

Good News and good news

Volume 5, Number 8 • April 9, 2024

Being Pushed...

by Judi Sweeney

When I was in elementary school, my uncle (and godfather) invited us to join him for a day on his Cabin Cruiser. He lived further north on the river, but drove his boat south until he came to the public dock in our small, northern Illinois town. I was so excited. We had never been on such a glorious boat, and we had never been on the river that wound through our town. My uncle had told my mother to bring bathing suits and towels, and she did. But I didn't know that. I probably wouldn't have stepped onto that boat if I had known that. I didn't know how to swim. I could dog paddle, and I could float. I was still working on floating on my back, but all my practice was done in peaceful, shallow water in which I could always touch the bottom.

My uncle decided, though, that it was time I should learn to swim. It was important. It was vital to my existence. Mom had me put on my swimsuit so that I could sun on the deck. My uncle stopped the boat and anchored at a wide part of the river. "Look at this, Judi!" he called to me as he walked to the front of the boat. He was standing right where there was no boat wall to prevent my falling into the water. He called again. He had something "cool" to show me. I walked over timidly and with an equal amount of trepidation. I held onto the little bit of wall on my right and looked down into the water to see what had him so interested. He pushed me into the river.

I surfaced spitting water and calling for my parents. I saw my dad helping my uncle put the ladder out. It seemed like it was taking forever. I was dog-paddling for all my worth. My uncle was trying to convince my parents that he did this "for her own good." As he calmly explained, "She has to learn how to swim sometime, and now's as good a time as any other." Dad and my uncle got me onto the boat. It took years before I would even consider going on a boat again. I never trusted my uncle again.

Continued on page 4...

Our Passover Seder...

by Jane Ingersoll-Mahoney

You shall tell your child on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt'. You shall therefore keep this statute at its appointed time from year to year. Ex. 13:8, 10

Our church will, once again, celebrate Passover on Monday, April 22 at 6:00 pm in Fellowship Hall. Jesus celebrated this ritual feast every year of His life. In Exodus 13:8, God commands the Israelites to retell the story of their Exodus from Egypt. Even today, our Jewish brothers and sisters continue to retell the story at the Passover Seder. Having our roots so firmly planted in Jewish history, we too will join hands with them to commemorate this event. The difference is that our story includes the Christian story of the new covenant of Christ's blood shed for the forgiveness of sins.

The Passover Seder includes a full meal and dessert. It is a scripted event, meaning that throughout the meal there will be readings and prayers and various significant activities. Each person will be given a copy of the Haggadah (the full scripted ritual) which will make it easy to follow along.

The Passover Seder, celebrated together as a church family, is deeply spiritual and holds great significance according to scripture. It is a joyful celebration, and it is for the whole family. Children also play a part in the evening's activities.

Please sign up on the table as you enter Fellowship Hall over the next two Sundays to assure that you and your family have a place at our Passover table!

good news...

These are the birthdays of people age 65 and older and couples with anniversaries from April 8th through 30th.

Birthdays:

Bob Downie	April 13
Linda Hamill	April 16
Susan Jorritsma	April 25
Joan Calverley	April 26
Mike Palumbo	April 28

Anniversaries:

John & Rhonda Brault	April 13
Andy & Sue Caron	April 30

Altar Flowers

April 28 - Flowers are given by to celebrate the birthdays of Deb Dwelly on April 22 and Ray Dwelly on April 29 by their mother, Pauline Dwelly.

Flowers are also given with love by Sharon Combs to celebrate the birthday of her sister Judy and to also remember the birthday of her Father, Shaler Combs.

Please see the letter from Laurie Drake about her retirement from the Altar Flower Ministry on page 4.



New Small Groups • New Start Dates

Living Single...

If you are single and want to join other Christian singles for Bible Study and activities, then please consider joining **Living Single**, a new Bible Study and Activity Small Group that will begin on **Thursday, April 18th**. Each month, the group will meet in the Conference Room for a Bible Study on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays. The Bible Study is based on the book and video by Tony Evans called *Kingdom Single*. *Kingdom Single* will encourage you to see yourself as complete in Christ and free to serve Him. It will empower you to live as Kingdom men and women in a corrupt culture. On the 2nd, 4th, and 5th Thursday nights, they will be meeting to do activities in the area together.

The group is celebrating Christian singleness and growing strong relationships with other Christian singles. For more information, please contact Bridget Reynolds.

Overcomers...

A new women's Bible Study will be starting on **Monday, April 15th**. The group will be facilitated by Jeannine Fish, and they will be meeting at her home from 6:30 - 7:30 pm.

