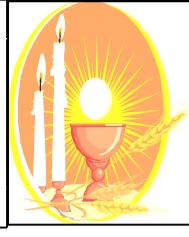


The Beacon



"Go, and make disciples (my life-long, obedient, followers, learners, and servants) of (all people), baptizing them in the name of (through the authority of) God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – teaching them to obey all that I have commanded. (and remember) I am with you (now) and until time is no more....." Matthew 28 (paraphrase)

As the new year is dawning I am reminded that as followers of Jesus we do not become so quickly or by accident. Someone extends Christ's love to us. Someone takes us under the wing and nurtures us as disciples - that is, by intention, seeking to assist us in becoming life-long, obedient, followers, learners, and servants of Jesus. Life-long suggests that discipleship is a process more than a destination. The primary role of a disciple is to...follow. The primary task of the church is to intentionally practice or nurture – one another in becoming Jesus' disciples.

Author Leonard Sweet gives us some insights as to why "making disciples" is as important today as in the 1st century.

"We tend to forget...that the twelve disciples Jesus called to found his movement were all lay people. Jesus had three years to save the world. How did he choose to spend those three years? Founding a mega-church? Launching a mass movement?? Building a temple??? Starting a new religion???? He chose to spend what time he had training a small cell of disciples....."

In 2009 Benson Memorial will establish a first-ever Leadership Academy. The intention of this in-house academy is to identify, call, and empower 12 persons to share in an experience of personal, spiritual leadership development. The first step in the establishment of the academy is calling into existence a Leadership Board. Once launched this group of Benson leaders will begin by sharing together in a short-term small group experience utilizing John Maxwell's, Developing The Leader Within You. Maybe you have an interest in seeing this goal become reality. If so, please feel free to contact me with your questions and insights. Leaders like disciples are not born. They are made.

In 2009 questions loom now before each of us. Who am I intentionally helping to become a disciple of Jesus? To whom will I extend Christ's love? Who am I willing to take under my wing and nurture in the way that is Jesus' way? New Year's resolutions will not make this happen. I believe the same Spirit Who is active and visible in Jesus, is at work (now) within and among us; making this calling a real possibility. We remember Jesus' promise: "I am with you – always – even to the end of the age." Because of Christ the possibilities in 2009 are limitless.

In Christ,

JON (the Methodist)



MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN WAKE

COUNTY – Warmth for Wake is a volunteer organization within Wake County Human Services in which volunteers cut, split, and deliver firewood to those in need in Wake County. Over forty-eight homes were served last year and we hope to do the same or better this year. The work days will be the following Saturdays: January 10 and 24 -February 14 and 28 -March 14 and 28(if needed, will be clean-up day) at the Raleigh Yard Waste Facility, 900 New Hope Road and at Jimmy Everett's Tree Service, 10024 Baileywick Road. For more information about how to volunteer please contact the church office and details will be given. Thank You.

The UMW General Meeting will be Tuesday, January 6, 6:30 p.m. at the home of Louise Humphrey.



ADULT FELLOWSHIP

The Adult Fellowship will meet Thursday, January 8, 2009, 11:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. A light lunch will be provided at no cost. Lisa Williams, Family Service Manager for Brown Wynne and Mitchell Funeral Homes will present an informational workshop entitled "Planning Ahead for all the Right Reasons." Please notify Jack or Linda McCaslin, 510-6838 no later than January 5 if you would like to attend. Please come prepared to pay \$5 dues per person for 2009 .



PRAYER CONCERNS : Lois Branch, Becky Clegg, Beatrice Ennis, Fred Greger, Charles McAdams, Lizzie Mock, Mike Steger, Service men and women serving our country, Resa Webster.

For Prayer Concern Requests, please complete the Blue Prayer Request Card available in the Sanctuary Pew Book Holders or contact the church office 787-0789. Drop the Prayer Request Cards in the Offering Plate during the Worship Service.

