



# The GoodNewsletter

## First Baptist Church, Littleton

“Journeying to God’s Sacred Beat”

November 2009



# November Events



### Saturday, November 14

#### Women’s Day Retreat

9:00am – 2:00pm

At Grotonwood with Elizabeth Deveau



<http://www.elizabethdeveau.ca/>

### Sunday, November 15

Elizabeth Deveau in

10:00am Worship

First Baptist Church of Littleton

Elizabeth will be singing and sharing with us for the majority of worship. Please join us and bring a friend for this inspirational morning!

### Saturday, November 21

#### Fall Holiday Fair

9:00am - 3:00pm

Supper with Santa  
at 5:30pm



**Vendors:** Silpada Jewelry, Princess House, Beautiful, Discovery Toys, Tastefully simple, Dove chocolate, Pampered Chef and Usborne Books.

**Artisans:** Quilter, Candles, Hand sewn items, Hand-made Jewelry, Soaps and Essential Oils, Children’s Author of Cow books, Holiday Crafts, EIEIO Baby, Mineral Crafts, Hair Accessories, Paper Crafting, Homemade Albanian items., Photography, and a Wood Turner.

**Demonstrations:** Lace Making and Yarn Spinning

**Yard Sale**

**Food:** Pie Table, Bread, Popcorn, Soup Lunch

Parking is available around Littleton Common



## Knowing about God and Knowing God

The first sermon that I preached as a seminary student at Andover Newton Theological School took place one Sunday morning at First Baptist Melrose. I remember the morning so clearly; I had worked out the sermon for what seemed like months and I was very nervous. I had been at the church for awhile, knew and loved both the senior pastor and the people who gathered every Sunday morning for worship. The sermon was on the “the fear of God,” a topic I was working with in another seminary class on Job. I had been taught a lot and it turns out that I took the preaching opportunity to teach the congregation all that I learned in my Master’s degree class. And I mean *all*. I could tell while I was in the pulpit, that I was not connecting with folks on any spiritual level. Instead it became an analytical teaching time that was too long and pretty dry. (Translated dry = boring!) It held little meaning for their lives.

It has taken many years of being a *pastor* to learn that most people come to worship to *know God* rather than to *learn about God*. There is a place to learn *about God*, but it is usually outside of worship. Sunday school classes, Bible studies, discussions and small groups are vital to the life of a church and in one’s faith journey. There needs to be classes, workshops and small groups outside of worship to learn more about God, the Scriptures, the work and life of Jesus Christ.

M. Craig Barnes, a pastor and professor said that “*in every soul the insatiable thirst for holiness perseveres. The living water that can quench this thirst is not more right information about Jesus. Only Jesus himself will do. And Jesus is not a what; he’s a who.*”

Knowing God and knowing Jesus is about a relationship. When I preach I do so as pastor and I am in a pastoral relationship with *you*. I listen to God and listen to what is going on in *your* lives and in the world we live in. And even though I do go through systematic exegetical work for each scripture passage, I

no longer feel that I have to tell you all of it on Sunday morning. I use fewer words and leave room for the sacred space between the words. My pastoral prayer is that all of *worship* is an encounter with the still small voice of God who loves us and is whispering our name.

Grace and peace,  
Pastor Debbie

## Greetings from the Finance Board!

This year the Finance Board is made up of Mark Reilly, chair, Tom Alsup, Constance Smithwood, Gretchen Webster, Dick Huebner, and a representative from the Trustees. We are starting to get excited about some creative, helpful and resourceful ways to work with and expand our church finances. One important piece of our role is education. Your pledges are vital for our church's daily, monthly and yearly ministries. We plan on using every dollar that's pledged or promised for the church, and then some. Sometimes, actual giving doesn't keep up with the amount that's been pledged. We hope, in fact we pray, that by the end of the fiscal year in May, the actual giving will match or even surpass the pledged income. Before then, we want to provide a "snapshot" of our giving to date compared with what's been pledged. Look for the Camera updates in every newsletter. And in the meantime, know our deep thanks for all the ways you give of your time, your talents and your money to support our church family.

Blessings, The Finance Board



Through the 3rd Sunday in October:

**Actual Pledges: \$35,530**

**Budget: \$40,710**

# If Walls Could Talk

By Mark Reilly



Early, almost every Saturday morning I can be found cleaning the church. Sometimes I arrive as early as 7am to vacuum, dust and scrub the many nooks and crannies of this beautiful old building. At that early hour the sanctuary is especially quiet, and it is in those peaceful moments that I wish the walls could talk.

