



**Calvin Presbyterian Church**  
*where faith, compassion, and authenticity meet*

# Calvin's News & Notes

## The Standish Inkwell

April 2010

*(note: If this article sounds familiar it should. I preached about this topic on Easter. I actually wrote this article first, and then thought, "Hey, this would make a good Easter sermon. Sorry about the repetition but as they say, "repetition = remembering")*

Have you thought much about what the ramifications of resurrection are? I'm not asking if you've thought much about what the ramifications of what Jesus' resurrection are (Christians talk about that all the time), but what the whole theme of resurrection means.

Recently I had an insight about Christian faith, an insight into how Christianity fundamentally differs from all other religions. It all boils down to *resurrection*, or more specifically, the second life possibilities that come with Christian faith. Think about many of the key words of Christianity—*resurrection, reconciliation, redemption, and rebirth*. They all have to do with possibility, with the hope that no matter how bad life is, it can get better. Resurrection and all the other "re" words of Christian faith remind us that no matter what we've done, no matter what's been done to us, no matter what is going on around us, life can be transformed from something difficult into something great. I don't know the extent to which this aspect of faith is emphasized in other religions, but I know that none emphasizes this idea of possibility in the way that Christianity does. At its core, Christianity is a faith of second, third, fourth, fifth, and infinite chances. Join me in looking at these core beliefs of Christian faith: (Continued on page 2)

**Have you thought much about what the ramifications of resurrection are?**

### Did You Know?

"Christian Apocrypha: Jesus as a Kid" by Brendon Wahlberg

**P**reviously, this column has taken a look at a few ancient Christian writings which did not make it into the New Testament, such as the "Acts of Peter", the "Shepherd of Hermas", and "The Acts of Paul". This time, we will examine a once-popular gospel that claims to tell all about Jesus as a kid. It is called the "Infancy Gospel of Thomas" (not to be confused with the very different "Gospel of Thomas", a controversial collection of Jesus' sayings) and although it was once widely read and copied into many languages, few people read it today. The portrait of Jesus it contains is simply too hard for modern readers to take seriously. Could you believe a story that presents Jesus as a bratty child who kills neighbor children who annoy him?

If you are familiar with the Gospel of Luke, you know that it depicts the birth of Jesus and a bit of his infancy, and then it skips to Jesus' twelfth year with this sentence: "*The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.*" (Luke 2:40) Around the year 150, an unknown author decided that the brief account in Luke was not enough. Jesus was too important for people not to know more about him. That gap of twelve years had to be filled. (Continued on page 6)

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### THE STANDISH INKWELL (CONTINUED...)

**Resurrection is the power of new life coming out of death. As we enter the Easter season, remember that this is a season of celebration.**

- *Rebirth*: Christianity really emphasizes the possibility that we don't have to live a life trapped by instincts and urges. As C. S. Lewis has said (and as I'm often fond of saying) humans are amphibians. We can live in both the earthly realm and the spiritual realm at the same time. And just as a frog has a second birth when it transforms from tadpole to frog, we have a second birth when we become truly open to the spiritual in life. Evangelicals call this second birth being "born-again," but the experience of second birth doesn't always happen the way they describe it. For a tadpole, the rebirth is a slow, gradual, progressive process. I think the same is often true for us. We have that spiritual rebirth when we make the decision to become truly open to God's Spirit throughout our lives, and then our lives slowly, but consistently, become better.
- *Redemption*: This is the process by which our lives, which had been falling into turmoil due to our choices and faults, make a turn for the better. And the turn for the better resuscitates our lives and opens us to new possibilities. If you look at a tremendous number of biblical stories, they are about redemption—Joseph's redemptions, Moses' redemption, the Israelites' redemption (after living as slaves in Egypt), David's redemption (after his sin with Bathsheba), Israel's redemption (after the exile), Peter's redemption (after his denials of Jesus), and Paul's redemption (after persecuting Christians). Basically, the Christian message is that no matter how bad our lives are, they can be redeemed if we are willing to be open to God's way. Redemption may take time, but it comes eventually.
- *Reconciliation*: This is the process of healing relationships that have been broken. Christianity is always about restoring broken relationships, whether that means restoring the torn relationship between God and the world, God and us as individuals, and among each other. The promise of Christianity is that if we really let God into our relationships, then they can become reconciled no matter how bad they may be. God can find a way to heal broken relationships, but only if we are willing to renew the ways we are with others.
- *Resurrection* is the power of new life coming out of death. Christianity doesn't only stand for the belief that Jesus was resurrected. Christianity stands for the belief that anything in life can be resurrected with faith—opportunities, careers, relationships, and more. The point of resurrection isn't just that God can create life out of death, but that the new life that is resurrected is a transformed life that rebirths, redeems, and reconciles everything.

