

First Baptist Church, Littleton

"Journeying to God's Sacred Beat"

Spring 2013

Saturday May 18



**Spring Concert with
*Dell Smart and Exit/In & For Higher***

**Here at FBC, 7-10pm
Cost: \$15 presale, \$20 at the door**

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Pastoral Surveys due!

From time to time the Pastoral Growth and Relations Committee (PG&R) surveys the congregation to obtain objective information for nurturing the pastoral congregation relationship. Such a survey was last completed by the congregation in 2009. In order to obtain current feedback we ask you to complete the new PG&R Survey. This will assist us in providing feedback to Debbie and to assist in supporting our pastoral ministry going forward.

The survey was sent to you via email on April 4th or hard copies are also available at church. All members and friends are encouraged to complete the survey. Please return the survey via email, the mail or hand it to one of us.

Thanks so much,
PG& R Committee, Willow DiLuzio,
Carol Huebner, Lyle Webster

How Green Was the Valley

By Carolyn Webster

My world in the 1930's was a very limited one, from our farm on Bulkeley Road in Littleton to Maynard, Lowell, and Ayer. My parents had no car at the time so we had to depend upon family and friends for transport. My maternal grandmother and some aunts and uncles lived in Maynard. It was Mom's sister Blanche and her husband Tom who most often took us for a drive, even to do some pre-mall shopping in the department stores in Lowell.



We raised our own dairy products, eggs, vegetables, some fruit, and relied on the old crank telephone to order groceries from the Center, or the Red and White at the Depot (formerly Thacher Johnsons). All would deliver. Carl Reed would come to the house with a big block of ice gripped by tongs resting on the leather covering over his shoulder and put it into our ice box before we put in electricity and a refrigerator. Mr. Berg was the fish man, coming every Tuesday with a good selection of seafood.

The best treat was when Brockelmans's bakery van loaded with breads and goodies came by. Although my world was limited, it was a happy one, even in the midst of the Depression. The farm life was a good life, if a hard one.

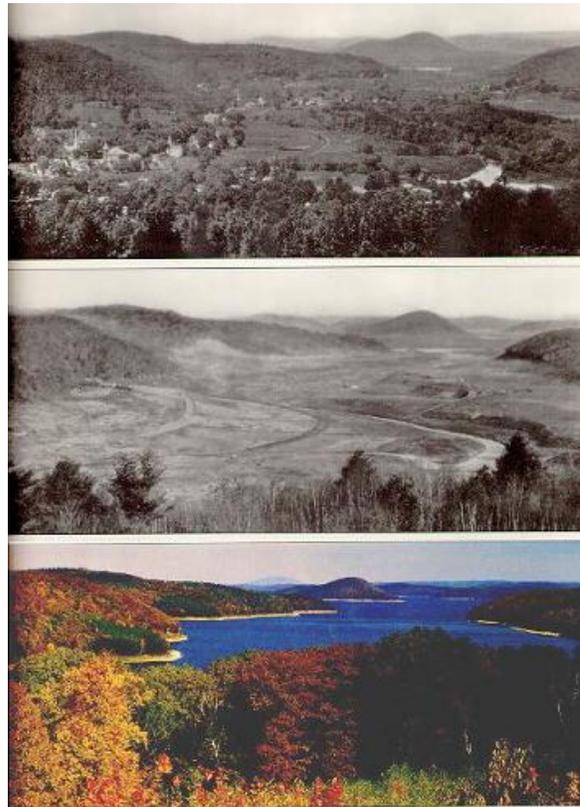
It was cause for great excitement to me when Aunt Blanche and Uncle Tom took my parents and me on a great adventure to central Massachusetts, the farthest I had ever been. I saw higher hills and deeper forests than I had ever seen before, and then we descended into a beautiful green valley with farming communities not unlike our own – the towns of Enfield, Dana, Greenwich, and Prescott.

Uncle Tom had relatives in Enfield, Tom and Sarah Rock. I wondered why they seemed so sad, not understanding the trauma they and their neighbors were facing. I know now that I was seeing history happen. We looked out the window and saw a whole house being moved. Truckloads of cattle and other livestock were heading out of town. Some houses and barns had been abandoned and would later be demolished.

