



Calvin Presbyterian Church
where faith, compassion, and authenticity meet

Calvin's News & Notes

The Standish Inkwell

July 2009

What difference does church make? Have you thought much about that question?

Do you think that there is there a benefit to becoming a member of a church, of being involved in a church, and of going to church on Sunday mornings? I mean a tangible benefit? We live in times in which more and more people are saying that since they are “spiritual” they don’t need church. Are they right? Does going to church on a regular basis help us, hurt us, or do nothing for us?

To me the answer is obvious, but I realize that in these times, when fewer people actually go to church on a regular basis, the answer is not obvious. Many see church membership and attendance as irrelevant to our spiritual, mental, and physical health. Are they right, or is there an impact of church attendance on our health?

Do you know what’s funny about answering this question? We live in a research culture, and we base much of what we believe in on research, but when it comes to research on the impact of church on health, many people ignore the research. We are constantly bombarded by news stories about what research shows about this and that. For example, if research shows that fat is bad for us, we try to switch to low-fat diets. If carbs are shown to be bad, we switch to low-carb diets. If research shows that seatbelts save lives, we institute laws to get people to wear seatbelts. If research shows a link between tobacco and cancer, we work to reduce smoking. In business, if a particular research program shows that by doing X we can improve productivity, we work to enhance X.

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Did You Know?

“My Old Friend from Antioch” by Brendon Wahlberg

I was reading the book of Acts one day, when I came across someone I really identified with. His name was Nicolas of Antioch, and here is his brief appearance in Acts 6:5. “Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distri-

bution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait at tables. Therefore, friends,* select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.’ What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and **Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch.**” (Acts 6:1-5)*

“Proselyte” is not a word many people would recognize,

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Does going to church on a regular basis help us, hurt us, or do nothing for us?

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THE STANDISH INKWELL

In medicine, if a particular treatment is shown through research to be more effective, then doctors switch to that treatment. We live in a research culture in every aspect of life except when it comes to religion and health.

So what does research show about the impact of church on health? Consistently it shows that if you go to church on a regular basis, you will become physically, mentally, relationally, and spiritually healthier than if you live the exact same life and don't go to church. So much research has been done on this that it's hard to believe that few know this. One of the first to research the link between church attendance and health was David Larson, M.D., Ph.D. He was a psychiatrist trained at Duke University Medical School, who founded and directed the National Institute for Healthcare Research and was a leader in the religion and health research field. Back in the 1990s he started surveying already existing health studies, and what he found shocked not only him, but many people in the medical field. He found hundreds of studies showing that when extraneous factors were controlled for (a fancy way of saying that they made sure there couldn't be some other reason for a result other than the one found), the research overwhelmingly showed that people who attended church were healthier than those who didn't. He found that obese churchgoers lived longer than obese non-churchgoers. He found that smoking churchgoers were healthier than non-smoking non-churchgoers. He found a lot of other results just like this. Fellow doctors were shocked by the results because many of them saw religion as a problem, not an aide. What he found has changed much of common medical wisdom, to the point at which many doctors are now bringing faith questions into their initial medical assessments.

It's not just Larson who found these things. Google "church attendance and health," and see what you find. For instance one website cites the benefits found in many research projects when it comes to the impact of regular church attendance on children, stating that church attendance:

- increases the average life expectancy of your children by 8 years
- significantly reduces their use and risk from Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs
- dramatically lowers their risk of suicide
- helps them rebound from depression 70% faster
- dramatically reduces their risk for committing a crime
- improves their attitude at school and increase their school participation
- reduces their risk for rebelliousness
- reduces the likelihood that they would binge drink in college
- improves their odds for a "very happy" life
- provides them with a life-long moral compass
- and gets them to wear their seatbelts more often

As the website says, "These findings are supported by research from Duke University, Indiana University, The University of Michigan, The Center for Disease Control, Barna Research Group, and the National Institute for Healthcare Research" (<http://www.sundaysoftware.com/stats.htm>).

