

BIRCHWOOD BEACON

A Publication of Birchwood Presbyterian Church

February 2012

From Pastor Bruce Becker

Fifteen years ago we had a guest for Christmas dinner. His name was Kenny, and he lived in our inner-city neighborhood in Philadelphia. Kenny, in his mid-30's, was a substance abuse counselor and a "former" crack addict, "former" being a relative term and subject to redefinition by Kenny. He arrived late and uninvited. He had to work the late shift on Christmas Day as the supervisor of a drug rehabilitation halfway house. He had nowhere else to go for Christmas dinner, so he dropped in and left early. After dinner I paid for Kenny's transportation to North Philadelphia, and he was gone.

Our only other dinner guest that Christmas was my dad's brother, Uncle Bob. Uncle Bob was 61 years old and had lived his whole life in that city. For 30 years he had owned and operated a bar in Philly's African-American ghetto, and he could smell a con from four blocks away. As soon as Kenny left, Uncle Bob said, "You should not have let him in. That man did not deserve to be in your house. He is a crook and a con."

With that uncanny omniscience that comes from a lifetime of street smarts, Uncle Bob turned out to be right on the mark about Kenny. Kenny soon went back to his addiction. He lost his job and abused my friendship. It was not long before he was on the street and homeless again. Uncle Bob was absolutely right about Kenny's future, but he was wrong about Kenny's present, that Christmas dinner. Kenny was poor and had nowhere else to go for Christmas dinner. If Kenny did not deserve that Christmas dinner, what did that matter? Who gets Christmas because they deserve it? There is not a whisper in the Bible about the birth of Jesus being an excuse for a banquet of the deserving.

Jesus said (Luke 14:12-14), "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Imagine replying to Jesus, "Lord, to be honest, we probably won't obey this command much. But one thing that you can count on is this - the one day we will NEVER obey this command is the day we celebrate your birthday!"

(Continued on Page 2)

"We offer Hope, Community, Acceptance, and Purpose in a broken world."

(Continued from Page 1)

I am not addressing the problem of enabling another's addictive behavior and the cycle of codependency. That is a different subject. I was not Kenny's friend for long, a few months. When he abused and manipulated our relationship, I refused to comply with his requests, and he was gone. That is a different subject.

What I am pointing out is our resistance to aiding anyone without documenting both the genuineness of the need and the deservedness of the person. We have to talk ourselves into being generous. Jesus, on the other hand, healed ten lepers, nine of whom could not be bothered with saying, "Thank you." Jesus would not be deterred. He was a serial faith healer and a random generosity artist. Jesus loved bonuses and surprises.

The proof that we know the real Jesus is the depth of our desire to be like him, the efforts we take to surprise others and the sacrifices we make to share the wealth of his gifts to us. We should get a reputation. Others should start to wonder about us what they used to wonder about Jesus, "What's he up to, now?"

"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but in deeds and in truth."

1 John 3:17-18



In this month of focus on the heart, this artistic reminder that Jesus knows all about the joys and the wounds of every one of our hearts. For those who have lost ones you love, for those who have welcomed brand new life, and everyone in between-- a picture of hope and compassion from Jesus, the one who holds and became himself

"Broken & Beautiful"

Thank you for making Gallery Walk of Faith a mission outreach of our Birchwood Family.

We look forward with you to following God's lead into 2012.

Sincerely, Rosie Harris

Dear Church Family,

What wonderful gifts I have received from my church family! Thank you for your prayers and cards of encouragement. I'm doing much better and although healing is slow it is steady.

