

The Harbinger

March 2009

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Calendar Insert

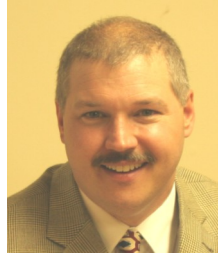


MEMORY VERSE OF THE MONTH!

I am not ashamed of the gospel,
because it is the power of God
for the salvation of everyone who
believes: first for the Jew,
then for the Gentile.

Romans 1:16

The Stone or the Acorn?



If there be a law of nature which is universal it is surely gravitation. Stones never rise into the air, unless a force superior to gravitation lifts them; and if thrown into the air by force, they fall again as soon as the force is spent which threw them up.

But consider the trees. They persist, in spite of the law of gravitation, in lifting themselves out of the earth, holding themselves perpendicularly, and throwing out branches skyward, in great freedom.

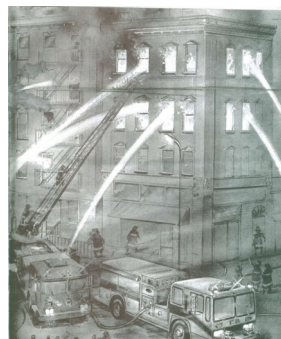
To the stones who do not know the secret, it is a perfect miracle, that the trees lift themselves towards heaven, and make such a flourish of their liberty. Bury a pebble, and it will obey the law of gravitation forever. Bury an acorn, and it will obey a higher law. Is the law of gravitation suspended? Never for one moment! But in the buried acorn (and the buried wheat kernel) there is a vital force which is superior to the attraction of the earth.

Let us consider for a moment together what truths are found in this wonderful illustration...

First, are you a stone or an acorn?

This is the basic question that Scripture asks? Are you alive or dead? Ephesians 2:1-2 tells us that we are all:

dead in (our) transgressions and sins, in which (we) used to live when (we) followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air...



In other words we were all stones at one point or another. In Ezekiel's prophetic vision (Ezek 37), it was described in very visceral terms as dry bones. People without Christ are quite literally dead! That is why our new evangelism vision statement is "**Rescuing the Dying**" because people are dead and dying in the burning building. However through the work of Jesus on the cross, a new door is opened to everybody which leads to life. Listen to how Peter puts it and notice the references to "life":

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade (1 Peter 1:3-4)

So, are you an acorn in Christ or a stone?

The second question that this illustration asks is: Which force do you obey? Ephesians 2 continues and tells us that we all used to follow the ways or 'laws' of this world...

gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts

That is our natural condition. We simply are wired to follow our sinful nature.

We naturally follow the laws of this world (gravity). In fact, Scripture goes on to tell us that we cannot help but obey this force (Romans 6:16). However, when you put your trust in Christ, you are set free from the laws that bind you to earth (gravity) and are enabled to obey a "higher" law...God's. Your heart of stone is turned to flesh (Ezek 11:19) and you begin to grow and flourish just as the tree in our illustration. What a glorious sight it is to witness the "higher" law being obeyed in a person's life!

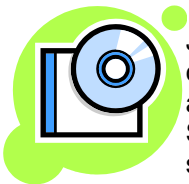
But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. (Romans 6:22)

Let us never forget that we are not stones, but acorns!

Finally, let's never forget what it took for us to be set free of the earth's laws. As we bask in this new found freedom in Christ to grow and stretch out our "limbs," remember that our Lord Jesus was the kernel that fell to the ground and died (John 12:24). It was because of his sacrifice on that cross those many years ago that we are enabled to obey the "higher" law. It was because of His stone cold death, that we have hearts of flesh.

Pastor Blake Brown

The CD Ministry Continues to Grow!



Just a quick praise to relate. The CD ministry continues to grow! We are sending out more and more CD's of both the sermons and the Sunday School class each week, which is a source of great praise. The personal mission of the Pastor is described in Ephesians 4:12 & 14:

to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

The CD ministry is fulfilling this mission! As a reminder, **both the sermons and the Sunday School classes are now online at www.swhcc.com**. If you are receiving CD's and the online resource fulfills your need, then please drop us a note, email or call and let us know that you no longer need the CD's. However, if you are like many people, these CD's are perfect for long (or short) car rides, a quick shot of Christian edification. We are more than happy to keep sending them to you.

As always, we miss all of you and look forward to seeing you soon up here in Southwest Harbor. Until then, may the Lord shine His face on you and be gracious toward you (Numbers 6:25).