In addition, in 2002 "researchers from the Human Population Laboratories of the Public Health Institute and the California Department of Health Services, and from the University of California, Berkeley, found that people who attended religious services once a week had significantly lower risks of death compared with those who attended less frequently or never, even after adjusting for age, health behaviors and other risk factors" (<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/4132>). In other words, as adults, just going to church once a week helps you live longer"

People who attend religious services once a week have a significantly lower risk of death compared with those who attend less frequently or never

Also, going to church makes you happier. For example, a 2006 Pew Research study (the folks who also are leading pollsters during elections) found that “people who attend religious services weekly or more are happier (43% very happy) than those who attend monthly or less (31%); or seldom or never (26%). This correlation between happiness and frequency of church attendance has been a consistent finding in the General Social Surveys taken over the years” (<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/301/are-we-happy-yet>). In addition, other research has found that families who attend church regularly, even if it is hard to get everyone to church, report more marital and family satisfaction.

So what is it that keeps us from making regular Sunday worship part of our lives? The same things that make diet, exercise, rest, and living a balanced life hard: busyness, laziness, tired of fighting with my kids to get up and go to church, wanting more rest, playing golf, the television, being bored (we do try to make worship interesting, even stimulating, without losing sight of our calling to help you grow), getting out of the habit, and more. Whatever it is, what’s the impact on your health? What’s the impact on your family’s health?

So what’s my purpose in writing this? It’s more a reflection than a nagging. I’ve always seen my role in particular, and our role as a church in general, to create worship that not only connects people with God, but helps them be transformed by God. My goal in worship is to create a context and experience where people can become healthier spiritually, which leads to enhanced mental, physical, and relational health. We can’t be responsible for who does or doesn’t show up, but we can be responsible for creating a context in which people can become healthier.

What I’d like you to do over the summer is to reflect on the role worship has in your life? Have you made it a regular part of your life? If so, what are the benefits? If not, what’s keeping you from doing so? You could become healthier, you know, if worship was more regular in your life. So could your family.

Take time to reflect on the role God has in your life, and what role worship has in enhancing God’s role in your life.

With God’s Blessings,

The Rev. Dr. N. Graham Standish

Personnel and Financial Notes

Most of you probably won’t remember, but back during the budgeting period the Calvin Church session, recognizing that the country and world were in the midst of difficult economic times, agreed with a request from the staff to freeze their salaries for 2009. The freeze was in lieu of the annual 3% cost of living adjustment that the staff normally receives. The session, at its December meeting, agreed with a caveat. They decided that if the church was in good financial shape in July of 2009, that they would increase the staff salaries by 3% for the remaining 6 months. At present the church is doing wonderfully, posting a healthy surplus. So we have instituted a 3% adjustment for all staff (except for those who are covered by other salary increase arrangements). This will mean a 1½% adjustment for the year.

The Rev. Dr. N. Graham Standish

Beth Moore Study

It’s Beth Moore time again at Calvin. Please plan to join the Beth Moore group as we study the Book of Esther. The study titled:

Esther: It’s Tough Being a Woman explores God’s providence and the hope He offers women facing challenges in our society. Esther includes 10 video sessions and nine weeks of personal study. Beth Moore explains how God placed a young Jewish woman who fulfilled her destiny “for such a time as this” and saved the Jews living in a pagan culture from certain destruction. Esther, though a queen, lived as an outsider in a hostile environment. Her life offers an example for today’s woman who finds it difficult to live in someone else’s shadow, to see physical beauty take precedence over character, to face life-altering decisions, to move from self-preservation to brave determination, and to see mean-spirited people prevail. You will learn strong lessons of faith that will equip you to live a courageous life.

Going up against heavyweights bent on her destruction, Esther trusted God and landed a blow that saved her people. The Old Testament story of Esther is a profile in courage and contains many modern parallels for today’s woman. Esther’s destiny can be yours as you know more deeply the God who is in your corner.

We hope you will be able to join us for this wonderful journey growing in God’s grace. If you are interested please feel free to call Betsy Huhn @ 724-272-3226 or email her at bhuhn@zbzoom.net. We will meet every other Wednesday night starting **September 9th** from 7-9 pm.

