



# The GoodNewsletter

## First Baptist Church, Littleton

*"Journeying to God's Sacred Beat"*

*September 2009*

### *Rally Day.....*

### *Sunday, September 13*

*Join us for Do, Love and Walk with God*



*9:00 am 60's Fun & Service*

*10:00am Worship*

#### **Micah 5: 4-5**

He will stand and shepherd his flock  
in the strength of the LORD,  
in the majesty of the name of the LORD  
his God.

And they will live securely, for then his  
greatness will reach to the ends of the  
earth. And he will be their peace.

#### **Micah 6:8**

God has shown you what is good,  
and what does the LORD require of  
you? To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.



# FROM THE PASTOR



“...and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8

This fall our church will begin a year of living, worshipping and serving through the Biblical lens of Micah 6:8. Micah was a country prophet from the village of Moresheth outside Jerusalem, that called the weary people be more faithful by doing justice, loving kindly and walking humbly *with* God. Walter Brueggemann says that these three elements “embody all that we need to know in order to be faithful and to be human. They are not three “virtues”. They are not three “things to do.” Rather, they speak of *three dimensions* of a life of faithfulness, each of which depends on and is reinforced by the other two.”

Do justice  
Love kindness  
Walk humbly with God

How do we practice them?

## *Justice*

How do we serve the lost, hungry, needy people of our world? Both of the Biblical testaments call us to serve and help the weak, the poor, the widows, the sick and the marginalized of society and bring restoration to broken places? How do we do that individually and as a community?

## *Love kindly*

How do we love kindly? The Hebrew word used is *hesed* which means steadfast kindness, loyalty and mercy. How do we live out the fullest concept of *hesed* in all of our relationships?

## *Walk humbly with God*

How do we walk *with* God? This is the personal and spiritual dimensions of our faith walk. In what ways do we humbly listen to God, pray, worship, forgive, learn and tend to our personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

These are not three easy things to do – but are three dimensions of our life together with God and with one another. How do we follow Micah’s call? This fall we will begin that process of discernment, prayer and action.

Blessings,  
Pastor Debbie

Eddie and I are filled with gratitude for your love, kindness and help during the months since he was diagnosed with cancer. You are lights in our life – and your gestures, help, words, cards, meals and love continue to bring light to this time in our life – which I call or sense is such a shadow time. It hasn’t gotten too dark – because of you and the light of the Lord. Thank you for your continued prayers, patience and *hesed* love as we continue to wait for tests, results and for Eddie’s strength to return.

Love,  
Debbie and Ed



## Upcoming Events at FBC

### Sunday, September 6

**Pool Party & Picnic** Celebration & Welcome to the Reeds.

At the home of Pastor Deb & Ed

12:30-4:00pm

Picnic – bring your own food, beverages and a dish to share

### Sunday, September 20

9:00am Sunday School for all ages including

Chat& Chew (bring your breakfast)

10:00am Worship

**November 14-15 Women’s** ministry event with special music led Elizabeth Deveau, Canadian Christian singer/songwriter. Elizabeth will also lead us in worship on Sunday, November 15.

### November 21 – All Church Fair

See the poster on the Kiosk and please sign up to take part. Thank you!



## SUNDAY SCHOOL

REMINDER: PLEASE REGISTER YOUR CHILD FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 13

GO TO

<http://www.fbclittleton.org/ministry/christianeducation.html>

AND CLICK ON THE REGISTRATION FORM.

THANK YOU



**Welcome Back, Choir!** Choir rehearsals will resume on Thursday, September 10th at 7:00 pm. We always welcome new members so if you are interested, please speak with one of us or just stop by the church any Thursday evening and add your voice to this

dedicated (and FUN) group of people! We look forward to another great year of music ministry with you. *Steve and Cindy Hudson*

## See A New Sun Foundation Walk For Suicide Prevention

**Did you know that in the United States, a person dies by suicide every sixteen minutes?** Suicide is the third leading cause of death among fifteen to twenty-four year olds and the second leading cause of death among college students. In this country, approximately twenty million people suffer from serious depression and one million people attempt suicide each year. However, most Americans remain unaware that suicide is a major national health problem that takes an enormous toll on family, friends and the entire community.