So, what does all this mean for us? It means that when we live a Christian life—a true Christian faith based on opening our lives to God in everything—our lives become different. Our lives become better.

As we enter the Easter season, remember that this is a season of celebration. After the long days of Lent, in which the focus has been on sacrificing something to prepare for Easter, we now get to celebrate all of those "re" words. We celebrate the *reforming* of our lives. We celebrate the *restoring* of our lives. We celebrate the *revitalizing* of our lives. And we celebrate the *renewing* of our lives.

I hope you have a *refreshing* Easter season.

Blessings to you, *The Rev. Dr. N. Graham Standish*

## Adult Education for Spring: Serving God—Body and Soul

April 11, and 25, May 2, 9, and 16. 10:00 to 10:45 a.m. each Sunday morning in Fellowship Hall.

A new series of adult education classes will focus on the soul/body connection of faith. The class will examine questions of how to live the spiritual life in a physical body and how to take care of the body God gave us. Several guest speakers have been invited to discuss some alternative ways to care for our physical side. Some of our guest speakers will be offering testing and evaluations to help you think about your health. Connie Frierson will start off with two classes to examine how the bible has treated the soul, the body and healing. Then guest speakers will discuss chiropractic care, nutrition, heart health and the importance of exercise. On May 16<sup>th</sup> Calvin will sponsor a Health Fair, when practitioners and businesses that promote healthy living will offer information and samples of services and products. Please come and join in our search for serving God body and soul.

*Contributed by Connie Frierson*

### Calvin Singles Ministry News

**Calvin Singles Bowling** - Calvin Singles will be bowling at the Mars Bowling Lanes on **April 10, 2010** at 6:30. Please call Carrie Allen to RSVP at 724-452-1967.

**Wednesday Walk with Calvin Singles** – Beginning **April 14<sup>th</sup>**, Calvin Singles will be offering a weekly walk for exercise and friendship at Cranberry Park off North Boundary Rd. At 5:30 Calvin Singles will meet at pool parking lot. Carrie Allen, Dave Piesik, Jill Bell, Nancy Reader will greet you and introduce you to other walkers.

*Contributed by Connie Frierson*

### Parenting Tips: Why do your teens argue with you so much?

If you are the parent of teens, you live in the midst of constant arguing, right? It's frustrating, exasperating, and irritating. Wouldn't it be better if your home was an argument-free environment? Not if you want to be a good parent it wouldn't. Wait! What?

Whether you know it or not, the fact that your teen argues with you is actually a sign that your teen respects you. Teens who don't respect their parents learn to avoid conflict by lying to diminish conflict. New research on teens shows that the ones who argue with their parents the most are often the ones who most respect their parents' judgment, rules, and guidelines. So if they respect you so much, why do they argue with you? Because they are trying to use reason to creatively adapt your guidelines to their situation. They do so because they know that you will listen, that you will try to be fair, and that you are doing your best to care about them.

Typically, arguing teens live in households where there are clear limits with loving parents who are willing to listen to their kids. When kids argue, they are trying to do two things:

- First, they are working on becoming adults who are responsible with their lives. They are trying to reason out what the rules of life are. They argue to discover to what extent rules are hard and fast, and to what extent they are situational. So, when a teen asks to stay out late with their friends, and argues with you about your "home-by-eleven-o'clock-rule," they are trying to find out the extent to which some events allow for the stretching of rules. When parents say, "Okay, this time *only* because it's a special event," they learn that their parents listen, and that there are certain times when rules can be adapted.
- Second, they are trying to be adults in working problems out through talking, rather than through sulking or walking away.

The real sign of problems in families arises when the teens don't try to reason with their parents. In those situations, they probably have learned that it's better to avoid conflict by lying to their parents and seeing if they can get away with it. They learn that by stretching the truth, not telling the truth, or withholding information they can get what they want. The tragedy comes later in life when they haven't learned how to live a more disciplined life. The kids who grow up with strong limits and boundaries, and with parents who are willing to reason things out with their kids, end up being kids who do well in later life.

So, if you have a teen at home who is arguing with you, know this: You are probably doing a good job.

*Contributed by Dr. Standish*

## Food Cupboard News

Food Dedication is **April 4 and April 11** ...or any day that you remember to bring it to the church!