Contributed by Betsy Huhn

Calvin's News & Notes

Food Cupboard News

Thanks to all who served at the Cupboard in June.....we had a great group of volunteers who worked hard to fill the food cupboards of the needy in South West Butler County.



In addition to the regular needs of the cupboard, we are asking you to save brown paper grocery bags for us. We use 190 each month and we seem to run out of them every month. Please bring any that you might have to church and leave them in the Food Cupboard box under the coat rack. Thanks!!

Food Dedication - **July 12** (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

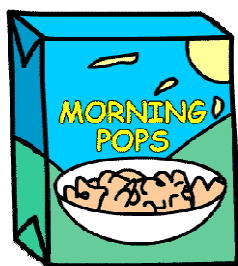
Egg Noodles, Pasta, Peanut Butter & Jelly, Helper meals, Ensure

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".

Contributed by Arby Shenesky



PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN NEWS

SOUP UPDATE:

Once again a big THANK YOU. Calvin Presbyterian Women gave a donation of \$300.00 to the Camp Lambec/Westminster wish list. This was made possible by Calvin Church congregation and soup purchases earlier this year. The camps needed any and everything such as pencils to life vests to camping equipment, paint and much more.

Open Circle information: Annual August picnic - **August 4th** @ the "Little House" Sherwood Oaks. Theme is Western so decorate your straw hat, put on your cowgirl boots and anything else you can think of. Time to meet is 6PM and bring a dish to share. Call Judy Kercovich, Kathy Efaw, or Agnes Peebles if you have questions or need directions to the "Little House".

The SERRV Store, located at 134A Main Street, Zelenople, now has a new name: Artisans' Marketplace. It is stocked with many new items and is open Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday each week between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. You are encouraged to visit, shop, and support fair trade.

The SERRV sale will be on **October 25th**. Setup is **October 24th**.

One Great Hour of Sharing

Did you miss the special offering we usually take during Lent? Well, so did the Mission Committee! That offering provides money for disaster assistance in this country and around the world. It helps to fight hunger, wherever it is found. And it supports people who are trying to develop ways of meeting their own needs through the Self-Development of People Program. We've set the last Sunday of July as the day to receive and dedicate this offering. You will learn more about the ways in which the money is used during the month of July. Hunt up those unused offering envelopes in your envelope boxes and prepare to use them on **July 26**.

Contributed by Agnes Peebles



Mission Matters

Rally Around Habitat for Humanity

Our Habitat for Humanity chapter was offered an opportunity to raise money by serving a dinner at Cranberry Community Days on **July 9**, 4:00-8:00 p.m., at the Cranberry Community Park on Route 19. Calvin Church members are urged to participate in three ways. First, for the dinner we need 400 bar cookies (brownies, etc.), so we are looking for fourteen people who are willing to make two 9x13 pans of bars. They should be brought to the church by noon on the 9th. Second, servers are needed for two-hour stints. If you can make cookies and/or serve, contact Judy Kercovich as soon as possible at 724-774-5746. Third, come and enjoy a meal of roast pig, baked beans, coleslaw, pierogies and assorted desserts for only \$10.

Habitat will also have a booth at Horse-trading Days in Zelienople on **July 16, 17 and 18**. Baked goods (that does not need refrigeration) and people to staff the booth are needed. Again, contact Judy Kercovich.

From Here to Alaska

Sally and Keith Johnson, who are serving the Chapel in the Mountains in northern Alaska, would welcome correspondence from anyone in Calvin Church. Their church is near the Brooks Range and the Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preservation Area, in a remote part of Alaska. It has a unique history that they and members of their congregation would like to share with others. (Besides that, I think it may get rather lonesome up there!) Address your letters to the Johnsons at Chapel in the Mountains, PO Box 21050, Anaktuvuk Pass, AK 99721.

All God's Children Got Shoes!

Well, not all of God's children, but some of them have shoes because of your gifts to the Pentecost offering on June 7. Our share of that offering has gone with the mission team to Louisville to buy shoes for the kids and moms at the shelter.

