

The United Endeavor

News from United Evangelical Church

Aug 2007/Sept 2007

Pastor's Message

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. ~
Jeremiah 29:11*

One thing that I find difficult in parish ministry is the continual living in the future which is required. In Lent I am writing about resurrection; in Advent I am looking beyond Jesus' birth. Living in the spiritual moments of the church year feels like fleeting opportunities.

In looking ahead to August and September I feel that same way. I see summer coming to a close, kids going back to school and the church returning to full programming. And I can feel a sigh escaping from my spirit as I wonder, in the middle of July, where the summer went. Within my spirit I'm experiencing a tussle between living in the moment and in the future.

While I find this dichotomy difficult, it is obviously necessary. Just as we prepare for the future in our personal lives, we also must prepare for the future in the church. We wouldn't dream of not

preparing for our retirement, such a thing would

be foolish. The same is true for the church. Rev. Jim Bell has said several times that he knows that he is not the future of the church, so he wants to make sure that there will be a future church for his grandchildren.

**...participate in the visioning process of the church.
Please be willing to volunteer as this project is critical
for our church's future.**

In September we will celebrate 134 years of being a church. As we do so, there are many things we are doing to prepare for our future. Soon work will begin on the restoration of our stained glass windows, ensuring that the sanctuary will continue to be a beautiful space for future worshippers. As I write this, eight families have come forward to sponsor windows, leaving just two windows yet to be funded.

September is also the one year mark for the visioning committee. You will find in the pages of this Endeavor some of the material that is being covered by the committee. I encourage you to read it and participate in the visioning process of the church. Under the leadership of Rev. Jim Bell, the committee is now focusing on making recommendations to council that will increase our visibility and connection with our neighborhood.

Work also continues on the conversion of the Sunday School building into a multi-tenant non-profit center. The hope is to have the tenants, the funding, and the building design plans ready to present to the congregation at our meeting in November.

Harvey Jacob, Jim Bell, and I are spearheading these efforts, yet more help is needed. Harvey has put together a "To Do List" which you will find enclosed in this Endeavor. Please be willing to volunteer as this project is critical for our church's future.

(cont'd)

Church Council

Pastor's Message—cont'd

One thing that every generation of the church must do for its future is educate. This year there will be a confirmation class. I will be leading a joint class of students from United and Christ Church in Locust Point. Confirmation begins September 19th.

This year United will also be a "teaching church" for a student of Lancaster Theological Seminary. George Swift will be joining us on Rally Day, Sunday September 16th. George's ministry passion is getting men more involved in the church, and so he will be doing some things with us along that vein. Educating future church leaders is a vital role that a church plays.

As we look to the future I hope to see everyone at the church picnic on September 9th as we symbolically close our summer before kicking off a new year the next week with our Rally Day. The Sunday School is planning something special on Rally Day as we begin another year of educating the future church. There will also be a reception of new members and an official welcome for George. As we make these future plans, Jeremiah reassures us that surely God has plans for our future.

In Christ,
Rev. Cathy

For surely
I KNOW THE
plans
I have for
YOU,
says the
Lord...
TO GIVE YOU A
future
WITH
Hope.
Jeremiah 29:11, NRSV

Council President

President's Message

Communicate: to share with others, to impart, transmit, to make known, tell; also, to partake of the Lord's Supper. As I was thinking about what to write about for this issue of The United Endeavor, with Editor Barbara Matthew's deadline facing me, the words 'communicate' and 'communication' kept coming to mind. Important word, communicate; it is what we do when we interact with each other, our families, the community and the world. Where would we be without communication? Unplug the telephone, turn off the radio and TV, stop the newspaper, don't talk to anyone, and do away with our church services and the Pastor's sermons. When we participate together in partaking of the Lord's Supper, I feel we are communicating with Christ. There is the root of that word again in "communion".

Over the last several years I have read some books on church growth, sought and found information about church vitality on the internet and attended several lectures pertaining to building church membership. One of the most recent was a two day seminar earlier this year that I attended with Rob Gundlach. Titled: "CAC Church Vitality Retreat". I suppose, if I had to sum up what I have learned or what, stated in one word, could describe the theme of all the information I have been exposed to recently, the word would be: "Communicate".

