



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

# Calvin's News & Notes

## The Standish Inkwell

September 2009

**W**here are the thin places of your life? I don't mean those places where you feel thin. I mean those places where you experience God—places where the space between our realm and God's realm seem particularly "thin." These are the "thin places."

I was reminded of this idea several weeks ago in a conversation with Bruce Smith about Celtic Spirituality. Over the years I have studied Celtic Christian beliefs, and I resonate a lot with them. Celtic Christian spirituality is a spiritual perspective that arose out of the Irish (Celtic) people after their conversion to Christianity in the 6<sup>th</sup> century due to the efforts of St. Patrick.

Patrick had been raised in the western part of what is now England/Wales. He had been captured as a teenager by a Celtic raiding party, which took him back to Ireland and forced him to become a slave. As a slave, he pretty much lived outdoors for six or seven years while tending sheep. It was under the sun and stars—living with the grass, trees, and sheep—that he first felt a tangible connection with God. That connection eventually helped him to escape from slavery. One night, in a dream, he heard God calling to him to walk to the coast where he would find a boat. He followed the dream, found the boat, and made his way back to England, where he was reunited with his family.

(Continued on page 2)

### Did You Know?

"Almost in the New Testament" by Brendon Wahlberg

**R**ecently, an ancient copy of the New Testament was put online for the first time. You can now see every page of the famous Codex Sinaiticus (found on Mt. Sinai), which may have been one of the copies commissioned by the Emperor Constantine in the year 331. This copy shows how the canon of the New Testament was not yet finalized at the time, because although it contains

all of the books we are familiar with now, it also contains two books which were later rejected from the final New Testament collection. These books, which were "almost in the New Testament", were the "Letter of Barnabas" and "The Shepherd of Hermas". What were these books about? And why were they kicked out of the canon in the end?

"The Shepherd" was a

very popular book during the first four centuries of Christianity. It was probably written between 140 and 170CE by a man named Hermas, the brother of Pius, the Bishop of Rome. Many churches regarded it as holy scripture, which explains why it was included in the Codex found on Mt. Sinai. Basically, "The Shepherd" is about an angel who appears to Hermas in the form of a shepherd and shows

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**Where are the thin places of your life? I mean those places where you experience God**

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

He continued to follow God's calling and was trained for the priesthood. Eventually he asked to be named Bishop of Ireland so that he could bring Christianity to them. The Celts already had a faith that was very nature oriented. They also were very wary of Christianity, believing that it was a pretense for the Roman Empire to conquer their island. So whenever the church had sent missionaries, they were killed. Yet Patrick was unafraid.

When Patrick finally returned to Ireland with his small band of missionaries, he was captured and threatened with execution, but he managed to convince the king that what he brought would be a blessing to the Celts. He taught them a Celtic form of Christianity that revered what they already revered. The Celts were very much a people in love with nature, and Patrick taught them that Christ was revealed through nature. He took many of the Celtic religious beliefs and practices, and adapted them to Christianity. Through this he formed a Celtic form of Christianity that revered God in creation.

One of the beliefs he adopted from the Celts was the idea of "thin places." The Celts believed that there were special places where people could tangibly touch and experience the divine because the veil between heaven and earth was especially thin there. You can find photos of traditionally "thin places" by googling "thin places of Ireland." Often these thin places were tops of mountain, islands, and lakes—places of deep beauty and perspective. They are still revered today as holy sites.

So where are the thin places in your life? Where are the places that you sense God most present? Many of us choose natural sites. I do, too. One of my favorite thin places is Hereford Manor Lake, along 288 to the northwest of Zelenople. That's where I walk and pray at least four to five times a week. Our labyrinth is a thin place, too. It is constructed to transport those walking in it to a sacred space where God can be sensed and heard. Another thin place for me is Calvin Church's sanctuary. Over the years we've tried very hard to form it as a holy, sacred place where people can walk in and feel God's presence. We've put in art, tapestries, crosses, and the like as a way of creating a sacred, holy place where God can be experienced just by being there. In fact, we try to do little things around the church to put in symbols that allow the whole church to become a thin place.

