March
2009

NEW CASTLE FIRST CHURCH OF GOD

Monthly Newsletter

Freedom from Worry

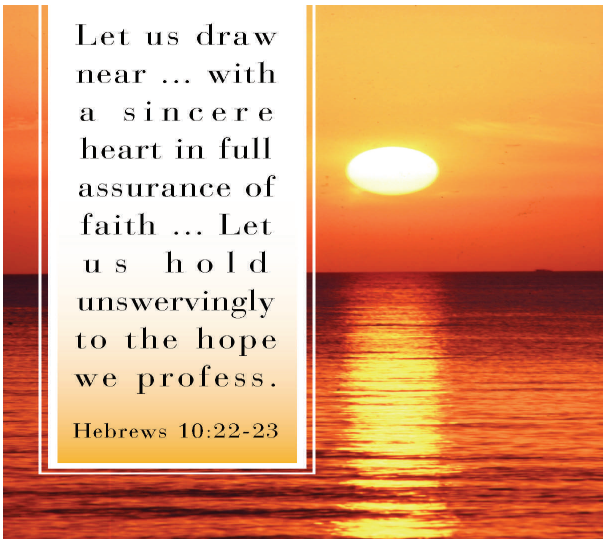
FROM THE PASTOR

We are living in difficult times. The economic crisis has everybody concerned about their jobs, their homes, and financial responsibilities. It's not an easy time for any of us. But it is a time for each of us to see what our faith is really made of. Dick Eastman is the international president of Every Home for Christ. He gives three ways that God has promised to provide:

(1) **Faith and Endurance.** The Apostle James made a statement that has special significance right now: "When troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance a chance to grow." Endurance isn't developed overnight. Endurance is developed through hard work and struggle. But the key to developing enduring faith is to keep our eyes focused on the Lord. James uses Job as an example of endurance. As we endure by faith God will provide the mercy and compassion we need to keep on going.

(2) **Free from Worry.** As we face an uncertain future, it's easy to become consumed by worry. What's going to happen? What will we do? How will it all work out? The key to conquering worry is to remember that the future is in God's hand. Worrying about the future implies a lack of faith and doesn't accomplish anything. If we seek God in prayer and do our best to follow His path each day, we can rest assured that He is in control of the future and there is nothing to worry about. Read Matthew 6:25-33. In this passage Jesus puts worry and anxiety in its proper perspective. If we simply place the future in His hands, God will provide us with a supernatural peace.

(3) **Free from Fear.** The more we seek and follow the Lord through faith and prayer, the more we will experience His great love. "God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them." (I John 4:16). "Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear." (I John 4:18). If we allow the Holy Spirit to replace fear in our hearts and minds, we will be able to experience God's love during difficult times and express His love to others who need encouragement. Love is the key to fear-free living. With the Lord by our side, we can face a future that is in the hands of a loving God, without fear, free from worry, with an abiding faith that is strong enough to endure any trial. But how long will it take for the dark days to pass? It all depends on how much faith we are willing to let God build into our lives.



Prayerfully yours,

Pastor Bill and Carole

Amazing Grace

From the Desk of the Pastor of Recovery Ministries:

When considering the value and mission of our Celebrate Recovery ministry in the life of our church and the community of New Castle I have been drawn to a very familiar and powerful passage of scripture, John 8:1-11. This is the story of the woman caught in adultery and brought before Jesus by her many accusers. Consider the clear words of Jesus in this account:

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger and said to them, ""If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

The message here is powerful. Jesus did the unexpected. Rather than condemn the woman for her actions, he challenged her accusers. Then the extended his amazing grace toward the woman and admonished her to change her life---to *"leave her life of sin"*. This incredible story teaches us a valuable principle to apply to our personal lives and to our ministry as a church:

We are to HATE the sin; however, at the same time we are to

LOVE and extend GRACE to the sinner!

God loves to take the worst and transform it into the best! Have you noticed that? He takes broken things and makes them new again. Recently I read an amazing story of transformation concerning the life of a woman by the name of Marnie. She was shared many of the same circumstances as the woman brought to Jesus. Listen to her words:

"I know what it's like to be caught in that kind of sin---to be disgraced and to deserve that judgment. For years, I was a modern woman caught in adultery. Of course, I wasn't physically dragged to Jesus by a condemning crowd with an ulterior motive. I wasn't literally in danger of being stoned. But I was just as guilty as the woman in John 8.When spiritually I imagined standing before Jesus, I felt overwhelmed with similar shame."

