



Calvin Presbyterian Church

where faith, compassion, and authenticity meet



Calvin's News & Notes

THE STANDISH INKWELL

January 2009

Are we, or about to be, in the worst economic times of our lifetimes? If you are under the age of 65, that may be the case. In my lifetime I've not heard such talk of gloom and doom ever. I've heard people complain about bad economies and recessions before, but not like this. Since I was ordained as a pastor 20 years ago, I've pastored through three recessions (including this one), and went to seminary at the end of another. Yet what I hear on television and radio, and read in papers, is that this one will be the "mother of all recessions" and possibly a depression.

How do we respond to times like these if we are

people of faith? I've recently read a lot of articles about churches being worried that people will stop giving. Should that be our worry? We're about to embark on a follow-up capital campaign to eliminate or reduce our debt, a debt that is close to \$1 million. Should we be doing a capital campaign in these economic times? I'm not sure we have much choice. To do nothing would be to create an even worse situation, since our debt is too large to take over through our general budget without significantly cutting staff members. So what should we do? Panic? Worry? Trust? Have faith?

Whether you know it or not, faith was made for times such as these. In

fact, it's times like these that not only "try men's souls," but it is times like these that form our souls. As we go into these bad times, you and I will face a fundamental question: Will our faith grow or diminish?

Really, what choice do you have in times like these? None of us has any real control over the situation. None of us has control over whether or not we will lose money, whether or not we will lose our jobs, whether or not we will become victims of an economic downturn in some way. We can't control the economy, the marketplace, or the future. So what can we control? We can control how we respond to times like these.

(Continued on page 2)

How do we respond to times like these if we are people of faith?

Did You Know?

"Hallelujah and Amen!" by Brendon Wahlberg

The Bible is so much a part of our culture that some biblical Hebrew words have entered into our English language. We say them all the time, sometimes without fully knowing what they mean. Hallelujah and Amen are two good examples. There is a rich history behind both of these

words, and if we are going to use them so often, we might as well know better what we are saying, right?

Hallelujah! We shout it in church, we use it in song, and we say it when great things happen. What does this ancient word mean? Hallelujah is really a transliteration of two

Hebrew words, which means that the sounds of the original words are simply written out in English, and are not actually translated. A good example of a transliteration is the word "Hanukkah/Chanuka/Hanaka, etc."

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THE STANDISH INKWELL

An interesting paradox in the Bible: Faith dies in a garden, but blooms in the desert.

The question is whether we'll respond with faith and love, or fear and selfishness.

I've discovered an interesting paradox in the Bible, a paradox that has a big impact on the formation of our faith in times like these. The paradox is this: *faith dies in a garden, but blooms in the desert*. There were only two people in the Bible who were asked to form their faith in a garden: Adam and Eve. They failed miserably. There was something about comfort, ease, and peacefulness that didn't allow their faith to grow, just as there is something about good times that doesn't allow our faith to grow. They were thrown out of the garden and into the desert, and that's where their faith grew. From then on the list of characters who went into the desert to form their faith reads like a who's who of the Bible: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David (his desert was slavery and imprisonment), Moses (who found God in the desert), the Israelites (who were led by Abraham into the desert), David, Elijah, Paul, and Jesus. Others formed faith during difficulties that, while not literally being in deserts, were desert experiences. These were people like Job, who lost everything. These were people like most of the prophets, who were beaten or harassed for speaking truth. These were people like the apostles, who spread the word and eventually were killed for it. They all learned the one essential lesson along the way: faith blooms in the desert and dies in the garden.

If the times we are about to enter truly are as bad as so many predict they will be, then they will be a test our faith. The truth is that in times like these people are tempted to lose faith, yet the deeper truth is that it is in difficult times like these that faith thrives. The question is how will you respond if things get bad?



