

BIRCHWOOD BEACON

A Publication of Birchwood Presbyterian Church

March 2012

From Pastor Bruce Becker

Not since the national brain freeze over the Clinton perjury trials and impeachment have I seen such appalling incidents of Groupthink, the replacement of thinking with unexamined values and prejudices.

First, the State of Washington has legally redefined the word “marriage.” The state has an obligation to maintain the rights and well-being of her citizens. Kudos to Olympia for that. However, the state does not have the power to change the meanings of words. For 6000 years until recently the word “marriage” included a man and a woman in its definition. Even the decadent Roman Empire, which practiced widespread sexual profligacy and whose emperor, Nero, married males in separate weddings (so Nero could be a bride and a groom), even Rome did not change the meaning of the word.

When governments change the meanings of words (such as at Auschwitz, where the sign over the gate read, “Work liberates”) evil happens.

When the word “marriage” changes, we are likely to forget that each of us on the planet is the product of a man and a woman. The mating of any species requires different sexes and it is mating that produces children. Same sex marriage is not mating, period. Same sex marriage does not produce children except by biological engineering. More same-sex relationships equal fewer children. Does our society want fewer children? Is that not an ethical decision about the value of children in our society? We Americans want more money and fewer children!

We are likely to forget that the sexes are not interchangeable (a political idea now being promoted in England). We are likely to forget that the stability of Western society is attributable to the historical fact that the west was most thoroughly converted by this moral norm of “one woman-one man” faithful within marriage. Such was not the case in Asia and Africa where women were considered property into and through the twentieth century. The West refuses to acknowledge that the rest of the world does not always share our values, and that there are moral, historic reasons for that, marriage being one.

Second, the Obama administration mandated that certain Catholic institutions violate their own consciences and even pay the bills for those who violate Catholic doctrine. Vice President Joe Biden, a Catholic, opposed the mandate vigorously. Yet the Obama administration believed that its own religious values abetting the right for a woman’s health care trumped and squashed Catholic doctrine.

Jews and the National Association of Evangelicals joined the Catholic Bishops’ opposition to the Obama mandate. The federal government and the bishops are searching for a compromise.

Then in Nashville, TN, Vanderbilt University, a private university, has forbidden Christian student groups from electing for themselves leaders who fit the groups’ own definition of “Christian.”

(Continued on Page 2)

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

(Continued from Page 1)

This paves the way for an atheist to be elected president of an Inter-Varsity or Campus Crusade chapter.

Bible verses had to be eliminated from group constitutions. Bible quotations and even Bible reading were eliminated from leader tasks or qualifications.

Vanderbilt was reacting to defend itself from a discrimination law suit by a practicing homosexual who sought to be an elected Christian leader. As a private university, Vanderbilt was within its rights to ban all religious groups from campus. But such religious intolerance did not agree with its reputation as a welcoming, pluralistic place. Vanderbilt's solution? Keep the groups but change their religion into a pluralist freethink, a nondistinct Christianity which believes in all religions was okay. However, pious, orthodox, conscientious Christian meetings were banned. A Chinese Christian student, who has lived his life as an underground Christian under totalitarian rule in mainland China, suggested a similarity between clandestine Christian groups at Vanderbilt and the persecuted church in China. He was scoffed by the university provost.

These three incidents evidence a widespread cultural hostility to distinct, exclusive Christian thinking. Our religious freedom is being attacked by a shambling, cultural relativity which condescends to Christians until an impasse. At an impasse it presumes upon its own widespread acceptance in order to bully believers into conformity. This pluralism falsely claims that Christians do not think. When Christians want to discuss and argue logically, then pluralism appeals to sentiment and the thoughtless prejudices with which the public has been brainwashed over the last twenty or thirty years.

This week somebody asked me about the future of the Presbyterian denomination. Well, now I am more concerned about our nation. What to do? Pray. And learn. Learn the truth. The truth about anything and especially about the faith. Pluralism is the result of laziness and the popularity of idolatrous assumptions. Pluralism dislikes being tied down by facts and history and tradition, which is power received first-hand. Prayer and truth and logic, not popularity, are our weapons.