**On September 12<sup>th</sup>, Devon and Gretchen Webster will be participating in a walkathon to raise money for the See a New Sun Foundation,** a Littleton-based 501c organization that promotes suicide

education and prevention in schools throughout

Massachusetts and beyond. SANS provides funding for quality evidenced-based programs for Middle and High Schools through Screening for Mental Health's SOS® Program and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's new DVD "More Than Sad". Would you support our walk? Or better yet, would you like to walk with us on our journey to prevent suicide? The walkathon begins at 9 am and will be 2.5 miles starting at Fay Park in Littleton and returning to Fay Park. For more information about the walk and SANS, go to [www.4sans.org](http://www.4sans.org). Our pledge forms will be posted on the church kiosk. Thanks in advance for helping us celebrate life one step at a time.

Devon and Gretchen Webster

You may think that it's too soon to be thinking about the holidays, but they will be here before you



know it. This year on Saturday, November 21 we will be holding an ALL church holiday fair. We are hoping that everyone in the church will be involved in some way or another. Please put on your thinking caps and come up with

some creative idea for that day. We will be renting out tables and spaces for crafters, so if you know of anyone who might be interested please have them email me at [charlieandannelee@gmail.com](mailto:charlieandannelee@gmail.com). The music board is going to be having a silent auction table and we will gladly accept any items that you may have for our table. This is a great opportunity for us to open up our church to the public and also make quite a bit of money at the same time. If you have any ideas, please speak to me.

Thank you, Anne Lee

# Boy to the World

By Caroline Poser

## How I Spent My Summer Vacation

*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.*

*~ Ecclesiastes 3:1 (KJV)*

For me, there was no question about how I spent my summer vacation, it was clear each week when I wrote the checks to camp and daycare. However, if my elementary-school-aged sons were asked to write this traditional back-to-school essay, what would they say, I wondered.

We didn't have a real vacation this summer, meaning the kind where you pack things and leave your home for an extended period of time. Though I'd taken one week straight off from work and had grandiose plans for a road trip to Niagara Falls with a friend and her kids, those dwindled to going to Maine for part of the week, to simply taking day trips.

We called this our "Daycation."

One of our day trips was going to be to a large amusement park in another part of the state. We had set aside either of two days for this. Though, as the days drew near, the weather forecast was like a cold black cloud coming down. Additionally, given that it was a two hour drive (the drive time being what caused the reduction in road trip length initially: spending time in a car with three boys thrashing, poking, jockeying for position, and asking me what time is it, when are we gonna get there, how many more minutes, what does the GPS say, is highly undesirable), we chose to go to a more local amusement park on a different day altogether.

Unfortunately, it seemed that everyone else had the same plan. We had to park at a remote lot and be shuttled to the park, which meant my strategy for taking a break midday and eating the carefully prepared food I had packed went out the window. I wound up buying fried food, soda, cotton candy, ice cream and all manner of naughty and costly things.

My kids were hot and grumpy and this was one of the occasions during the week when I said out loud, "Maybe we all would've enjoyed our week more if you stayed in camp and daycare and I took a week off by myself," though I had surely thought it numerous times.

As the day wore on, the crowds thinned. My youngest and I were sitting on the Sky Ride, which is a gondola-type ride that travels high above the length of the park. I pointed out that it was a good thing we hadn't come any earlier (as they had lamented) or we wouldn't have been able to last all day to see the magic show and the fireworks.

"Mom, what's gravity?" he asked, ignoring my insight.

As much as I would have liked to engage in a grave discussion of amusement park physics, I told him, "Uhhmm. That's a good question for your dad, honey. He's a physicist."

We sat in companionable silence, and I reflected on some of the life lessons that were illustrated that day. Aside from physics, and practicing patience by waiting in long lines, "black diamond" attractions at amusement parks such as roller coasters show us that life includes ups and downs, twists and turns, and sometimes an upside down part. The water park



reminded us that occasionally things get dumped on you unexpectedly. Riding the Ferris Wheel was a good example of how when you're on top of the world, you can see the big picture, but when you're down in

the weeds, you can only see what's in front of you. My youngest's inaugural experience on the bumper cars taught him that when you hold on too tight and try to steer things your way, you end up spinning in circles, but when you let go, you move forward with ease.

Technically, the fact that summer was a break in the usual routine – and as Dictionary.net defines a vacation: "being free from a duty or service – we

had been on vacation for the whole eight weeks. (At least the kids were, as they were free from the duties of school and scouts, but my duty and service simply shifted from helping them with merit badges and homework to shuttling them to camp and summer sports. Maybe next year I *will* take that solo week off.)