Littleton's First Baptist Church was built in late 1840. William Henry Harrison had just defeated Martin Van Buren to become only the 9<sup>th</sup> President of these young United States. The Irish potato famine was still five years away and there were nearly three million slaves searching for freedom across the country. It seems like ancient history, but it is a history our church building knows first-hand.

In its 169-year existence, our church building has been a refuge for the many believers that needed a quiet place to pray. As I work, I wonder how many came to ask God's divine intervention to the Civil War in the 1860's. I wonder how many concerned parents have since filled the pews to pray for the safe return of their sons and daughters from numerous other wars around the world. This church building offered a place of hope to those who suffered in the great depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s. How many unemployed at that time made their way to this very building to lift up their hearts to God? And further, how many desperate prayers of healing for loved ones have been quietly and tearfully whispered within the four walls of our sanctuary? If only the walls could talk.

Of course there have been countless times of joyous celebration in our church as well. I can imagine that thousands found renewed life in Jesus through the nearly 8,500 carefully worded sermons delivered since

the building was erected. Perhaps someday while cleaning I will find a written record of the weddings, baptisms and baby dedications that have brought tears of joy to the congregation. How many times over these many long years have members stood to proudly proclaim their prayers to be answered by a loving, generous God? How many times have young men and women raised up their hands to show they have been saved, and to grab hold of that eternal life that only Jesus offers? If only the walls could talk.

Our church building is a very special place. Unlike the modern mega churches popping up around the country, our church building is full of history. Surely those new churches have softer cushions and better lighting, but they lack the long, proud trail of selfless sacrifice that our church boasts. This church building holds the history of our town. This church building holds the history of our families. This church building holds the ever-lengthening story of 'our' walk with God.

No doubt the building is getting old. The energized children have a way of testing its delicate structure every Sunday. Frequently I break out the toolbox to tighten a loosened screw or to hammer a nail that lifts its curious head. I treat the work as a form of penance. Certainly, I don't envy the Trustees who work to erase the signs of age from this fine old lady that watches over the Littleton Common. The paint is fading, the wood a little dulled and the carpets a bit worn. But know that we will not be the last generation to pass through this building. With some hard work and determination we can be assured that our children, and our children's children, will rejoice in the loving warmth of this fine place. Many years from now the members of First Baptist Church Littleton will speak of the recession of 2009 and how this church building was a place where many families gathered to share their concerns. They will speak of how we were faithful during the difficult wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They will speak of how we overcame the budget shortfalls and found a way to tell the story of Jesus to so many who needed to hear it. They will look back upon us as one of the many generations that left a faith-filled legacy in good standing to the next. And after we are gone the walls will have one more story to tell. If only the walls could talk.



## Micah 6:8 Opportunities

### From the Mission Board....

We are thankful for all the “Givers” in this church community and for our missionaries, here in the Littleton area, and all across the world.

Our mission outreach this month focuses on our local ministries of justice and caring: the Loaves and Fishes food pantry and the Lowell Transitional Living Center, which provides food, shelter and services for the needy in our area.

During the “March Forward” Offering on the Sunday before Thanksgiving, Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>, holiday food will be donated by church members. The following “shopping list” is meant as a helpful guide, with specific suggestions for items that would be appreciated by the Loaves and Fishes clients:

*Canned veggies of all sorts, canned fruit (fruit cocktail, peaches, etc.), cranberry jelly or sauce, applesauce, sugar, flour, boxed pie crust mix, spices, pie fillings, apples, blueberries, pumpkin, squash, canned evaporated or condensed milk, stuffing mix, nuts, canned olives, fresh, potatoes, onions, carrots, squash, frozen turkey, ham.*

The March Forward will take place during the Offering time on Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>, during which all donated items will be carried up to the sanctuary. After the worship service, Larry Fisher will be taking everything over to the Loaves & Fishes food pantry. He will gratefully accept help carrying the donated items to his pickup truck after church! Loaves and Fishes will be distributing Thanksgiving dinner items for folks who need help stretching their food budgets right up until Thanksgiving Day. Many thanks in advance for your generous support of this very worthwhile and much needed outreach.