1. *Will your trust in God grow or shrink?* In the coming years you'll be tempted to believe that everything is going to hell in a hand basket. Will you follow that temptation and shrivel in faith as you see only what God isn't doing, or will you grow in trust, believing that in the end everything will turn out okay? The truth is that God never promised anywhere in scripture that only good will happen. As I mentioned above, every faithful person of the Bible went through difficult times. The ones who thrived were the ones who saw themselves as having a calling: to have faith and to be a beacon of light to all around them no matter how bad things got.

2. *Will you look for what's good or for what's bad?* It's easy, even during good times, for some people to see only what is bad. When times truly turn bad, it can become an epidemic. How do we look at the world around us in these times? For the past few weeks I've been reading a book about a Russian Orthodox priest named Father Arseny, who died in 1973. I've been truly inspired by his life. He spent over twenty years in a Siberian gulag during the reign of Joseph Stalin. He was sent there because he had the temerity to write an article saying that faith was important. Stalinist Russia was atheistic, so voices like Arseny's were shut out. Sentenced to fifteen years in the gulag, Arseny lived in brutal conditions. The gulags weren't created just to punish people. They were designed to slowly kill political prisoners out of sight so that they would never rejoin society. Arseny was in the worst situation possible, yet as bad as it was, he always saw God's grace working. He was regularly beaten by the guards and the hardened criminals who were sown in with the political prisoners. In the winter they froze, with temperatures dipping to -30° outside and below freezing inside, and in the summer the plagues of mosquitoes spread disease at epidemic rates. Despite these conditions, he tried to see God's hand in everything. He cared for the sick. He cared for soldiers. He cared for people who derided him, including the judge who sentenced him to the gulag and was eventually confined there, too. And in the process, he introduced many to Christ who otherwise would have lived in despair.



3. *Will your response to God contract or expand?* As I mentioned above, Father Arseny was a model for responding to God during difficult times. How will we respond? By contracting and protecting ourselves, or trying harder to reach out to others? One of the attributes of those who lived through the Great Depression is that they became a much more caring and sharing generation than previous generations. Those who lived through the Great Depression learned to scrimp and save in a way that has bothered those of us who are their children. Still, the Depression generations learned the art of hospitality. During the Great Depression something interesting happened. As the times got worse, people gave more. People gave money, food, and clothing to strangers they would have ignored years before. Will that be the legacy of our children who are growing up in these times? Will they learn generosity from us, a generosity born in faith and a desire to respond to God? Or will they learn to close in and to focus only on what is theirs and how they can get more? What will they learn from us?



We may be about to embark on difficult times, but they can be wonderful times for forming faith. The question is how each and every one of us will respond in times like this. Will our faith wither or bloom?

With God's Blessings,

Dr. N. Graham Standish

Adult Education for January

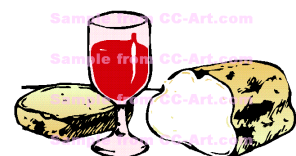
Praying in Color and Other Experiments with Prayer, taught by Connie Frierson,

Prayer is the avenue to God. Yet we often find praying challenging. So often our prayers seem more like postcards and laundry lists and less and less like relationship building love letters. If you are word-weary, stillness-challenged, easily distracted, or just in need of a new way to pray, come to the adult education class and experiment with Praying in Color. In four classes, we will look at our expectations of prayer, how we pray, why we pray, and show different styles of prayer that may open us up to God's grace. We hope to open up and wake up, body and soul, right and left brain, hands and feet to the experience of talking with God.



Communion Class for Small Children

If you have small children who have questions about communion, or if you aren't sure how to answer your children's questions, a class about the Lord's Table will be offered on Sunday night, February 8th at 6:00 in the sanctuary. The Youth Formation Committee is planning an interactive class with the story of the Last Supper, a bit of holy play and bread and juice. This class will be geared towards first and second graders to help them understand how God is present in this sacrament and how we come to God's Table. The class will last about 30 minutes and parents are welcome to participate. Please contact Connie Frierson at 724-452-7560 x19 or frierson525@earthlink.net if you or your children plan to participate.