*“Good leaders sometimes - in fact, quite often - lose in the material world.
They go right ahead anyway, knowing that they are going to lose...
They are committed to defending the right values.
And the right values are seldom safe, easy or advantageous.”
General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, US Army, ret.*

Dear Friends of Gallery Walk of Faith,

Just as your prayers opened the doors in December and welcomed many in to see Christ in word, art and others' lives, your prayers are coveted for this time *after* the glory of what seen and unseen things God did during that time. We need his direction, spiritual maturity for me and the others who may be called to the ministry anew, and clear focus on his word and what will come from seeking truth. For patience in waiting out what his will is and not imposing our own. Please pray as you are lead for what he would have.

Gratefully, Rosie Harris



News of the Seasonaires

A Fellowship Ministry for those 55 and over

By Minister of Congregational Care, Bud Lee

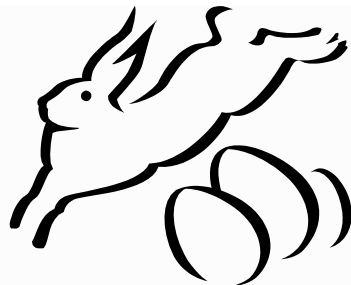


What we heard at our February Seasonaires meeting about the Holocaust of the last century is something we needed to hear and feel so that we could enter into the pathos and deep hurt of a people who endured such a hideous treatment at the hands of human beings moved by hatred and a false ideology. How could that happen among civilized people? That is a question we need to answer and ponder until we are motivated to some kind of action and education to see that it never occurs again! Thanks to people like Noemi Ban who told the story to us and keeps it alive to motivate us to sympathy and involvement in caring for humankind everywhere.

Next Meeting:

Next month on March 20 we will meet again when the Birchwood choir will be the program. They will do a mini concert and their accompanist, Michael Refvem, will perform one of the great works of one of our world renowned composers. If you enjoy music you will be wonderfully rewarded if you come.

Easter Breakfast



It's a hop, skip and a jump away from this year's Easter Breakfast! Please join us on Easter Sunday for a special breakfast for family and friends.

Menu

- Scrambled Eggs & Ham
- Roasted rosemary & garlic potatoes
- Great Harvest Breads
- Juice, Coffee & Tea
- Cocoa Bar for kids of all ages

Breakfast will be served from 8:30 am to 10:00 am in the Family Life Center with the worship service following at 10:15 am. Family friendly and affordable, breakfast is \$5 per person or \$15 per family.

Birchwood 101 in March!

**Sundays March 11, 18 and 25
with Pastor Bud Lee**

Birchwood 101 will be offered again in March on Sundays March 11, 18 and 25 at 9:00 am in the Cedar Room. If you are a newcomer to Birchwood Church or you are interested in becoming a member this class would be helpful.

We will deal with basic beliefs and practices of the church, what programs we have and our vision and philosophy of ministry. Besides this you will meet the elders and staff of the church. We hope you will consider coming. Contact Pastor Bud Lee if you have questions or would like to enroll.

Adult Education at Birchwood!

By Elder Chuck Kingsford-Smith



As we have passed the halfway mark for this year's adult education season, we want to thank both the teachers and discussion leaders for their stimulating material, and also all the adults who have faithfully attended the sessions.

A look ahead reveals that some interesting and valuable courses are coming up, starting around the 1st of April. Our much-appreciated veteran teacher, Mike Pooleon, has prepared a new historical series, this time on that crucial period of history called the Reformation. Mike recently taught about the 1000 years of church history from the fall of Rome, and the reformation is a dramatic climax to that period.

We're not quite ready to announce the details yet, but another new and valuable course will be on the subject of prayer.

If you haven't been attending any of the three adult groups, we have to say that you've been missing some great opportunities both to learn and to fellowship with fellow believers. There's still time to join in!

Education Ministries

Just a Bit of Colored Paper?
C.S. Lewis – from Mere Christianity
Submitted by Mary Becker

Bruce gave me "A Year with C. S. Lewis: Daily Readings from His Classic Works" (HarperSanFrancisco) for Christmas. The reading for January 18 truly resonated with me as a strong propionate for life-long Christian education. As we study God's Word at 9:00 am on Sunday mornings at BPC, it is our desire that we are transformed by His Word.



