



Inside this issue:

From the Senior Minister

<i>Calendar</i>	2
<i>Book Review</i>	3
<i>ElderSpirit</i>	4
<i>Benevolences Dis-</i>	5
<i>Christian Education</i>	6
<i>Hymn Sing/Study</i>	6
<i>Joys & Concerns</i>	7

Dear Friends,

An experience so extraordinary that it's nearly impossible to incorporate into ordinary life. Chuck Noland quite unexpectedly spends four years alone on a desert island. The lone survivor of a company jet crash in the movie *Cast Away*, he washes onto an uninhabited island. No internet, no TV or radio, no books, no people, no grocery stores—he has none of the trappings of ordinary existence. Tom Hanks, who plays Noland, does a marvelous job portraying the utter emptiness and pathos of his island existence. Four years, day after day, of no interaction. Four years of full responsibility for every meal and every drink of water. Four years of staying alive, but with no pleasure or satisfaction in that life. Noland's reality is a demoralizing mix of urgency and boredom.

After Noland is rescued, he finds himself at a company party thrown in his honor. You can see the utter disorientation in his eyes. Fresh

water splashes in fountains. Chandeliers pour light into the room. Gourmet foods overflow serving bowls. Everyone, including himself, is well groomed and fashionably clothed. People laugh and converse. All these things missing for four years are at the party, indeed in ordinary life, simply taken for granted. Noland is clearly discombobulated by suddenly finding himself back in society.

The movie ends without resolution. We don't know how Noland's life unfolds from here. But one road open to him, and the one often taken when one rejoins ordinary life, is to once again become so acclimated to ordinary life's ebb and flow that even four years on a desert island recedes into the past. I want to draw what may at first appear to be a rather odd analogy. Not many of us have spent four years alone on a desert island. But I suspect we have all had extraordinary experiences, experiences that have for a time lifted our focus from the day to day. Sometimes they have been occasioned by loss, sometimes by love, sometimes by

(Continued on page 4)

Ash Wednesday ~ March 9

We will observe the start of Lent with a service at 6:30, which will be followed at 7:00 with a light supper. Feel free to invite your friends. Many people who are not church-goers or church shopping look for some connection to a worshipping community during this season. If you can bring a soup or bread, or would like to make sandwiches, please speak with Corey O'Brien or Tom Hathaway.

Coming Up

Saturday, March 5
10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, March 6
11:00am Rev. Jed Mannis
12:30pm Study Group

Wednesday, March 9
Ash Wednesday
6:30pm Ash Wednesday Service
7:00pm soup & Sandwich dinner

Saturday, March 12
10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, March 13
Sandwiches for Outdoor Church
10:40am Hymn Sing
11:00am Rev. Rose
12:30pm Study Group

Saturday, March 19
10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, March 20
11:00am Rev. Rose
12:30pm Study Group

Saturday, March 26
10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, March 27
11:00am Rev. O'Brien
12:30pm Study Group

Saturday, April 2
10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, April 3
11:00am Rev. Rose
12:30pm Study Group

Wednesday, April 6
11:30am ElderSpirit

Saturday, April 9
10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, April 10
Sandwiches for Outdoor Church
11:00am Rev. Rose

Saturday, April 16
10:00am Craft Making

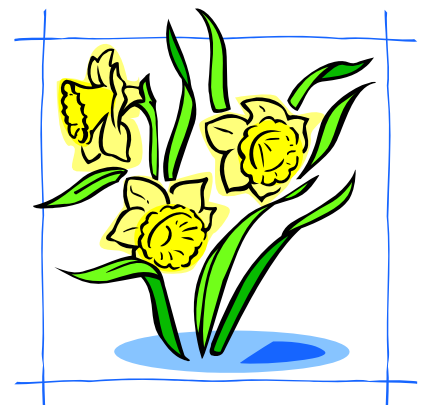
Sunday, April 17
Palm Sunday
11:00am Tom Hathaway

Thursday, April 21
Maundy Thursday

Friday, April 22
Good Friday

Saturday, April 23
10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, April 24
Easter
11:00am Rev. Rose

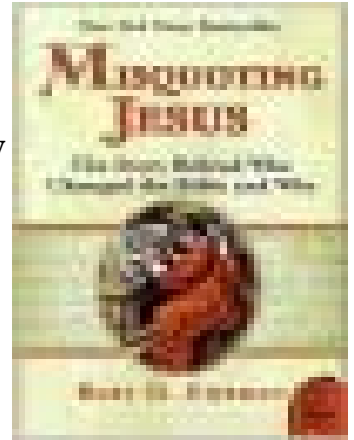


Book Review

Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why

by *Bart D. Ehrman.*

HarperCollins, New York, 2005. 242 pp. \$24.95. 0-0608-4496-5.