Interested in Cooking?

Sign up for a class where you learn how to cook and serve with flair for family and friends. Enjoy a wonderful evening of food and fun at Rita Venturino's house in Gibsonsia. Her classes come highly recommended!

Space is limited Only 7 people can sign up for this class. So don't delay--reserve your seat today. Contact: Denise Shank at calvinevents@zoominternet.net with number of people interested in going by Saturday, January 3rd.

Date: Thursday, April 30th 2009, 6 PM Cruising Through Palermo - Flavors of Sicily!



Food Cupboard

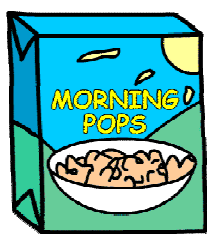
The SWBC Food Cupboard begins 2009 with increased pride and love for the many servants who made 2008 a huge success. We were able to pack and distribute about 3060 bags and boxes of food to help feed the hungry in our little corner of the world. We made their Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays very special with fresh fruit, vegetables, hams, turkeys, pies and gifts for their children at Christmas. They are all grateful for the SWBC Food Cupboard. On behalf of the Board members, thank you for your continued support, be it food, money, time and prayers.



A very happy and healthy new year - Arby Shenesky
Food Dedication - **January 11** (the second Sunday of each month)

Needs:

Baked Beans, Baking mixes (muffins & cookies), Cereal, Boxed potatoes (mashed & scalloped), Canned vegetables, Canned fruit, Applesauce, Spaghetti Sauce, Soup, Tuna, Macaroni & Cheese, Egg Noodles, Pasta, Peanut Butter & Jelly, Helper meals, Ensure



Boxes, Xerox paper size, are also needed. These are best for filling and carrying. Baby food and formula are not needed, as these are supplied by the WIC (Women Infants & Children) program. Diapers and wipes, however, are needed.

***Please supply only the items on this list. Most other items are hard to dispose of.
Your monetary contributions are most welcome.**

Please make checks payable to **Calvin Church** and mark "Food Cupboard."
If you have questions, please don't hesitate to call Arby Shenesky at 724-452-9755.

Green Team Tidbits

Some simple, low cost solutions to reduce heating bills



1. If you have forced hot air heating, close the vents in any rooms that are not used. This concentrates the heat where you want it.
2. Make sure the damper for the fireplace is closed tightly. Even better, consider having a top mount fireplace damper installed. This provides tighter seals and prevents heat from escaping.
3. Install a programmable thermostat - one that can automatically set the temperature higher when you are awake and lower when you are sleeping or at work.
4. Install caulking around windows and doors, and use weather-stripping to ensure that there are no gaps that are letting warm air out.
5. Tune up your heating equipment every year or two to keep it running cleanly and efficiently.
6. Draw curtains or drapes over the windows after sunset to block cold air drafts from coming into the house.
7. Use ceiling fans to gently push the warm air back down from the ceiling and help it circulate.
8. Set your thermostat back a degree or two. For every degree lower you set your thermostat, you will save 3% on heating costs.
9. Replace filters in the forced air systems. The more clogged the filters, the harder the system has to work just to give you the same amount of heat - and the more you pay just to have the same amount of heat.
10. Add more insulation to the attic. Even though your windows and doors may also be drafty, the majority of your heat escapes through the ceiling. If your attic is accessible, rolling out another layer of insulation is an easy weekend project.