Thank you again,

Nancy Galbraith

A colorful drawing of a flower with pink petals and a yellow center, with green leaves. Below it, the text "a word of thanks to:" is written in a blue, cursive font.

a
word of
thanks to:

News of the Seasonaires

A Fellowship Ministry for those 55 and over

By Minister of Congregational Care, Bud Lee



Sorry if this seems like a weather report, but weather is front and center right now and we cannot ignore it. It was weather that forced us to cancel the January Seasonaires meeting on January 17; but hopefully it can be rescheduled. Right now we will concentrate on the February 21 gathering when Noemi Ban, who could not be here because of illness in October, plans to give her personal account of the Holocaust. Talk about rescheduling! We are doing it big; but is not that how life is? Things do not always go as we expect so it is good to have an alternate strategy. The Apostle Peter advised, "Simply concentrate on being completely devoted to Christ . . . Be ready at any time to give a quiet and reverent answer to any man who wants a reason for the hope that you have within you." I believe that applies to a lot of things like being ready to change our plans or objectives when God leads us in a different direction. And the secret to feeling positive and comfortable in this process is being devoted to Christ. Pray for that spirit! Enjoy the weather and plan to be with us in February, God willing.

Birchwood Women's Retreat

March 2-3 at Cedar Springs

To All BPC Women and their friends:



Our retreat planning committee is anxiously preparing for and planning another memorable overnight that is sure to strengthen your relationship with GOD and other women, you may or may not have even met yet! It's a time when women can be revealing outwardly and inwardly! We all share an inner beauty that God has created within each of us, yet often we are too busy to notice what others find so special about us! God always makes a point of being present at these re-"treats" and we hope you are planning to be present too!

We strongly encourage you to come Friday and Saturday night, but you won't be alone if you can only come Saturday morning to join us. We look forward to having you present either way!

This year's speaker is Debi Gavette. She is a wife, a mother and a woman willing to share her strengths and personal weaknesses so that we can relate and grow in our own relationships with family, friends and most importantly God. Please plan now to set some time aside....for YOU, by planning to join us the first weekend in March!

Education Hour Classes:

Sundays at 9:00 am

Children Kindergarten - 5th Grade:

with Mary Becker, Gail Northey, Janice Bethman
"The Life of Jesus"

Middle & High School Students:

Middle School with Julia Paxton:
a study of "The Life of Jesus"

High School with Nate Knudson:
a study on Romans 12
Youth Rooms

For Adults:

"Study of Ephesians"

with Pastor Bruce Becker
Palm Room

"The Screwtape Letters - Part 2"

with Dave Ruble and Chuck Kingsford-Smith
Almond Room

"Emotionally Healthy Spirituality"

with Peter Becker
Chapel

Love INC Ministry Needs:



Love INC
Love In the Name of Christ

- **Office Help:** answering phones at our office, computer data entry, publisher, and Word processing.
- **Outreach Gap Ministries:** Prayer ministry – receive once a week email prayer list.
- **Furnished with Love** needs men to pick up and deliver furniture on Tuesday and once a month on Saturday.
- **Budget Boot Camp** needs coaches and assistants to serve in this life changing ministry. Groups meet in Bellingham and Lynden. Training is provided.
- **Childcare Workers** needed for Budget Boot Camp sessions. Great outreach opportunity for small groups.

Call 671-6201 for more information on these opportunities.

Adult Ministries

The 3 Adult Christian Education groups are about halfway through their term, which tracks the public school calendar. The Chapel group has just started a new class with Pete Becker as instructor: "Emotionally Healthy Spirituality", studying (and practicing) ways God wants us to grow inwardly as we follow and obey Him. This class will continue until about the end of March, so there will be time for you to participate in most of it if you connect right away. See Pete for details.

Another worthy adult ministry is the Men's Group, who started the year in mid January with a delicious breakfast (prepared by the Coffingers), a talk by Pastor Bruce, prayer, and Ron Bailey leading a planning session for the Men's retreat. This retreat is on the Friday and Saturday before Mother's Day in May.

The men are looking forward to monthly gatherings, with perhaps a special one each quarter. Stay tuned for details!