We are now providing food for over 100 families....I'm sure that is not a surprise, considering the state of the economy. As a result, our shelves are bare. We need everything: egg noodles, Jello and puddings, boxes of spaghetti, Helper Meals, rice, instant potatoes, ready to eat pasta meals and cereal, canned fruit, vegetables, soup, Sloppy Joe sauce, chili and stews and jars of jelly, peanut butter and spaghetti sauce. We continue to need brown grocery bags (we are now using about 210 each month ) and monetary donations to pay for the cost of the \$5 and \$10 Shop & Save vouchers. You can make checks payable to Calvin Church and put "Food Cupboard" on the memo line.

Please help if you can. We are so blessed to be in a position that allows us to serve our neighbors in need rather than be in the line at Zion Church on the 3rd. Tues. of each month for Food Cupboard distribution.

Thank you and Happy Easter!

*Contributed by Arby Shenesky*

## Presbyterian Women's News

Women of the church are invited to the Spring Gathering of Presbyterian Women of the Beaver-Butler Presbytery here at Calvin on **Saturday, April 24**. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m., with the program beginning at 10:00. Registration cost is \$9.00, including lunch (prepared by Calvin members). Featured speakers are Christine Fuller, who was a member of a team that went to Eastern Europe, and Patty Summerville, who will speak about her trip to Pakistan and Africa. Call Judy Kercovich or Kathy Efaw to make your reservation (and to offer to make a salad for the luncheon!)

**Mothers' Day Cards:** Special cards that help women in other countries are available from Judy Kercovich, Kathy Efaw, and Agnes Peebles for a suggested donation of \$10. The income from the cards goes to provide nets to protect from mosquitoes that carry malaria, health education and treatment for women, and primary care for children.

**Open Circle** upcoming dates - **April 27** Host is Marleese Hames, **May 25** Host is Mary Schlott, **June 22** host is Linda Anderson.

Two Presbyterian Women's Projects through the Synod of the Trinity benefit from you purchasing soup from the women of Calvin. They are **Susquehanna Safe Harbor** - funds used for building furnishings and equipment and initial start-up funds of a permanent shelter. The shelter provides permanent housing, supervision, and training for 25 mentally challenged men with the hope they become self-sufficient. Also area of building is set aside for overnight winter shelter for additional homeless persons.

Second project is **Navajo Reservation**. 10 sewing machines, 3 pellet stoves, 3 electric water heaters, 2 refrigerators will be purchased. Pastor Norma McCabe is a Navajo and pastor of the Kayenta Presbyterian Church in Arizona. Sewing machines will facilitate classes in sewing, while other items improve living conditions for the women and children of the community. \$100.00 will be given to each project.

*Contributed by Kathy Efaw*



## Morning Circle

Our final lesson, Chapter 9 of Luke will be on Thursday, April 8th, same place, same time. Peg Leddon has our new study books. If you ordered it please put \$6.60 in an envelope with your name and give to Peg. Pat Strutt will wrap up our final lesson for us of Luke. Jane Smith has the 2010 new Mission Book and Mary Anderson tells us another story on the Least Coin, We had 16 at our last gathering so let's keep the attendance up. Don't forget if you want to eat lunch after our study be prepared to go someplace. I've already been given several suggestions as where to go for lunch.

*Contributed by Flo Towers*

## Mission Matters

### What's Happening in April

Our focus for April giving is the Pittsburgh Project "Toys for Kids." Some of the schools in which the Project works are in need of outdoor playthings, such as balls (small and large) and jump ropes. With the weather offering more opportunity for children to be out on playgrounds, such items are important. Containers will be in the usual place for your contributions. (Look, too, for the new mission bulletin board.)

### News from Janet Guyer in South Africa—who will preach at Calvin Church on April 24th

We are looking forward to a visit from Janet late in April, when she will be back in our area.

The following is a message from her that appears in the current Mission Yearbook of Prayer.

"In southern Africa we are living where AIDS has struck the hardest. It is a part of everyone's life. We have all lost loved ones to the HIV virus. So, one might ask, where are those rivers of living water in the midst of this pandemic?

We are holding a series of workshops on HIV and AIDS in a presbytery of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Africa. On the first day we asked participants why they chose to attend and to make a commitment of six weekends. Sylvia said she wanted to make a difference in her community and in her church."

Sylvia's daughter became infected with HIV and Sylvia nursed her intensively until her death.