When I was planning the agenda for our June church council meeting, thinking about all the issues we need to address and all the things we need to do as a congregation, feeling somewhat overwhelmed and discouraged, I put an item on the agenda, calling it: "How can we make things happen?" At the meeting, my wife,

(cont'd)

Church Council

Council President's Message—cont'd

Ursula, raised her hand and said, "I think the first thing you need to do is start a list of things we need to address and do". Communicate. My wife is a smart lady. A list I have started, which I presented to the council at our July meeting. You will find a copy of it in this issue of The United Endeavor. If there is any item on the "To Do List" that you can assist with, your participation is surely needed and appreciated by all. I will "Endeavor" to keep the list up to date by adding to and subtracting from. Suggestions are most welcome.

Let us all **COMMUNICATE!**

Harvey

See the "To Do" list on the next page.

*Contribute time and effort—participate!
Your church needs you!*

BE A VOLUNTEER



Property Committee

Any concerns regarding the janitorial maintenance of the church or school building should be directed to Dale Sanders. Dale and Paul Polasky, our custodian, will be working together to develop a comprehensive roster of tasks to keep our facility clean. With Dale acting as the liaison between the congregation and the custodian, any concerns can be quickly addressed.

Dale Sanders can be reached at (410) 679-1452.

**Treasurer's Report
1/1/07 through 6/30/07**

Operating Revenue & Expenses

Total Revenue	\$ 86,886.48
Total Expenses	(101,396.17)
Amount Under (Deficit)	\$ (14,509.69)

6/30/07

Operating Funds on hand	\$ 57,905.29
Investment &	
Endowment Funds on hand	192,355.00
Total All Funds	\$ 250,260.29

Canton Home and Garden Tour

September 15, 2007

11- 4 pm

Again this year United is part of the Canton Home and Garden Tour. Volunteers are needed to welcome visitors. Rob Gundlach will be providing organ music as we put our best foot forward with our neighbors. If interested in helping, please contact Ursula Jacob, 410-679-6163.

Church Council

UEC "To Do" List

- Seek out suitable non-profit organizations to occupy school building
- Explore grant money and funding sources for school building conversion—submit applications
- Design and produce flyer for space available in the school building
- Clean up school building—sell or haul away items no longer needed
- Develop schedule for school building modification and renovation—design spaces
- Act as liaison person between Church and Nonprofit Center Network
- Attend Canton Community Association meetings and report back to Council
- Further develop and maintain church website
- Update church membership list—categories: active, inactive, shut-ins, friends
- Inventory all locks in buildings and match up with keys
- Change and maintain outside church and school building signs
- Find someone to repair cracked windows in Fellowship Hall & kitchen
- Check heating & A/C thermostats periodically for correct settings and programming
- Host weekly practice sessions for aspiring musicians and combos
- Disconnect, disassemble and clean ice making machine
- Do monthly walkthrough of buildings & make list of maintenance & repair items required
- Purchase and place large flower pots with bright flowers on each side of church front steps
- Maintain flower pots in front of church—water weed & clean weekly or more frequently
- Research and lead effort to update to working condition the tower clock and bells
- Paint and replace steel decorative trim on front doors of bell tower
- Re-varnish oak window sills in church sanctuary and office
- Seek & list ways congregation can attract and serve people in local community – implement
- Replace church sign's plastic windows—explore acquisition of affordable LED sign
- Seek and implement ways to prevent birds from roosting on church buildings
- Study feasibility and cost of installing elevator in school building—elevator company listing available

This is a list in process; please do not hesitate to offer suggestions, additions, comments & constructive criticism

New News



Welcome
George Swift
September 16th

There will be a reception on Sunday September 16th following worship celebrating Rally Day. Part of that celebration will be to welcome our seminarian intern, George Swift. George is a retired Baltimore police officer beginning his second year at Lancaster Theological Seminary.

He is a single parent with a 10-year old son, Richard. George plans to help teach our youth class and anticipates heading up a men's ministry within the church.

Please introduce yourself and welcome George to our church family. Remember Christ's words: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me ..." (Matthew 25:35, NRSV).

