



# SECOND THOUGHTS

100 COLLEGE AVENUE, NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY  
732 545-0581 Fax: 732 545-4773 Email: SRCNB@aol.com  
The Web: www.secondreformednb.org

January 2005

## “Sharing Our Good Gifts”

### Christian Education Update

Our Sunday School program will resume this Sunday **January 9th** following worship and brief coffee hour time. Youth Group will also get back in the swing of things at their usual time and meeting place, in the upstairs teen room.

The Sunday School lesson for this Sunday using our "One Room Sunday School" curriculum is entitled Sharing God's Good Gifts. What a perfect lesson for our children to be thinking about at this time following such a tragedy in southeast Asia.

Our youngest church members from the Sunday School class gave weekly offerings during the fall months using envelopes for their gifts. At our last December class when we had a lesson on the Promise of a Messiah, the children agreed that they would like their offering to be used for a local child or family in need in area, and for the purchase of a goat, chickens or sheep for a family in a far-off land where that would truly help people who are starving or struggling to make a living. The offering total for the fall from the weekly contributions came to almost \$50.00!

Since our One Great Year of Sharing offering is just concluding I am going to suggest to the children that we add \$10. of their offering to that cause, and the rest go toward a needy family from Elijah's Promise and the RCA's Buy a Goat program.

The children will receive envelopes again this Sunday for use over the coming months. Many thanks to the Sunday School teachers who shared their good gifts during the fall including Judy Chibbaro, Ellen Van Glahn, Linda and Lyssa Snyder & Marilyn Koops. Also, leading our Teen Youth Group have been Michael Beals, Mark Chibbaro and Annie Hays.

If you missed our service on Dec. 19 you missed a great treat, as the children of all ages did a wonderful job during the service with bells, singing, reading, lighting the Advent Candle and more. Thank you Annie Hays for the wonderful Children's Sermons during Advent. *Phyllis Beals*

## Last Flight Out

All are welcome to see "Last Flight Out", a Christian movie being shown in two segments—On Sunday, **Jan 9** and the following Sunday—**Jan 16**—11:30 am. After Jan 16, the DVD will also be available to those that will not be able to make the above times. Please come!

*Hap Harris & Congregational / Life Cmtee*

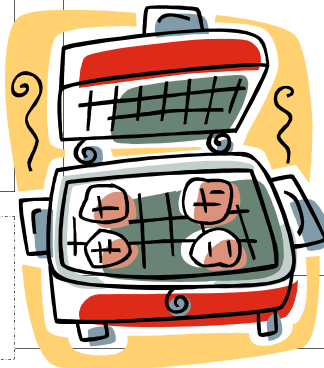
## HELP!!

In need of large electric grill. Looking for an electric grill for upcoming Sunday morning breakfast. Needed for cooking eggs, bacon and pancakes, so that we won't have to start up the big stove in the church kitchen.

*Thank you!*

*Hap Harris & Outreach Cmtee*

*P. S. We would also welcome any help with cooking.*



## Heartwarming Thank You's!

Dear SRC Family:

Thank you all so very much for your support through this five ½ year ordeal. With your concern, prayers, and love I was able to make it through the darkest of times. I could not have handled this situation without all of you.

Now, my prayers are of thanksgiving, to Jesus Christ for his love and for all of you for your love and support. Thank you again for everything that you have done for me.

*With Love and Gratitude.*

*Kathleen.*

Dear SRC Family:

Thank you one and all for praying and being supportive of Kathleen. Thank you one and all for taking care of my child. *With Love and Respect.*

*Loretta Bennett*

# An Eight Session Mentoring Course that Will Change Your Life!

Every time angels show up in the Bible they have to say to the ones to whom they've come, "Don't be afraid!" So we'll follow their lead and say to you, adult members of the congregation, DO NOT BE AFRAID!

We have something wonderful in store for you and for the eight young people who await you and your help. The Confirmation process this year includes Mentors, older Christians who are willing to help ONE young person review the basics of Christian belief, offer encouragement, affirmation, and friendship, over the eight week course and, hopefully far longer. You don't need to be an expert or a "pro" to do this. We've got books and people to guide you as you guide your young person. Do not be afraid!

Please take a few moments to read the excerpts below from the Mentor's Guide to "I Believe" (the book you'll both be using), and pray and think about this, for soon you may be asked to serve. The program will begin around Sunday, **January 16th** and proceed through about **March 13th**. The dates are purposely a bit vague because you and your mentee will set up your own best times for about an hour or an hour and a half per session. This may take place on Sundays, of course, but any of the other days of the week are fine, too.