Janet concludes Sylvia's story in this way. "Today the pain of her loss is still there, but so is something else. Born of her faith and her commitment to serve God's people, Sylvia is providing home-based care for ten people with AIDS. She's using the skills she learned caring for her daughter, the love and compassion that bring hope when it seems hopeless, and a touch of peace in the midst of suffering and grief...living waters from the heart of God."

*Contributed by Agnes Peebles*

## Youth Formation & Education

With Spring right around the corner, the Youth Formation & Education Committee is planning ahead. We are looking for both adult and teen volunteers to help with the following:

\* Vacation Bible School Task Force - In July, we will be hosting a vacation bible school for the congregation and community. We need helpers to organize and coordinate this event.

\* Summer Children's Program - For 12 weeks through the summer, we offer a modified children's program during the early worship service (for ages 3 - 6 years). We need helpers to lead these classes which will run from June - August. All lessons and materials will be provided.

These are 2 great opportunities to get involved with the younger youth. If you can assist, in any way, with these important ministries, please contact Karen Albert at 724-772-3898 or [jalbert@zoominternet.net](mailto:jalbert@zoominternet.net)

**Calling all graduates:** If you are a high school or college graduate this year, please let us know your future plans and goals. We would love to share this and to acknowledge your accomplishments with the congregation. Please email your information to Karen Albert at [jalbert@zoominternet.net](mailto:jalbert@zoominternet.net) by **April 15th**.

*Contributed by Karen Albert*

## Calvin Youth Groups

**Calvin Youth Group (CYG), grades 9-12** Sunday evenings, 7:30-9:00 p.m.

**Calvin Youth Group 2 (CYG2), grades 7-8** Sunday evenings, 6:00-7:30 p.m.

**Calvin Youth Group 3 (CYG3), grades 5-6** Sunday evenings, 6:00-7:15 p.m.

**Ready for God (RFG), grades 3-4** Sunday evenings, 6:00-7:15 p.m.

**All Youth Groups**—always check the Sunday bulletins for any changes

For further information contact Bruce Smith, Youth Director, at the church at 724-452-7560 (ext 14) or [brucesmith@zoominternet.net](mailto:brucesmith@zoominternet.net)

### “Christian Apocrypha: Jesus as a Kid” (continued)

Early Christians were hungry for stories about the childhood of Jesus, stories which would show that he was capable of miracles even at a young age. Indeed, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas begins this way:

*“I, Thomas the Israelite, make this report to all of you, my brothers among the Gentiles, that you may know the magnificent childhood activities of our Lord Jesus Christ – all that he did after being born in our country.”*

Thomas' first story shows Jesus at five years old on a Sabbath day, playing by a stream, making pools, and purifying the waters in them with a word, perhaps foreshadowing the ritual of baptism. Jesus then takes soft clay and fashions twelve sparrows, but a neighbor complains to Jesus' father Joseph that the child is violating the Sabbath prohibition against work on that day. Of course, this foreshadows the many arguments which the adult Jesus will have with his fellow Jews over this subject. Joseph chastises his son, but Jesus claps his hands, cries out 'be gone' and the clay sparrows come to life and fly away, effectively ending the argument.

It is a reflection of how widespread this story once was, that the miracle of Jesus and the birds made it into chapter five of the Koran. *“Then will Allah say: ‘O Jesus the son of Mary!... Behold! I taught thee the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel and behold! Thou makest out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave, and thou breathest into it and it becometh a bird by My leave...”*

A child takes a stick and destroys Jesus' pools of water. Jesus tells the child that he will be barren and wither away, and immediately it happens. Another child runs by and bumps into Jesus' shoulder, Jesus tells him that he will go no further, and immediately, the child drops dead. The neighbors are amazed and horrified, and they warn Joseph that he cannot live in the village unless Jesus learns to bless and not to curse, for Jesus is killing the village children. Joseph privately tells Jesus to stop, but Jesus declares that his accusers will be punished, and immediately they go blind. Joseph tries physical punishment, yanking Jesus' ear, to no avail.

A teacher named Zachaeus promises Joseph to teach Jesus to love, honor, and respect his elders and children his own age, and to teach him to read the Greek alphabet. But Zachaeus is soon frustrated and humbled. Jesus already knows far more than his teacher, and the child lectures the teacher until he is confused and defeated. *“Since you do not know the true nature of the Alpha, how can you teach anyone the Beta?”* Jesus demands. The teacher gives up, saying, *“I beg of you, brother Joseph, take him away. I cannot bear his stern gaze or make sense of a single word. This child is not of this world... Maybe he was born before the world came into being.”* Of course, all this talk of the Alpha, and Jesus being born before the world, clearly reflects the beginning of the Gospel of John.