We aren't just called to find and go to thin places. We are called to be "thin people." I don't mean physically thin. I mean people through whom the connection between God and us is especially. We're called to cultivate a life in which the veil between God and us is especially slim and porous. Thin places are experienced most by spiritually thin people—by people of prayer, compassion, and grace who work hard to be open conduits for the Spirit to work in and through.

What are you doing to become spiritually thin? Are you cultivating a thin life? In what ways? This kind of thinness doesn't require restrictive dieting. It requires indulgence—indulgence in a Spirit-filled life where we engage in practices of prayer, discernment, and love.

As we start up a new church year, I'd love to have you reflect not only on where your thin places are, but how you can become more intentional about cultivating a thin life.

With God's Blessings,

*The Rev. Dr. N. Graham Standish*

**So where are the thin places in your life? Where are the places that you sense God most present?**

## Sunday School

It's time to go back to school...back to Sunday school, that is! The 2009-2010 Calvin Sunday School classes will begin on **Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM** between services. We will also be commissioning the teachers at both the 8:30 and 11:00 a.m. services on September 13<sup>th</sup>. Below is a list of classes with teacher and classroom information. If you have any questions, please contact Shaney Mitchell at (724) 779-6479 or at [shaney@zoominternet.net](mailto:shaney@zoominternet.net). Hope to see you in class!

### **Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten (ages 3-6)**

*Preschool Room, Downstairs*

Teachers: Shaney Mitchell & Diane Standish, Anissa & Marco Tekelenburg, Kim Sebring & Laurie Becker, teen helpers Julia Vandrak and Michelle Baxa

### **Grades 1 & 2**

*1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Classroom, Downstairs*

Teachers: Pam & Ryan McCarthy, Michelle & David Shepler, Rachel & Eric Stoltenberg

### **Grades 3 & 4**

*3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Classroom, Downstairs*

Teachers: Kathy & Rich Dilts, Robin & Mark Fleming

### **Grades 5 & 6**

*5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Classroom, Downstairs*

Teachers: Carol & Allan Findlay, Andrea & Jeff Reiterman, Beth & Jim Willard

### **Grades 7 & 8**

*Faith House Back Room*

Teachers: Kaye & Tom Reiber, Amy & David Sloat, Robin & Dave Wuchina

### **Grade 9 (Confirmation)**

*Conference Room*

Teachers: Karen & Jim Albert, Frank Baker, Connie Frierson, Bob & Betsy Huhn, Joan McConahy

### **\*\*\*NEW CLASS!!!\*\*Grades 10 and up**

*Faith House Kitchen and Parlor*

Teachers: Mandy Brown, Betsy Huhn, Joan McConahy, Robert & Karen Stubenbort, and Holly Voelp

*Contributed by Shaney Mitchell*

## 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](mailto:bhuhn@zbzoom.net). We will meet every other Wednesday night starting **September 9<sup>th</sup>** from 7-9 pm .

*Contributed by Betsy Huhn*

## Calvin's News & Notes

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### Food Cupboard News

For the month of September, the Food Cupboard NEEDS canned Spaghetti Sauce, Apple Sauce, Noodles, Cake mixes & Frosting and canned Stews. The shelves are bulging with, and therefore, we DO NOT NEED canned vegetables or fruit or cereal. Please keep this in mind when you shop for the Food Cupboard this month.

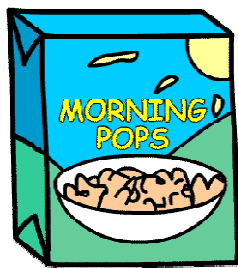
Food Dedication - **September 14** (the second Sunday of each month)

**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*

### Open Circle

Open Circle will meet **September 22, 2009** at home of Linda Anderson. The lesson is "All Are Invited." Scripture is Luke 14:7-24; 16:19-31. Key idea is that Jesus welcomes all to the table. A suggestion made by the author of this lesson, is to live the lesson. The author, Dale Lindsay Morgan, states that every banquet requires food and drink. Meeting the needs of people in distress means ensuring that they have clean drinking water. Living Waters for the World ([www.livingwatersfortheworld.org](http://www.livingwatersfortheworld.org)) is a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) global mission resource that addresses the world water crisis in communities that have only contaminated water. Go to their website and read how you can help.