"Don't Drink The Water"

Good advice for travelers in many parts of the world is, "Don't drink the water." An estimated 1 billion people worldwide lack access to clean water and another 2.6 billion do not have access to adequate sanitation. Some analysts say that water related diseases, which include typhoid, cholera and hepatitis A, kill more people than AIDS. Jim McGill, a Presbyterian mission worker since 1990, is doing something about it. His wife Jodi's focus is nursing education. Our mission support dollars help him coordinate a hand-dug, shallow well program in Malawi. He works with the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian's Synod of Livingstonia. Local residents provide materials and unskilled labor. Price tag for a single well is about \$350. There's a dedication ceremony for each well where a volunteer declares in the dedication, "Your well is special and your well represents the love of Jesus Christ." Our mission giving sends good news.

Contributed by The Rev. Dr. Stephen L. Polley

Morning Circle Schedule

Since we don't meet in August here's the scoop of our July get-together. Everyone has signed up to go to lunch at the WATERING HOLE on **July 9**. Have decided to meet at the church at 11:15 and we will car pool over to the restaurant, unless you decide to drive yourself. Call me, Flo Towers, if that is what you decide to do. After our snack you are to come to my house for some dessert and another one of my silly projects which everyone enjoyed the last time. Remember the date is July 9th (Thursday) at the church at 11:15 or 11:30 at the restaurant.

Contributed by Flo Towers

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

Calvin's News & Notes

“My Old Friend from Antioch” (continued)

and perhaps a more modern translation of Acts 6:5 would help; here is one from the “New Living Translation”, one of those English paraphrases of the Bible: “*and Nicolas of Antioch (a Gentile convert to the Jewish faith, who had now become a Christian).*” I read this, and I thought, wow, this guy did the same thing I did, except he did it almost two thousand years ago. Like Nicolas, I was also a convert to Judaism who was later baptized as a Christian. I wondered if the road of faith Nicolas traveled was anything like mine.

When I was very young, I attended an old fashioned, small-town, New England Congregational Church, or at least I did until my adopted parents, one a lapsed Catholic and the other an Agnostic, told me I didn't have to go any more. So, not knowing any better, I stopped going. As a result, I didn't have any religious identity until I went to college and fell in love with a young Jewish woman. With an empty place in my life waiting to be filled with faith in God, I began to study Judaism. Eventually, I worked with the campus Rabbi and formally studied to become a convert. So Nicolas of Antioch and I were both converts, although today they call it becoming a Jew by Choice.

For me, conversion involved (1) demonstrating to a panel of three Rabbis that I had learned the basics of the faith, (2) a full immersion in water (just

like long ago with John the Baptist, except in a small ritual pool inside a building, not in the Jordan River), and (3) a symbolic circumcision – symbolic because when I was a newborn in 1966, they routinely circumcised babies in Boston. As a Proselyte, a Gentile converting to Judaism in the first century CE, Nicolas of Antioch would have undergone something similar. Ancient sources tell us that it was required that a proselyte be circumcised, and that he undergo a proselyte baptism, a water ceremony.

After my conversion, I eventually had a proper Jewish wedding, with the canopy and stepping on the glass, and everything. I truly enjoyed being Jewish, and I continued to study and grow deeper in my faith. Nothing shook me from it, not even when my long-lost birth mother entered my life and turned out to be a Pentecostal, Charismatic, speaking-in-tongues, Holy-Ghost-filled, dancing-in-the-spirit, street preacher who was expecting the end of the world in one year's time and wanted me to be saved in time for the Rapture. I am sorry to say, she did not present an attractive picture of Christianity. She did not shake my faith. It took the end of my marriage after twelve years and two children to do that.

After my divorce, I was broken-hearted and religiously adrift, feeling distant from God and waiting to see where life would take me. Over the next few

years, I was blessed to begin a relationship with a wonderful woman named Toni who was a member of Calvin Presbyterian Church. I am convinced that the Holy Spirit really is present at Calvin. I believe this because when I began to attend there with Toni, it felt like the Holy Spirit began to very gently speak to me, to beckon me to come and join in, for healing and belonging and a new, closer relationship with the same God I once knew. At first I resisted, still confused and trying to work out where I belonged in terms of faith, but one day, I looked around at the kind and welcoming people in the Calvin congregation, and I realized I was the only one keeping myself out, like a person standing out in the cold when the door to the party is wide open and right there in front of him.