Details regarding the reception will be announced in upcoming church bulletins.



Welcome
Evelyn Daniloski

Please welcome our new church secretary, Evelyn Daniloski to the UEC staff. Evelyn will be replacing David Flaherty. Church hours will remain the same, Tuesday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. If you see Evelyn, introduce yourself and welcome her to the fold.

Thank You, David



As we welcome Evelyn we say goodbye to David Flaherty who has helped in the office over the past 6 months. Thank you

David, for a job well done.

We wish you every success and hope you will keep in touch with us.

The Youth Booth



Youth Happenings

All youth 12 and older are welcome to join in the fun and faith of our Youth Group. Below is a schedule of upcoming events. Unless noted otherwise, we will meet at the church in the Fellowship Hall. Hope to see you there!

Date	Event	Time	Need to Bring
Sunday, September 9 th	Church Picnic	after 10:30 service	your family
Sunday, September 30 th	Rally around the Pizza	5:00 p.m.	enthusiasm & energy

Mission Moments

Mission Moments is a new addition to the Endeavor and is a way of highlighting our congregation's connection to the wider church. Our church is a vital part of the United Church of Christ, and it is not alone! Each Mission Moment will help inform members of what they make possible through their gifts to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM).

Mission Moment

UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Named and Sent

Matthew's account of Jesus' ministry is thrilling. We read story after story of amazing transformations. A leper's sores disappear! A paralyzed man walks! A girl rises from her death bed! A mute person gains voice! These astonishing encounters are accented with stories of spiritual healing.

People heard a marvelous word of hope in Jesus's simple invitation, "Follow me." Crowds formed in town after town to hear Jesus teach about a new way to live. Seeing the people's eagerness, he empowered his disciples to extend this ministry.

Healing and telling, telling and healing... the heart of ministry is the same today as it was then. People still experience spiritual and physical pain. We still are eager for messages of hope, love and faith. In 2007, the 50th anniversary year of the United Church of Christ, the faithful are still called to serve. Astonished, we receive the gift of grace to continue the ministry of Jesus. Just as Jesus brought the disciples from the sidelines to the forefront, so do we come together with the holy purpose of bringing God's healing to the world. Time and time again, people are transformed by the power of the one great story.

In the United Church of Christ, we are bound together by covenant in the shared purpose of God's mission. No person, no congregation, no Conference, no national ministry body, no seminary, no council, not any of us stands alone. Together, we are named and sent.

God is still speaking,

Just What is OCWM?

Just what is it and how is it different from OGHS (One Great Hour of Sharing)?

OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission)

Right now, Our Church's Wider Mission is bringing the UCC message to more and more people:

*No matter who you are
or where you are on
life's journey...you're
welcome here.*

Without OCWM, there would be no United Church of Christ. OCWM is who we are.

OGHS (One Great Hour of Sharing)

OGHS works with international partners to provide sources of clean water and food, education and health care, emergency relief, and resettlement aid for refugees. OGHS also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster response and relief.

The United Endeavor

Places to Go, People to See, Things to Do....

Ladies Organization Trips & Events

Upcoming Events



Ariene Pate 410-327-3211
Millie Wirsing 410-675-3904

Aug. 5th **Crabcake Dinner** UEC Friendship Hall following 10:30 a.m. worship

Menu
2 crabcakes homemade crab soup
potato salad coleslaw
bread coffee/tea
soda machine available

Tickets are \$ 10.00 per person and will be sold up until July 29th at the 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. worship services)

Oct. 14th **Octoberfest Luncheon** UEC Friendship Hall following 10:30 a.m. worship

Menu
4 entrees 2 hot vegetables
large selection of cold vegetables & salads

Tickets are \$ 10.00 per person and will be available shortly

Nov. 3rd **Bus Trip to Faith Church Frederick, MD Turkey & Oyster Dinner** \$34.00 per person

Please send \$10.00 deposit if you would like to reserve a seat. Call Ariene or Millie for further details.