PRESENCE...

Worship Attendance:
December 7 – 333
December 14 – 388
December 21 – 448
December 28 – 242

Sunday School Attendance:

December 7 – 212
December 14 – 211
December 21 – 193
December 28 – 135

"DID YOU KNOW"...

... January is a time for personal resolutions and a suggestion for 2009 is that you equip yourself to share the "Good News" of your Christian faith:

- 1) PRAY for God's help.
- 2) BIBLE STUDY to clarify what you believe.
- 3) PRACTICE with fellow Christians.
- 4) TRUST the Holy Spirit to provide opportunity and words.
- 5) SEEK with confidence ways to spread God's great gift of love for all mankind.

FAITH SHARING FULFILLS THE GREAT COMMANDMENT.

CELEBRATE OUR FAITH, STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH,
SHARE OUR FAITH

Benson Book Club,
January 5, 2009

The Benson Book Club met Monday, January 5, 2009, 7:00 p.m. To begin reading and discussing The Shack by William P. Young.

Mackenzie Allen Phillips's youngest daughter, Missy, was abducted during a family vacation, and evidence that she may have been brutally murdered is found in an abandoned shack deep in the Oregon wilderness. Four years later, in the midst of his great sadness, Mack receives a suspicious note, apparently from God, inviting him back to that shack for a weekend. Against his better judgment, he arrives back to the shack on a wintry afternoon and walks back into his darkest nightmare: What he finds there will change his life forever.

The book can be purchased at a local bookstore. There is a long waiting list for this book at the library. If you have a copy of this book that you can loan us for this reading and discussion, or would like to borrow a copy of this book, please contact Carol Gosselin at [881-0504](tel:881-0504) or by email at j.c.gosselin@bellsouth.net. I will attempt to match up books with readers as much as possible.

This book club is very informal. Any one is welcome at any time, and no long-term commitment is necessary. Read and discuss only the books that have interest for you. This club is open to anyone interested in reading and discussing good books.



FLOWER CALENDAR

The Flower Calendar is posted in the Administrative Building Hallway Bulletin Board. Please sign to provide Worship Service Altar Flowers.

WIHN

Benson will host WIHN the week of January 11-17, 2009. Please contact John and Diane Rees for information or to volunteer 919-787-5510.

Thank You Messages

...The Benson Memorial Staff deeply appreciates the generous and thoughtful Christmas Love Offering

...The Trustees would like to thank Jack Robinson, PD Hill, Alan Pinnix, Doug Adams, Mike McKinney, Tom Hobgood, Jim Lee, Lee Honeycutt, Morris Daniels and the Good Neighbor Ministry for their help with maintaining the facilities during the past year.



2009 Women's Retreat

BENSON MEMORIAL WOMEN, as you have probably heard, this year's Annual Women's Retreat is much earlier: February 27 -March 1. We will be

"Embracing Winter's Blessings" at Avila Retreat Center. Forms/information for NEW RETREATERS is available in the narthex and outside the church office in the information rack. Be looking for this registration information, and do consider spending this weekend in Christian fellowship with your Lord and with many wonderful friends--old AND new! It is not too late! Questions? Call Pat Lee (787-9406) or Vicki Crenshaw (848-1014).

Pathfinders SS Class 2008 Christmas Report

This year the Pathfinders, through our weekly Sunday school offering, were privileged to provide to the minister's fund: Ten grocery gift cards in the amount of \$25.00 each and thirteen booklets of bus passes for eleven rides each for \$150. We gave two monetary love offerings in the amount of \$209.00 to a Burmese family and \$400 to a church family in need. We continued our weekly "bread run", picking up from Harris Teeter and delivering to The Raleigh Rescue Mission, and provided two evening meals for our WIHN guests.

