

THE GOOD NEWS



The Newsletter of Ebenezer United Church of Christ

May/June/July 2010

Spiritual Gifts

Pastor Michael's sermons always work on me for days and weeks. He has spoken about spiritual gifts. I expect most everyone is a bit like me when it comes to this subject; what are my gifts? How can I be sure? Am I really using them to their fullest? Remember that sermon? What part of the body am I—foot, hand, tongue? Well maybe not tongue, SueAnn has that job sewn up.

On the other hand, I, probably like most everyone else, find it easy to identify what the spiritual gifts of the other people in the church. As an example it is easy to see and hear what a love Pastor Michael has for the Word of God and how much of a gift he was given in his ability to impart the truth and the lessons of the Bible to us. That gift is definitely bearing fruit.

Yet again, on another hand (is that three hands?), I find it extraordinarily easy to identify those among us who have gifts but are not doing anything with them. Why is it so easy for me to see the sawdust in a brother's eye while ignoring the plank in my own eye? (Matt 7:3)

Pastor Michael often preaches on and talks about true faith manifesting itself in good works and service. I'm not so sure pastor would not have continued to preach on those five little chapters in the book of James except he thought we all might revolt.

Even when it comes to good works we, myself included, find ways to corrupt such a simple, easy concept. This is how that works: we think about, talk about, and gossip about those around us who we have decided either don't do good works or don't do enough of them or don't do the ones we think they should be doing. Do me a favor, take some time and ponder on this.

Have you ever, either inwardly or outwardly, complained about how miserly someone else was with their tithes and gifts? How about how this one doesn't visit the ill or elderly, or how that one never has sent a card, or that family sure could be better about being in church on Sundays other than Communion days? What good does this do

for the body here at Ebenezer? What good does it do for the person(s) you are talking about?

What I think, know, and have seen is that we have a church here at 8th and "B" Streets that is full of brothers and sisters manifesting their faith through good works. Look around next time you find yourself judging a brother or a sister's works. I look at each member, and I see things they are doing or have done that are great testaments to their faith, things that have been a service to me. To do this I had to get off my lazy behind, put mind in gear, a positive forward gear, and watch, listen, and remember.

I have my examples all over the sanctuary. Here are a few.

Our newest member, Pete Debus, is one. Pete is faithful. He is here every Sunday, his smile is infectious, he makes me feel good about our little church.

Although they cannot attend anymore, the Beckers served in many ways. From the first day I sat down in front of them, they treated me like a son. Love oozed out of their every pore.

One pew back sit Mr. and Mrs. Robertus. When it is time for a song, those two lovebirds can sing; it makes me jealous. The only thing I do worse than sing is play basketball. Mr. Robertus always brings hard candy. That may not mean much to you, but it means a lot to me. Every Sunday that I spent in church sitting next to my mother, from grade school through adulthood, she gave me a piece of hard candy. I love starting church thinking of mom.

Then there is Marj. So much gets done at Ebenezer that we don't even realize gets done. Why? Because she sees that it needs doing and she does it.

What about our bulletins, they don't just magically appear. Someone (Pat Worster) puts a great deal of time and love into that task which is of service to us and to the Lord.

(cont'd on pg. 2)



Most of us sure don't pay much attention to Tom Amen. Well that's not exactly true, we pay a lot of attention when he isn't here or arrives a little late. Sunday service would very difficult without his faithfulness

and service.

Gene Hinkle is a gift to Ebenezer. He never fails to answer his phone when I call and he never fails to take care of a task or chore, even if it comes up at the last minute.

Laura Gropp has our children. Who else has the patience, heart, and courage for that. Her service to us is beyond measure. Have you ever stopped to think and notice how kind her heart is?

Then there is Katherine Pabst. If I only had as much love for the Lord and as much faith as she has in her little finger. How many generations of us has she served? If we held a Bible knowledge bee, Pastor Michael would be wise not to even enter if Katherine was a contestant.

Jack and Rhonda Meister serve with élan. Rhonda's enthusiasm is contagious. Gary Ganger said this often and he was on the money, Jack's voice is magnificent. I would love to have him read the Christmas story from Luke (has to be the King James version.) to us.

Take time to think about all our board members, past and present. We would not have our church or building but for them.

Next Sunday and every Sunday hereafter, look around. Find a brother or a sister. Search your memory, your heart. If you do, I'll guarantee you will find many examples of how that brother or sister has proved their faith through service. It may be just a piece of hard candy that meant nothing to anyone but you, or it may be a testimony during praise and petition time that touched everyone.