Contributed by Tom Reiber

Building & Grounds Committee Update

Our first full year with the new addition completed has been a busy and productive one for the B&G Committee. Year-end gives us a chance to look back at what we have accomplished and what lies ahead. Items we completed this year include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Completed Faith House kitchen plumbing repairs
- Balanced and corrected some problems with the new heating system
- Installed new programmable thermostat in the Sanctuary
- Conducted Grounds maintenance work day in June (many things done)
- Bell Tower – removed damaged plaster, finishing brick walls
- Replaced outside light on Bell Tower and added two new outside lights
- Stripped and waxed tile flooring in new addition
- Filled the open position of Supplemental Custodian
- Conducted August work day to spread mulch
- Installed concrete pads for dumpsters
- Replaced old trash dumpster
- Organized contacts with other local churches for various services
- Finished decking installation on Faith House porches and outside steps
- Installed new entry way carpets and runner by Pre-school room
- Repaired damaged carpet in Sanctuary by Communion Table
- Assisted with the new robe closet in the Choir Room
- Completed numerous small repairs and general maintenance items

Looking ahead, there are several significant projects on our long-term plan that we will need to begin saving money for. These include a new roof for the Sanctuary, installation of drainage and repaving of the parking lot, additional outside lighting, a wheelchair lift for the back stairwell, and a privacy fence behind Charity House. We will provide more information when cost estimates are developed.

Many thanks for the renewed energy this year of the Building & Grounds Committee members including Lee Kornick, Rich Dilts, Jim Albert, Kaye Reiber, Brett Shank, Sheldon Weiher, John Kersten, and Keith Tilton. Lee has graciously accepted the role of Co-Chairman of the Committee. We would welcome any new volunteers who would like to join us as we continue our work on many more items into 2009.

Contributed by Jim Willard

Morning Circle Schedule

If you are between the age of 60 and 100 we invite you to join us the 2nd Thursday of each month at 10 AM. Do call Florence Towers or Irene Bortmess for more information.

Contributed by Flo Towers

Open Circle Schedule

January 27, 2009 - lesson leader, Jill Bell. Meeting place will be the church.

February 24, 2009 - lesson leader, Peggy Hall. Host - Kathy Efaw - 724-452-0323.

March 24, 2009 - Lesson leader, Kathy Efaw. Host - Robin Fleming 724-452-6932.

Contributed by Kathy Efaw



“Hallelujah and Amen!” (continued)

The reason there are so many spellings is that this is a non-English word sounded out and written like it sounds. For the same reason, Hallelujah might be spelled Alleluia. Transliteration of the word Hallelujah goes all the way back to Greek and Latin versions of the Bible.

Hallelujah is really a phrase made up of two words, Hallelu and Jah. The first part of the word, Hallelu, is a request to the congregation to joyously praise, and the second part, Jah (or, Yah), is a short form of Yahweh, the biblical name of God. So, translated, Hallelujah means “Praise the Lord, all you people!” In the Hebrew Bible, the word Hallelujah is only found in the book of Psalms, where it is used in 16 of the 150 Psalms. As the Psalms were meant to be sung, it is fitting that we use Hallelujah in song today, just as they did long ago. Psalms 146-150 are known as the “Hallelujah Psalms.” They were meant for use in joyful public worship. In each one of these Psalms, the word Hallelujah begins and ends the Psalm.

“Praise the Lord [Hallelu Yah]! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness! Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with

strings and pipe! Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord [Hallelu Yah]!” (Psalm 150)

In the New Testament, Hallelujah appears only in the book of Revelation (19:1-6), again as an introduction to praising God. *“After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God, for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants.’ Once more they said, ‘Hallelujah! The smoke goes up from her for ever and ever.’ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who is seated on the throne, saying ‘Amen. Hallelujah!’ And from the throne came a voice saying, ‘Praise our God, all you his servants, and all who fear him, small and great.’ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder-peals, crying out, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.”* Despite this limited usage in the actual Bible, Hallelujah has become a household word, used by Christians everywhere to praise God.

Amen! Amen is another transliterated Hebrew word found in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. We use it today as an expression of agreement, as in “Amen to that”, and in worship, it is the almost automatic ending of a spoken prayer or a hymn. But how was Amen used originally? It may be translated in several ways, including “so be it”, “truly”, “certainly”, “may it be so”, “let it happen”, and “verily.”