Flood Buckets and Health Kits Delivered to MERC Center



"Save Me, O Lord, for the waters have come up to my neck . . . I am worn out calling for help, my eyes fail, looking for my God." Psalm 69

This cry of the Psalmist articulates the call for help placed by thousands in our nation this past year. In an effort to play some small part in God's answer to pleas for mercy, Benson called for a collection of relief supplies in the form of Hurricane Flood Buckets and Health Kits.

I'm happy to report that the following were collected: over twenty buckets; fifty-three health kits; about \$200 to help with logistics expenses. We delivered them in December to the MERC Center (www.merciumc.org) to be used for hurricane relief. That amounts to nearly \$2000 for such a worthy cause! Just as significantly, we involved countless neighbors in this effort – giving our friends the opportunity to be a part of God's work in this world.

On behalf of the victims of hurricanes and floods throughout our nation, the MERC Center and our church would like to thank all those who participated, especially the following:

The dads and daughters of the Dancing Cheetah's tribe of Y-Princesses, and Craig Dunkley, who helped assemble the buckets for shipping. Before we assembled the buckets, we watched a video and considered the devastating effects of a flood. The participants really gained an understanding of why this job is so important.

Larry Von Voorhis who generously donated his time, energy, and vehicle to transport the buckets to the MERC center in Goldsboro. Thanks to him, the youth center no longer smells like large quantities of deodorant soap. Even more importantly, the MERC center can use the money we raised to cover their own shipping costs!

Ed Priestaf

Organ Account Created

Those of us that heard the new Johannes organ in October were thrilled to imagine the impact that this new instrument might have on our music program. We are considering the purchase of this new organ, but in these uncertain economic times are waiting for our year-end financial position to be analyzed and reported to Church Council. With that report we will determine the right time for an appeal to the congregation for funding of this project. An account has been created, however, and is available for contributions should you wish to support the organ project with an extra gift at this time.



A New Worship Service Targets "Young Cosmopolitans" 2009 New Year's Resolution

Over the past two years, members at Benson have been doing some dreaming. In 2007, a diverse group of people from Benson journeyed together through a long-range planning process called "12 Keys to an Effective Church". An outcome of that process was a long term vision to begin two new worship services by 2010, the first of which would begin in 2009. This vision was formalized at Benson's Charge Conference in October. Meanwhile, in the Spring of 2008, the Church Council voted to create a "New Worship Service Exploration Team". This team came together and worked through the summer and fall trying to prayerfully discern who in the community we might reach, and what a new worship service might look like. The team compared the demographics of Benson's congregation to those of the surrounding communities, and also looked at various styles of worship services that exist in the Raleigh area.

The team presented the results of its discernment to the December meeting of the Church Council, recommending that the new worship service would target a demographic group referred to as "Young Cosmopolitans". These folks are mostly single, in their twenties, carving out careers in their first years out of college. While many of the area churches offer contemporary worship with loud music, big stages, and big auditoriums, these "young cosmopolitans" would thrive in more of a lounge or coffee house environment that might provide more opportunity for connection. The music would be eclectic and excellently done. A Worship Service would be offered Sunday night or a weeknight to fit the life-schedule of many of the persons that fit the demographic. The Council approved the creation of a Launch Team, which will further refine the vision and work out all of the many logistical details that will present themselves.

Please pray about this ministry, which is intended to reach not just those who are not yet at Benson Memorial, but those who have never heard the gospel presented in a language that resonates with their lives in a meaningful way. Please contact Ed Priestaf at epriestaf@bm-umc.org, or 919-787-0789 with questions or to become involved in the Launch Team.

Benson on the Web

Want a great way to get or stay connected to one another at Benson? This new year, we wanted to let you in on just some of the many ways that you can plug into Benson Memorial's community 24 hours a day through the internet.

Benson's Website:

<http://www.bm-umc.org> is Benson's website. Information on this website includes: staff email addresses; missions updates; preschool information; youth ministry updates; children's ministry happenings; recent bulletins and Beacons; campus maps; or even listen to a sermon missed or want to hear again!



