



The GoodNewsletter

First Baptist Church, Littleton

“Journeying to God’s Sacred Beat”

February 2011

You are invited to a Benefit for the Lowell Transitional Center here – at First Baptist!

Ronnie Earl & the Broadcasters



**Benefit Concert for the
Lowell Transitional Living Center**

Friday, February 11, 2011 at 7:30pm

First Baptist Church of Littleton
461 King St
Littleton, MA 01460
978-486-4660
www.fbclittleton.org

Sponsored by Starbucks of Westford
Cost: \$20 donation at the door and a pair of warm socks if possible.

The Lowell Transitional Center is the closest homeless shelter to Littleton. Just twelve miles separate Littleton and the Lowell shelter but the living conditions are a world apart. However the people are the same in both places. Women, men, families – all of us live, breathe, cry, love, hurt, fear and worry. This is one of the places that we can “do justice, love mercy and walking humbly with God.” Please invite your neighbors and friends and come early for some Starbucks coffee. This year Linda Murphy and friends from Starbucks will be serving the coffee from 7:00pm to 9:00pm - so that Ronnie can play straight through!

Also....

Say Yes to Grace
*How to Burn Bright
Without Burning Out*

Kirk Byron Jones



7 Grace Solutions for 7 Great Stressors
Lighten Your Heavy Load; Grace Yourself

How to Burn Bright Without Burning Out
A book study and way through Lent
– learn to *live loved*.

Info inside



I'd like to begin the New Year by thanking everyone involved with the celebration of my ten years (10+) of ministry here at FBC Littleton. I am very, very grateful for words of love and gratitude both spoken and written, the music and the beautiful stole that was made by Debi Baranauskas, the children and youth of First Baptist. The stole stole my heart and it is carefully crafted with the same love as the stole that my mother gave me on the day of my ordination September 10, 1995. The green stole that my mother had made contains the names of significant people in my life and faith journey, and now this stole has the handprints of our own children and youth imprinted around it. There is nothing better! Thank you again to all for making my time here such a blessing!

Comings and Goings

In the past few years, and within the last few months, a few families that we all love have decided, for one reason or another, that it was time to move on and have left the church to worship elsewhere. All of them are people whom we dearly loved and with whom we share history. For the past 10-20 years our life stories have intersected and together we have shared moments of great joy, creativity and laughter. We have also shared pain and loss with them. The sadness and pain that we feel when we realize they have chosen to worship elsewhere is very difficult. It has been for me and I know that some of you feel the same way. However God holds us in our loss and helps us move forward, just as God holds and directs our friends who are worshipping elsewhere. The comings and goings in the life of a church community over a period of time are going to happen. At the same time that God is nudging them, God is also nudging people (whom we do not yet know) who will walk through the doors of our church seeking God's love and presence.

The **GPS process, which stands for Growth, Possibility and Sustainability**, is a creative, daring, and visionary process that we are choosing to do *in faith and with hope*. We are not operating from a crisis - we are being proactive. At times taking a risk for growth and birthing something new causes turbulence. From that labor and turbulent process comes something new! That is what happened in the story of creation in the book of Genesis. From chaos God created.

God is good all the time - which means that God is guiding us along the right path – right now.

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside still waters,
he restores my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

Psalm 23: 1-3

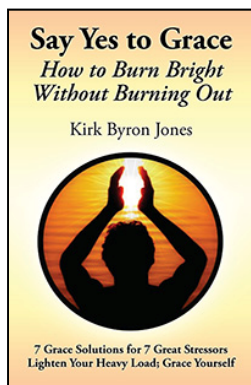
Thanks be to God!

Pastor Debbie



Say Yes to Grace, How to Burn Bright Without Burning Out, by Kirk Byron Jones.

Once again our friend Rev. Kirk Jones, who came to preach at our first Gospel Sunday, deals with the balance between stress and rest, just as he did with his book *Rest in the Storm*, which we also studied. From the book jacket:



Many are living on the frazzled edge: overstretched, overbooked, and about to snap. From overloaded students, to burdened-down moms, to over-worked business persons, we need help burning brightly in the world without burning out. **Say Yes to Grace** offers 7 Grace Solutions for 7 Great Stressors:

1. Fatigue----Learn to Rest.
2. Low Self-Esteem----Live from Acceptance not for Acceptance.
3. Disappointment----Loosen Strings to Needs and Expectations.
4. Hurry----Live at a Sacred Pace.
5. Worry----Claim Your Inner Calm.
6. Unhappiness----Balance Aspiration with Contentment.
7. Fear----Believe in God Beyond "God."