If you have questions that you need answered after reading the excerpts and before making your commitment, please talk to the Pastor (732) 249-5828, or in person. By the way, only seven more mentors are needed, because he's going to commit to being one, too. Join him. Do not be afraid! Excerpts from "I Believe" are listed below and on the opposite page, or, you may request a copy of the book, "I Believe" to review and keep if you agree to make mentoring your commitment.

## Mentoring: What's it all About?

The bible is filled with stories of mentoring, even if that label is never used. Consider Moses and his mentee, Joshua: Joshua spent more than forty years learning about leadership as he apprenticed himself to Moses. Ruth learned at the feet of her mother-in-law Naomi. The twelve disciples were mentored by Christ himself; they accompanied him on road trips, listened to his teachings, watched his miracles, and occasionally received admonishment and correction when they tried to pursue their own agenda. The apostle Paul served as a mentor to many, including young Timothy, whom he called "my true son in the faith."

The National Mentoring Partnership describes a mentor as "an adult who, along with parents, provides young people with support, counsel, friendship, reinforcement and a constructive example. Mentors are good listeners, people who care, people who want to help young people bring out strengths that are already there" ([www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)).

Sounds like a tall order, doesn't it? And it is. If you're feeling unworthy, that's a good thing. God delights in using people like you, who are willing and who depend on God to give them the wisdom and gifts needed to serve him. You won't be doing this job alone. God is your partner in this venture. The following pages will provide an orientation to your role in this *I Believe* course. Please read them carefully before you meet your partners so you'll have an idea of what's expected of you. You'll glean useful ideas on how to make this relationship work. Work through the two "Try This!" activities (pp. 17-19) on our own, so you'll be prepared to share your experiences and insights when specific issues arise in your conversations. And may God's Spirit accompany you as you assume a mentor's mantle in this voyage of discovery and mutual blessings.

## Program Goals

*I Believe* is an eight-session program in which mentors will help prepare a young person to make a public profession of faith. The program is aimed at youth in grades 5-8 but is also suitable for use with high school students, especially those in grades 9-10.

Mentors and mentees will use the *I Believe* notebook to provide structure and content for their meetings. By working through the notebook together, both partners will review key biblical teachings and will produce a personal creed of beliefs. At this stage in your young mentee's faith journey, the goal is not to embark on a comprehensive and systematic study of Christian doctrine or of the doctrinal standards of your church. Rather, the goal is to cover the basics in an age-appropriate way. Specifically those being mentored will:

- ◇ *Be affirmed in their faith.*
- ◇ *Be challenged to continue to grow in faith.*
- ◇ *Review basic Reformed Christian beliefs about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the ten commandments, sacraments, personal Christian growth, and responsibilities of church membership.*
- ◇ *Experience the value of being part of the family of God by having a faith model to work with.*
- ◇ *Express their faith through a written, sung, or spoken creed, or through producing a visual representation of their faith.*

## How Does the Program Work?

You will be paired with a young person who has expressed an interest in professing faith before the congregation. In preparation for this public profession, we ask that you get together for at least eight “one on one” meetings. During these meetings, you’ll be exploring topics that cover key Christian beliefs. Your job will be not so much teaching as listening, guiding, challenging, and sometimes correcting.

You and your mentee will both need a copy of the *I Believe* notebook. Both of you will answer questions, discuss ideas, do activities as suggested in the notebook, and complete the weekly readings and assignments in each chapter. On pages 40-41, the notebook features a “bulletin board” for keeping notes and recording ideas, questions, and observations to share at your next meeting. It’s important for you to work alongside your mentee, to reflect on and answer the same questions, to complete the same assignments, to model the activities you are expecting your mentee to complete.

The mentor’s guide will help you prepare for each of the eight sessions by providing some background notes on each page in the mentee notebook. Please don’t use this guide as a lesson plan or read from it during your sessions. It’s just for you-use it only to prepare for your meetings. Remember that your role is primarily that of an experienced guide, not a “teacher” in the sense that we normally use that word.