The first study will be from the new Lifeway Bible Study called *Life Under the Sun* by Hannah Anderson. Together, you will learn to name your anxieties, concerns, and disappointments. Then you'll discover how Ecclesiastes is more than self-help or good advice—how it frees us to ask the questions that Jesus Himself will eventually answer for each of us.

For more information, please contact Jeannine Fish.

Blue lettering indicates those groups that have updated information.

Adult Sunday School Class

This adult Bible Study meets weekly during the school year from 9:30 - 10:15 am in the Conference Room. Starting on January 21st, the class will be taught for awhile by Patti Barney using the book *Psalms 91*.

Monday Morning Women's Bible Study

Meeting weekly at Phyllis Cobiski's home at 23 Gilbert Street from 10 - 11:30 am. The group will be starting a new study called "*Breaking Free*" on January 8th. Contact Pauline Dwelly for information.

Women's Monday Afternoon Bible Study

This Bible Study will be meeting in the Conference Room on Monday afternoon from 12:30 - 2:00 pm. Contact Susan Gainley.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

This group meets the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month from 6 to 7:30 pm. The group meets in the Parlor. Contact Karen Bessette for more information.

Overcomers - NEW

This new women's Bible Study meets on Monday nights. See article above for details.

It's All About Jesus

This Bible Study group meets to learn more about Jesus through the Scriptures. The group meets on Tuesday evenings at 6 pm. Contact Jade Ford for more information.

Men's Bible Study

This group is currently in the book of Exodus, working through the Bible with a Bible Study entitled *The Essential 100*. We're discovering the 100 most inspirational passages in God's Word that truly identify the



Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. We meet on Tuesday from 6:30 to 8:00 pm in the Conference Room. Contact Brian Roth for details.

Understanding Spiritual Gifts - Zoom

This Zoom Bible study biweekly on Wednesday nights from 6:45 pm. They are Studying Spiritual Gifts, a study by Kay Arthur (available on Amazon). Contact Marcia Cummings to get a Zoom invite for the class as well as for more information.

Christian Yoga • Balanced in Him

Meeting every Wednesday night in the parlor. Contact Holly Kularski for information.

Prayer Group

This group meets weekly on Fridays at 9:30 - 11:00 am in the Conference Room. Contact Nancy Olson for details.

Celia Daniel's Bible Study

This Bible Study meets in the Multi-Purpose Room on Thursdays from 1:00 to 2:00 pm. Contact Celia Daniels for more information.

Sweeney Bible Study

We continue with our life application Bible studies. Our next meeting will be on April 11th and 25th. Contact Judi Sweeney for details.

Living Single - NEW

This new group for singles aged 30+ meets on Thursday nights. See the article above for more details.

Men's Saturday Breakfast and Study

The monthly men's breakfast and Bible Study is on the second Saturday of each month. Contact Dale Wadsworth for information. **The next breakfast is April 13th at 8:15 am.**

Drawing Closer

The Bible Journaling Group will meet in the Multi-Purpose Room from 9:30 - 11:00 am on Saturdays. Contact Deb Arnold.

Parents of Little Ones Bible Study

This new group will meet at the Hulsebus' home on the first Saturdays of the month. This group is starting a new study called "Grace Based Parenting" by Dr. Tim Kimmel. Please reach out to Brian or Jessie for more information.

Jr. KICK

This group for students in grades 6 through 8 meets from at 2:00 to 3:30 pm in Fellowship Hall.

Ignite

This group for high school students meets from 4 - 5:30 pm in Fellowship Hall.

Sharing Christ Through Cards

Watch the newsletter for the next session.

Joy 'n Hope

The Cancer Care Ministry supports people with cancer as well as their caregivers. They also pray for people whose life is impacted by cancer each month. See Melanie Silva Fortier for more information.

If you want information about a small group, please contact – Judi Sweeney, (508)383-5384, or jpsweeney58@charter.net

Age 4 - Grade 5

He is risen!!!

by Crystal Caron

On Easter Sunday, we celebrated by combining our classes to hear the story of the resurrection. The students made these beautiful daffodil crafts to remind them of our rebirth in Jesus. Happy Easter!



Age 4 - Grade 2

Praise Him in the Storm... *by Crystal Caron*

On Sunday, April 7, we used a big, blue quilt and tiny, little sponge boats to emphasize the storm Jesus and his friends experienced before Jesus calmed the waters. They definitely had some fun making waves! This was a great opportunity to learn about the storms of life and how Jesus is always there with us. We will praise Him in this storm!