In a warm hearted, compassionate, and supportive book, bestselling author, Dr. Kirk Byron Jones, offers liberating ideas and life-changing practices that will help readers balance rigor with respite, performance with pause, and human grit with God's grace.

I will be offering a book and bible study during Lent with *Say Yes to Grace* as our guide. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on March 9. I would like to offer four sessions –at two different times.

Sunday mornings March 20, 27, April 3 & 10, 9AM
 Tuesday nights March 15, 22, 29, April 5, 7PM

Then on **Tuesday April 12 Rev. Jones will be joining us at 7:00PM** to discuss the book and share with one another. Kirk wanted to come to FBC Littleton! He is an inspiration and will guide us as we seek to balance

our life and our faith journey while taking care of ourselves! Please prayerfully consider making this a part of your Lenten journey this year.

Sign up for the book on the kiosk or email me at pastordeb@fbclittleton.org

Cost of the book is \$10 including shipping. I will have copies for those who cannot afford it – *please* speak to me. If you would like to donate an extra \$10 then we will give these away to visitors and friends who join us during Lent and for Easter. What a great opportunity for sharing who we are!

Upcoming Events



Sunday, February 20
 Rev. Michael Harvey, the Executive

Minister of the Conference of Baptist Ministers will be preaching in worship.

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Soup Sale Sunday February 27 – sponsored by Women's Ministries. We are looking for donations of homemade soup for Sunday 2/17 that we will sell in quart containers along with some delicious Grotonwood rolls - to support the Women's Ministries of the church. Could you donate some soup? Please sign up on the kiosk or email Pastor Deb and we will provide you with quart containers to fill up with your delicious homemade soup. We will be looking for soup providers as well as soup consumers! Thank you for your support!

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Sunday, February 27 – Third meeting in the GPS process from 4-7PM with Alice Mann and pot luck supper.

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On **Saturday March 26th** there will be a regional Youth Rally at First Baptist led by For Higher & friends, as well as Pastor Deb, Cherie & Heidi our fearless and amazing youth leaders. Save the date!

Upcoming Ham and Bean Suppers

Feb 5 th	Finance
March 5th	Diaconate
April 2nd	Music PG&R

Boy to the World!

By Caroline Poser

Alone in the Pew

“Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body...”
~1 Corinthians 12:13-14

“Can we sit up in the balcony, Mom?” my oldest asked the Sunday we had returned to church after football season. I had been waiting in our usual church pew for the kids to come up from Sunday School.

I must have looked a little hesitant, because he continued, “We’re old enough...”

“I know you are...” And what was it our pastor had *just* been saying about friendship and fellowship? My kids simply wanted to sit with their friends.



“C’mon, mom!”

“Okay, honey. But if there’s any trouble up there, you’ll both be back down here next time.”

When we first started attending this church, my sons were five, four, and three months. We sat in the balcony for maybe the first month. On our debut at the church, my older two were dressed up like Incredible Hulk and SpiderMan (even though it was more than two months before Halloween season) with noisy little cowboy boots that made the stairs creak as they clomped up and down them. “I’m thirsty,” “I have to go to the bathroom,” “Can I get crayons?” The day that my middle son was sick to his stomach and hurled all over the (fortunately uncarpeted) balcony was the day that I decided we could not sit up there anymore. It was too noisy and too distracting, for them and all the others who frequently turned around to look up at us.

“Oh, kids, Mommy didn’t realize, but you have to be eight years old to sit up in the balcony...we’re gonna need to find different seats downstairs.” I asked the pastor to back me up on this.

I figured the best place would be right up front – that way if anyone was looking at us, I surely wouldn’t know

about it – and we’ve usually sat in or close to the same place ever since.

Almost three years ago when my oldest turned eight, he announced, “I’m old enough now, so I’m going to sit in the balcony.”