## Qualifications

Your basic job is to walk alongside a young person who has expressed a desire to profess his faith publicly. These qualities will help you do that:

- **Godliness:** Mentors love God, trust in Christ for salvation, and are growing in the fruits of the Spirit.
- **Love for children:** mentors remember their own adolescent and childhood worries and empathize with children’s concerns today. They speak up for children and enjoy being with them.
- **Positive attitude:** mentors affirm, welcome, and accept kids. They exhibit positive body language and enjoy life.
- **Grace:** mentors are slow to judge and condemn, able to forgive kids if they disappoint and fail them. Mentors are growing in grace themselves.
- **Accessibility:** mentors commit time and energy to this process. They are dependable.
- **Being real:** mentors are comfortable with themselves, are aware of their own strengths and shortcomings, and do not need to hide behind a mask.
- **A sense of calling:** mentors believe that God has asked them to do this job and are responding to that calling.

## Commitment and Responsibilities

- ◇ **Mentors** commit themselves to the person they’re mentoring and to his spiritual growth. Mentors pray for the young person they’re mentoring and affirm his identity in Christ. They understand that the mentee may seek out the mentor for support after this program is completed. They are willing to encourage the mentee in his ongoing spiritual journey, as one fellow Christian to another.
- ◇ **Mentors** commit themselves to completing the I Believe Program and to meeting at least with times with their mentee.
- ◇ **Mentors** offer support, advice, and encouragement as the young person writes his own profession of faith, studies and affirms key Christian beliefs, develops “holy habits” of personal piety, and explores the possibilities of using spiritual gifts in the church.
- ◇ **Mentors** will stand with the mentee before church leadership and the congregation during the profession of faith process. They will offer church leaders an assessment of the mentee’s faith commitment.

## Accountability

- **Ultimately**, mentors are accountable to God and depend on God for strength, wisdom, and guidance. They are also accountable to church leaders and are willing to submit to their authority.
- **Mentors** have read and agree to the church’s policies about safety, abuse prevention, and confidentiality.
- **Mentors** understand that they are in partnership with the congregation, church leaders, and parents in this process. They will depend on them for support.

## Rewards of Mentoring

Mentors will experience the rewards of

- \* Guiding a child of God on her spiritual journey.
- \* Using their gifts and talents in God’s service.
- \* Fulfilling the Great Mission to “go and make disciples.”
- \* Learning alongside a young person.
- \* Being affirmed in their spiritual calling.
- \* Knowing that their work may be replicated in the mentee’s life.

# ANNUNCIATION TO MARY

Luke 1:26-38

**Sermon 12/12/04 Preached at Second Reformed Church of  
New Brunswick by Rev. John de Velder**  
*(edited and abridged by Phyllis Beals)*

I want to begin with two stanzas from our final hymn "O Lord How Shall I Meet You?" That is a good question for us on this third Sunday of Advent.

I'll paraphrase the ending for us: to read, "O love beyond all telling that led you to embrace you and me! The question for you and me on this third Sunday in Advent is "how shall we meet you this Christmas, O God? How shall we prepare Him room? This Advent we wait for the celebration in the church year of the greatest miracle and mystery of our Christian faith - the coming to us in human form of a baby - the God of gods, very God of very God, the creator of all that is and sustainer of the universe. Just how are you preparing for such a meeting? And how do we prepare aright?"



So many Christmases and Advents we seem to miss something. We ask, "is this all there is?" Maybe it is that God is calling to us and we are not paying attention. Maybe we are not like Mary. God is asking us to believe and maybe we really don't. God is asking us to prepare room for God and maybe we just do not prepare Him room. The good news is that someone's experience can show us how to prepare for this meeting. Let us hear how Mary did!

So let us return to the story of Mary, who did hear, and believe, and receive God. And thereby she became the Mother of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ, the very incarnation of God. In a painting I like of "Annunciation to Mary" Mary is painted as a young woman in a dark room with light streaming in the window indicating the angel Gabriel's presence. The painting is filled with mystery and a sense of expectation. However we may picture the scene, there is no doubt that this is a dramatic moment, and we cannot blame Mary for being "much perplexed" or downright afraid and saying something like, "You want me to do what? Who is this really?"

If anything like this happened to us - it's likely we would check for what we ate or ask our Doctor for medication. But, Mary did manage, at least, to say; "How can this be, since I'm not yet a wife?" The angel said, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you - therefore the child will be holy." Notice the similar activity of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit put tongues of flame on the disciples at the birth of the Church - The Body of Christ. It's the same language at the birth of the Church at the announcement of the conception and birth of Jesus.