And so, I began to study with the Pastor, and he taught me that faith was another word for trust. I learned to trust again, and eventually, I was baptized a Christian at Calvin. (Unlike the babies who are baptized, I was not carried around the room by the Pastor.) I have loved being at Calvin ever since. I have always enjoyed religious studies, and one day I realized that if I was going to study and learn anyway, why not share it in the form of a monthly column in the newsletter? My perspective in knowing both the Jewish and Christian sides of things would make me a good person to write about the Old and New Testaments alike. It would be

like a mini-ministry in adult education, my way of serving at Calvin. Service to others is central, after all.

Which brings us back to old Nicolas of Antioch. Do we know what happened in Antioch that made him want to convert to Judaism after growing up as a Gentile (perhaps a Greek pagan of some sort)? Most proselytes were people who encountered Judaism in synagogues in the diaspora and were attracted to that ancient faith. Do we know how and why he later became a Christian? Did he hear the preaching of Peter or another Apostle and decide that the Jewish Messiah had come? We can never know the answers for sure. But we do know that he was a servant at heart.

The passage from Acts concerns the distribution of food to the poor in Jerusalem. As the passage notes, the new and growing Christian community there was made up of two groups: Hebrews (who were Jewish Christians) and Hellenists (who were Greek Christians). They were all equally “disciples” but some of the Greek widows were not getting their share of food. Nicolas was chosen, along with six others, to distribute food daily to the community of the disciples. The twelve Apostles of Jesus were unable to carry out that kind of duty. Instead, their task as given by Jesus was to pray and preach the gospel. But Nicolas' job was really no less important. Without him, some widows could starve. Those widows had

to be fed and healthy before they could hear the good news from the Apostles.

And the Apostles did seem to respect the service Nicolas performed, even if they felt they were too busy to do it. Notice that the Apostles required “*men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom*” to carry out the food distribution duty. Acts 6:6 tells us that the Apostles prayed and laid their hands on Nicolas and the other six men. Perhaps they were being placed in positions of authority in the infant Jerusalem church, where these seven men would attend to the needs of both the Greek and Hebrew Christians among them. Nicolas was probably a good person to choose because of his mixed background, making him better able to identify with both types of Christians.

I feel a kinship with Nicolas because I imagine that, like me, he felt it was okay to have a religious identity blending Judaism and Christianity, and that he could see that both faiths, usually thought of as separate by most people, were really two sides of the same coin.

How many ways are there to serve others in a church? There are as many different ways as there are different people in the church. This column is my way; what is yours? Whatever it is, **thank you** for doing it, and may it “*please the whole community*” like the service of my old friend from Antioch, Nicolas.

"Church Basement Ladies" Are COOKIN' at the Byham Theater in Pittsburgh!

For 11 years, William Christopher played Father Mulcahy on what many consider the best sitcom of all time, M*A*S*H. William is coming to Pittsburgh in the musical comedy that mixes the silliness of NUNSENSE with the homespun humor of PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION! This hilarious musical comedy is a celebration of the church basement kitchens everywhere and the wonderful, unsung women who work there.

Church Basement Ladies is perfect entertainment for the entire family, for friends, well...just about everyone! This show is full of good, clean laughs, memorable characters, great music and nostalgia.

Date: Sunday, **September 27th** 6:00 pm **Seats:** Gallery Center F, G, & H

Ticket Price: \$25.85 **Checks Due:** by **July 31**

Carpooling: Let me know if you're interested in carpooling.

Please contact Denise Shank at calvinevents@zoominternet.net if you are interested in going or have any questions.

"Did You Know" 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>

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 at nancy@mead.cc. Thanks in advance!

Staff

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Pastor

Rev. Dr. Stephen Polley
Pastor of Pastoral Care

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Director of Music/
Youth Director

Toni Schlemmer,
Director of Drama/
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Newsletter Editor

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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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Mark Sebring	<i>Personnel & Finance</i>		

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