Bible Study Fellowship



Bible Study Fellowship is studying the Acts of the Apostles this year. BSF is an interdenominational Bible study offering day classes for women with a preschool program and offering evening classes for women with a school program for school-aged students. Bellingham Day Women's Class will have an introduction class on Thursday, February 2, at 9:10 am at Bellingham Covenant Church. Bellingham Evening Women's class will have an introduction class on Monday, February 6, at 6:55 pm at Birchwood Church. Questions? Contact Janet Robinson at 398-9899 (Day Class) or LeAnn Young at 733-6712 (Evening Class). We would love to have you join us! Men, if you would like to attend a BSF class, please go to www.bsfinternational.org for location of classes near you or call Janet or LeAnn with questions.



Save the Dates!

Be Sure to Get the Following Dates on Your Family Calendar!

- Women's Retreat: March 2 & 3
- Men's Retreat: May 11 & 12
 - Youth Sunday: May 20
- Vacation Bible School: July 9-13
 - All Church Picnic: July 15



Birchwood Book Group

The past few weeks have been perfect for "curling up with a good book".

On February 16 we will meet at the home of Betty Smith to discuss *Digging to America* by Anne Tyler. The story is of two families that meet at the Baltimore airport, each family anticipating the arrival of an adopted daughter from Korea. Read about how these families meet and their lives intertwine.

Also in February those that wish to will participate in the Whatcom Reads event put on by the Whatcom County library system. This years book is *In the Presence of the Enemy* by Elizabeth George. The author will be visiting Bellingham February 21 - 23. Stay tuned for information regarding a group participation at one of the discussions presented by the Whatcom County library system.

Future Reading:

- March: *"Letters From the Lost"* by Wilkes
- April: *"The Big Rock Candy Mountain"* by Stegner

Children's Ministry News

By Julia Paxton, CM/MS Director

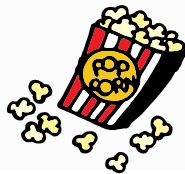


Family Fun Night



Movie Night!
Friday, February 24
6:30 to 8:30 pm

Come and join in the fun at Family Fun Night on Friday, February 24 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm in the Family Life Center. We will watch a family friendly movie together. Snack and beverages will be provided.



Parents' Night Out

Friday, April 20
6:30 to 8:30 pm



This is the night you have been waiting for! This is a time for parents to drop their children off at BPC where they will be fed, tired out, entertained and well cared for while you have an opportunity to relax, shop or just enjoy each other's company! The best part of this night is it is FREE!

Pre-registration is required. Please call Julia at 733-8860 or email: julia@bpchurch.org

Sunday School Achievement

Bible Verse Memorization
by Gail Northey

Mary Becker, Janice Bethman and I have been team teaching the K-5th Grade Sunday school class since September, and have had such fun getting to know the kids and pooling our strengths and abilities. One of the main things we have been working on is memorizing Bible verses, related to lessons we've been learning. I would like to spotlight Quentin Erickson, whom I have considered an "extra nephew" all of his life! Quentin has distinguished himself in memory work, not only by memorizing more verses than anyone in his class so far, but also by being able to explain what the verses mean. And, he recently astutely pointed out how earlier verses learned connected to ones he'd just learned, and they all connected to others, fitting into the whole big picture of the Gospel. Quentin also has been helping other kids memorize their verses, as well as asking pertinent questions and making observations. His latest big memory accomplishment was reciting the 23rd Psalm for the class, with little assistance or word prompts. While all the kids in the class are special and unique, I wanted to share how proud "Auntie Gail" is of Quentin for his hard work and the young man he is becoming. He is really beginning to learn to live out what all those wonderful Bible verses he's learned mean. Psalm 119:11 "I have hidden your word in my heart, that I may not sin against you." Pray for all the kids as they hide God's word in their hearts!



High School Update

By Peter Becker, High School Director



Because of the snow storm, we did not get to go up to Mt Baker to have our snow day. Instead we stayed in town. We sledded down the hills by the baseball field on Squalicum Parkway. A good time was had by all.

We had our second Sabbath Wednesday of the year on January 11. We listened to music by Aaron Strumpel, wrote in our journals, wrote letters to Chirange, played music on a piano, read the Psalms, etc. All-in-all we had a great time being with our Father in Heaven.