*Contributed by Kathy Efaw*



**About Kathy:** Cary and I moved to Zelienople January 2, 1987. Our children were ages 8,5,3. I was a stay at home Mom and decided the best activity I could do outside the home was volunteerism. Class parties, Bible School at the Methodist church (the whole town was invited), soccer, participate in World Day of Prayer, Calvin Women's retreat, Meals on Wheels, Presbyterian Women luncheons, Attic Treasure Sales, Sunday School teacher, choir, Elder, Chairman of Music and Worship, Presbyterian Women President, chaperoned youth group activities, co-chaired 150th Anniversary celebration with LaRue Craig, sewed costumes for plays at the church, Interdenominational First Gulf War Family support group, Calvin musicals, Seneca Valley Marching Band apparel chairman, SV Band concession stand, coffee hour, baked cakes for Hearth and Ladle, sewing stoles for confirmation class, Softball cheerleader, MS Walks, neighborhood March of Dimes and Leukemia. Today I work part-time for Home Instead Senior Care as staffing assistant and administrative support.

### Morning Circle

**MORNING CIRCLE:** IT'S TIME TO DUST OFF OUR STUDY BOOK OF LUKE AND ATTEND CIRCLE ON **SEPTEMBER 10TH AT 10 AM**. We are having a guest and it is Agnes Peebles, who is going to tell us about her trip to Kentucky and her attendance at the CHURCHWIDE GATHERING OF PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN. Our study is Lesson Four on page 31. See you ALL.

*Contributed by Flo Towers*

### Mission Matters

#### A Message from Janet Guyer

Sunday, August 9: We had a good workshop for NetACT, the Network for African Congregational Theology, working on the HIV and AIDS curriculum. Everyone went away quite pleased that they had worked very hard and come up with what is an innovative approach to teaching about AIDS in theological institutions. The next step is for me to do some editing. That will take a bit of time, so I am glad that I will be home for at least another week or so before going to Zimbabwe.

#### Our September Mission Project

VOICe, the Women's Shelter agency in Butler County, welcomes help in providing for those who often come to them with only the clothes on their backs. We will have baskets in Fellowship Hall during September to take your gifts, any of the following items:

pillows, phone cards, journals (personal), mini planners, small totes to carry personal items, pajamas for kids, pajamas for women (larger sizes), house slippers, moisturizing body lotion, trash bags, household cleaners, paper products (paper towels, one-ply toilet paper, paper plates).

#### Put This Date on Your Calendar!

On **Saturday, October 3, 11:30-1:00**, pot-luck salad luncheon in Fellowship Hall, with guests Cobbie Palm, a missionary to the Philippines, and Joel Tendero, a pastor in the Church of the Philippines. This is an opportunity to hear first-hand how Christians are working for peace and justice in a conflicted society.

We're Thinking Christmas - and hope you are, too!

**October 25**, the annual SERRV sale in Fellowship Hall.

**December 5**, we will have an Alternative Christmas Fair, where you will have opportunity to give monetary gifts to groups such as Habitat for Humanity, Medical Benevolence, and the Food Pantry as gifts to family and friends.

*Contributed by Agnes Peebles*

**About Agnes:** I have been a member of Calvin since 1992, active in the Women's Association and the Open Circle, taught Sunday School and Confirmation. I help make the Confirmation Class stoles each year, am now a member of the Mission Committee and am their "official communicator."