Helps for Worship #14: Responsive Readings

William Shishko

"...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." (Eph. 5:19)

Some students of liturgics (that is, the study of the proper manner of worship) question whether responsive readings are to be used in worship. What is the biblical basis for them? What is their purpose?

Our pattern is to use responsive (or unison) readings (usually from the book of Psalms) as we prepare ourselves for the prayer of confession of sin, which follows. The biblical basis for this practice is that the Scriptures themselves tell us that the congregation should use appropriate words in its ministry to one another (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). We usually think of our congregational singing in this regard, but the Scriptures command us to "speak" to one another as well as to sing to one another and to the Lord.

In the Old Testament, there is an example of this kind of congregational speaking in Deuteronomy 27. The tribes of Israel were divided between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. The blessings and the curses of the covenant were read aloud, and the people responded with their "Amen!" In doing so, they committed themselves to the very things God had told them in his covenant word. We do something similar as we take God's words on our lips and recommit ourselves to them in corporate worship.

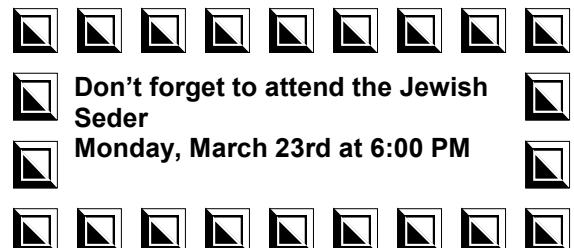
In a real sense, this time of congregational speaking is an extension of our corporate confession of faith. Because the Psalms have their ultimate fulfillment in the person and work of Christ (Luke 24:44), we are continuing our confession of him. We are also reminding one another of the multifaceted truths in a believer's experience (the Psalms are given, in part, for that purpose). Those very reminders should make us desire to come before God in repentance and confession.

What a privilege it is to take the Word of God on our own lips as we worship the God who is to be worshiped according to that Word!

For Reflection

- ◆ How does the responsive reading reflect your own experience, and how does it call you to confess your sins?
- ◆ How well are you ministering to others as you participate in the responsive reading?

The author is pastor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Franklin Square, New York. Reprinted from New Horizons, January 2007.



Here is a recent letter from Patricia of Uganda, the Missions Ministry's sponsored child (also see pictures on the Missions bulletin board downstairs):

January 6, 2009

I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord! I take this opportunity to thank the Lord for enabling us to end the year successfully. And we should not take it for granted because it has been a long journey up to this time. My friends and parents are also greeting you and they love you too.

I was so glad for the Christmas gift you sent to me which was 23,000 shillings. I bought a skirt and blouse. And I pray the Lord our giver may bless you abundantly and more from where you got. I was very smart as you will see on the photo. But also what was bad, I fell sick. I didn't enjoy very well as I expected. But above all, I thank God to see that I am still alive and I am getting well.

Thanks for the letter and the question you asked me. We use the goat for meat and money but there are other goats which are used for milk and cheese and they are not common and hence expensive in terms of cost.

I also thank you very much for praying for me because I joined senior three. I will not get tired to say thank you for your support and love you really show me because you have helped and supported me in the way I cannot tell. But I will keep on praying for you so that the living God Almighty, bless you abundantly and bless the work of your hands.

I have a memory verse for you from James 1:9-26 but mostly I like verse 16 because when I read it, there is the way I fell in my heart and it guides me to keep on trusting the Lord.

Greet all your friends there and remind them that I still love them so much and I pray for them too.

I wish you the best in this new year and I pray that the Almighty guide us to end it successfully.

Stay blessed



OTHER MISSIONS NEWS

The Missions Ministry prepared and hosted its second **Emmaus Shelter dinner** on February 15th. We again had the expert culinary advice and assistance of Diana and Eric Novella and the meal was another complete success. We served supper and then stayed to eat and share with the Emmaus residents—a real blessing for us! We plan to do this quarterly—**next time in May**—and we welcome anyone from the congregation who would like to help. See any Missions Ministry member to volunteer. **A thank-you card from the folks at Emmaus is on the Missions bulletin board downstairs.**

UPCOMING MISSIONS DATES

1. **March 14th**—Compassion Tea, 2:00 p.m. Write to a sponsored child.
2. **March 22nd**—Sam Leonardi teaching Adult Sunday School and sharing a Missions Moment during worship.
3. **April 18th**—Compassion Saturday potluck supper—share pictures and stories of your sponsored child.