Jesus laughs and says, *“Let the barren bear fruit and let the blind in heart see. I have come from above to curse them and call them to the realm above, just as the one who sent me for your sake commanded.”* When the child stopped speaking, immediately all those who had fallen under his curse were healed. No one dared to anger him from that time on...” Jesus has made his point, and now he reverses the damage he did to the neighbors. Blindness, withering, and death vanish away. Of course, the story of the blind villagers reflects many of the gospel sayings, in which blind people represent those who will not see the gospel truth.

Over the following years, several more healing miracles follow. A child falls from a roof and dies, and Jesus calls him back to life. Jesus next heals a young man's foot, which had been struck with an axe. Jesus also heals his brother James from a snake bite by breathing on the bite. Jesus touches an infant which had sickened and died, restoring it to life. Some of the villagers begin to want to worship him, saying, *“Truly, this child is either God, or an angel of God, for his every word is an accomplished deed.”* After yet another raising of the dead, the crowd says, *“This child comes from Heaven, for he has saved many souls from death – his entire life he is able to save them.”*

At age eight, Jesus sows a single grain of wheat, and harvests one hundred bushels. Then he feeds the wheat to all the poor people. This miracle makes literal some of the agricultural parables of the adult Jesus concerning the great harvest of people in the Kingdom of God. The reader begins to recognize the seeds of the adult Jesus, so to speak.

But Joseph thinks that Jesus still does not know how to read. Joseph tries another teacher, and the result is again a disaster. But the third teacher is wise enough to recognize that Jesus speaks in the Holy Spirit, teaching the Law with great grace and wisdom. This episode leads directly to the ending of the Infancy Gospel, which repeats the same story we find in the Gospel of Luke; at age twelve, Jesus goes to Jerusalem with his parents, gets separated from them, and is finally found teaching the elders in the Temple (Luke 2:46).

The Infancy Gospel was very popular in the Middle Ages, and has influenced much Christian artwork. Translated

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and copied many times, it comes down to us in a variety of texts with many variations in the details of the story. But of course it is not canonical, and today it is mostly dismissed. Modern readers probably have trouble getting past the image of young Jesus cursing other children to death over minor quarrels. But to be fair, everyone who is cursed or killed in the story is eventually healed or raised back to life. As Jesus grows from age five to age eight, his behavior changes; he is shown to heal many people. He begins to bless and not to curse, just as Joseph and the villagers hoped. The villagers go from fear of him to worship. Is the point here that even the Savior grows and matures? After all, as it says in Luke 2:40, *the child grew*.

The purpose of such literature is to satisfy the desire to know more about the central figure of a great religion. There are other stories in antiquity like this, in which a famous person is described as a child, and of course in these stories, the famous figure does not act like a child normally would. The point of such stories is precisely that the person was not a normal child at all. How could he have been, when he turned out to be such an amazing adult?

Did the author mean for people to take the Infancy Gospel as a set of true stories? It is hard to say. Beyond an overall sense of humor and exaggeration, much of the content of the Infancy Gospel is, after all, not greatly different from the content of the four accepted Gospels. There are healings and teachings, miracles and enactments of parables. The author apparently tried to make his child Jesus reflect the adult Jesus of the New Testament, in order to teach us something about Jesus. Whether it was “true” was beside the point. Perhaps the best thing we can do with such a story is to let it remain apocryphal

### “Did You Know?”

All of the previous “Did You Know?” articles are now hosted on the Calvin website in the Discipleship section. Or go directly to:

<http://www.calvinchurchzelie.org/didyouknow.htm>

## Green Team Tidbits and Green Fair!

**Second Annual Green Fair** will be held between church services on Sunday, **April 18, 2010**. Tables of interest will include:

- Gardening and Composting
- Rain barrels
- Electronic Recycling and Household Conservation
- Natural Household Cleaning Products

AND MORE!

### Green Ideas:

The Paper Industry Association Council states that more than 99 million tons of paper and paperboard were used in the U.S. in 2005. We also know, from the Municipal Solid Waste in the United States, 2005 Facts and Figures, that paper and paperboard are the largest component of municipal solid waste - 34% of the U.S. waste stream. Americans use and throw away a lot of paper! Please consider attaching the following to your computer e-mails:



**Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail** (every little bit of savings helps!)

All you need to do is cut and paste the above and add as a “signature” to your e-mails, or save it as a file that you can then insert into your e-mail. It really is easy, and if you don’t know how, ask. I’m sure you will find someone who can help.

*Contributed by Tom Reiber*

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