



The Mustard Seed

March 2014

Pastor's Corner

Who Are You & What Ought You to be Doing?

The decade of the 1960's was a decade of upheaval and turmoil. The social unrest was reflected in various ways in the arts. Andy Warhol made famous the phrase "fifteen minutes of fame". Millionaires sang of poverty. Authors such as Camus were being read on high school and college campuses. In the mid-sixties the British film "Alfie" came to the screen with its theme song "What is it all about, Alfie? The Beatles were the rage but in their music lurked some of the despair of Camus and the question of Alfie as evidenced by their "He is a real nowhere man sitting in his nowhere land making all his nowhere plans for nobody."

What the various voices in the arts were addressing is also addressed in Ecclesiastes by Koheleth as he opens his work with the well known "Vanity of vanities," ... "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." *What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?* But, Ecclesiastes may begin with a note of despair, but sprinkled throughout the text and in the conclusion, Koheleth speaks of the value of life. In this, Koheleth foreshadows the New Testament that clearly states that idle words, a cup of cold water, our thoughts, and our motives are valuable, for God will judge all.

So, how do we answer those who question the vagaries of life and wonder "where God is" in the turmoil and upheaval of life? Our answer lies in understanding who we are and what we are to be about.

Who are we? Psalm eight asks the question "What is man that you are mindful of him"? The Psalmist answers the question by stating that man has been made a "little lower than God". Furthermore man is "crowned with glory and honor". Man, by creation, is the highest of created beings for man was made in the image and likeness of God. The writer to the Hebrews (chapter 2) picks this thought up and acknowledges that "we do not yet see all things put under him but we do see Jesus. As the redeemed Church of God, we look forward to the New Creation when all things will be as they ought to the glory of God. Thus, as The Church, we are New Creations in Christ Jesus and therefore aliens in a strange land, the World.

What should we be about? The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Confession of Faith addresses this with the first question: "What is the chief end of man?"

Many philosophers have pondered this question. This question lies behind the "What is it all about, Alfie" of the 1966 British film. How do you answer that question?

The Shorter Catechism answers the question this way:

1. Man's chief end is to glorify God...

Paul addresses this in I Corinthians 10: 31: *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* Peter reiterates this with his exhortation in I Peter 4: 11 *that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.* As we meditate on this responsibility, we must be humble knowing that *A haughty look, a proud heart, And the plowing of the wicked are sin.* (Proverbs 21: 4). Only those who fear God are able to learn to love Him. Only those who Love Him obey Him with cheerful hearts. Paul reminds us at the end of the doctrinal section of Romans *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.* - Romans 11: 33 - 36

2. ...and to enjoy Him forever.

The Psalmist reminds us that God is to be the focus of our desire, our strength, and our trust for the purpose of declaring His works: Ps. 73:25 -28 *Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry. But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works.* We, who have the full revelation of "the Word made Flesh" are to fulfill our creative and redemptive purpose: unity with God through Jesus Christ and thus joined as one for eternity. This is as Jesus prayed in His high

Cont. on pg. 3



Save the Date! On March 16th

The Diaconate will host a dinner for the Congregation at 4:30 pm. We will provide the main meal but we would like to ask for some contributions of desserts/breads/salad.

A sign up sheet will be available during upcoming coffee hours.

Note: There will be no potluck luncheon following the service on the 16th, but we will have our regular coffee hour time of fellowship.



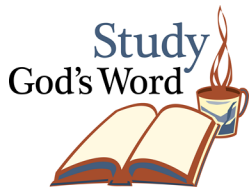
Have you received or passed along the Giving Plate?

Have you been encouraged as the giver or the receiver? Please feel free to send the blessings you have received to the church email or put a note in the Church Secretary's box. We would like to share them in the Mustard Seed each month.

If you do not want to give your name or who gave it to you that is fine. It isn't about acknowledgement, but how it has blessed and encouraged you as the giver or the receiver.

As a reminder, the Diaconate introduced the Giving Plate in the fall for the congregation to give and encourage one another with a treat, card, offer of service or whatever you were able to think of to give. Once received, then to pass it along to the next person with a gift and so on. It was suggested people give to someone they do not know as well in order to get to know them better.

Look forward to sharing the blessings you received in upcoming issues of the Mustard Seed. Thank you.



Church Theme 2013-2014

"Service & Unity"

"For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them.*" Romans 12: 4-6a



Diaconate Corner

This year's church theme is related to service, and how to encourage the congregation to identify and use individual spiritual gifts to serve the Church/ community. This month the spiritual gift of mercy will be discussed.

Every spirit filled believer has at least one, and more often multiple, spiritual gifts. The scriptures that review spiritual gifts include Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4: 1-12.

The spiritual gift of mercy involves the capacity to feel and express unusual compassion/empathy/sympathy for those in difficult or crisis situations and provide them with the necessary help and support to deal with the situation.

Throughout the scriptures mercy and compassion are taught. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus noted that it is a blessing to be merciful and one will receive mercy in the measure it is given. We are all called to be merciful and to do so with good cheer. For some, those with the spiritual gift of

mercy, this comes more readily. In Luke chapter 10 verses 30-37 Jesus tells of the priest who ignores an injured traveler due to the legal standards of remaining ceremonially clean while a Samaritan who is a stranger offers help and great personal sacrifice. Jesus notes in Matthew 23:23 that while all matters of the law are important to follow, it is even more important not to neglect justice, mercy and faithfulness.