Upcoming Ladies Organization Meetings

All Meetings Begin at 12 noon
(unless otherwise noted)



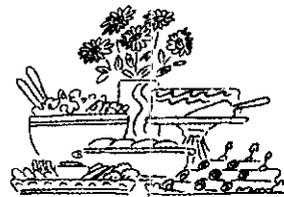
Sept. 5th **Covered Dish Luncheon**
(please bring a covered dish of your choice)

Oct. 3rd **Afternoon Tea**
\$10.00 per person
If you enjoyed the tea last year, please join us again this year.

Next Endeavor will list November & December meeting details

New members are always welcome!

Dues are \$ 10.00 per year



Once again the annual Strawberry Festival sponsored by the Ladies Organization of United Evangelical Church was very successful. I wish to thank all the volunteers, vendors and everyone who attended and supported this annual event.

Olga deBloom

Important Notice

All trips MUST HAVE DEPOSIT TO HOLD SEATS

If you must cancel your seat you need to find someone to take your seat to receive your money back.

Persons to contact:
Ariene Pate 410-327-3211
Millie Wirsing 410-675-3904

UEC August 2007 Calendar of Events

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Ladies Org. Luncheon 12 noon	2	3 <small>Rev. Cathy will be on vacation</small>	4
5 <i>Communion Sunday</i> Food Bank Donations 8:00 a.m. Worship Service 10:30 a.m. Worship Service	6	7	8	9	10	11
<i>UEC Crabcake Lunch</i> 12 noon-Friendship Hall <small>Rev. Cathy will be on vacation from Aug. 3 thru Aug. 20. Rev. Jim Bell will be available for pastoral care.</small>						
12 8:00 a.m. Worship Service 10:30 a.m. Worship Service	13	14 Church Council Meeting 7:00 p.m.	15	16	17	18
<small>Rev. Cathy will be on vacation from Aug. 3 thru Aug. 20. Rev. Jim Bell will be available for pastoral care.</small>						
19 8:00 a.m. Worship Service 10:30 a.m. Worship Service <small>Rev. Cathy will be on vacation</small>	20	21 Christian Education Meeting 6:30 p.m.	22 Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	23 Choir practice 7:30 p.m.	24	25
26 8:00 a.m. Worship Service 10:30 a.m. Worship Service	27	28	29 Bible Study 10:00 a.m.	30 Choir practice 7:30 p.m.	31 	

UEC September 2007 Calendar of Events

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
<p>2</p> <p>Food Bank Donations</p> <p>8:00 a.m. Worship Service</p> <p>10:30 a.m. Worship Service</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Labor Day</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Bible Study 10:00 a.m.</p> <p>Ladies Org. Luncheon 12 noon</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Choir practice 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p>
<p>9</p> <p>**Church Picnic**</p> <p>10:30 a.m. Worship Service</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p> <p><i>Patriot Day</i></p> <p>Church Council Meeting 7:00 p.m.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Bible Study 10:00 a.m.</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Choir practice 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Canton Garden Tour 11:00 a.m-4:00 p.m.</p>
<p>16</p> <p><i>Rally Day</i></p> <p>8:00 a.m. Worship Service</p> <p>10:30 a.m. Worship Service</p> <p>Reception following worship</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Christian Education Meeting 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Bible Study 10:00 a.m.</p> <p>Confirmation Class 6:00 p.m.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Choir practice 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p>
<p>23</p> <p><i>First Day of Autumn</i></p> <p>8:00 a.m. Worship Service</p> <p>10:30 a.m. Worship Service</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Bible Study 10:00 a.m.</p> <p>Confirmation Class 6:00 p.m.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Choir practice 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>
<p>30</p> <p>8:00 a.m. Worship Service</p> <p>10:30 a.m. Worship Service</p> <p>Youth Group 12:30 p.m.</p>	<p>31</p>				<p>September</p> 	

When ears won't hear

I went downtown shopping for designer sheers when someone whispered, "I have no bed."
I stood at an appliance store comparing prices of microwave ovens when an Ethiopian woman wept, "I have no food."
I hired a decorator to remodel my kitchen and to add more cupboards when a Cambodian child sobbed, "I have no cups."
I dreamed of building a getaway place, a cabin in the woods, a country place. Across the water came a cry, "I have no country."
I bought a new widescreen TV for a loved one's pleasure when a war orphan murmured, "I have no loved ones."
May God forgive us when our ears won't hear and our eyes won't see the sounds and sights of suffering around us. Amen

Poem for Laborers

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.
Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
from "A Psalm of Life"

United Evangelical Church

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8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Secretary Evelyn Daniloski

Custodian Paul Polasky

Director of Music Robert Gundlach
robert.gundlach@verizon.net

Newsletter Editor Barbara Matthew
barbmatthew@verizon.net



A "Hunger Site at the U.N" on the Internet

All you have to do is click a button and somewhere in the world some hungry person gets a meal to eat at no cost to you. Corporate sponsors pay for the food. Just go to the site listed below and click.