#### Guest Speaker

**The Rev. Tim Simpson** has been invited to preach on Sunday, September 20th. Tim is a dynamic and interesting speaker/presenter. He holds graduate degrees from Liberty University, the University of Florida, Columbia Theological Seminary and Union Presbyterian Seminary. Tim, co-founder of the Christian Peace Witness and editor of the journal of Political theology, is an Adjunct Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Florida and Parish Associate at the Lake Shore Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, FL. According to Tim, "The biggest question facing the American church today is...whether the church will continue to sit silently on the margins of the public square ...or whether we will invite our society to a new way of living that models the peaceable kingdom to which Jesus calls us..." Please join us on Sunday, September 20th.

### "Almost in the New Testament" (continued)

him five visions, twelve commandments, and ten parables. These revelations are symbolic and hard to understand, so Hermas begs the angel to explain each one. The reader is expected to glean valuable Christian lessons from each explanation. Most of these lessons are about repentance.

The most important of these lessons concerns the question of what happens to baptized people who join the Church and are saved, but later return to a life of sin. "The Shepherd" claims to be a new divine revelation that such people get one, and only one, second chance. In "The Shepherd" (Fourth Commandment Chapter Three) Hermas is talking to the angel, and they have the following conversation.

*"And I said, "I heard, sir, some teachers maintain that there is no other repentance than that which takes place, when we descended into the water and received remission of our former sins." He said to me, "That was sound doctrine which you heard; for that is really the case. For he who has received remission of his sins ought not to sin any more, but to live in purity. [...] For the Lord, knowing the heart, and foreknowing all things, knew the weakness of men and the manifold wiles of the devil, that he would inflict some evil on the servants of God, and would act wickedly towards them. The Lord, therefore, being merciful, has had mercy on the work of His hand, and*

*has set repentance for them; and He has entrusted to me power over this repentance. And therefore I say to you, that if any one is tempted by the devil, and sins after that great and holy calling in which the Lord has called His people to everlasting life, he has opportunity to repent but once. But if he should sin frequently after this, and then repent, to such a man his repentance will be of no avail..."*

Why did "The Shepherd" get rejected from the final canon? Part of the reason was that it had been written too recently. It did not go back to the Apostolic times. It was known exactly who wrote it, and Hermas was not connected to the Apostles. So, the book was not old enough or authoritative enough. But on top of those reasons, there was a problem with the way the book discussed Jesus. In Parable 9, "The Shepherd" suggests that Jesus was a normal person who became a host for the Holy Spirit. "The holy, pre-existent Spirit, that created every creature, God made to dwell in flesh, which He chose. This flesh, accordingly, in which the Holy Spirit dwelt, was nobly subject to that Spirit, walking religiously and chastely, in no respect defiling the Spirit; and accordingly, after living excellently and purely, and after laboring and co-operating with the Spirit, and having in everything acted vigorously and courageously along with the Holy Spirit, He assumed it as a partner with it. For

*this conduct of the flesh pleased Him, because it was not defiled on the earth while having the Holy Spirit."* This view of Jesus was rejected by the Church, and that may have banished "The Shepherd" from the canon. But before it was rejected, "The Shepherd" was almost part of the New Testament. It is precisely because it was once so popular that we still have the complete text of this long book.

The other book which was almost in the New Testament, and which can be found in the Codex of Mt. Sinai, is called the "Letter of Barnabas." We don't really know who wrote this epistle, but tradition associates it with either Barnabas, the companion of Paul, or someone named Barnabas of Alexandria. It was written around 130CE, for Christian Gentiles to read. The letter takes a very strong anti-Jewish position, and basically, it says that the Jewish understanding of the Old Testament, and the Jewish religion, are completely wrong. The letter says that Judaism is a false religion. Jews have never been part of a Covenant with God. Only Christians have a Covenant with God. Jews have never understood their own scriptures. An evil angel has led Jews to take their scriptures literally, when they were always meant to be taken figuratively. In fact, everything in the Old Testament is a really only a symbolic way to foreshadow the future Jesus.