Benson's Calendar:

We are currently keeping our church calendar on Google. If you are familiar with Google Calendars, or if you already have a Google id, you can enter the site at calendar.google.com and search the *public calendars* for "Benson Memorial Church". If you are not interested in having a Google id, you can enter the following link into your web browser: http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=bensonmemorial%40gmail.com&ctz=America/New_York, where you should see the calendar as a normal web page. (hope you're a good typist!) If you are having problems or would like more clarification, you can send an email to Ed at epriestaf@bm-umc.org.

Weekly Beacon:

Mary Honeycutt prepares a Weekly Beacon newsletter and sends it via email. She does so the first of every week, except during weeks when the full print Beacon is sent. Anyone not receiving the Weekly Beacon should provide the church office with a current email address. To be added to the email distribution list, contact Mary Honeycutt at mhoneycutt@bm-umc.org with your request.

Social Networking:

<http://www.facebook.com> - More and more of our members are finding their way to facebook – an incredibly popular social networking site with tens of millions of users. If you have a facebook profile, there is a group of Benson members that you can join called "Benson Memorial UMC". Our youth also have several facebook groups to help each other stay connected (youth group, praise band, youth council; youth are much better at this stuff than we old folks are). Please be aware that even with all the wonderful friends on facebook, there is also a risk that unfamiliar people may try to get to know you with malicious intentions. It would be like telemarketers or scam artists calling your house.

Pastor's Blogs:

Check out some of the musings of our pastors. As a reader, you can share your thoughts in response to the articles, or just read what is being posted. There are millions of blogs out there by famous, infamous, ordinary, and anonymous people –our pastors definitely have something to add to the global conversation.

<http://jonthemetodist.blogspot.com> - Jon extends this invitation: "I have moved into the 21st century (barely) with my first feeble attempt at the phenomenon known as, blogging. Try this link, and you can travel through nano-space to the mysterious blog of Jon (the Methodist). Who knows, maybe one day I'll know what I'm doing."

<http://priestaf.blogspot.com> – Our associate pastor Ed Priestaf is trying his hand at blogging. Some of Ed's recent posts that you might find interesting include his journal entries from the Benson mission trip to Jamaica last October.

Video:

Speaking of Jamaica, there is a short video that the Jamaica mission team created which highlights an interview in the home of one of our Jamaican friends. You can find it at <http://youtube.com> – when you search on the words *Benson Jamaica*.

Other Sites of Interest:

And finally, perhaps you are not aware of some other sites of interest. Here are some favorites:

<http://www.um.org> the official website of the United Methodist Church

<http://www.umcor.org> the disaster relief agency of the UMC

<http://www.gbod.org> the education, worship, and spiritual formation group within the UMC

<http://www.ncumc.org> the North Carolina Conference of the UMC

<http://www.biblegateway.com> – contains multiple bible study tools, such as an online concordance in many versions of the bible

In the coming months, we would love to hear from you! Do you have any favorite websites that you find helpful in your spiritual journey, or that might help us stay connected by telling us about yourself? We'll choose some to share in the next Beacon.



Posted on the Administrative Building

Bulletin Board...

...Ed and Ethel Boone
...Dorothy Simpson
...Eleanor Jackson
...Mary Harmon

**BEACON DEADLINE
DATE**

The Newsletter Deadline
for the FEBRUARY issue is
JANUARY 23.

The Beacon is published
monthly and mailed the
last week of each month.

Mary Honeycutt, Editor
919-787-0789
mhoneycutt@bm-umc.org



WOMEN'S PRE-RETREAT
GATHERING

*Embracing Winter's Blessings with all
things Chocolate*
Sunday, January 25, 2009
5:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall
ALL WOMEN WELCOME!

NOTE: Reverend Jon Strother's day off is Friday and Ed Priestaf, Associate
Pastor is off on Monday. The church office closes at 1:00 p.m. on Fridays.