Also because of the snow storm, our healthy relationships talks/discussions provided by Relate, a ministry of the Whatcom County Pregnancy Clinic, will be pushed back a week. We are still scheduled to do four weeks of talks culminating with a video/discussion of "Speaking a Mystery", a video done by Presbyterians for Renewal.

On March 10th-11th we will be participating in World Vision's 30 Hr Famine. We are starting our fast early Saturday morning and ending our fast at lunch on Sunday. More details will be provided in the next Beacon.

The first week of April (Spring Break), we will be going back to Fir creek for our local mission trip. At Fir creek we will be acting as camp counselors at a day camp for the week, providing programs and Bible studies for children 5-12. After the kids go home we will stay at the Firs, growing more closely connected in community with one another and with God. Last year was a blast! I am sure if you ask Caleb (with a C) Cooper, he would love to tell you about it. Also in April, the High School will be going back to the Firs for a Spring retreat from the 20th-22nd.

bpcYG is going back to Creation! Save the date (July 18-21) and start saving up!

Middle School Update

By Julia Paxton, CM/MS Director



After finishing a great study last fall on Ephesians and the Armor of God, the middle school students are moving on to a new study on the life of Christ. What's the difference between prophecies and predictions? What was Jesus like as a 12 year old boy? Was Jesus ever tempted to sin? These are some of the questions we've gone over so far, and the middle schoolers are doing great! It is an amazing privilege to discover and explore who our High King is together with the students.

Despite a missed Wednesday for snow, youth activities are going strong. MLK Jr. Day brought a ton of snow and a ton of teenagers to BPC to gather for an awesome day of sledding and building snow men. January 11 was our second Sabbath Wednesday of the school year - an extended time of rest, prayer and worship, reading Scripture, and singing together every seventh youth group. Check out some of the upcoming youth events for this Winter & Spring:

- **February 10-12:** Middle School Winter Retreat
- **March 10-11:** 30 Hour Famine
- **April 4:** Spring Break - no youth group
- **May 20:** Youth Sunday



(From left to right) Kaili Laakso, Makayla Stahl, Jacob Souza (in armor), Ian Tomberlin (behind Jacob) and Hannah Reidel

Whatcom County Pregnancy Clinic

By Matahna Erickson

Whatcom County Pregnancy Clinic (WCPC) is a nonprofit medical clinic in Bellingham. The Clinic has been providing valuable services to the community since 1991. They provide pregnancy tests and related services to women, teens, and families. All services are available at no charge with same-day appointments available in most cases.



Their services include:

- Pregnancy Tests
- Options Information¹
- Ultrasounds for positive test clients²
- Preparing for parenting programs

WCPC hours are: Monday - Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Closed during major holidays.

WCPC provides information on all options but does not perform or refer for abortions. WCPC offers limited diagnostic obstetrical ultrasounds to their patients who have received a positive pregnancy test and are not already receiving prenatal care

I am involved with Whatcom County Pregnancy Clinic because I feel that it is important to give positive education to pregnant women with a Christian connection. I really believe in the clinic and how they help people no matter their circumstance or age.

We have the opportunity to support this great non-profit organization in a personal way every spring. The WCPC has their most interactive fundraiser in the **Walk for Life**. It is a great chance for families to get out and show their support. Then in the fall the WCPC hosts a Banquet at the Lakeway Best Western. At the banquet there is the opportunity to learn about what goes on daily and annually at the clinic; also they often have a few clients share about their experiences. Dinner and company is always enjoyed.

Please join me in supporting the WCPC. If you have any questions contact WCPC (360) 671-9057, or Matahna Erickson (360) 398-0153.

Volunteers Needed:

The Whatcom County Pregnancy Clinic is looking for women to serve as peer-advocates to those facing an unplanned pregnancy. Please contact Christy Tucker for more details at 671-9057 ext 17 or christyt@whatcomclinic.com. Volunteer training begins soon.