Grade 3 - 5

God Is King...

by Susan Caron

On Sunday, April 7, 2024, we opened with prayer and watched The Biggest Story Video, "The Rise and Fall of King Saul." It is the story of Israel's first king. Samuel, the man God had appointed as judge in Israel, was getting old; and the people did not want his greedy and corrupt sons taking his place, so they asked Samuel for a king. Samuel felt rejected by the people, but God told Samuel they were really rejecting Him and to give them what they asked for. Samuel had tried to warn them what they would have to give up if they got their king, but they persisted. God told Samuel to anoint tall, handsome, Saul as king. Things started off all right, but Saul began to do things his own way, instead of God's way; and things went downhill from there.

We made crowns and swords labeled "God is King" to remind us that we should always obey God and not be swayed by the world. Do not give in to peer pressure, but follow God our King.



Save the Date ***Vacation Bible School***

This summer
July 22nd - 26th, 2024

Closing Ceremony on July 28th



Pushing and Evangelism

On Sunday at church, I was talking to one of my friends. She is on a journey now to build a fuller life for herself. We were talking about how other people see us. Do they see us as Christians without our even stating it? We both agreed that trying to push or shove people into faith simply doesn't work and is not God's way. But if we don't push our faith on non-believers, how will they ever find out the Good News. We agreed that people need to see God through us and how we show the love of God shining through all we do.

And then, as God always does with me when He gives me His idea for the newsletter, He confirmed it by having me "stumble" across an article about the different ways we can evangelize others. Based on a book by Bill Hybels, this article (<https://adosc.org/what-style-of-evangelism-best-fits-you/>) talked briefly about six different ways that people can effectively share Christ with others. These ways work with the talents and Spiritual Gifts God has given each of us. Just to be clear, not one of them mentions pushing or shoving.

The Direct Approach

The person who evangelizes in this style boldly proclaims the Gospel. He or she is compared to Peter who in Acts 2:39 said, *"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* (verse 39). This direct approach to the Good News occurred just after the Holy Spirit had come upon disciples in the form of tongues of fire. Following that, people from many nations had come into town and found miraculously that they could understand what was being said to them in another language. Then Peter proclaimed the Gospel. Believers would have the choice to listen, repent, and accept. That proclamation opened the time for conversation and conversion.

The Intellectual Approach

This evangelizing style is favored by believers who God has given the ability to think logically or to be an apologist. The writer C.S. Lewis was an evangelist in this mode. Peter also used this method of evangelism at times, *"But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you."* (1 Peter 3:15). Being able to argue one's faith in this way is important, but equally import is *how* it is done as detailed in the end of that verse, *"yet do it with gentleness and respect."*

The Testimonial Approach

The person who evangelizes through testimony has been given the gift of story-telling. Sharing your story with another is a natural and easy way to explain the power of a transformed life to others. In John 9, we read the story of the blind man whose sight is healed by Jesus. He tells his story to people in town, to his parents, to the Pharisees. While some believed him and followed Jesus, the Pharisees rejected the truth of the story they heard.

The Relational Approach

Some people's evangelistic abilities are seen in their ability to relate to other people. These people love being with others, and they want to share the joy of their faith with others they care about. Think of the calling of Levi (Matthew) to be a disciple in Luke 5:27-29, *"After this He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, 'Follow me.' And leaving everything, he rose and followed Him. And Levi made Him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them."* His first action after deciding to follow Christ was to find his friends to share the truth of the Gospel with the people he cared about.