I remember once when I had been giving a talk to the R.A.F., an old, hard-bitten officer got up and said, "I've no use for all that stuff. But, mind you, I'm a religious man too. I know there's a God. I've felt Him: out alone in the desert at night: the tremendous mystery. And that is just why I don't believe all your neat little dogmas and formulas about Him. To anyone who's met the real thing they all seem so petty and pedantic and unreal!"

Now in a sense I quite agreed with that man. I think he had probably had a real experience of God in the desert. And when he turned from that experience to the Christian creeds, I think he really was turning from something real to something less real. In the same way, if a man has once looked at the Atlantic from the beach, and then goes and looks at a map of the Atlantic, he also will be turning from something real to something less real: turning from real waves to a bit of colored paper. But here comes the point. The map is admittedly only colored paper, but there are two things you have to remember about it. In the first place, it is based on what hundreds and thousands of people have found out by sailing the real Atlantic. In that way it has behind it masses of experience just as real as the one you could have from the beach; only, while yours would be a single glimpse, the map fits all those different experiences together. In the second place, if you want to go anywhere, the map is absolutely necessary. As long as you are content with walks on the beach, your own glimpses are far more fun than looking at a map. But the map is going to be more use than walks on the beach if you want to get to America.



Time to Spring Ahead

Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, March 11.

Pinochle Anyone?



Friday, March 30!

Do you like to play pinochle but you haven't played for a long time? Do you like to play card games but have never played pinochle?

No Problem!

We will be having a pinochle night, Friday, March 30 at 7:00 pm in the Palm Room. We have "cheat sheets" and experienced players willing to teach the game. For information please call Judy Stahlbush or Mary Becker. Bring your favorite snack to share, and come to have an evening of fun and fellowship.

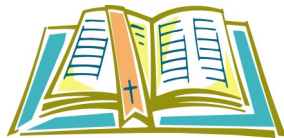
Your BPC Library Parish Nurse Resource Library



Did you know there is a library inside our church library? It's called the Parish Nurse Resource Library and it's found under the window in the far corner. There are several books there that may be of help to you. Some of the subjects covered are first aid, heart disease, care giving, depression, aging, Alzheimer's disease and pregnancy.

There are so many treasures in your library. You may be surprised at how your life will be enriched by the books donated by BPC friends of the library.

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, March 1 at 9:10 am at Bellingham Covenant Church. Bellingham Evening Women's class will have an introduction class on Monday, March 5 at 6:55 pm at BPC.

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 ww.bsfinternational.org for location of classes near you or call Janet or LeAnn.

Here's Some Good News!



Women's Retreat Rescheduled

This Year's Birchwood Women's Spring Retreat, "The Changing of Seasons, Hearts and Women" has been rescheduled! To ensure more women had the opportunity to experience and grow through this unique time together, the new date is one day only, Saturday, April 28.

New Location: the Firs Conference Center, Cable Street in Bellingham.

Please Mark Your Calendars now because this is truly your last chance to hear Debi Gavette from Stoney Ridge Farms. Lunch will be served and the cost is \$20.00 per person. We encourage this as an outreach and would love to have you bring a girlfriend. They will be glad you invited them!

Look for the New Sign up and Registration to Start March 11 in the Church Foyer!

Children's Ministry News

By Julia Paxton, CM/MS Director



How Can You Get Involved in the 30 Hour Famine?

The 30 Hour Famine is a time for kids, youth, families, the Church to come together in fasting, praying and serving in an effort to raise support for feeding the hungry around the world with World Vision. It is a time of experiencing hunger, learning about hunger, and fighting hunger. Here are a few ways that people at Birchwood can participate:

- Have elementary-aged kids? Plan a meal on Saturday, March 10 of just beans, rice, and water-what much of the world lives on day to day.
- Pray for those that are fasting. Pray for those around us and around the world where survival and sufficient food is an unknown.
- Join the youth group for a walk Saturday afternoon, March 10. We will be walking from Birchwood to Cornwall Park and back (about 4 miles round trip). This is the approximate distance many people walk just to get clean water everyday.
- Sponsor a student in the youth group and donate money to World Vision. There will be a table set up outside the Worship Center with more information.