It all counts. In His Love,

Ed S.



One Small Kindness

First, a disclaimer: *I believe that church is not the place to discuss politics, so even though*

this editorial mentions political figures, it is not meant to represent any political viewpoint.

In March of 2009, two American journalists, Laura Ling and Euna Lee, were detained and indicted by North Korea for illegally entering the country. Lisa and Euna were working on a film project about North Korean refugees along the border in China. Following a local guide, the two women crossed the river into Korean territory, realized they needed to go back, but were immediately stopped by North Korean guards. They were eventually sentenced to 12 years in a hard labor camp for illegal entry into North Korea and unspecified hostile acts. Lisa and Euna were later released to former President Bill Clinton, who had traveled to North Korea on their behalf.

While being held, the North Koreans, very uncharacteristically, allowed Laura to make several telephone calls to her sister Lisa, also a journalist. The North Koreans would make it known to Laura to whom they would consider speaking with on her behalf. She would then tell her sister during the carefully worded phone calls. In the end, the North Koreans would agree to speak with only one person, former president Bill Clinton.

The U.S. has no diplomatic relations with North Korea and could not, therefore, speak with the North Korean government directly on behalf of Laura and Euna. Bill Clinton, traveling as a private citizen, spoke with the leader of North Korea, Kim Jong Il, and the women were released to him and flown home.

You're probably wondering where I'm going with this, and we're getting there.

On the plane home, the women asked President Clinton if he knew why Kim Jong Il would only speak with him. The reason was apparently very simple—he wanted to meet Bill Clinton. He told the former president that when his father died in 1994, Bill Clinton was the first leader to call and offer his condolences, even before North Korea's allies.

I don't know about you, but my reaction to this was a strong "aha" moment. While some may have considered President Clinton's call to Kim Jong Il unnecessary or ill advised, and many other leaders would not have ever considered making such a call, I see it differently.

Jesus taught, "But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. If someone slaps you on one cheek,

offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don't try to get them back. Do to others as you would like them to do to you. If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return. Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate." (Luke 6:27-36)

North Korea and the U.S. are enemies. They do not speak; they do not have any kind of diplomatic relationship. Yet because one man phoned "his" enemy and treated him with human compassion on the death of his father, this other man remembered; and two women were saved from years at hard labor.

Following Jesus does not mean that your life will be easy, which should be evident when we read scripture. He asks us to do difficult things, like love your enemies. When Jesus speaks of love in this passage, he is not describing emotional or romantic love. The Greek word for love used in the scripture passage was "agape," a word rarely used in Greek writing. Agape would not be used to denote love of a spouse, family member, or friend. It can loosely be defined as a love which seeks only the highest good of others. Our emotions change constantly—sometimes by the minute. Emotions do not produce agape love. Agape love is a choice we make, it doesn't just happen. One writer defines it as: "Agape is a positive, constant mental attitude of willfully choosing to love another unconditionally with no strings attached and sacrificially. A great amount of feelings and emotions will come from it but are not used to produce it. Emotions can shift and change, come and go, but agape never comes to an end." Agape is a principle by which we live.

Perhaps you are thinking, but I don't have any "enemies." Think not about who you may "hate," but who may hate you. All of us have had individuals who did not understand us, had "something against us," or just didn't like us for whatever reason. There are many today, in our own country, who do not believe, believe in other

"gods," or who, at the very least, make fun of and denigrate Christians—if not outright hate them. We do have enemies.

Jesus calls us to make a choice, to act in a loving way, even though we don't "feel" love. We can demonstrate agape love by doing good things for those who dislike us, blessing those who curse us, and praying for those who treat us badly. I'm sure that President Clinton had no idea when he made that condolence call that it would one day result in saving two women from a long prison sentence, possibly saving their lives. We may not, and probably won't, see that kind of tangible result in this life as we seek to follow Jesus. But one day, our "reward from heaven will be very great."

--Patricia Worster, Editor

Congratulations!

To Ethan Weber who graduated from Southeast High School on Sunday, June 6. A concert (by Ethan) and open house was held at the church on Saturday, June 5. Ethan has received a \$40,000 Faculty Scholarship from Texas Christian University where he will be attending this fall.



To Tim Amen who graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a degree in Education, majoring in Special Education. He will be teaching at Northstar High School this fall.