-continued on page 7

Birthdays and Anniversaries

Birthdays and Anniversaries *(Please call the church office if we do not have your information!)*

Birthdays:

Mar. 2—Ron Reiter

Mar. 4—Carol Harlan, Marissa Lastoria

Mar. 8—Don Print

Mar. 11—Cami Schaubroeck

Mar. 20—Ron Lastoria

Mar. 21—Mary Lou Garver

Mar. 24—Zayne Rowland

Mar. 26—Olivia Walker

Anniversaries:

Mar. 15—Bob and Linda Grass

March 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 12:30 Underground Refuge Mtg & Lunch 5:30 Youth 6 Bible Exp	2 7 Celebrate Recovery	3 6:30 Council Mtg	4 7 Prayer Mtg	5 7 Trustees Mtg	6	7 6 Tweenager soup and salad dinner
8 5:30 Youth 6 Bible Exp	9 7 Celebrate Recovery	10 6:30 CEC Mtg	11 7 Prayer Mtg	12	13	14 6–10 St Patrick's Day Party in Underground Refuge
15 St Patrick Day Dinner after church 5:30 Youth 6 Bible Exp	16 7 Celebrate Recovery	17 	18 7 Prayer Mtg	19	20 First Day of Spring	21 2-4 Preschool Open House Youth ACS Daffodil sales
22 Youth pizza fundraiser begins 6 Bible Exp	23 7 Celebrate Recovery	24	25 7 Prayer Mtg	26	27	28 6–10 Mystery Night in Underground Refuge
29 5:30 Youth volleyball game 6 Bible Exp	30 7 Celebrate Recovery	31				

St. Patrick's Day Celebrations

Tweenager Dinner

Saturday, March 7th, 2009

6 PM

Tweenager dinners are for all adults 'tween the ages of 40 and, well, anything over that!!!! So come and join us for some good food and a nice evening out! We'll be meeting in the Fellowship Hall. Let Carole Hunley

St. Patrick Day All-Church Dinner Coming Up

There will be a dinner for the whole congregation on Sunday, March 15 right after church. Come enjoy a great meal with your friends and church family! See Carole Hunley to sign up and to see what you can bring.

*See page 8 for St. Patrick's Day Party in the Underground Refuge on March 14th from 6-10 PM.

Ladies Retreat—May 1st and 2nd

The First Annual CHOG Ladies "Revive" Retreat will provide , in addition to meals and lodging, the opportunity for ladies to relax, worship, pray, learn, and laugh together! Check-in is Friday, May 1, from 6 to 7 PM and check-out is Saturday, May 2, at 3 PM. The location is the Whitehall Camp and Conference Center. The retreat is for all ladies age 18 and up. The cost is $40 if paid in full by April 3rd and $45 after. The deadline for registration is April 24, 2009.

Registration forms are available in the church office.

Please RSVP by March 5!

You are invited to a Celebration of Ministry Dinner to honor Vern and Cathy Allison at the North Main Street Church of God in Butler, PA on Thursday, March 19, 2009, at 6:30 PM. Vern has been the Director of Ministries for Western PA Ministries at Whitehall for 12 years and is now leaving to become the Sr. Pastor of The First Church of God in Sidney, OH. Reservations for the meal must be made by March 5. There are forms in the narthex to fill out and mail in with your $15 check made out to WPA Ministries. There is a card shower also. The mailing address is:

WPA Ministries
PO Box 597
Emlenton, PA 16373

The phone number of WPA Ministries, if you have any questions, is 724-867-9601.

Easter Egg Hunt—Apr. 11

We will be having our Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 11th, the day before Easter. It will be an egg-citing day of fun, story-telling, and, of course, egg hunting! All children through sixth grade are invited to participate. Donations of wrapped candy and money for prizes and candy are needed.

There will be a box in the narthex for candy donations or you may give monetary donations to Cara Print.

Precious in His Sight Preschool

Open House

March 21st from 2 PM to 4 PM

Come & see what we have to offer your child!