Parents' Night Out



April 20
6:30-8:30 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 or Matahna at
733-8860 ext. 210
or email: julia@bpchurch.org

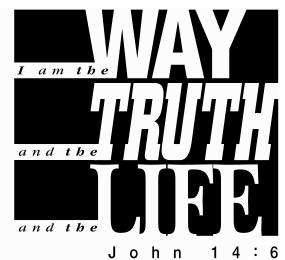
Meet a Sunday School Student!

By Gail Northey

Our March Sunday School Student of the Month is Claar French. We wanted to spotlight Claar, because she is one very special young lady. Claar is intelligent, sweet, gentle and beautiful, and is beginning to emerge from her "shell." Lately she's even been helping the ushers pass out bulletins before church services. She definitely has the "cute factor" going in her favor as she does that!

Claar is getting to be a very strong reader, and is doing well memorizing Bible verses, even coming up with flash cards to aid her memory. This is a study skill that will help her throughout her life. Claar has even invited friends to join her for Sunday School. When asked which memorized Bible verse meant the most to her so far, Claar mentioned John 14:6 - Jesus replied, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father, except by me." She stated that it was her favorite because it says that Jesus is the only way - one to follow.

Good observation, Claar, keep growing sweet one!



High School Update

By Peter Becker, High School Director



Greetings BPC family. I hope you all have had a good winter and if you haven't, you are in luck because Spring is right around the corner. With Spring around the corner the youth schedule is about to heat up. March 10-11 is the 30 Hour Famine in which we fast for 30 hours while doing service projects that revolve around food, learn about some countries that are suffering from the grips of famine, and raise money so World Vision can go in and love our global neighbors. This year World Vision is using money raised by the 30 Hour Famine in the Horn of Africa. However, seeing we have connections with Haiti and we want to make a concerted effort to remember the past, we are continuing to raise money for those still suffering in Haiti.

During the students' spring break, a group of us are going to be counselors at Fircreek's day-camp. Last year, four of us went and we had an amazing time. There were a lot of laughs, spiritual and emotional growth, and good friendships made. The Spirit was present during that time and it was obvious. Please pray for us as we go back, that relationships would continue to be made and that the Spirit would continue to be present.

A very big thank you/shout out to Nate Knudson. Nate has been teaching high school Sunday School for me while I have been teaching an adult Sunday School class entitled, "Emotionally Healthy Spirituality". Nate has been going through Romans 12. This has been a huge blessing because every week for youth group we read Romans 12:9-21 to remind the group what kind of culture we are striving to be. So this has been a time not just in Bible study, but a deepening of our culture as a group. Please continue to pray for us as we try to fight the good fight. Pray that we are quick to encourage and that we would love our enemies and even those that just straight up annoy us. Thank you so much for all of your encouragements and all the ways you have been praying for us.

Middle School Update

By Julia Paxton, CM/MS Director



Last month was the first retreat of the school year for the middle school students. A dozen brave souls headed down to Camp Casey Conference Center on Whidbey Island for an overnight of bunker exploring, pirate avoiding, flag capturing (in the snow at midnight, no less), 1st John reading, "suh-mores" eating, and t-shirt blinging. We were favored with good weather and great volunteers. To close out our time at the retreat the kids took rocks from the beach, wrote their sins on the rocks, took time to confess their sins to the Lord and ask for His grace and forgiveness, and then...launched them hundreds of feet into the Puget Sound via a three-person sling shot! It was fantastic. Thank you for continuing to remember the youth in your prayers!

Looking Ahead...Save these Dates!

30 Hour Famine:

March 10-11 7:00 am (Sat) to 1:00 pm (Sun)

Spring Break:

No Youth Group on April 4

Mariner's Game:

May 5

Youth/Children's Sunday:

May 20



World Vision's
30 HOUR FAMINE

On March 10 and 11

Our BPC Youth will . . .



Because 30 Hours
Can Change
the World!

Ways You Can Be Involved!

Sponsor a Student:

Donate money to a participating student.
The money we raise is going to World Vision's continued effort in Haiti.
In January 2010 an earthquake hit Haiti which killed 316,000 people,
injured over 300,000 and left 1 million
homeless. 500,000 remain homeless today.
Recently a cholera outbreak took another 6,000 lives.

Donate Non-Perishable Food:

We will be collecting food for the Bellingham Food Bank.

Pray for Us!

Pray for our students and World Vision as we go hungry so others can eat.