The angel goes on about Mary's cousin Elizabeth conceiving a son even though she was beyond child bearing years and was considered barren (for nothing is impossible with God). Perhaps it was this news that her old cousin was pregnant that helped Mary to decide to open herself to this mysterious visitation. She said "Ok, here am I, the servant of the Lord" and then she spoke the nine most important words in our Christian experience. As we respond to God's initiative and call to us. "Let it be with me according to your word".

This experience of the human response to God is at the heart of the greatest miracle and mystery of our Christian faith. The Word made flesh, and made flesh in us today. That Word comes to us, not just to Mary. For Jesus to be incarnated in us we need to really sing the line from the Christmas carol: "O come to us, abide with us, be born in us today".

The Word is to be heard. The Word is to be believed. The Word is to be received. That is what Mary did. That is what we need to do too. Thank God that Mary heard and perceived that there was a word for her that God was talking, calling her, as did Moses when he perceived God in the burning bush!

Are we hearing God's promptings? Are we seeing God's activity, and sensing God's Presence? Many heard and believed that this was God and so she said, "Let it be done to me according to Your word". Maybe we do not hear God's call to us so clearly or see God's activity or sense God's presence for a lot of reasons. Maybe we just don't expect much from God anymore. Maybe our god is too small. But, this Advent let's look for a big god, let our lives experience the love beyond all telling that led God to embrace you and me. Our God is not a small god. God is most powerful but comes to us in seeming weakness. So we have to have ears and eyes and hearts of faith to apprehend God's.

Like Mary, we can do this for each other. We can tell each other that God loves us and wants us in God's beloved community. GOD IS WITH US! Mary's story goes on (in Luke 1:39-45), she visits her cousin Elizabeth because she has heard of her miraculous pregnancy and "her Babe leapt in her womb". Elizabeth says "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by her Lord. Then with her heart full of joy and gratitude to God Mary sings a beautiful song of praise called the Magnificat. Mary sings because she is so full of joy. She is full of God's presence and overwhelming joy and peace and love. She bursts forth in song of praise.

I want to tell you about my experiences recently that I believe are God's prompting through my daughter's family experience. I have been away from church a lot this Fall because I have been visiting my new grandchildren. I do not have one new one, but four, because daughter, Rebecca and son-in-law Jonathan adopted (in August 2004) four special needs children, all brothers and sister, ages 2, 4, 7, 8, named Tristan, Theodore, Tabitha and Thomas. I believe that God's Angel of annunciation took a different form with Rebecca and Jon. There was no direct call but none the less the call needed the same response as Mary's. The brothers and sister came from Cincinnati. After many visits Rebecca and Jon, I believe, heard God's prompting to make room in their hearts and home (for the Word to become flesh) to provide love to these four precious children without a mother and a father.

To me this is a real Christmas miracle for the children for Rebecca and Jon and for me as Grandpa. They look up at me and ask, "Are you my Grandpa?" When I look into their eyes and when I hear their voices, I hear the voice of God calling us to love each other and bring people into God's kingdom or beloved family. Once these four children had no family and now they are a family. And in the church we remember the line, "once you were no people but now you are God's people."

We all need to give and receive love and God meets our need for belonging and family. These four grandchildren of mine now have a family. They give and receive love. So God, let it be with us according to Your Word!! There is a new song in that little family, the children love to sing. They sing a song called "Happy Adoption Day" and they sing at the top of their lungs. As they sing, how can I keep from singing?



Thy hymn writer Robert Lowry lived in some of the most troubled and tumultuous time in our nation's history. He wrote memorable hymns, but one of his lesser known hymns is what fits with Mary and the Annunciation and with us as we wait for our Lord's birth in us. It is "How Can I Keep From Singing?" It suggests that pulsing through life and history is the ever present refrain of God's love. This refrain or melody of love can be heard underneath the nightly news; the sounds of gunfire and bombs exploding in Iraq or Palestine; underneath the cries of the hungry in darkest Africa, the poor in Bangladesh; the sick in all the hospitals; amidst the homeless all over the world. The melody can be heard even when the fearful thunder crack of the imminent life - storm is approaching in our lives.

Thy hymn goes like this, "What through the tempest round me roars, I see the truth it liveth. The peace of God restores my soul, a fountain ever springing. All things are mine since I am loved, how can I keep from singing?" Something breaks in, at times the melody is a soft gentle hum that reminds us of God's unswerving devotion to God's creation. Or it's a whisper of gentleness on a quiet night, like the still small voice Moses heard (not the whirlwind, lightning or thunder).