Amen appears in many places in the Hebrew Bible. Here are examples of Jeremiah using Amen to say “so be it.” *“So shall you be my people, and I will be your God, that I may perform the oath that I swore to your ancestors, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day. Then I answered, ‘So be it [Amen], Lord.’” (Jeremiah 11:4-5)* *“and the prophet Jeremiah said, ‘Amen! May the Lord do so; may the Lord fulfill the words that you have prophesied.” (Jeremiah 28:6)*

Amen was also used in the Psalms as a liturgical response, appearing along with Hallelujah. *“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. And let all the people say, ‘Amen.’ Praise the Lord [Hallelu Yah]! (Psalm 106:48)* The book of Psalms is divided into five parts, and the ending of each part is marked by an Amen, or even a double Amen, as in *“Amen and*

Amen.” (Psalm 41:13)

Early Christians adopted the use of Amen as a confirmatory response to a prayer, as shown by these passages. *“I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also; I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind also. Otherwise, if you say a blessing with the spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say the ‘Amen’ to your thanksgiving, since the outsider does not know what you are saying?” (1 Corinthians 14:15-16)* *“[...] to bring about the obedience of faith - to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever! Amen.” (Romans 16:26-27)* According to the writer Justin Martyr (150 CE), second century Christians said Amen to the blessing after the Eucharist.

Besides those kinds of liturgical usage, Amen also has a special place in the words of Jesus. In the gospels, Jesus uses Amen in an exclusive and unusual way: not to close a prayer, but as an introduction to his next words, which is meant to emphasize the importance, authority, and truth of what he is about to say. Here are two examples. In one, Jesus even uses a double Amen! (Note that the word Amen has been translated as “truly” in the NRSV.) *“For truly [Amen] I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until a l l i s a c c o m -*

plished.” (Matthew 5:18) “And he said to him, ‘Very truly [Amen, Amen], I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’” (John 1:51)

Finally, Amen can be an aspect of God. Amen is the embodiment of truth and faithfulness associated with God – this is used to powerful effect in the words of Isaiah, when he

calls God the “God of Amen.” “Then whoever invokes a blessing in the land shall bless by the God of faithfulness [of Amen], and whoever takes an oath in the land shall swear by the God of faithfulness [of Amen]” (Isaiah 65:16). And in Revelation 3:14, Jesus is called “the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God’s creation.” Paul says of Jesus, “For in him every

one of God’s promises is a ‘Yes.’ For this reason it is through him that we say the ‘Amen’, to the glory of God.” (2 Corinthians 1:20) Therefore it is fitting that the New Testament itself ends with the word Amen. “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.” (Revelation 22:20-21)

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Pastor

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Pastor of Pastoral Care

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Director of Music/
Youth Director

Toni Schlemmer,
Director of Drama/
Associate Director of Music

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David Sloat
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Nancy Mead
Newsletter Editor

ANNOUNCEMENT

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>

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

Announcements and News

To put announcements in the Sunday Bulletin, please call the office no later than the Thursday of the week you want the announcement to appear.

All Newsletter material must be submitted by the 20th of each month to be included in the next month’s edition. Please send newsletter items to Nancy Mead nancy@mead.cc.

Thanks in advance!

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and discerning God’s purpose and will through sincere commitment to

worship, prayer, fellowship, teaching and mission.

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Nan Durny	<i>Clerk of Session</i>	Sandy Lambert	<i>Spiritual Nurture & Outreach</i>
Jim Willard	<i>Building & Grounds</i>	Karen Albert	<i>Spiritual Nurture & Outreach</i>
Marco Tekelenburg	<i>Mission</i>	John Heinbockel	<i>Worship & Arts Committee</i>
Sandy Lambert	<i>Nominating committee</i>	Shaney Mitchell	<i>Youth Formation & Education</i>
Peter Clakeley	<i>Personnel & Finance</i>	Heidi Vandrak	<i>Nursery School Committee</i>
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