No gimmicks, no tricks.

You are only allowed one click per day, so spread the word to others.

The site is: www.hungersite.com



General Mills Boxtops for Education

Don't forget to bring in your General Mills Box tops for Education and leave them in the display in the Narthex.

Points to Ponder...

**Becoming a Healthy Church
in a Changing Social Structure**

(attributed to Lyle Schaller, quoted from *Renaissance to Ruin* by Brit Minshall)

Some symptoms of social dysfunction in the church:
(Lyle Schaller has referred to this as "church blight").

- 1) *Emphasis on institution, not God*
Security becomes the reason we attend. The serving of God, preaching and teaching the Gospel, and ministering to the people in the community are only paid lip service. Church survival is the underlying reason for all our actions.
- 2) *Ignoring future consequence of current actions*
Decisions are made for the best interest of the current generation with little thought to future growth.
- 3) *Sunday School convenience scheduling*
Christian Education (Sunday School) is seen as a child's activity, separate and not vital to the church as a whole. The entire church enters into a belief compact that implies teaching the Gospel and learning one's faith is for children and youth and not a life-long experience.
- 4) *Planning for yesterday*
Everything from parking to budgets are based on what was previously achieved with little thought to move beyond it.
- 5) *Decisions are made for leaders, not for congregations and communities*
Officers and core members see themselves as "we," the providers and controllers, while they look at the general membership and new people as "they."
- 6) *Means becomes an end in itself*
"Events" become icons in the church and often impedes the progress of the congregation. An uproar occurs if a study is proposed to find out if that event currently holds any valid purpose in church life.
- 7) *Numbers replace participants as the only goal*
The church works to bring new members "in" but never plans for the assimilation of the new people into the life of the church.

8) *Meetings-reports-goals take the place of results*
These churches "meet to meet." A meeting is held, some decisions are made, some goals are set, and that's the end of it. The church sees "problems" rather than "opportunities."

9) *The church operates itself on other than the donations of its congregation.*

Signs and symptoms of a healthy church

1. *Theology*
The church-alive is first of all a theological institution. The Christian church that has the mandate for success is God centered.
2. *Philosophy*
For Christians involved in healthy churches, Jesus is their guide, their philosophy is doing, giving and sharing.
3. *Economy*
The living, growing church exists on its own offerings received fairly equally from throughout the church.
4. *Ethos*
The reigning underlying and fundamental concept of the living church is that it exists as a tool—a utility—an implement to be used and even used up in the work of the Realm of God.
5. *Leadership*
Leadership is shared among old and young, long-time and brand new members. They are leading the congregation toward God, not toward some sort of business centered goal.
6. *Moral Codes*
Growing and living churches teach and exhibit a well defined moral structure. They are not afraid to continually evaluate beliefs for fear of offending someone.
7. *Citizenship*
Members consider themselves not just members of an institution, but really see themselves as disciples and followers. They are not spectators, but rather they themselves are priests.

The United Endeavor

Special Events



Crabcake Luncheon
Sunday, August 5th
12 noon

UEC Friendship Hall

Held by the Ladies Organization at UEC

Menu

- 2 crabcakes
- homemade crab soup
- potato salad
- coleslaw
- bread
- coffee/tea
- soda machine available

Tickets are \$ 10.00 per person
and will be sold up until July 29th
at the 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. worship services



Oktoberfest

Sunday, October 14th

UEC Friendship Hall

(Held by the Ladies Organization at UEC)