Another mission outreach going on during Nov. is the Grace Bag initiative. Last year we assembled 150 +

Grace Bags for the Lowell Transitional Center, and they were really a blessing to the recipients. This year the Grace Bags will each contain:

- Pack of gum
- Breakfast bar or cheese crackers
- Small package of tissues
- Chapstick
- Small grace note with words of encouragement, faith, hope, & love.

Look for the large basket in Fellowship Hall to drop off any items you would like to donate. We will have an “assembly line” after services on the Sunday Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, to put all the Grace Bags together.

## Thanksgiving Interfaith Service

**Sunday, November 22, 7:00pm**

The Unitarian Church of Littleton



All are invited to this service of Thanksgiving sponsored by the Littleton Council of Churches. The theme this year is **Trusting in Our Abundance**, based on Philippians 4:4-9. The combined choirs of all the churches will sing two songs, Allison Vesey will speak on our behalf and Pastor Debbie will participate.

## Littleton Council of Churches Food Drive

**Tuesday, December 1 5-8pm**

**Wednesday, December 2 5-8pm**

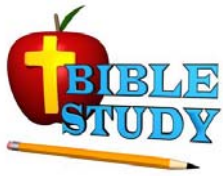
At Donelans in Littleton

Help is needed as First Baptist takes a turn collecting canned goods and food items for the Christmas dinner baskets. Youth are able to receive service/volunteer hours by participating. Please sign up on the Kiosk.

## "Our Life, Our Theology"

### Temptations, Burdens, Death and Suffering - Are they one in the same?

**"God Does Not Give You More Than You Can Handle"**. We've all heard this phrase, probably offered by someone trying to be comforting at a time in our lives when we were faced with deep sadness or great difficulties. I lost count how many times I've heard this phrase in the past year, but I can count on



one hand how many people I talked with about this phrase, asking them what it means to them. Where does this come from? Have you said it to anyone? What does it mean to

you? And do you think it might mean something different to others?

Join me in Adult Bible Study Group on Sunday morning, Dec 6th at 9:00 for the first discussion group in a series called "Our Life, Our Theology" where we'll explore the connection between topics from our everyday lives and our personal theology.

See you there!  
Chris Raine

## The Warming Hearts Movement



Debi Baranaukas has shared that her granddaughter Samantha will be taking part in a Charity Dance Show to benefit the Lowell Transitional Center, St. John's Church & Saint Vincent de Paul.

Saturday, December 19, 6:00pm at St. John's the Evangelist, 115 Middlesex Street, Chelmsford

\$7.00 per ticket

## Boy to the World

By Caroline Poser

### What Would Grandma Say?

*...it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.  
~ Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi*

"I sure do miss Grandma!"  
"I do, too, honey."

"Mommommmom!  
Remember Grandma?"

"Yes, of course I do!"

"I wah-ah-ahnt my Gra-ah-ah-ma!"

"So do I, love, so do I..."



These are all things my youngest has said at least on a weekly basis during the past year: the first two being matter of fact and cheerful and usually followed up by a fun or funny story, the last reminiscent of Grandma's memorial service, the Saturday after Thanksgiving last year.

He was three at the time and had cried himself to sleep while sitting on the lap of one of his preschool teachers' who had come to the service. Today he cries for his Grandma when he is indignant over something his brothers have done, looking for a second opinion about a consequence I've doled out, or just plain tired.

Grandma had become a more or less constant presence in our lives for the almost-year prior to her passing, when she had moved back from California to be near her "grandboybies."

And now a year after her death, she was still that steady presence. Just about every night my middle son asked for "meditations" – bed-time recordings my mom had made, which I had transferred from cassette tape to CD, not only so each boy would have his own copy, but also so we'd have a back-up source.

We all still talked about her as if she had gone on a long weekend trip somewhere and left us behind, in a collective huff that we didn't get to go.

Even now, there were times that I'd spontaneously snap a picture with my cell phone camera of the kids doing something that only Grandma would appreciate – like my youngest eating Froot Loops® with his toes – and then delete it because I had no one to send it to, my heart feeling empty as I confirmed “yes, delete photo” and watched the clock icon ticking as the picture evaporated into nothingness.

Hardly a day passed that one of us didn't muse, “What would Grandma say?” or “Grandma would be so proud of you!”

“Well, she is, Mom!” my oldest reminded me. “Don't you think she can see us from heaven?”