The Scriptures are full of descriptions of the mercy of God. In Psalm 103:8 The Lord he is merciful and slow to anger and plentiful in mercy and in Exodus 34:6 The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth and love. There are many more verses related to God's goodness and mercy.

Some practical examples of the use of the gift of mercy include visitation of the sick, partaking in a prayer ministry, writing notes/cards and telephone outreach to those who are homebound, counseling (with training to avoid pitfall of taking on others' offenses), some of the professions, medical profession, funeral home director,

pastoral ministry.

Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit, while they can be developed over time, they cannot be "earned" and are given by grace. These gifts are given to the believer solely for the purpose of edifying the church and glorifying God. They are not given for personal gain or advancement.

There are many surveys/inventory type tests designed to assist the Christian in identifying his/her spiritual gifts, however, the most reliable way to discern this is through prayer and affirmation of the presence of a gift(s) by other believers in your life.

If you feel you may have this gift of mercy, and wish to explore the use of this gift within the congregation, please contact the Diaconate for encouragement and possible opportunities.

In Service to His Church,
John Kunze, Helen Palmer,
Karen TenDyke, Pastor Russ,
Nina Miranda, Hartwig
Schmidt, Dianne James
& Ruth Reed

Pastor's Corner (cont. from pg. 1)

Priestly prayer: John 17: 21 – 23: *"that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.*

May your life be a continuous sacrifice of praise to the one who created you and redeemed you for His good pleasure.

Pastor Russell



This month the Missions Committee is highlighting New Life Home for Women and Children in New Hampshire. Report by Ruth Reed.

In December 2013, a few of us (Ruth Reed, Don and Marcia Armstrong) attended an Open House at the New Life Home for Women and Children, and it was a wonderful experience. We were given a lovely tour by a former resident who lived there with her children. She is now living in a transitional house, and attending school for nursing. We were informed that there were 14 women and 17 children living in the Home at that time, and there was a waiting list of about 40. During the tour, our guide shared how her faith in the Lord had grown immensely through prayer, love, support of others, and having a safe home to live in.

Please continue to pray for the New Life Home and its residents. Pray that they find love and peace through the grace and mercy of the Lord, and that their faith grows daily. Pray that the Lord continues to bless them with support and resources to provide a safe haven, as well as physical, emotional and spiritual health.

Missions Committee,
Lavern Forrest, Marcia Armstrong, Louise Jenkins,
Cheryl Diorio & Joyce Gigliotti



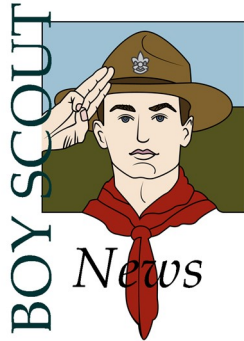
At church one Sunday, I noticed a woman carrying a Bible neatly wrapped in colorful ribbon, like a package. My first thought was that she must be giving it to someone as a present.

Throughout the next few weeks, however, I realized that was the woman's own well-used Bible. Whenever a worship service or Bible study ended, she carefully rewrapped the Scriptures with that shimmery strand.

What a great reminder that God's Word is a precious, practical gift meant to be opened and reopened regularly.

—Stephanie Martin

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Cub Scout Corner

It has been a snowy month. We met only twice this month and worked on catching up with merit badges which some of the boys had missed. We had hoped to have a sled day, but guess what, it snowed during the time we would have been sledding!

During the last Pack meeting for February we will have the Blue and Gold ceremony, which is the Birthday of Scouting. We have four boys moving from Webelo's Pack 56 to Boy Scouts. I think three boys will be joining Troop 56 at the Church.

God has blessed us to mentor these boys sharing our faith and being great role models as a Church body. Please keep our scout leaders and the cub scouts in your prayers that we can make a difference. God Bless,

Boy Scout Corner

It was a short month with the storms and February Vacation limiting our meeting time. The Boy Scouts are busy working on merit badges and advancement. We had planned a pancake breakfast which we canceled because of the threat of another snow storm. We will be planning a breakfast at a later date. As soon as we get the information and date set we will pass it on. Please come and enjoy our pancake breakfast.

The Boy Scouts are off to a fun filled weekend of skiing the last weekend of February. We leave Friday and return Sunday. Jared Lloyd has completed his Eagle Scout requirements and will be having his ceremony early March.

Plans are being made for an April camping trip, summer camp as well as a 9 day Allagash Canoe Trip this summer. This is an epic canoe trip in the Allagash wilderness in northern Maine. They will be canoeing, hiking, and camping.

Several Boy Scouts earned their pulp and paper merit badge this month. Jose was one of them. They learned why it is important to recycle, and how paper is made. They also made pulp and paper.

As you can see they are always busy. Thank you to the members and leaders of the Church for supporting these boys in everything they do. Please pray for these boys that they will grow in God's Grace and be blessed by His gifts.

*Submitted by Peter James
Charter Chairman-Dick Grinder
Charter members-Steve Lyons & Peter James*

The Congregational Church

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*Moved? Please update your
address with the Church Office.
Thank you.*

Mustard Seed Newsletter

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Music Director: Lydia Okumura
Sexton: Don Armstrong



April
Newsletter Deadline
March 19, 2014

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Sunday, March 9th

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