To Ethan and Will Weber who were on the honor roll for Lincoln Southeast High School last semester.

Change in Leadership

It was with sadness that Ebenezer said good-bye to Pastor Michael Krause on Sunday, May 27. He has accepted the position of Pastor of Student Ministries at Faith Bible Church here in Lincoln. Pastor Michael has been a great gift to our congregation; and we will continue to keep him in our prayers and in our hearts.

The good news is that another Krause, Pastor Franklin, has agreed to serve as our Interim Minister. Pastor Franklin and his wife Sara have been with us a number of times in past years and we are very happy to have them with us.

New Church Web Site

A new church web site is under construction thanks to the efforts of Mike Worster. In addition to worship times, the web site will include our mission and outreach, history, leadership, a calendar of church events, and the ability to submit prayer requests online.



Indoor Garden Party

The Dorcas Society will be holding its summer get together for the women of Ebenezer, their relatives and friends, and the women's ministries from our sister churches on Saturday, July 17.

This year's theme is an Indoor Garden Party. We'll be enjoying an afternoon in the garden without the heat and humidity. We'll begin with a luncheon at noon. The guest speaker will be Gladys Jeurink, master gardener. Be sure to wear your favorite "garden" hat.

95th Anniversary

Ebenezer Evangelical Congregational Church was organized on August 23, 1915. That means that Ebenezer will be celebrating its 95th year on the corner of 8th and B Streets in August. Wouldn't this be a great time to invite past members and friends to join us in praise and thanksgiving for God's goodness and grace.

Noah's Ark

Everything I need to know, I learned from Noah's Ark .

ONE: Don't miss the boat.

TWO: Remember that we are all in the same boat!

THREE: Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark.

FOUR: Stay fit. When you're 60 years old, someone may ask you to do

something really big.

FIVE: Don't listen to critics; just get on with the job that needs to be done.

SIX: Build your future on high ground.

SEVEN: For safety's sake, travel in pairs.

EIGHT: Speed isn't always an advantage.. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.

NINE: When you're stressed, float awhile.

TEN: Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.

ELEVEN: No matter the storm, when you are with God, there's always a rainbow waiting.

Anniversaries

- 7/23..... Gary & Kathryn Ganger
- 7/24.....Jim & Kim Graff
- 7/29..... John & Nan Reinhardt
- 8/3Lewis & Barbara Demiktroff
- 8/10..... J.R. and Kathy Graff
- 8/18..... Tom & Nadean Amen
- 8/24 Wally & Marj Schwabauer
- 8/30 Robert & Joyce Riddle
- 8/30Leonard & Carolyn Robertus
- 8/31.....Tom & Chris Urban
- 9/14..... John & Mary Brehm

Birthdays

- 7/1 Marie Reinhardt
- 7/1 Tom Urban
- 7/2..... Jaydon Debus
- 7/6..... Michael Krause
- 7/8..... Donald Weber
- 7/10..... Courtney Worster
- 7/12 Kinley Dreyer
- 7/13 Phil Becker
- 7/17 Frank Smith
- 8/1..... Mary Brehm
- 8/4 Kim Hansen
- 8/5..... Richard Allen

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Birthdays (cont'd)

8/5 Tammy Lutzi
 8/8 Brian Pabst
 8/14 Tori Weber
 8/15 Jan Nutsch
 8/16 Frieda Walter
 8/16 Luke Dreyer
 8/22 Samone Pabst
 8/24 Jonathan Hinkle
 8/31 Lesley Krause
 9/3 Barbara Bailey
 9/3 Eva Forbes
 9/6 Laura Gropp
 9/7 John Brehm
 9/8 Matt Rose
 9/18 Joan Worster
 9/22 Larry Carr
 9/23 Dick Miller

Directory Update

Please update your Church Directory with the following additions and changes:

Pastor Franklin and Sara Krause
 8812 Sicily Lane, Lincoln, NE 68526-9732
 402-420-7104 (home); 402-570-5556 (cell)

Reuben and Norma Keller
 200 Levi Lane, #417, Adams, NE 68301
 402-937-2424

National Ice Cream Month

July is National Ice Cream Month, with Sunday, July 18 designated as National Ice Cream Day. The most popular flavor in the U.S. remains vanilla. Whether you enjoy it plain, with chocolate sauce, or sprinkles, in a cone, a dish, or right out of the carton, be sure to enjoy your favorite flavor this month.

