by Reverend Rose, was Job 1:16-19. Minister Dorsainvil then presented an eloquent and moving sermon entitled, "Haiti Remembered", reflecting on the tragedy, the trials of Job, and the will of God.

After a short coffee hour we returned to the sanctuary where Minister Dorsainvil showed us her slides of the devastation in Haiti taken on her several trips to Haiti, where her parents and sisters escaped harm (which she could not learn for three days.) She spoke now in practical terms of the tragedy, the unimaginable devastation, and the needs of the people.

She and her sisters have established a kindergarten, named for their father, as a way to help to heal. This is a practical, fitting and ambitious effort. Other aid efforts of which Minister Dorsainvil spoke were two—her home church, First Baptist Church in Needham, is planning a mission trip to help rebuild a health institution. This is open to participants. She also spoke of local Catholic Charities as being a clearing house for earthquake refugees who have come here with their many needs.

As we prepare to allocate our Benevolence disbursements, we shall certainly be giving attention to the needs in the Boston area. However, Haiti is our near, terribly damaged neighbor, and it is fitting that we help its people to help themselves. The sisters' Peniel Kindergarten is a modest, efficient (and inspired!) effort to heal, and nurture and educate. It deserves support so that its efforts can continue to grow and reach children and families in need.

Remember that offering envelopes are available to everyone. The church would like to give you a receipt for the IRS for your donations, and if you put cash in the collection plate each week, using envelopes is the only way your generosity can be credited to you.



Senior Minister Dudley Rose was in Puerto Rico recently to attend a meeting of the Association for Theological Field Education, the US and Canadian professional organization that oversees field education (such as we offer here at NPU) for divinity school students. He was honored for service to the organization, particularly six years on its execu-



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 - Kai Bodwell

6 - Kay Wheelock

9 - Ruth Lowe

12 - Florence Webber

Chris McGinley

17 - Vinny Vellucci

23 - Mary Bodwell

28 - Rebecca Ramsay

31 - Steve Bodwell

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

11 - Kate Eshelman

12 - Stephen Moyer

18 - Jennie Galante

20 - Sally Addison

28 - Phyllis Dixon

Is your birthday here? If not, please contact the office.

Condensed from a letter of thanks from the Rev. Jed Mannis:

Please thank all of the members of North Prospect Union UCC for their very generous gift to the Outdoor Church... We are feeding more people, making more pastoral visits and providing more spiritual and material care to the people we encounter on the streets of Cambridge... We are blessed to continue to serve their needs... We are blessed, also, for your support. Your confidence in our mission makes it possible.

Sincerely yours,

Jed

Joys & Concerns

In the past couple of months, at least three members of our church family have made trips to an ER—Florence Webber, Wanda Macnair and Corey O'Brien (all are doing well, thank you) - and Nancy MacKinnon had a short stay in the hospital before Christmas, but is back in church feeling fine now. Jennie Galante has reason to celebrate: she made the varsity swim team at her high school. Please keep Bruce MacKinnon in your prayers as he undergoes tests to determine a sudden hearing loss (unrelated to his sister Sherry's reported last month, which is improving). Sally Addison's son-in-law, Kenny Francis, died suddenly while shoveling snow. Our condolences go to Sally, Jackie, Alexx and Kenny Jr.

North Prospect Union UCC

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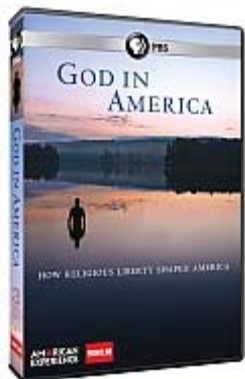
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January-February 2011

Study Group ~ God in America



The focus of NPU's upcoming study group, to begin February 20th after worship, is popular PBS presentation, *God in America: How Religious Liberty Shaped America*. To quote the website, "The series considers the role religious ideas and institutions have played in social reform movements from abolition to civil rights, examining the impact of religious faith on conflicts from the American Revolution to the Cold War, and how guarantees of religious freedom created a competitive American religious marketplace." This intersection of religion and public life in our country is well-known, but the series takes various approaches that force us to look at events and attitudes in new ways.