AN INVITATION

By Mary Walsh, Director of Worship and Music

ASH WEDNESDAY

To: You and Your Friends
What: BPC Ash Wednesday Worship Service
When: February 22, 2012 at 7:00 pm

Purpose: To start the forty-day period of Lent, which is traditionally a season for personal and corporate remembrance of what the Lord did for us through the cross and his resurrection. It is a time for repentance/renewal; a period of dying to self and rebirth in Christ. It is a period of time to prepare our hearts and minds to fully appreciate the joy of the resurrection that we will celebrate on Easter Sunday.

In observing Lent, we join with Christians through the ages and around the world as we seek to enrich and expand our relationship with God and with one another. Lent provides an opportunity to strengthen our relationship with Christ through disciplines of the soul and body through prayer, reading and mediating on Scripture, fasting, and works of mercy - which are the traditional disciplines of Lent.

During the Ash Wednesday service, we will come together as the body of Christ, to remember that Jesus suffered, died and was resurrected so that each of us can be redeemed if we invite him to be our Lord and Savior. During the worship service, if you elect to, you will have the opportunity to have ashes imposed on your forehead in the shape of the cross as a sign of your mourning and repentance before God for your sins. One of the key scriptures of Ash Wednesday is Mark 1:15 which says *Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel*. This worship service can be a much needed reminder for all of us that we are called to lead changed lives. Please save the date and plan to attend the Ash Wednesday service with the rest of your church family.

Bells Will Be Ringin'?



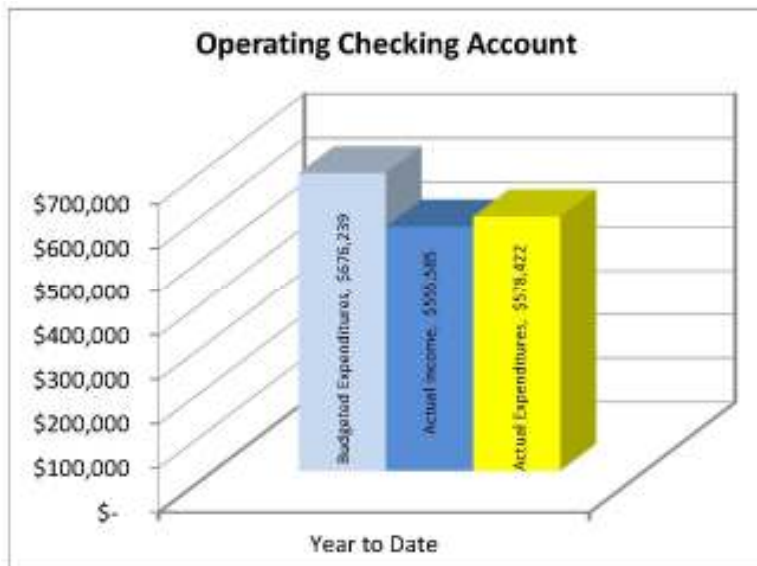
If you are interested in playing in a bell choir this spring, please contact Mary Walsh (733-8860 ext 109 or mary@bpchurch.org) to express your interest.

No prior experience in a bell choir is needed but the ability to read music and keep a beat are a necessary requirement.

Worship Volunteers Needed



If you would like to help lead worship by being a Children's Moment presenter, participating on a worship team, being part of the Tech Team who run sound, lighting and video, or as a choir member please contact Mary Walsh, BPC Worship and Music Director, at 733-8860 ext 109 or mary@bpchurch.org.



2011 OPERATIONS VERSUS BUDGET

Our Operating Checking Account expenditures were "under-budget" for the budget but this is primarily due to the fact that we are not incurring \$5000/month for a budgeted family/youth pastor position. As previously presented to the congregation, Session agreed that the family/youth position will not be further acted upon until BPC has at least a \$50,000 Operating Reserve balance.

Our 2011 actual operations receipts was down \$45,446 (\$555,586 in 2011 v. \$601,032 in 2010). Due to the fact the expenditures exceeded receipts by \$22,837, we had to borrow from Birchwood's "restricted" funds totaling \$11,248. The "restricted" funds were donated in the past for purposes other than general operations. The loan will be repaid as monthly tithes and offerings (allocated to Operations) exceed operating expenditures.