First Church of God

12 W. Euclid Ave., New Castle, PA

Call for more information: (724) 714-1259

Children's Books Needed

There is a box in the narthex for new and gently used children's books for the new preschool which will be opening in our church this fall. Please help by donating whatever books you have available that your child has outgrown or that you are willing to contribute

Dates for Whitehall Youth Camp 2009

Third and Fourth Grade Camp	Fifth and Sixth Grade Camp	Jr / Sr High Camp
June 28th - July 2nd	June 15th - June 20th	June 22nd—June 27th

We Want to help with Youth Camp Fees

Remember! March 1st is the last date to inform Nina Strohmeyer if your child / teen is attending Whitehall Youth Camp this summer, and would like to take advantage of the early bird discount and the church's help with camp fees. The offering which was taken on Feb. 15 and 22 and the church's budget amount for helping with camp fees will be divided among the names turned in by March 1st. Then the week of March 1st, telephone calls will be made to the parents of the children / youth who had names turned in on time to inform them of the amount they will receive from church and the balance they are responsible for. Registration forms and checks (made out to the church) need to be submitted to Nina or the church office by March 8.

March Youth News

Joe Corby Frozen Pizza and Dessert Sale

Starts March 22nd

The youth will begin selling items March 22nd. Orders will be due to Ginny Butchelli on April 5th. The ordered items will be delivered April 25th and all money will be due on or before May 3rd.

Annual Church Rummage Sale

May 1st—2nd

The Annual Church Rummage Sale has been scheduled for Friday, May 1st and Saturday, May 2nd. We will be setting up and pricing items for the sale from April 27th to April 30th. Items are not to be put in the Fellowship Hall before April 27th.

Acquire the Fire

May 8th—9th

The youth will be attending the Acquire the Fire event in Oakland on may 8th and 9th. The cost for youth members will be 430. More information will be coming.

Sunday, March 1st—Youth Meeting 5:30—7:30 in the Underground Refuge

Sunday, March 8th—Youth Meeting 5:30—7:30 in the Underground Refuge

Saturday, March 14th—St. Patrick's Day in the Underground Refuge—6:00-10:00 PM

Sunday, March 15th—Youth Meeting 5:30—7:30 in the Underground Refuge

Saturday, March 21st—Daffodil Fundraiser for the American Cancer Society

We will be helping the American Cancer Society with their annual daffodil flower and candy sale. Please meet at the church at 9:00 AM We will then be traveling to various sites to sell the daffodils. Since you will be traveling away from the church in a vehicle driven by one of the youth leaders you will need parental permission to attend this event. Please get a permission slip and return it to Jamie or Andi on or before the March 15th youth meeting.

Sunday, March 22nd—Joe Corby Pizza fundraiser begins

Saturday, March 28th—Mystery Night in the Underground Refuge—6:00-10:00 PM

Sunday, March 29th—Teens versus T.E.E.N.S. Team Volleyball Game

We are planning to have a volleyball game from 5:30-7:30 PM. We are currently working on securing a gym for the game. If the gym is not available, we will be playing in our Fellowship Hall.

Amazing Grace, continued from page 2

"My life, too, was a total mess. I was a sexual sinner: an unfaithful wife involved with a man who was not my husband. And it wasn't the first or the only time. I'd been down this road before, first with promiscuity as a teen, then after I got married, acting out in multiple affairs. There was no reason to believe I wouldn't go down it again."

"It's not that I thought what I was doing was OK. I didn't. I clearly knew my behavior was sin. I knew the rules. And I knew the consequences. I saw how my affairs affected my husband. I saw the confusion and fear in my children's eyes. I watched families crumble in the wake of my infidelity. I had lost my self-esteem, my health, and very nearly my life because of my sexual behavior. I felt totally without hope, perhaps like the woman who was brought to Jesus. If I kept doing what I was doing, I was surely going to die---physically, possibly---spiritually, certainly. *But I could not stop*. My life was unmanageable, and I was powerless to change it on my own. I saw no way out. I didn't know where to turn."

"I knew how the world dealt with women like me. I'd heard the jokes about loose women. I'd experienced the revolving door of exploitation on the one hand and condemnation on the other. I knew the world saw me as a loser, but I didn't really care about the people of the world. It was the religious folk I was afraid of. The Christians---the church people---those were the ones I wanted to avoid. I knew how the church dealt with sinners like me. They still threw stones. Maybe not literal ones, but sharp ones nonetheless."