“Well, yes, of course, honey, I suppose she can...”  
We celebrated Grandma's birthday in late October with orange-frosted cupcakes. A couple of my best friends brought or sent me flowers and several others sent me notes to commemorate Grandma. Some of us wore her jewelry or flowers in our hair.

“Why did Grandma have to die!?” my middle son demanded.

“I don't know, angel, but if we keep her in our thoughts and prayers, she is alive in us and alive in heaven, right?”

I often wondered *where is heaven, exactly?* Is it possible that it is right here among us? We can't see or hear everything in the electromagnetic spectrum; in fact the portion that we can see and hear with our human eyes and ears is just a small percentage including certain colors of light and radio waves. We can feel some things that we can't see (like infra-red light). Perhaps Grandma really is here with us sometimes. Would that explain the sensation that she's standing beside me or the dreams I have about her, or my youngest telling me that he talked to Grandma on the phone last week? Or how sometimes my friends will pass messages from her (“Your mom doesn't like that pumpkin”) or say things to me that only she has ever said (“Well, my dear...”) in precisely the same tone of voice.

“I can't wait to go to heaven!” my youngest told me.

“Oh, I can wait – I'd miss you too much!” I wondered if Grandma missed us the way we missed her, or if “missing” was just a one way street.

“Well, not if you're already there!” he pointed out.

“Oh, but I'm not ready to go there, little dude. I can wait!”

“I'm not afraid to die,” my oldest chimed in.”

Is that just what all people under 30 say or is he truly unafraid of the unknown? Because I am not looking forward to dying any time soon, personally. I've had to fight off tendencies toward hypochondria during the past year. I cling fast to the reminder one of my friends told me, “When it's your time, it's your time,” imagining that it can't possibly be yet since I don't feel like I am done here, though deep down, I know that's not really up to me.

At a basketball scrimmage recently, another mom relayed the story about her seatmate on an airplane who told her she'd had a brain aneurism, died, gone to heaven, and came back as doctors resuscitated her body. In heaven she had seen her father, and he told her he loved her, that it was not yet her time, and that he would see her when she died again. The mom said that this woman now lived peacefully, unafraid, and with a spirit of gratitude.

Grandma, too, lived her life peacefully, unafraid, and with a spirit of gratitude. I hope and pray that when it is my time, I feel the same way. After all, isn't dying a form of rebirth? Isn't “tomorrow” just a big unknown, anyway? Would the eternal aspect of heaven make it seem that our time on earth was just a “long weekend”?

Will all our questions be answered when we die?  
What would Grandma say?

Still, I can wait.

### **Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi**

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;*

where there is doubt, faith;  
 where there is despair, hope;  
 where there is darkness, light;  
 and where there is sadness, joy.  
 O Divine Master,  
 grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to  
 console;  
 to be understood, as to understand;  
 to be loved, as to love;  
 for it is in giving that we receive,  
 it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
 and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.  
 Amen.

### Between the Winters



*Iris and Violets, they bloom in the spring.  
 Splendid color and aroma they bring.  
 Orchid and light blue, showing flowers anew.  
 Twix color and aroma the songbirds do sing.*

*So cold and wet is the frog in the brook.  
 Tword color and song she cannot look.  
 Just camouflage green, so she is not seen.  
 For hiding and croaking is all that she took.*

*Now flyaway songbird for your time is done.  
 And wilt away flowers in the warm summer sun.  
 She will duck away, but return the next day.  
 It's only morning her life's just begun.*

*There's nothing around her and nothing came.  
 The water is colder but she's just the same.  
 Content she will be, she'll just wait and see.  
 When springtime comes can she still play the game.*

*The fun time is over, the season is late.  
 She thinks of the warm times and of her mate.  
 She'll see him in spring, the songbirds he'll bring.  
 He's out there somewhere; she'll just have to wait.*

P.F.

## Christmas Flowers Order Form 2009



It is time to order your Christmas Poinsettias. The cost this year is \$12/plant. Please give orders and payment to one of the Deaconess ~ Anne Lee Ellis, Carol Huebner, Lynda Fisher, Dawn Gravlin, or Marge Payne. Orders may be mailed to: Carol Huebner, 17 Sherwood Drive, Westford, MA 01886

Checks should be made payable to "Deaconess Fund"

**The order deadline is December 13th.**

**Quantity** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please include the words of recognition you would like to use in the bulletin

In memory of (or use your own words)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Leave \_\_\_\_\_ Pick Up \_\_\_\_\_

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**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