A COMPASSION INTERNATIONAL TEA

Saturday, March 14th at 2:00 PM

This will be a time to improve our letters to our sponsored children. We will share ideas and learn more about Compassion while enjoying fellowship with each other. **ALL are welcome.** Whether you sponsor a child or not, we all sponsor Leancia in Haiti and Patricia in Uganda. All of us love to receive more than one letter, so come help!

Please bring postcards, cards, writing paper and sponsor numbers.

COMPASSION BULLETIN BOARD

Look for the bulletin board labeled **Compassion** downstairs in the Fellowship Hall. This is being offered as a spot to display our sponsored children. It will be an encouragement for us to remember to pray for the children as well as for the organization itself.

Please bring to church a picture of your sponsored child or children. Attach their names, their countries and your name. Give these to Mary Anna Fox.

Thank you for your participation!



P.O.Y.C. (Pronounced "poi-k")

If you happen to be at the church on either the first Saturday or third Friday of the month, you might notice a group of people eating, laughing, playing games and having a great time together. This would be the 'P.O.Y.K.' group. What? Let me explain...

Well, the acronym does a little of the describing. It stands for **Parents Of Young Children**, a group formed by Erin Ritter and Kari Reed. They saw a need, both in themselves and for the community, for fellowship. As everyone knows, couples who have young children are in a season in life where adult fellowship is few and far between. So what did they do...They formed POYC!

Twice a month families gather for a potluck-style dinner. This past year the group decided to go "around the world." That meant that each dinner was themed by country. So we had an American style BBQ when we were in the USA, Spaghetti, lasagna and a lot of garlic in Italy, and when we went to Turkey, well we had a big turkey dinner (who knows what they actually eat in Turkey?!)

Other countries visited include Israel, the orient, Spain, even a trip down into Africa (that was interesting). People have really gotten into it and go online to find authentic recipes from the country. We have even done some different themes such as an 'all-red food' for Valentines Day and recently we had a Mardi Gras with an authentic King Cake!

After dinner the kids go into the back rooms and play and watch a movie and this affords the adults some much needed time to play games or just talk. The group has grown over the months from just 3-4 families into at times 8-10 families (35-50 people!!). It has also become apparent to the SWHCC families that the Lord has other plans for this group than just Christian fellowship. There are many families who come that are totally unchurched. It has turned into a wonderful *"green-space"* opportunity.

So please keep this new activity in your prayers. Not only that the fellowship would be satisfying and fun, but that relationships would be forged so that the Gospel could be shared in love with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

*Part of SWHCC vision. Think of Christians as the color yellow and unbelievers as blue, we want to create events where those two colors (people) mingle, creating green-space and opportunities to share the Gospel.

News From the Den

Youth ministry is busy! There's always something exciting happening. It's been a while since I've updated you all on what the youth at this church do with our time. Where to start?

Hmm... why don't I give you the calendar? It's posted on our website, but just in case you haven't checked it lately:



Deeper Well

When: Wednesdays, 6PM to 8PM

Where: At the Church

Ages: 11 through 19

Bring: \$3

Did you know that the Bible, as big as it is, is just one big story? Join us as we dance around, nosh, rock out, and learn about God's great story. Come see how you fit in...

Deeper than Deeper

When: Saturdays, 6PM to 9PM

Where: At the Church

Ages: 13 through 19

Bring: Something to Share

So these stories we're going through on Wednesdays have given you an itch to learn more. Want help scratching? We'll provide coffee and hot cocoa, you bring the bagels, pastries, and doughnuts and we'll hunker down for some good Q and A, deep discussion, and maybe a game or two. Come prepared to think, think, think!

Movie Night

When: Friday, March 13, 6PM to 9PM

Where: At the Church

Ages: 13 through 19

Bring: Soda

Do you like larger than life? Now you can experience it! We'll pop some corn and enjoy a movie on the big screen. No pausing for bathroom breaks, so PB4UGO.

Potluck—The kids are encouraged to join in the church fellowship potlucks.

Bring: Your Family and a Dish to Share

Pool Sharking

When: Friday, March 6th and 27th, 5:30PM to 10PM

Where: Meet at Harbor House

Ages: 15 through 19 (March 6th), and 11 through 14 (March 27th)

Bring: \$8, money for Denny's food, and Tasty Snacks for Chaz

Okay, here's the deal: Chaz thinks he can whip anyone in pool. Make him put his money where his mouth is (figuratively!) – pride does, after all, come before a fall. Afterwards, we're off to Denny's to eat all the grease in Ellsworth. The question is, are you man (or woman) enough?