Years after I learned that the graves in the cemeteries of those towns had been relocated to one larger cemetery on higher ground. Construction of a massive dam on the Swift River would create the huge Quabbin Reservoir to provide water for the city of Boston and that beautiful green valley would disappear. Its four towns would exist no more.

We took a walk around the Rocks' property, soon to be many feet under water. It was hard to believe that such a thing could happen. Cows no longer grazed in their pasture. The barn and stable had been vacated. Chickens were soon to be moved a distance away. The wood lot that had long provided firewood to heat the Rocks' home awaited its fate. My parents dug up a few small evergreens and birches to transplant to our yard. Three of them yet thrive: a large birch, a hemlock almost 50 feet in height, and a spruce nearly as tall. Still living on the farm my Dad purchased in 1919, I look

at those trees and smile as I traverse our driveway. To my mind, Enfield still lives.



The photos at left were taken from the same location on Great Quabbin Mountain about sixty years apart. The photos are all looking north. The top photo was taken in 1927, the middle in 1939 and the bottom (photographer Les Campbell) in 1989.

<http://www.westfordcomp.com/quabbin/threepix.html>

Good Friday Walk for Loaves and Fishes Participants!



Pastoral Daze

Radical Gratitude: Seeds

³⁰ Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.” Mark 4: 30-32

Thank you God for spring! It seems like it has been a long winter and it is heartening to see the ground warming up and signs of life at every turn. It is surprising to see where groups of flowers are popping up such as the tulips and daffodils that are sprinkled here, there and everywhere. I know that they were once been planted with care at a time where the light was waning and the temperatures were dropping. Now they are vibrant, alive and delighting our senses. I am grateful for those who planted them with a vision for what was ahead, knowing what they would look like in the future. It is good to keep ourselves in the day but also to act with hope that new life is ahead. Seeds and their flowers symbolize the growth that comes from acts of radical gratitude.

Radical gratitude is the fuel of our faith that takes small seeds and helps them grow into wild, proliferous trees. Radical gratitude is the fuel of our faith that takes small acts of kindness and service which make a difference in someone’s life. Gratitude is *the tool* that takes us from despair to sadness, from scarcity to abundance, from faith to fear.

This is a true story of radical gratitude.

Recently I was meeting with someone from church who was very grateful for the many

blessings in her life. She seemed to have a number of needs but I noticed that she chose to speak, pray, think and act with gratitude and hope. At each moment – when she could have slipped down into depression or despair - she *chose* gratitude. She reflected on the blessings that God had placed in her life. She insisted and acted as if God had supplied enough. Just enough. Always.



For example she expressed gratitude for having received a fifty dollar gift certificate from the Deacon’s fund a while ago and said

that she had made that certificate *last three months* along with her weekly trips to Loaves and Fishes. I wonder if I could use fifty dollars that wisely? I was amazed at her thrift and how intentional and careful she was with each penny! How often do we take our pennies and our spending for gratitude?

She also shared another true story of radical gratitude and it is one worth telling. Life was tough and challenging within the dynamics of her family for various and assorted reasons. There were physical, emotional and financial challenges. One day she came home to find an envelope in her mailbox with a fifty dollar bill in it. It was anonymous and she had no idea where it came from. She really needed it but being so full of gratitude she decided to tithe a portion of the anonymous gift that had been given to her. Wherever she went to break the fifty dollar bill into smaller bills only had ten dollar bills and so she left with five of them. Therefore she decided to tithe 20% since she only had a ten dollar bill. She thought about who she should give it to, praying that ***God would guide her giving.***

She ended up leaving it, also anonymously, on the desk of a work colleague who had six mouths to feed. A few days later her colleague, not knowing who had left it, shared with our church friend, the story of her ten dollar bill. She had been surprised and grateful to find the bill on her desk, and after work went to the local grocery store, with one of her daughters in tow, and carefully went up and down the aisles, adding up the cost of each of the items that would be for their dinner that night. She got in line and was surprised to find that a senior citizen checking out before her was in conversation with the cashier because she did not have enough to pay for food in her cart. The senior was deciding which item to put back.