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Interview with God

I dreamed I had an interview with God. "Come in," God said. "So, you would like to interview Me?" "If you have the time," I said. God smiled and said "My time is eternity. It is enough to do everything. What questions do you have in mind to ask me?"

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I asked, "What surprises you most about mankind?"

God thought for a few moments and then answered "That they get bored of being children, are in a rush to grow up, and then long to be children again.

That they lose their health to make money and then lose their money to restore their health.

That by thinking anxiously about the future, they forget the present, such that they live neither for the present nor the future.

That they live as if they will never die, and they die as if they had never lived"

God placed my hands in His and we were silent for while. Then I asked,

"As a parent, what are some of life's lessons you want your children to learn?"

God replied with a smile "To learn that they cannot make anyone love them. What they can do is to let themselves be loved.

To learn that what is most valuable is not what they have in their lives, but whom they have in their lives.

To learn that it is not good to compare themselves to others. All will be judged individually on their own merits, not as a group on a comparison basis.

To learn that a rich person is not the one who has the most, but is one who needs the least.

To learn that it only takes a few seconds to open profound wounds in persons we love, and that it takes many years to heal them.

To learn to forgive by practicing forgiveness. To learn that there are persons that love them dearly, but simply do not know how to express or show their feelings.

To learn that money can buy everything but happiness.

To learn that two people can look at the same thing and see it totally differently.

To learn that a true friend is someone who knows everything about them... and likes them anyway.

To learn that it is not always enough that they be forgiven by others, but that they have to forgive themselves."

I sat there for awhile enjoying my visit with God. I thanked Him for His time and for all that He has done for my family and me. He replied, "Anytime. I'm here 24 hours a day. All you have to do is ask for me, and I'll answer."

Are You a Bucket-Filler or a Dipper?

You have heard of the cup that overflowed. This is a story of a bucket that is like the cup, only larger, it is an invisible bucket. Everyone has one. It determines how we feel about ourselves, about others, and how we get along with people. Have you ever experienced a series of very favorable things which made you want to be good to people for a week? At that time, your bucket was full.

A bucket can be filled by a lot of things that happen. When a person speaks to you, recognizing you as a human being, your bucket is filled a little. Even more if he calls you by name, especially if it is the name you like to be called. If he compliments you on your dress or on a job well done, the level in your bucket goes up still higher. There must be a million ways to raise the level in another's bucket. Writing a friendly letter, remembering something that is special to him, knowing the names of his children, expressing sympathy for his loss, giving him a hand when his work is heavy, taking time for conversation, or, perhaps more important, listening to him.

When one's bucket is full of this emotional support, one can express warmth and friendliness to people. But, remember, this is a theory about a bucket and a dipper. Other people have dippers and they can get their dippers in your bucket. This, too, can be done in a million ways.

Lets say I am at a dinner and inadvertently upset a glass of thick, sticky chocolate milk that spills over the table cloth, on a lady's skirt, down onto the carpet. I am embarrassed. "Bright Eyes" across the table says, "You upset that glass of chocolate milk." I made a mistake, I know I did, and then he told me about it! He got his dipper in my bucket! Think of the times a person makes a mistake, feels terrible about it, only to have someone tell him about the known mistake ("Red pencil" mentality!)

Buckets are filled and buckets are emptied; emptied many times because people don't really think about what are doing. When a person's bucket is emptied, he is very different than when it is full. You say to a person whose bucket is empty, "That is a pretty tie you have," and he may reply in a very irritated, defensive manner.

Although there is a limit to such an analogy, there are people who seem to have holes in their buckets. When a person has a hole in his bucket, he irritates lots of people by trying to get his dipper in their buckets. This is when he really needs somebody to pour it in his bucket because he keeps losing.

The story of our lives is the interplay of the bucket and the dipper. Everyone has both. The unyielding secret of the bucket and the dipper is that when you fill another's bucket it does not take anything out of your own bucket. The level in our own bucket gets higher when we fill another's, and, on the other hand, when we dip into another's bucket we do not fill our own ... we lose a little.

For a variety of reasons, people hesitate filling the bucket of another and consequently do not experience the fun, joy, happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction connected with making another person happy. Some reasons for this hesitancy are that people think it sounds "fakey," or the other person will be suspicious of the motive, or it is "brown-nosing."

Therefore, let us put aside our dipper and resolve to touch someone's life in order to fill their bucket.