For more information please contact Julia or Pete.

Too Much Worship?

By Mary Walsh, Director of Worship & Music



Holy Week

Holy Week presents us with five chances to come together in worship. Is that too much worship to handle in one week or should we make every effort to participate in as many Holy Week worship services as possible? Was it too much for Jesus to suffer on the cross and have the connection between himself and God broken as he took on the sins of you and me? Obviously not, since he willingly did die on the cross and became the perfect sacrificial lamb so that you and I could be redeemed and restored as God's own child. How much easier is it for us to rearrange our lives and attend as many of the worship opportunities as possible? Obviously, our role in obedience to God's call is much, much easier than what Jesus had to do for us. Please prayerfully consider attending the mid-week opportunities in addition to the Sunday opportunities you will have during the upcoming Holy Week.

Listed below is a brief synopsis of each of the Holy Week worship services and what they commemorate about our Savior Jesus' sacrifices that He willingly made for each of us.

Sunday, April 1, 10:15 am – Palm Sunday: Remembers the day Jesus publicly acknowledged that he was the promised king of Israel, and the Messiah promised in Zechariah 9:9, *"...See your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey..."* This act, that Jesus chose to do at this time, set the murderous intent of the Jewish leaders into full swing.

Thursday, April 5, 7:30 pm – Maundy Thursday: Remembers the final meal Jesus had with his disciples before he was arrested and crucified. During this meal, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, established the first communion, and predicted his betrayal by Judas. On this night, Jesus also went to pray and prepare himself for the ordeal he knowingly accepted that he must face in order to redeem mankind.

Friday, April 6, 6:00 am to Noon – Stations of the Cross: Areas around the worship center are set up that depict different ordeals suffered by Jesus on the path to his crucifixion on Good Friday. There are special readings from Scripture at each station and suggestions of what to meditate on, pray about and be humbled by at each station. It is a silent, individual worship event that intensely acknowledges the sacrificial love of Jesus for each of us.

Friday, April 6 – Good Friday, 5:30, 6:00 & 6:30 pm: It is called Good Friday because as 1 Peter 3:18 tells us, *"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit."* Jesus did the ultimate good for us on the day he died upon the cross. We remember the day with three short, back-to-back somber worship services that look toward the joy of the resurrection celebrated on Easter. You can attend one, two or all three worship services.

Sunday, April 8 – Easter, 10:15 am: The celebration of Easter is the acknowledgment that Jesus Christ had victory over death. His resurrection symbolizes the eternal life that is granted to all who believe in Him. The meaning of Easter also symbolizes the complete verification of all that Jesus preached and taught during His three-year ministry. His resurrection is irrefutable proof that He is really the Son of God and that He has conquered death once and for all.

**The Following is a Summary of “Operating”
Checking Account for January 2012:**

Cash received for Operations \$ 55,754
 Cash disbursed for Operations \$ <47,750>
 Net increase (before transfer) \$ 8,004

- Our operations account balance is \$0 at January 31, 2012.
- During the month of January, \$8,000 was repaid to the “restricted” funds.
- The loan balance (restricted funds to operating funds) has been decreased to \$3,259 as of January 31, 2012.

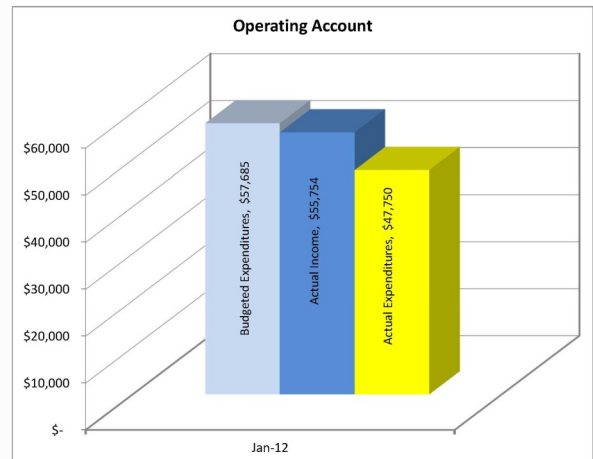


Please keep your tithes and offerings in your prayers. We want to reimburse the “restricted” fund this month and begin building the operating reserves to support BPC’s mission and its’ programs.