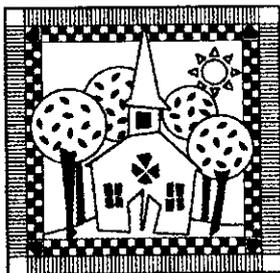
\$ 10.00 per person

Menu

- 4 Entrees
- 2 Hot vegetables
- Large selection of cold vegetables & salads

Tickets will be available shortly

CHURCH FAMILY



PICNIC

- Hot dogs
- Hamburgers
- Potato salad
- Coleslaw
- Dessert table

Bingo
Games for
the kids

September 9, 2007
UEC Annual Picnic
begins right after 10:30 a.m. worship

\$ 6.00 per person

Bay Shore Trolley Area in
North Point Park

Mark your calendars!!!!

There will be a small donation for parking (so bring a buddy)

Bring a non-refrigerated dessert

Non-alcoholic beverages only

Need a Ride?

No problem—sign up sheets for drivers & riders
will be placed in the Narthex

P.S. Wear your picnic clothes to church!!

Points to Ponder...

In Remembrance of Sept.



Dear Lord, loving Creator of us all, we remember with great sadness those whose lives were taken on September 11, 2001. We hold up to you the victims' families that they may know, despite their pain, that they can find solace in your loving presence. Help them bring their hurting hearts to you, realizing that your everlasting arms can bear them up and that they cannot be separated from your abiding love.

Please assure us that even though we cannot understand such horrible deeds, you can bring good out of evil, justice out of injustice and righteousness out of unrighteousness.

Therefore, confessing our human weaknesses, our grief and our struggles to make sense out of this world, we cry out with the psalmist: "Rise up, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand; do not forget the oppressed" (Psalm 10:12, NRSV). Strengthen our hearts, this day and every day. Amen

Bits 'n Pieces

church e-mail directory



Church E-Mail Directory

The Church Office is compiling e-mail addresses of members for communication purposes. If you have an e-mail address, would

you please take a moment and either enter the information on the sign-up sheet in the Narthex, or simply send an e-mail to the church address; uecucc@verizon.net and simply put "e-mail directory" in the subject line.

This directory will only ever be used for UECUCC correspondence and never shared with any organization.



The chart for requesting altar flowers is in the Narthex. The offering is \$ 15 per vase.

If you have any questions, please call Ursula Jacob, 410-679-6163.

EXPLORE GOD'S LOVE

Does God make mistakes?

God made us, and we sure do make mistakes! We couldn't make mistakes if we hadn't first been given the gift of freedom and accountability, the capacity to choose and the inevitability of facing the consequences of our choices. We learn the hard way if we must. **So God doesn't necessarily make mistakes so much as create the kind of world in which we can.**

God tolerates our mistakes for the sake of our freedom. Otherwise, the human experiment is rigged.

It's possible to learn from our mistakes. In fact, learning from mistakes is the best use of them. When we undertake to learn from our mistakes, God uses them for good all around. The churchy name we give to this intentional examination of our own error is repentance. The good God can do with our repentance we call redemption. So if our learning is made possible by our error repented, then mistakes have a paradoxical way of growing us up in spirit. How can that be a mistake in the end?

Isn't it ironic that we become people we wouldn't otherwise be by taking these lessons to heart? Personally and collectively, the human journey is not about being perfect but about being perfected, to the extent that we give ourselves to those hard-won lessons and begin to cooperate with the good God seems to be bringing out of them. In church talk, we call that amendment of life, our work to make things right, insofar as we are able, being wiser from regret.

There's another level of response to this question that is causing a good bit of excitement among theologians, who wonder about God all the time as their work. We might rephrase the question slightly to ask if God ever has second thoughts. In other words, does God change, if not by making mistakes, perhaps by getting better and better? During the history of God, there have been both static and dynamic views of God expressed by devotees. Scripture is packed with both views, sometimes side by side.

Recent scientific theories, such as evolution and quantum physics, for instance, have provided a rich source of metaphorical speculation about God's nature. Such thought is exciting to me, because it proposes a God whose characteristic creativity implies constant change, the exercise and expression of the same freedom given to us. When you stop and think about it, it makes sense that the very evolution of human history and its consequences for all of creation call forth from God new responses all the time. It's an interactive and emergent view.