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Please keep in your prayers the tithes and offerings. The Operating Reserves are at \$0. We need our members to give on a regular basis throughout the year.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN ENDS APRIL 2012

Additionally, remember our 3-year Capital Campaign (which started May 2009 and ENDS April 2012). Please catch up on your pledge giving as soon as possible. If you do not know your outstanding pledge balance, please contact Allyson and she will provide you that information.

BPC Facilities Report

By Claude Robinson and Dick Stark



FACILITIES COMMITTEE:

We still need new people on the Facilities Committee because old members have moved away. If you feel called to work on the facilities, Contact Dick Stark at 734-5478. We will especially need a team of people to do exterior trim painting late this Spring.

BUS MINISTRY:

The 1996 Ford Goshen was purchased by BPC on Wednesday, December 28. We were pleased that EK Coaches took care of three concerns we had: 1. A left rear seal leak, 2. A power steering pump leak, and 3. Clearance lights that were not working. EK Coaches made all modifications we had requested, including removal of two rear seats, to make us legal, and installing very useful hand railings near the entrance doors. We feel they treated us quite fairly in the negotiations, and conceded on several points, to our satisfaction. There are a few things that will need attention in the next few months, but they are not immediate. We will also need to determine how to attach additional signage to the bus, since the removable magnetic signs will only work on the driver's door. A rear bumper also needs to be painted. Purchase price was \$11,000. We added a back-up camera for safety at a cost of \$840, also 14 retractable seat belts, for \$47. Licensing and taxes added another \$1300. We surprisingly got a trade in value of \$1,000 for our old bus. Final price paid was \$13,050. The bus fund still has \$2000 for future major maintenance. Many thanks for the help of Dick Stark, Jim Zander, Ron Bailey, Bruce Cox, and Ted Genger for their help on this project.

BUILDING:

The building is handling the cold weather well so far. The improvement in the insulation several years ago seems to be helping. There has been no further vandalism this month after the broken lights last month.

January Session Meeting Review

By Kathleen Hunter, Clerk of Session



This is intended to provide an informal and timely review of the monthly Session meeting. Personnel issues are considered confidential and will not be included in this review. Note: MSA is an abbreviation of "Moved, Seconded, and Approved."

CLERKS REPORT: 177 people were served communion on January 1, 2012.

MAJOR BUSINESS:

After Allyson's computer crashed we purchased a new computer and hired Dick Marcum to configure her data base to handle out data entry needs. We were able to keep all the costs to less than \$2000.00.

FACILITIES COMMITTEE:

Dick thanked Bruce Cox for taking part in crucial phone conversations during the purchase of our new bus. We are looking into signage for the bus. There is still a balance of \$2000.00 in that account.

Claude reported that there was a heating malfunction that has been fixed. He reminded session that our building is getting older and will in need of more repairs, as time goes on.

PASTORS REPORT:

Bruce is devising a more comprehensive curriculum starting with the kids and going on through adults.

Bud told us of several new people attending Birchwood. He also reminded us of his upcoming vacation at the end of the month.

400 Meadowbrook Court
Bellingham, WA 98226
phone (360) 733-8860
www.bpchurch.org



Office Hours

Monday - Thursday 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Friday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm

Sunday Schedule

NOTE: A well-staffed nursery and pre-school program are provided during the worship service and education hour.

Education For All Ages 9:00 am
Worship 10:15 am
Fellowship 11:30 am

March Beacon deadline is:
February 20, 2012

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Ash Wednesday Service

Wednesday, February 22
7:00 pm
Worship Center

ASH
WEDNESDAY

Join us as we begin Lent, a season of anticipation and preparation for Easter. During this service we take time to corporately acknowledge and even mourn our sinfulness and mortality, using the imposition of ashes to physically and visually remind us that we all are but dust and marked with sin. Together we repent and then, by partaking in communion together, we celebrate that through Christ we are not mired in ashes but resurrected into new life in the Body of Christ.