"Stones of gossip---I'd heard the whispers and the rumors. Stones of withdrawal---I'd seen the averted eyes, the retreating backs. People avoided me. Who wants to associate with a woman caught in adultery? Stones of judgment---the condemnation overwhelmed me. I try not to blame the religious folk. Most thought judging me was the right thing to do. Good Christians are supposed to take a strong stand against sin, right?"

"All I knew was that those stones didn't help. The threat of punishment sure wasn't turning my life around. Yes, I was afraid of hell, but I was already living in it, and I didn't know a way out. I knew everything about rules. I had no clue about relationship."

"**Until I encountered Jesus!** His approach was totally different and surprising. He was kind with me and gentle. He looked tenderly into my soul and saw my pain. He saw my past---my history of sexual abuse and parental abandonment. He saw how desperately I wanted a different future. He knew I couldn't do it on my own, and He didn't expect me to. He offered forgiveness. He showered me with grace. He caught me with His love and threw His power against my pain."

"Jesus gave me hope for the future and grace for the journey. Instead of beating me up with stones, He challenged me with His love. He called me to a different life. He led me to the resources that made it possible. He coaxed me into relationship. And since Aug. 8, 1992, one day at a time, by the grace of my Lord, this sinful, sexually addicted woman has been walking with Him in a newness of life."

What an amazing story of transformation from a life of sin and despair to victory and wholeness! This all occurred because Marnie experienced the amazing grace and unconditional love of Jesus. She experience him through the ministry of a church that not only believed in the transforming and healing power found in a relationship with the Savior, but also modeled His life through their actions. And because Marnie found healing through a life-changing encounter with Jesus, she is now helping others to find that same redemption and cleansing through serving as a counselor to hurting people at Bethesda Workshops. You can learn more about this ministry at www.bethesdaworshops.org.

Through Celebrate Recovery we strive to help hurting people acknowledge the sin in their life and transform their lives through a miraculous encounter with Jesus. That is accomplished as we model the amazing grace and compassion of the Savior and help these hurting people experience recovery and healing through the 8 principles and 12-steps of recovery. These principles and steps are designed to help people confront, instead of run from, their problems and look to God's Word for solutions.

Please pray for the ministry of Celebrate Recovery and its leaders. This ministry can be extraordinarily difficult and very frustrating; however, the hope of healing, recovery, and transformation keeps us focused and committed. God desires for the Marnie story to be the norm rather than the exception. We are called to be God's agents of transformation! Will you answer the call? It all starts by modeling the amazing grace that Jesus extended to the woman caught in adultery.

With much Love,

Pastor Carl

NEW CASTLE FIRST CHURCH OF GOD

12 W. Euclid Ave.
New Castle, PA 16105

phone: 724-658-3951
fax: 724-658-3962
website: www.newcastlecog.org
e-mail: www.newcastlecog@verizon.net

Rev. Bill Hunley, Sr. Pastor
Rev. Carl Nicklas,
Pastor of Recovery Ministries
Cami Schaubroeck & Jill Toy,
Worship Leaders

[Where relationships are made that will last for an eternity!]

Underground Refuge News

St. Patrick's Day Party

Saturday, March 14th

6-10 PM

Fun, friends, and lots of good luck!

There is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

* *

Mystery Night

Saturday, March 28th

6-10 PM

Figure out what the mystery is all about.

Community Outreach

Celebrate Recovery!

Celebrate Recovery is a Christ-Centered recovery path for those who want to overcome their hurts, habits and hang-ups through 12 steps wrapped around 8 principles taken from the beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-12. It is a safe place to talk about real problems. The group meets every Monday at 7 PM. Rev. Carl Nicklas is the Director.

Underground Refuge Christian Recreation Center

The Underground Refuge is a community outreach ministry for teens and young adults. This cafe/game room/lounge area with 12 ft. viewing screen has been the home of many fantastic events! Check their website for upcoming events: myspace.com/undergroundrefuge. Directors are Paul Ross and April Lewis.

Please turn in articles for the following month's newsletter by the 20th of each month. The church's e-mail address is newcastlecog@verizon.net. Thank you.

Sharon Bromley, Church Secretary