Great Skating at Great Skates

When: Wednesday, March 18th, 4:30PM to 10:30PM

Where: Meet at Harbor House

Ages: 11 through 19

Bring: \$20 and Tasty Snacks for Chaz

Too cold outside to play, too dark to see? Don't worry – Great Skates in Bangor is the place for winter fun! We leave Harbor House at 4:30PM and won't be back until 10. While we're out, we'll nosh at Taco Bell/KFC, skate to our heart's content, and maybe get a game of laser tag in. Seating is limited, so sign up today!

Jews for Jesus Seder

When: Monday, March 23rd, 6PM to 8:30PM

We are certainly a busy group! And we could certainly use your help. We need the following:

Rides home from youth group on Wednesdays and Saturdays
to and from Rollerskating on Wednesday, March 18th from 4:30PM to 10PM
to and from Pool Sharking on Friday, March 6th and 27th from 5:30PM to 10PM

Food on Wednesdays and Saturdays

picked up cooked served

Set Up/Clean Up on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and some Fridays

Hands-On Volunteers for ANY and ALL Things

Run Games Help with Discipline Aid in Discussions/Lessons Bring Music

Babysitting Children

Mine (So Kari Can Come) Kirk's (So Kirk Can Come)

This is an open invitation to any who would like to help in any way. If you have any ideas on how you may like to contribute, please let me know! Working with youth is very rewarding, but it takes more than a lone ranger – it takes a community of believers. The work is plenty, but the laborers are few. Hey, maybe you could, in your special way, be numbered among our few! Let's talk about it.

Treasuring the Triune and Living God as He Graciously Enables Us to Glorify and Enjoy Him, Chaz Reed 244-0210

Help!



FROM THE HYMN CORNER

MARCH 2009

SANDY JOHNSON

Michael W. Smith-also known as "Smitty"

musician/Author/Co-Pastor/Founder/ Philanthropist/Actor/Service/Activist



For March's Hymn Corner, I selected a younger person, Michael W. Smith, who has ministered to many through a multitude of his songs of praise to our Lord. After studying several resources, I have found that Michael's big heart for God has not only inspired him to write and sing MANY great contemporary praise songs for God, he also has a real burden for missions and the growth of Church throughout the world!

Born October 7, 1957, in Virginia, to Paul and Barbara Smith, Michael was a typical boy involved with baseball (developed from his father), his family's church activities and played the piano. Writing his first song at five years old, he gave his heart to Christ at ten, which he calls 'an intense spiritual experience' that led to his becoming a devout Christian as a teenager, involved in a Bible study with a group of older friends who shared his same excitement. When his friends said 'good-bye', moving away to college, Michael's life spiraled downward with feelings of loneliness and alienation which led to his involvement with alcohol and drugs. He dropped out of Marshall University in West Virginia after a few semesters, and moved to Nashville, to pursue a music career, playing with several local bands in the Nashville club scene. Marrying his 'love at first sight' girlfriend, Deborah Davis in 1958, they have been blessed with five children.

Since "Failure is not final!" in November of 1979, Michael recommitted his life to Christ after suffering a breakdown. The next day he auditioned for "Higher Ground", as a keyboardist and landed a job. After his first tour with this group, playing mostly in churches, with the Lord's help, Smith finally was able to put the drugs and alcohol behind him. In 1981, he became a song writer for Meadowgreen Music, being very successful writing gospel hits for Sandi Patty, Kathy Troccoli, Bill Gaither and Amy Grant, including touring with Amy Grant. In 1983, Michael made his very first record, called the "Michael W. Smith Project." Michael wrote all of the music and Debbie, his wife, wrote the lyrics. His most recent album, along with the African Children's Choir, will be released this month, "A New Hallelujah."

In 1999, Michael and Debbie started a prayer group which had been meeting at their farm and grew to the "New River Fellowship" church. Revealing his faith and sincerity with his 'mission heart', **he is involved with groups such as Compassion International (for 20 years),** Third-World countries and DATA (Debt AIDS Trade Africa). Making many trips with Compassion, Michael says he has witnessed Christian work having a great impact in some of the most physically needy countries. "You can see famine and starvation," he says, "and then inside this devastating place, all of a sudden there's this church. It's like a little light bulb in the middle of a dark place, and it shines pretty bright. It's very encouraging.' He also has a real burden to support and inspire people in their work for God, such as the Vice Chair of the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. (I have searched without success this website to find out if President Obama is continuing this organization began by past President George W. Bush.)