The work colleague decided to offer her ten dollar bill to help pay the difference and so she gave the cashier the extra money that was needed. The senior was able to receive all of her items and the work colleague received \$8.68 back from the ten dollar bill. She had generously given \$1.32 towards someone else's meal. The cashier then added up the items she had carefully picked out for dinner that night and the bill came to \$8.62. She received .06 cents back in change and on the way out she and her daughter put the .06 cents into a charitable can. It was being held by a group of local cheerleaders raising money for something they needed.

Those were all acts of radical gratitude! All of them. Each decision to give and act in love was an act of radical gratitude. That is how it is done. That's the fuel. One small act and one step at a time. We do not often hear the story of exactly what happens to a financial gift but I imagine that most of them are similar to this story. I am grateful to our church friend for sharing this story with me.

There is more to the story of course – because somewhere along the way someone decided to give a fifty dollar bill and put it in our church friend's mailbox. We don't know how that came about. There is always a backstory – or many backstories going on that we don't know anything about. But it is, occasionally, a real blessing to hear and see the fruits of radical gratitude.



Since I told this story in worship and wrote it for the newsletter, the bombings at the Boston Marathon occurred as well as the subsequent terror that resulted from the acts of two men with evil and callous motives. Look how easy it was for fear to spread and terror to take hold of the hearts and minds of an entire city! Many of us were shaken to the core and still are. But the compassion was greater. The kindness and selflessness was greater. People acted with great courage and they will continue to be strong and work to bring justice and healing to those who were injured and for those who lost loved ones. There were terrible acts of evil but there were an even greater wave of service, compassion, justice, and love. Faith, hope and love remain but the greatest of these was love.

We must continue to plant seeds of hope. We must continue to do kindness and justice. We must plant. Plant with a vision of what will be ahead even if the days are dark. Plant with radical gratitude. Those acts will have an effect and its cumulative weight will be there to balance those that continue to act against the common good.

Do you remember the lyrics to the **Magic Penny song**?

*Love is something if you give it away,
Give it away, give it away,
Love is something if you give it away,
You end up having more.*

It's true.
Pastor Debbie
~

**Neighborhood Supper Tuesday night
April 30 at the Congregational Church.**
Our turn to prepare and serve the meal.
Menu – a Ham and Bean meal. Salads and
desserts are needed. Please let us know if
you can bring something and can come to
help!



May 5 Ronnie Horvath
speaking in worship at
10AM

May 12 Mother's Day

May 19 Annual Meeting of the Church,

June 9 (7 weeks away!)
Children's Day worship,
Cook Out & Pool Party at Blanchard's



Boy to the World!
by Caroline Poser

It's not fair!

*"In this world you will have trouble. But
take heart! I have overcome the world."
~John 16:33 NIV*

"It's not fair!"

"This stinks!"

"That was a foul! The ref shoulda called
that!"

"That team is way bigger than ours!"

My younger two sons were droning on and
on about what a stupid basketball game we
were watching. My oldest was playing in it.

"You're right. It's not." I validated their
complaints.

Silence. Their eyebrows drew together as
they frowned at the game.

I continued, "Does that mean our team
should quit?"

Silence.

"Are there other ways of measuring success
besides the score?"

"Not in basketball, Mom," my middle son
said with disdain.

"Yeah, Mom!" My youngest matched his
tone.

Ignoring the implied insult of stupidity,
"Well, boys, what if we considered it a
success every time we get the rebound?"



Silence.

“What if every time we prevent the other team from scoring, we look at it as a success?”

More silence, but this time one pair of sky blue eyes and one pair of bronze eyes were riveted on me and not at the stupid, unfair, stinky game.

“Honestly, boys. We all know it’s not fair. The other team has seventh *and* eighth graders. We only have seventh graders. Everybody knows this.”

“Well, we’re not gonna win.”

“You’re probably right.” *More than probably. The other team was up by 20 points and it wasn’t even halftime.* “And I would think the other Middle School coach would let his seventh graders have more play time than the eighth graders, so it would be a more even match up. But that’s not up to us.”

“Hmmmph!” My middle son scoffed, and resumed watching the game.