Yet even in this view, it's not that God makes mistakes, but that God has new ideas and takes new actions as God wills. We outgrow earlier notions of God, and scripture records some of that evolution. My own notions about God have been transformed over time, and I hope insistent inspiration will continue to stretch me. Does God outgrow previous notions about us?!

Another way to ask that is to ask if we can surprise God. Freedom seems to require that astonishing possibility.

Did Jesus surprise God by the breakthrough of his choices, by the singleness of heart that avoided the typical human error? Good questions typically lead to others.

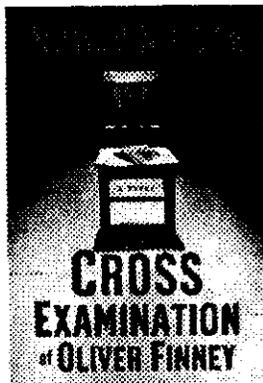
--The Rev. Dr. Katherine M. Lehman

From: www.explorefaith.org/questions/mistakes.html



For by
GRACE
you have
been saved
through
FAITH ...
it is the gift
of **GOD ...**

Ephesians 2:8, NRSV



The Cross Examination of Oliver Finney

By: Randy Singer
Publisher: Water Brook Press (2006)
415 pages



Reviews are written by
the webmaster, Tim Frankovich.

Randy Singer constantly impresses me with the way he brings new twists and new concepts to the legal thriller genre. Rather than sticking with stories that revolve around a single court case, where his writing is solid enough, Singer stretches himself by coming up with storylines that involve so much more.

Never has that been more apparent than in *The Cross Examination of Oliver Finney*. While legal discussions and themes are a major part of this story, the majority revolves around, of all things, a reality TV show. In this case, it's a show sponsored by a dying millionaire, where representatives of each major religion are pitted against each other in both courtroom-style debates and real-life experiences that test their faith.

Fans of Singer's previous novels will recognize Oliver Finney, the feisty old judge called upon to "defend" Christianity, as well as his clerk, Nikki Moreno. Nikki has been a protagonist in several of Singer's previous books, always flirting with the edges of Christianity, but never embracing it. Will the firm defense and example of her mentor be enough to convince her this time around? Oh, and you don't need to have read any of Singer's previous novels to enjoy this one. They all stand alone with no confusion.

When Judge Finney begins to suspect something more sinister during the reality show, he manages to send coded messages to Nikki, using codes he embedded in his own book, *The Cross Examination of Jesus Christ*.

And that's where Singer gets really clever. Because the non-fiction book, *The Cross Examination of Jesus Christ*, does exist (written by Singer, not fictional Finney), and was published simultaneously with this novel. And yes, the codes are embedded within that book, right where they're referenced in the novel.

If you have the time and patience, you can try to break the codes yourself, or you can just wait for Nikki and her crypto-geek friend to figure it out in the story. (Except that they don't break every code. There's a few left for readers to solve, if they so choose.) All of this might seem at first glance to just be an elaborate gimmick to convince people to buy both books. And it might be, if it weren't for the fact that both books are very, very good, and both complement the other nicely.

The method Judge Finney uses to pass on coded messages to Nikki is truly brilliant, and reading all about codes and cyphers was fascinating. Even to someone not interested in the subject, Singer's interwoven anecdotes carry things along at a smooth clip.

The defense of Christianity versus other religions is never handled in an inappropriate way. No one is hammering anyone over the head with a Bible. Instead, the other religions are treated with respect, while still exposing their inherent weaknesses.

Quite probably, this is Randy Singer's best work yet. Highly Recommended.

Comics Corner

oops!

From a church newsletter in Sharon, Pennsylvania:

Please extend Christian hostility to the folks from Living Word Church who bring the "Unity Cross."

Now, that's hospitality!



Campbell

"I was leading a life above reproach when suddenly, gravity took over."



"You're grillin', pastor. That must make you a friar!"



Double Duty

When the church custodian quit, the pastor asked the organist if she would be able to also clean the church sanctuary.

The organist replied, "Do you mean that now I have to mind my keys and pews?"



Cathy Fifield for submitting the following chuckles:

Who was the greatest female financier in the Bible?

Pharaoh's daughter. She went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet.