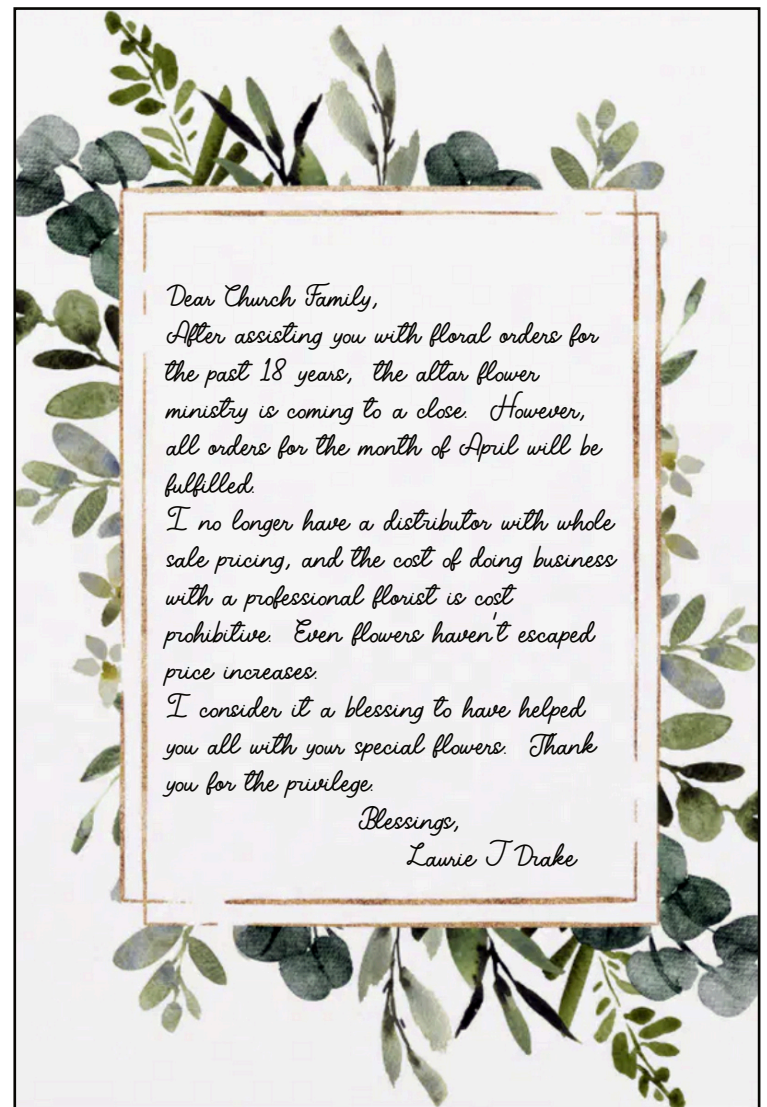
The Invitational Approach

This type of evangelism is about inviting people to church events such as retreats, Bible studies and other outreach activities. Even if you don't feel you have the right words, inviting people who need Jesus into the church places them with other believers who have the ability to share the Good News. Being made welcome opens the door for sharing the Good News. Romans 15:7 tells us to, *"Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."*

The Service Approach

Finally, if you are a person who naturally sees the needs of others and is called to help meet these needs, you are using service to open the door to the Good News for unbelievers. Doing something is more important than words in your world, especially as you begin to know the person. You know that service, though, just opens the door. Salvation comes through God's grace, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."* (Ephesians 3:8)

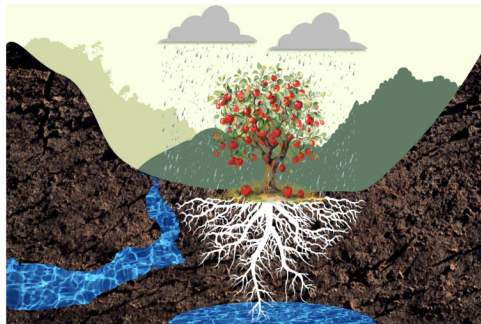
In the end, I learned how to swim and I actually became a scuba diver; but it took a long time because of that push. I was blessed by people who came beside me and taught me to swim; and in my faith life, I have been blessed by the people God sent to help me repent and make a personal commitment to Christ. This I have learned...pushing gets you nowhere.



Deeply Rooted Women's Retreat • April 6, 2024



58 women came together to celebrate deeply rooting their souls, minds and hearts into Christ. It was a day of fellowship, learning, prayer, worship, activities, crafts, stories, food, laughter, and even tears. God blessed us all in mighty ways! (and thanks to the men for their wonderful service!)



Annual Baptism Service • June 23, 2024

It's time to save the date for our annual Baptism Service held at the Sweeney's home on Lake Wickaboag in West Brookfield. Baptism in our church is an individual choice of a person who has made a personal decision to publicly affirm Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior. Babies and small children are dedicated by their parents in our church.

If you or your older child wish to be baptized, please see Pastor Joe or any Diaconate member as soon as possible. Please also talk to us if you have any questions.

Memorial Service for Heather Downie Saturday, April 20, 2024



Join us to celebrate the life of Heather Downie, 46, of North Brookfield. Heather passed away peacefully at home on Friday, March 22, 2024. She leaves her father Robert Downie, extended family and friends. She was predeceased by her brother Dana and mother Dianne.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, April 20, 2024 at 11:00 am. Burial will follow in South Cemetery in Oakham. Following the burial, there will be a reception back at the church.

Luke 11:33-54

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