I HAVE ONE. Most hotel rooms in the United States have one. Statistically speaking, you probably have at least one in your home. I am talking, of course, about the Bible. How is it though, that a book with such ancient origins found its way onto your and millions of others' bookshelves? It is exactly this question that American New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman takes up in this concisely written and provocatively titled volume.

Taking a chronological approach, Ehrman describes for us how the broad-ranging genres of Christian literature that emerged after Jesus' death eventually developed into the New Testament. Ehrman emphasizes that this process was not nearly as fast and easy as many of us believe it to be. Rather, he takes great pains to depict for us a long, drawn-out process fraught with debate, the final list of 27 texts that we know as the New Testament not being settled upon until of the middle of fourth century. Although brief, this account leaves the reader with an appreciation of the complex history out of which the Biblical canon was formed.

Ehrman shines most brightly, however, in his discussion of how these canonized texts were passed down to us through the ages. Here, Ehrman opens the doors to a world likely unbeknownst to most readers. Whereas we live in a world where hundreds of pages can be perfectly reproduced with the click of a button, Ehrman vividly portrays for us a world in which every last letter of a text had to be reproduced by hand. This process was not only slow but also allowed for a great deal of variation to be introduced into the copied text, both inadvertently and intentionally. He outlines these (sometimes fascinating, sometimes mundane) changes over the course of several chapters (3,6,7).

Even as Ehrman seeks to play the provocateur, he does so with a compassionate touch; throughout this work he treats his subject matter with great respect. Ehrman acknowledges that although early scribes engaged in practices that conflict with our modern sensibilities, "they, like we, were trying to understand what the authors wrote while also trying to see how the words of the authors' texts might have significance for them, and how they might help them make sense of their own situations and own lives" (218). It is Ehrman's ability to engage unapologetically in historical analysis while at the same time upholding the dignity of the text that I believe makes this an excellent volume for any interested in learning about how the Bible, as we know it, made its way onto our bookshelves and into our lives.

– Tom Hathaway

Continued from page 1

worry, sometimes by ecstasy, and sometimes by God knows what. Very often these experiences turn us to God or evoke spiritual insights and commitments. The loss of a loved one may cause us to recognize that we have let our relationships flag. It may lead us to renewed commitments to appreciation of others. And we may rediscover the profundity of Jesus' edicts about love.

But then, like Chuck Noland, we are ultimately returned to ordinary life with all its enticements and demands. And the question is can we integrate the extraordinary insights and commitments into the day to day? At the end of the movie Noland stands at a crossroads trying to decide which one to take. Everyday life is so totally different and so seductive that the answer isn't simple.

This month we begin the season of Lent. Sometimes we hear about giving things up for Lent. That can be a good thing, I think. But I'd rather think of adding as a way of giving up things. Here I am thinking about intentionally integrating those spiritual insights that we've had, but which we may have let slide, those insights which would reorder our daily living. I'm talking about getting in touch with those moments of insight and inner stirring that we have all had in our lives. Now, daily life resists this, doesn't it? But, Lenten practices of giving up some of the things that distract us, or of prayer and contemplation, for example can help break the hold of those things that ordinarily benumb us.

While Chuck Noland is on the desert island, FedEx packages from his plane wash ashore. Over time he opens and uses the contents of all but one, one marked with a pair of wings. At the crossroads at the end of the film, we see a woman pulling away in a pickup truck with the same pair of wings painted on its tailgate. At the last we see Noland make a barely noticeable move to follow the wings. We are left with the impression that it will make all the difference.

Blessings and peace,

Dudley



ElderSpirit ~ Wednesday, April 6



Come join us for prayer, luncheon, sharing and fellowship at 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!