As the season of summer wound down, we had a few more days off before the start of school. We spent these last days in a frenzy of activity – mostly baseball related, with a mix of laser tag and backyard fun with friends thrown in – before we had to settle back into our school-year routine. The kids’ teachers’ letters had already arrived in the mail with the foreshadowing, “I’m looking forward to hearing about your summer adventures.”

## A Dog With a Calling

Reprinted from the Boston Globe



LITTLETON - Mosby is a Baptist, but his ministry is inclusive.

Anyone - atheist or believer - will get a hand licked by the 3-year-old golden retriever, deemed too friendly for work as an assistance dog for the disabled but perfectly suited for a career in spiritual outreach.

Mosby is a ministry dog, one of a growing breed of assistance dogs assigned to clergy and church workers to offer a special kind of comfort.

A few times each week, Mosby dons his vest and nose-lead, chows down a Pup-Peroni dog snack, and hops in the backseat for a short ride to Emerson Hospital in Concord, assisted living centers in Ayer and Westford, or the Life Care Center of Nashoba Valley in Littleton.

Mosby’s busiest day is Sunday, however, when he can be found lying in a pew alongside his owners, Lynda and Larry Fisher, at the First Baptist Church of Littleton, where they are longtime members.

His presence is especially welcome during what has been a hard year for the First Baptist community. Several members are coping with serious illness, deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan, and job layoffs, said First Baptist’s pastor, the Rev. Deborah Blanchard.

“A dog ministry breaks down barriers right away,” said Blanchard. “It helps put aside the barriers and connect on a real level to offer comfort and love.”

The idea of a formal training program for ministry dogs sprang up just over a decade ago, when a divinity student and dog lover made a case to NEADS, Dogs for Deaf and Disabled Americans, a nonprofit organization based in Princeton that is one of the nation’s largest assistance-dog training programs.

“She explained how she’d be going to hospices and working with the elderly and sick children, all populations who can’t have a dog but could really benefit,” said Sheila O’Brien, the agency’s chief executive officer. “She said, ‘You know, Sheila, dog spelled backwards is God.’ ”

In 1998, NEADS graduated its first ministry dog, a schnauzer named Lynks. Since then, it has trained more than 15 dogs serving a variety of churches.

Last year, 74-year-old Lynda Fisher approached NEADS with hopes of being matched with a ministry dog.

She and her husband, Larry, 78, had lost their longtime canine companion, a 15-year-old Brittany spaniel named Jessie.

You could say she had a dog-sized hole in her soul.

“I told them, ‘I’m a deaconess at my church. Part of my duties is to visit the sick and infirm, and it would go so much better with a dog,’ ” Fisher recalled.

Although the dogs are generally designated for ministers, Fisher's 40-year affiliation with First Baptist and enthusiastic devotion to her faith, and to dogs, won her an exception to the rule. NEADS trainers introduced her to a few puppies, but sparks really flew with Mosby, named as a puppy for John Mosby, a Confederate officer who worked to help heal the nation's wounds after the Civil War.

"I like to think it was God saying, 'Lynda, this is the dog for you,' " she said.

She and Mosby trained together at NEADS headquarters and on April 13, 2008, Mosby received his orders and a blessing at a dedication ceremony at the 187-year-old American Baptist church on Littleton Common.

During weekly outreach visits to Life Care, Mosby visits often with 92-year-old Phyllis Wallace, whose diabetes keeps her bedbound and away from Sunday services at First Baptist.

Mosby is not the only church worker making the rounds at Life Care: local chaplains, priests, and rabbis regularly visit and hold services, including Wednesday Vespers and Sunday Mass, said executive director Ellen Levinson.

But Mosby may generate the most enthusiasm. During a visit to the facility's unit for Alzheimer's disease patients, residents halted a bingo game to reach out to touch the dog. Several elders who had been sitting in silence started talking animatedly.

"Isn't he beautiful?" murmured one woman in a wheelchair.

"I love it when the dogs come down. It makes everyone smile. It brings back happy feelings," said Charlotte McCullough, a nurse who oversees the unit. "It makes people think of their childhoods."

On Sunday mornings, Mosby helps Larry Fisher, a church greeter, pass out programs, comes up to the altar for the children's portion of the service, and licks hands at coffee hour.

"It's more fun when he's here," said 12-year-old Alyssa Mackensie after a service last Sunday.