Then there are other times like on some Christmas eve when we have a palpable sense of God's presence in God's world. Then the sound is full and rich with a crescendo that sounds like a thousand heavenly trumpets of that first night of the birth of Jesus when the angels sang. But when life comes crashing down on us or just grinds us down it is this melody like Aaron Copeland's "Appalachian Spring" that keeps after us to remind us that "The peace of God restores my soul, a fountain ever springing. All things are mine since I am loved, how can I keep from singing?"

The song of God is under, over, around, and through in each one of us (whether we can sing or not). It is incarnated in every flesh. The Holy Spirit invites us to hum along, it doesn't matter what kind of day we're having, the song is there, it breaks in! It doesn't matter what the weather is or whether we are rich or poor, healthy or sick, the song is there. It doesn't matter if we have been overlooked or undervalued, the song is still there. Doesn't even matter if the darkness of human evil clouds the light of the sun, the song is still there.

That song is the song of God's love for us in Jesus, the Word made flesh, that dwells with us in all its fullness. Like Mary, how can we keep from singing? AMEN

## SRC SPECIAL OFFERING FOR TSUNAMIS VICTIMS

As families in Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand try to determine how to rebuild their lives after the horrific earthquake and tsunamis of last month, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) is coming alongside of them to offer \$2 million in long-term assistance.



This disaster killed over 150,000 people. It also left hundreds of thousands homeless and without a source of livelihood. Fishermen lost their boats and nets, farmers lost their most recent crops, and families who had already been living in poverty lost their homes. Today, survivors are still living in a daze as they struggle to find food and shelter and develop a plan for what to do next.

CRWRC has been busy responding with emergency food, water, and other supplies to more than 75,000 families in India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. They have also been working with churches and local organizations in these countries to develop a program that will meet the long-term needs of survivors.

"Once the emergency aid stops flowing, too many people will be left on their own to rebuild their lives," explains Jacob Kramer, CRWRC International Relief Coordinator. "Our mission is to help these families reseed their fields, restock their farms, and obtain new equipment for occupations like fishing so that they have the ability to thrive on their own."

Given the extent of the damage in India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, CRWRC is estimating that this response will cost \$2-\$3 million (US). In order to meet these needs, CRWRC is relying on the donations of individuals and churches in North. Financial donations to support CRWRC Disaster Response efforts should be marked "South Asia Earthquake" and sent to CRWRC at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560 (US) **or you can earmark your check, "South Asia Earthquake" and place it in this Sunday, January 9th offering plate.** There will be special envelopes available in the narthex for your donation. Credit card donations can also be given by calling 1-800-55-CRWRC or through their website [CRWRC's website](#).

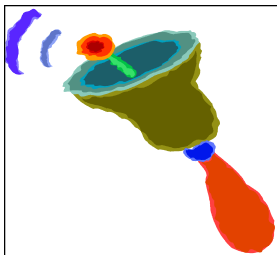


## Budget Update

Our Treasurer, the Finance committee and the consistory have spent many hours on the budget for SRC. Despite lengthy discussions and several meetings devoted solely to the budget, it was not completed by the end of December as we had promised. We apologize for the delay!

This year the process was slightly more complicated due to the change from our "old format" to a new software program. In the future this should make things easier to read and understand but it took a bit to get it up and running. Special thanks to Suzanne Wade and Kathy Fisher for all their work in this area. Thankfully the process is nearly complete. We need to just fill in a few more numbers and it will be done. We will hopefully have the budget complete at our January consistory meeting and plan a congregational meeting/brunch in February to allow congregational review. Again, we are sorry for the delay. As always, if you have questions or concerns regarding the budget, don't hesitate to speak to any consistory member.

**Annie Hays**



## Silver Bells for Easter??

I am looking for anyone who is interested in forming a hand chime choir to work on some music for the Easter season. It doesn't matter if you've never played before or if you are an experience ringer. If you can count, then you can play the hand chimes. Ask any of the members in the confirmation class. They learned "Away in the manager" in just three weeks. Some of them only played their part once before they played in church! We can make it as easy as you want! They will tell you that it is quite fun as well as very easy.

You won't need to make a long term commitment but we will need to find sometime to practice as a group on a regular basis. Look for a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the hall on the way to the parlor. Please write your name and a phone number where I can reach you, as well as available times/days that you would be able to come to the church to practice. If you have any questions, please call me at 732 828-8345.

**Annie Hays**