Council Approves Benevolence Disbursement ~ Penny Light

On Sunday, February 13, the Executive Council voted to make the following disbursements from those funds pledged for benevolences:

- > To Wordpress Plugins, which develops software for nonprofit websites, such as the sermon browser and staff directory we use **\$150**
- > To the Seafarer's Friend, a group which give life-managing aid to seamen who come into port in Boston **\$200**
- > To the Carpenter's Boatshop, a vocational social service organization in Maine, giving training and counsel to at-risk youth **\$200**
- > To The City Mission Society's Homelessness Prevention Program, which identifies and assists people at risk of homelessness, providing information, referral, advocacy services, flexible funding, case management and support on the path to economic self-sufficiency **\$700**
- > To the City Mission Society's Youth Empowerment, which provides educational and recreational activities that encourage youth to play a positive role in their communities through summer and after-school programs led by positive role models sharing useful life skills and violence prevention techniques. Peace Workshops reach at-risk youth through conflict resolution skills on plans that were made by a young man named Jahmol who lost his life by the very forces he was trying to turn around. Young Arts works in Boston schools to appeal to multiple learning styles through arts-centered curriculum. **\$700**
- > To Peniel Kindergarten in Haiti. As described in the last month's newsletter, Minister Sondra Dorsainvil (who spoke with us) and her sisters have established a kindergarten to help heal a fraction of the damaged lives in Haiti. **\$700**

The two City Mission Society programs pointedly address very great needs in greater Boston. I am grateful that we can contribute to them. As for Peniel Kindergarten, our visit from Minister Sondra on January ninth gave a personal immediacy to the healing project on which she and her sisters have embarked. Ideally, we shall learn more of the school through pictures and descriptions, and can establish a vigorous connection with it. I wish you could have heard the appreciation and joy in her voice when I called to tell her of our gift. She was very, very grateful, and eager to let us know more about the school and possible other ways we could connect with it. Thank you all!

Love,

Penny



Christian Education Update

Church Friends,

I am writing to you very excited about the state and the direction of our Sunday School program. Over the past few months, we have been making some adjustments to our curriculum to better meet the needs of our youth and also to bring the curriculum more in line with who we are as a congregation. In our classes, we have turned our attention to learning about and engaging with the great stories of our tradition: the good Samaritan, Jesus multiplying the fish and the loaves, Jonah and the whale, David and Goliath, to name a few. On one level, I think we can all agree that these stories are captivating and simply a lot of fun to read. Most Hollywood movie producers would have a hard time coming up with plots as rich and beautiful as these. On a deeper level, however, these stories form the very backbone of our tradition. As we hear these stories, they push us and prod us, causing us to think deeply and imagine God in different ways. In class we read these stories aloud, take some time to think about what they might mean to us today, and then try to interact with the story further through the arts. In this process, we are hoping that students will form a dynamic, probing faith that will not settle for easy answers but will always be open for further exploration. As we continue on this journey together, I ask that you hold our youth, our Sunday School and our church in your prayers.

Grace and peace,

Tom Hathaway

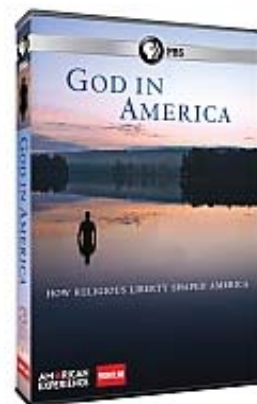
Minister of Education



HYMN SING

10:40 ~ MARCH 13

GOD IN AMERICA



**HOW RELIGIOUS LIBERTY
SHAPED AMERICA
during March**

From the Boston Globe Magazine, Tales from the City ~ Kathleen Beyerman

My dog, Amigo, is a visiting therapy dog and is well-suited to the job. One day working in pediatrics, Amigo had four patients. The last was a young man who invited Amigo up on his bed. (Policy allows it, provided there's an extra sheet covering the patient's linens.) Amigo settled in, loving the attention and petting, and the patient doted on him. After a while, we prepared to say goodbye. At that point, I asked the patient



MARCH

3—Muriel Dawes

5— Chris Lavallee

10—Henri McKeown

24—Bob Lord

Karen Perry

25— Betty Rockwood

28—Kathleen Beyerman

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

~ WISH LIST ~

We need a really big basket or a plastic bin to hold the socks and toiletries folks bring in for the Outdoor Church. Please call the office.

Joys & Concerns

Two cherished members of our church family celebrated birthdays after worship in February. Sally Addison's 80th, and Muriel Dawes's 98th!! We think Muriel is the oldest member of the congregation now, and delight in her memories of church events that predate most of us. She was pleased to realize the great-grandchildren of some of her old church friends are in the Sunday School.

The daffodils on the Osgood Street side of the church, planted many years ago by Leona Graham's husband David, have made an appearance. No blooms yet, but the leaves are up about four inches.

Many of us have family members and friends who are in need of prayers due to health concerns, relationship difficulties, under- or unemployment, or mental illness. Please keep them in mind.

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