Mosby ministers at home too. The Fishers, Medford natives who have been married for 51 years, are longtime community volunteers. But Mosby keeps them active in their senior years, mingling with the crowds at Littleton's Halloween and July Fourth celebrations. Mosby makes friends wherever he goes while pulling them along by the leash, the Fishers said.

"Life without him would be so much duller," said Lynda Fisher. "I know we'd be a lot less active."

Not everyone in the congregation or community-at-large likes dogs, so Fisher says she is vigilant about keeping Mosby away, unless people clearly want him nearby.

Dogs are not welcome in all houses of worship, and federal law does not guarantee access to churches, mosques, and temples, even for service dogs, though O'Brien said she has not encountered criticism of the ministry dog work by NEADS.

Some animal advocates are concerned that Mosby and his working colleagues get too few opportunities to socialize with other dogs. NEADS asks owners to plan play dates and make regular visits to off leash dog parks, "so the dog has a chance to be a dog," she said.

There is also a growing demand for therapy dogs of all types. NEADS began providing dogs for military veterans with physical injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder in 2006, and more dogs are requested by injured vets every year. She also predicts there will soon be a boom in demand for dogs trained to assist autistic children, and to detect blood-sugar imbalances in diabetics.

The pool of trained therapy dogs is limited, with NEADS graduating just 50 or so annually from all its programs.

But one advantage for the ministry dog program is its acceptance of a wider variety of breeds, even tiny shih tzus, while traditional assistance dogs tend to be retrievers or German shepherds, large enough to guide a client through traffic and crowds, said O'Brien.

Most of Mosby's clients have been to First Baptist members, but the Fishers say he is available for visits to any area resident, of any religious affiliation.

Mosby does not proselytize, and neither do the Fishers, who carry no religious materials on their visits.

Dogs, unlike stressed family members and shy children, are also never in a rush to end a visit to a hospital or nursing home.

"He lifts their spirits for five minutes, but at least that's five minutes," said Lynda Fisher. "That's a good thing."

*Matters of Faith is a series of occasional articles examining religious life in area communities. Erica Noonan can be reached at [enoonan@globe.com](mailto:enoonan@globe.com).* ■

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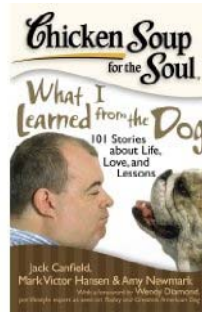
Heartfelt thanks to you all for your support throughout my cancer treatment these past 10 months - the notes, prayers, cards, calls, visits and rides to my appointments - all of it was such a help. It really was so wonderful to feel all the care, concern and support from my church family. As you may have read on my Carepage, I received a clean bill of health - I am now cancer free! I need to have some continued treatments every 3 weeks through next February but that is just standard practice to help keep the cancer from returning. Now that I have completed the bulk of my treatment, including my daily radiation treatments, Bill, Hannah and I will be going away for some fun and family time before school starts. So, we'll see you all in mid-September.

Chris Raine

## FBC Folks in the news....

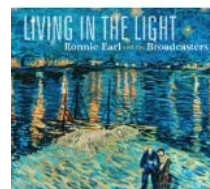
**Congratulations to Caroline Poser for her story "The Perfect Reflection of God" being published in the new a *Chicken Soup Book*.**

### **Chicken Soup for the Soul: What I Learned from the Dog: 101 Stories about Life, Love and Lessons**



Release date September 22, 2009 and now available for preorder on Amazon.com

And another glowing review of Ronnie's CD...



### **Graham Clarke, Blues Bytes**

*Living in the Light* is easily Earl's most personal album, based on the song selection and the passion and sincerity he brings to each guitar solo. The

seven instrumental tracks are diverse and spectacular, featuring Earl's highly distinctive and original playing as well as his interplay with Limina's B3 and piano. What has amazed me about Earl's albums is the fact that the most recent ones have featured nearly eighty minutes of guitar work and there's never a dull moment. You're on the edge of your seat waiting for his next solo. *Living in the Light* will please not only fans of blues and jazz guitar, but music fans in general. This is real soul music of the finest kind.



You may now find ALL church events and building usage on our interactive Google Calendar which can be found on the church website

[www.fbclittleton.org](http://www.fbclittleton.org)

**First Baptist Church of Littleton**

P.O. Box 156

Littleton, MA 01460-0156

Phone: 978-486-4660

Email: [Hoffice@fbclittleton.org](mailto:Hoffice@fbclittleton.org)

Website: [www.fbclittleton.org](http://www.fbclittleton.org)

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