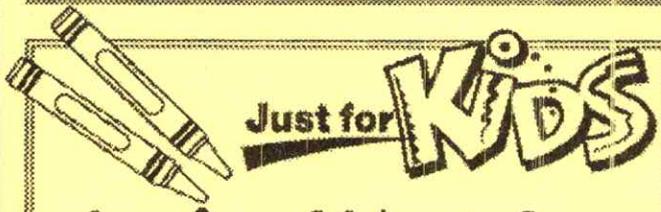
What excuse did Adam give to his children as to why he no longer lived in Eden?

Your mother ate us out of house and home.

What kind of motor vehicles are in the Bible?

Jehovah drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden in a *Fury*. David's *Triumph* was heard throughout the land. Also, probably a *Honda*, because the apostles were in one Accord.

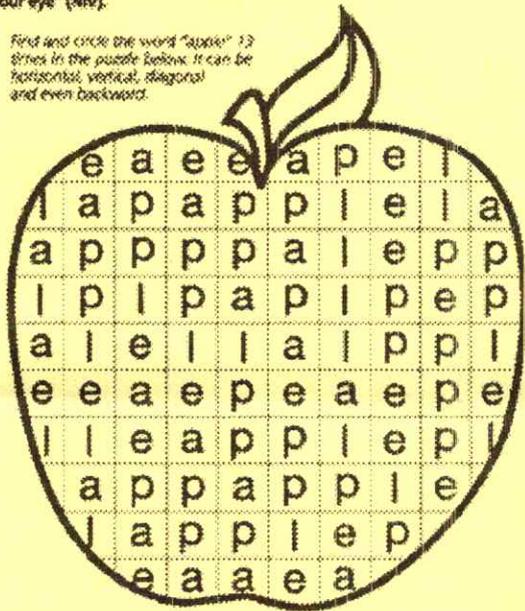
Kids Only!!



Apple of Your Eye

When something is said to be the "apple of your eye," it means it's precious to you and you would protect it as you would your own eye. With school starting up again, we should remember God's instructions in Proverbs 7:2: "Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye" (NIV).

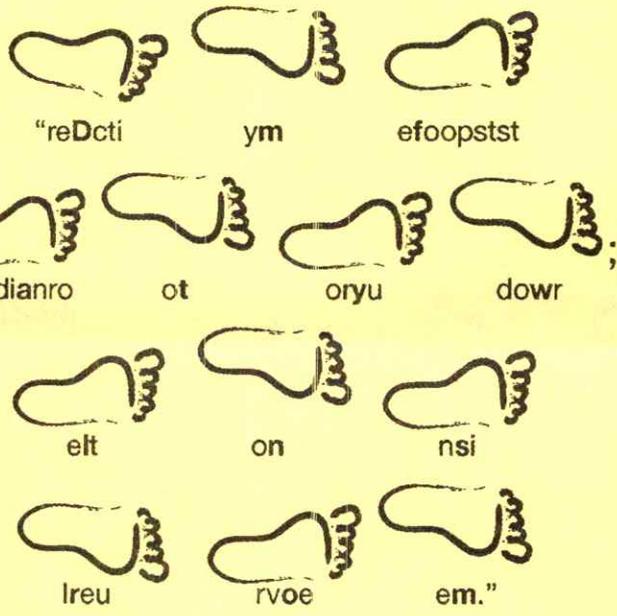
Find and circle the word "apple" 12 times in the puzzle below. It can be horizontal, vertical, diagonal and even backward.



Unique Creations

Have you ever walked along the shore and noticed the footprints you make in the sand? A famous poem called "Footprints in the Sand" reminds us we are never alone.

Unscramble each word and write it inside the footprint. See what Psalm 119:133 (NRSV) says about our footsteps. (The bold letters are the first letters of the words.)



PSALM 119:133, NIV

Answer: "Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me."

Kid's Joke

Did Noah Fish?

A Sunday school teacher asked, "Johnny, do you think Noah did a lot of fishing when he was on the Ark?"

"No," replied Johnny. "How could he, with just two worms?"

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Let us draw
near to God with
a sincere heart in
full assurance
of faith...



Hebrews 10:22