“Okay, honey,” I’d said.

He did it once, and realized it wasn’t so fun to sit up there alone. There was no way I’d let my middle son up there with him, since he was only six at the time because that would be “not fair.” I didn’t think he was mature enough then, either. So, for two-plus more years, we all sat together, except when my youngest went off to sit with his “big friends.”

“Why does he always sit with them,” my middle son had asked one time.

“Because they’re nice to him.” It’s the phenomenon where older kids are able to be nice to other kids’ younger siblings, but not their own (if they even have any).

That post-season Sunday, there was not any trouble up there. My younger two came forward for the children’s sermon, and after that my youngest returned to his big friends and my middle son sat with me until it was time for communion, at which time he moved in front of me to sit with the kids who had come back from bell choir practice (and did his very best to remain reverent, despite all the squirming, poking, and bread ball rolling in the pew, one of the deaconesses kindly assured me). My oldest remained in the balcony for the entire service.

It felt weird not to have to wrestle with, hush, or insist someone get up off the floor and out from under that pew *right now*. (“No, I don’t care if the ministry dog is on the floor. You are not dogs.”) I thought about whether I should maintain that we all sit together as a family, but quickly shrugged off the idea, not only enjoying being alone, where I could worship without the distractions I had become accustomed to, but also realizing that the whole congregation is, indeed, our church family.

I want my kids to have friends at church, and I want them to enjoy being at church. So, as long as there’s not any trouble up there, I’ll let them sit wherever they want.

Grateful Thanks from the Littleton Council of Churches

Each year through the generous support of our member churches and the local community the Council of Churches is able to carry out two major outreach activities during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday seasons. This year was no exception as together we were able to support around 40 needy families with food and gifts at each holiday. We so appreciate the giving of so many individuals and groups who assist in making this outreach possible.

Thank you for your generous hearts!

Calling all bakers!

We need yummy baked goods for the Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters Benefit Concert on Fri. 2/11. Please tell Donna Horvath if you are able to bake something. Baked goods will be set out in fellowship hall around 7pm on 2/11. Thanks! Donna



Pennies from Heaven

By David Reed

“You were sold for nothing and without money you will be redeemed” Isaiah 52:3

I found a Penny...

This all started weeks ago. It was a clear cool day. I was walking toward the sanctuary when I saw a penny on the ground. I kept going. These days a penny alone isn't worth a lot. This one was dropped, forgotten and just as I was about to do, left behind as worthless. People don't spend a lot of time looking for a lost penny but a hundred of them make a dollar and on every one it says, “in God we trust”. That day I stopped. I didn't know why but was quickened to turn around, retrace my steps, and pick up that penny. I slid it into my pocket and continued on my way thinking, “I wonder what that's about”.

that told a Story...

I was heading to a funeral. The air in the sanctuary was filled with somber tones, hushed voices and furtive glances. This wasn't a joyous celebration of the long life and dedicated service of a believer. This was one of those sad and difficult stories that ends up in God's hands. She was 18. She had ended her own life. At least that's what the police report said. She had lived with abuse and at some point she believed the lies of a pimp. She believed him when he told her that he loved her and then sold her over and over again.

about a washing...

The funeral service was beautiful. Really. In a warm and tender way the pastor invited hope into the room. He shared that earlier in her life she had walked with Jesus. She had asked the Lord of all to forgive her sin and she had known the joy of her king. I don't know what her last moments were like but I am convinced that God's mercy and grace are infinitely more powerful than the devastation caused by abuse or the lies of a pimp. She had been washed by the blood of the Lamb of God. She was not forgotten or left behind or ever considered worthless by the King of Kings. Not ever.

and a calling.

Weeks later, I stepped through the door of my classroom to begin another semester. I was beginning to teach the doctrine of salvation. Our starting point was grace. I was about to begin the teachings that tell us that in Heaven there are no forgotten pennies. Not ever. I looked at the faces of my students, thought of that penny again and the quickening of my heart returned. God was going to use these people to pick up pennies in our world...lost people. People who believe they've been forgotten and left behind as worthless. I was glad to be there. Thank you for making it possible to equip people in Mexico to pick up pennies for heaven. May God use you to do the same wherever you live.