**The Following is a Summary of the
Capital Campaign as of January, 2012**

Capital Campaign Donations Received \$ 745,317
 Missions allocation (10%) \$ <74,532>
 Capital Campaign Debt Paydown \$ 670,785

Loan Balance at 01/31/2012 \$1,363,584
 Loan Balance at 12/31/2011 \$1,375,243
 Loan Balance at 11/30/2011 \$1,396,138
 Loan Balance at 10/31/2011 \$1,409,869



Invest in Miracles

By Elder Dick Stark

It is hard to believe but in April it will be 3 years since we began our Capital Campaign (*Invest in Miracles*). Since moving into the building in June of 1996 we had paid our mortgage down to \$900,000, but then in 2007 catastrophe hit, in the form of severe water damage from faulty construction materials (building warranty was expired), and restoring the building brought our mortgage back to \$2.1 million.



We can be extremely grateful for the way our congregation stepped up during this very difficult time. Thanks to your generosity the mortgage has been reduced to approximately \$1.3 million. Our original deadline for the *Invest in Miracles* three year campaign was April 2012 but several members have spread their commitment to the end of the year so session has extended the campaign through December 2012.

We want to make it clear that the Invest in Miracles statements you received in January were not bills, but just an informational reminder of your pledge amount. For some, your circumstances have changed in the past three years. Please do not feel guilty about changing your original commitment, this campaign was never designed to be a hardship. For those who have completed their pledge, you are certainly welcome to continue to give towards the reduction of the mortgage, just be sure, as with all special gifts, that you mark it clearly on your offering envelope.

If you are new to Birchwood you may not be aware of our Invest in Miracles campaign (debt reduction). If you are interested in participating please contact me at stark@bpchurch.org

Out in the Community with the Second Saturday Service Group

Upcoming Service Dates:
March 10 and April 14



Although winter is not officially over, spring is peeking its head out from under a carpet of dead leaves and tweeting in the trees. Now begins the work of cleaning up the winter debris both indoors and outdoors and getting ready for Bellingham's warm, renewing summer ahead. The Second Saturday Service Group began this work in February as ten of us assisted the Bellingham Parks Department and an enthusiastic group of community volunteers to plant trees, dig up invasive plants, and spread mulch in the Connelly Creek Nature Area. What a blessing it will be to walk in the area in the years to come and see the trees we planted growing! Also, another group washed windows and put up a window blind for a member of our extended church family. Thank you to all of those who generously gave of their time on a beautiful Saturday morning and afternoon.

On March 10, we will be working with Chores and other local agencies to help those in our community who desperately need it with spring cleaning – both inside and out – and on April 14 we will help Animals as Natural Therapy get ready for their annual Blessing of the Animals and Open House. Join us as we share God's love with others in our community through our service.

For more Second Saturday information contact Suzanne Rautiola at 306-8633 or at swilliam@trinity.edu; Judy Stahlbush at 715-1145 or Pamela Cushing at 393-4529.

BPC Facilities Report

By Claude Robinson and Dick Stark

Facilities Objective: Provide an inviting and welcoming place for growing disciples and for Jesus to work his will among his people.

FACILITIES COMMITTEE:

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

EASTER WORK PARTY:

A work party has been scheduled for March 24 from 9:00 am to Noon to clean up the winter debris and prepare our landscaping and grounds for Easter visitors. Many hands are needed, please put this on your calendar - all talents are welcome.

BUS MINISTRY:

The new bus is working out well. Keep an eye on it - Jim Zander is having a new Birchwood sign applied to both sides and the rear.



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

April Beacon deadline is:
March 20, 2012

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Holy Week Calendar

Maundy Thursday Service

Thursday, April 5
7:30 pm
Lord's Supper
Worship Center

Good Friday Services

Friday, April 6
3 different 1/2 hour services
Attend one or all three!
5:30 pm, 6:00 pm, 6:30 pm
Worship Center

Good Friday Stations of the Cross

Friday, April 6
6:00 am to 12:00 pm
Visit 9 different stations for prayer and reflection in the Worship Center.

Easter Sunday Celebration

Sunday, April 8
Easter Breakfast: 8:30 to 10:00 am
Easter Service: 10:15 am