For example, "Barnabas"

says that circumcision was really only a symbol of Jesus on the cross. To make this point, he notes that Abraham circumcised 18 and 300 men in his household. Then Barnabas converts numbers to letters and makes the number 18 into Jesus, and the number 300 into the cross. The point is that the Jews were never supposed to take circumcision literally and actually go and do it, but that the circumcision story was really meant to point to the future event of Jesus' death.

Likewise, Barnabas says that keeping Kosher was not to be taken literally either. "Now when Moses said, "Eat neither pig, nor eagle, nor hawk, nor crow, nor any fish that is without scales [...] it is not God's commandment that they literally should not eat, but Moses spoke in the spirit. For this reason, then, he mentions the pig: Do not associate, he is saying, with such people – people who are like pigs. That is, people who forget their Lord when they are well off, but when they are in need, they acknowledge the Lord; just as when the pig is feeding it ignores its keeper, but when it is hungry it makes a din." (Barnabas 10:1-3)

It may be a blessing that "Barnabas" was excluded from the canon. Anti-Semites have used certain New Testament passages to justify their hatred through the ages. The "Letter of Barnabas" would have been the kind of material that they would have loved to use, if it had been ranked with Holy Scripture.

So there you have it, a brief introduction to two

books that were almost Scripture. John Greenleaf Whittier wrote, "For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: 'It might have been!'" It might have been that our New Testament was two books longer than it is today. Instead, "The Shepherd" and "Barnabas" were tossed on the discard pile of history. But perhaps such things are part of God's plan and for the best after all.

### “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:

### 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)

### About Our Newsletter Contributors

As part of our ongoing communications, over the next few months, we'll be providing a little biographical information about our regular contributors. This month we've got information about Kathy Efaw, our “Open Circle” contributor, and Agnes Peebles, our “Mission Matters” contributor.

### A NEW LOOK

The Worship & Arts Committee is trying a couple of structural changes for the front of the sanctuary with the choir and the musicians with the hope of improving the sound and coordination of our music ministry. Basically, we are moving all of the instrumentalists closer to the piano for ease of communication and movement between instruments. Also, the choir will be moved closer to the Friendship Room, which will enhance the sound of the choir in that extension. The look of the changes may not appear symmetrical, it will enhance the sound and allow the musicians to communicate and coordinate more effectively. Our hope is that by doing this we will improve everyone's worship experience.

### Return to Regular Worship Schedule

Remember, we return to our regular Sunday morning schedule on **Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup>**. Worship is at 8:30 and 11:00 a.m., and Church School is from 10:00—10:45 a.m.

#### Staff

Rev. Dr. N. Graham Standish  
Pastor

Rev. Dr. Stephen Polley  
Pastor of Pastoral Care

Bruce Smith,  
Director of Music/  
Youth Director

Toni Schlemmer,  
Director of Drama/  
Associate Director of Music

Connie Frierson  
Program Director/  
Seminary Intern

DeWayne Segafredo,  
Technical Director/  
Accompanist

Abbie Hoffman  
Assistant Youth Director

Michelle Shepler  
Staff Secretary

Karen Frank  
Treasurer

Greg Zimmerman  
Custodial Staff

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Jack Haubach  
David Sloat  
Web Servants

Nancy Mead  
Newsletter Editor



**Calvin Presbyterian Church** is a spiritual family sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ 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 &amp; Outreach</i>
Jim Willard	<i>Building &amp; Grounds</i>	Karen Albert	<i>Communications Committee</i>
Rosemary Shirley	<i>Mission</i>	John Heinbockel	<i>Worship &amp; Arts Committee</i>
Karen Albert	<i>Nominating Committee</i>	Shaney Mitchell	<i>Youth Formation &amp; Education</i>
Heidi Vandrak	<i>Nominating Committee</i>	Heidi Vandrak	<i>Nursery School Committee</i>
Peter Durny	<i>Personnel &amp; Finance</i>		
Mark Sebring	<i>Personnel &amp; Finance</i>		

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

**We're on the web!**

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*where faith, compassion, and authenticity meet*

**Calvin Presbyterian Church**



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