“Yeah.Hmmmph!” my youngest echoed, and followed his brother’s gaze.

“The only thing up to us is our attitudes. Even if they lose the game, each boy on our team could still have a personal victory.” I know this is true for my oldest, anyway. They had lost every game of the season except the two games against other seventh grade teams, which they won. I asked him how he could handle all those losses. He had answered, “I just want to play, Mom.” Meanwhile, my younger two were silently staring at me again.

I thought about all the times I had to remind the boys that life isn’t 100% exactly equal and you get what you get and you don’t get upset: with the box of donuts (invariably someone would think “he got the bigger one,” or “he touched the one I wanted”); there are three of them but only one of me (“you’ll have to wait your turn” and “no, I am sure your turn is not *always* last”); and the reason they don’t all have the same amount of homework is that they are in different grades “but it was the same when you were in that grade” (“okay, you’re right, I am sure it is not *exactly* the same since you had different teachers”).

I didn’t mention any of this, but instead asked them to, “Think about it boys. Our school has a seventh grade team and an eighth grade team. Our eighth grade team will probably beat this team. Next year when we’re the eighth grade team, we’ll probably beat them again. We’ll have paid our dues and it will work out fair in the end.” (I purposely omitted mentioning the part about how my middle son might possibly be on the seventh grade team next year, thus would be facing the same challenges his brother was currently.)

“Yeah!”

“We’ll show them!”

“And, we’ll be good sports about it, right?”

Silence, again, as they turned their attention back to the mismatched basketball game. In our Sports Trivia Devotional, one of the readings was about Vinko Bogataj. I didn’t know who he was, but I did recall the Wide World of Sports show on ABC where the announcer said, “Spanning the globe to bring you the constant variety of sport – the thrill of victory...and the agony of defeat.”

Yeah, he was that guy: the skier who slipped on ice, lost control, and crashed (fortunately emerging with only a minor concussion).

We all experience defeat. Loss. Sorrow. God does not promise a life of only good times, but He does promise to be with us in everything.

One time years ago when I was in the midst of a trial, a friend at church handed me a letter. In it was written, "I know of your life – the good and the bad, your grief, your disappointments, your unrewarded efforts, your frustrations and temptations. Always remember I offer you my peace, my blessing, my love. I am nearby if you need me."

It was signed, "Love, Your Heavenly Father."

According to Joel Osteen, "God has seen every wrong, every person that has hurt you, every tear you've shed, every lonely night, every injustice. He will pay you back."

Just as Jesus said before leaving his disciples and going to the cross, "*In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*"

God can take our defeats and transform them into victories.

The mother of three sons, Caroline Poser lives with her family in Groton.

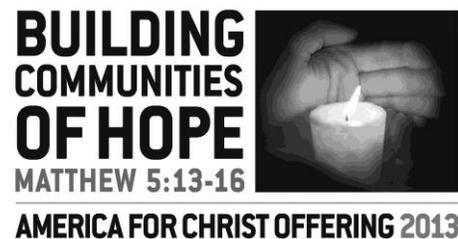
www.CarolinePoser.com.



Flowers for Worship

The Chancel Team wishes to thank everyone who purchased flowers for Easter. They all added greatly to the beauty of the Sanctuary that morning.

Remember flowers may also be donated on a weekly basis in honor or memory of someone special or to celebrate a special occasion. Please contact the Chancel Team Member of the month to make arrangements.



The 2013 America for Christ (AFC) theme is "Building Communities of Hope" based on text found in Matthew 5:13-16. This is a vital reminder that we are to be "salt and light" in the world. We are to live out an incarnational practice that makes a difference in the life of our churches and communities.

Those who have counted the costs of discipleship and pay the price daily are different. They function as salt and light. It is a call to stand out and stand up for Christ. To change the atmosphere, and influence others with a transformational hope wherever we go.

The theme this year "Building Communities of Hope" encourages us to be engaged. Let us all strive to become "salt and light" and give liberally to this year's 2013 America for Christ Offering and help us reach our church goal in support of making a life giving difference in the lives of others for the cause of Christ. "You are the light of the world."