With all of my research on Michael, I am finding that he is more concerned about others than himself. A note from an article regarding an interview with Michael in the February 2007 **IN TOUCH**, by Charles Stanley states: "I am concerned that people don't understand how much God loves them, and, therefore, don't know how to share the love of Christ". "When Believers understand how much they are loved by God, they will start figuring out ways to serve Christ, and the Church will change the world, by believing God's Promises, allowing the freedom of the Holy Spirit to do a great work in their hearts, as well as in the hearts around them with the spiritual gifts that God lovingly bestows." "The Church needs to be serving in the worldwide community, showing the love of Christ to all people."

For all of Michael's accomplishments, his involvement with church and missions, his leadership in his local church body, being an artist, author and a record label executive, **Michael sums up his life as this, "to be remembered as a God-fearing man who loved his wife and kids well."**

One of my favorite recordings of Michael W. Smith's is "**Ancient Words**" which we have sung at SWHCC. Oh how we need those "HOLY and Ancient Words" every day of our lives!

**"Holy words long preserved
For our walk in this world,
They resound with god's own
heart
Oh, let the ancient words impart."**

**"Words of life, words of hope
Give us strength, help us cope
In this world, where e'er we roam**

**Chorus:
"Ancient words ever true
Changing me, and changing
you.
We have come with open
hearts
Oh let the ancient words im-
part."**

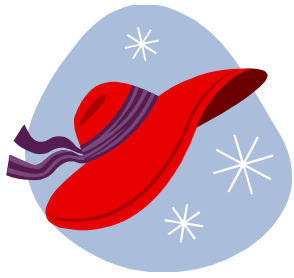
**"Holy words of our faith
Handed down to this age.
Came to us through sacrifice
Oh heed the faithful words of Christ."**

**"Holy words long preserved
For our walk in this world.
They resound with god's own heart
Oh let the ancient words impart."**

Resources: Michael W. Smith website: http://www.michaelwsmith.com/biography_71;
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_W._Smith#Early_life

"In Touch", February 2007, pages 34-26, Charles Stanley, Atlanta, GA, with permission from: Permissions@intouch.org - Joey Tindell, In Touch Ministries/Permission

**We have come with open hearts
Oh let the ancient words impart**



Women's Fellowship

Our newly-reorganized Women's Fellowship group is thriving, with well-attended, interesting gatherings in January and February.

Our next meeting will be March 11th at 10:00 a.m. at Kay Woody's home (snow date March 18th, same time and location). We will begin with some praise music, followed by our program—"Christian Humor for Mud Season."

We'll be seeing a video by Christian comedian Ken Davis. Ken delivers an uplifting and encouraging, humor-filled presentation to help us find the missing gusto in our lives (pretty necessary in Maine in the middle of March!). He gives no promises of health, wealth or perfection—just an honest look at the Christian life. We're invited to live with "Nothing to Prove, Nothing to Hide, and Nothing to Lose!"

After the program and a time of prayer we will continue fellowship for those who are able to stay longer by having lunch together. Bring a sandwich—beverages and dessert will be provided.

We welcome everyone. If you've never been, give it a try! Young moms, there will be a lot of grandmothers to help with your kids! If you need directions to Kay Woody's house, call 244-9469. The address is 70 Burnt Hill Road in Tremont.

Easter Dinner Wish List for Westside Food Pantry

Canned Hams (1-3 lb.)
Canned Green Vegetables
Canned Yellow Vegetables
Canned Fruit
Boxed Cake Mixes
Frosting
Chocolate Bunnies (for each child, in the family)

Also nice to have:

Stuffing Mix
Canned Chicken Broth
Cranberry Sauce



Food Collection

Checks, money and Hannaford Gift Cards are also very helpful towards the purchase of the perishable items (chickens, potatoes and carrots). Please **make checks out to St. Saviour's Church** and **make note for Easter Dinners, on the memo line.**

Donated items (excluding checks, money, and gift cards) can be deposited in the basket at the back of the sanctuary at SWHCC. Please turn all money and gift card donations in to the church office. The Westside Food Pantry will pick up all collected items on **Sunday, April 5.**

Thank you for helping your friends and neighbors.





*Come join us for
Southwest Harbor
Congregational Church's
6th annual*



Best Ever Spaghetti Dinner

*To benefit the
Westside Food Pantry*

Saturday, April 4, 2009

5-7pm

Downstairs at the church

*We will be serving homemade meat and vegetarian
sauces, salad, bread, and desserts provided by some
of the best cooks in Southwest Harbor.*

**Cost at the door is \$6.00 per person or
\$25.00 per family**



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