

ON Broadway

Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church Newsletter

March 2015



Loving God, Serving People

Building a community
loved and changed by
Jesus,
loving and changing the
world for him.

Being Whole in All the Stages of Our Lives

Barb Okonkwo & John Groen

“There are two things we can’t fix –aging and dying.” That was one of the things Dr. Atul Gawande, author of *Being Mortal*, said in a recent documentary.

It’s true, we can’t fix them.

However, we can educate ourselves and prepare as much as possible for the inevitable. This may be quite uncomfortable ...we tend to want to avoid talking about unpleasant things. Authors Sonnebelt-Smeenge and DeVries write about the psychological principle that “talking specifically about something that is uncomfortable or painful actually reduces rather than increases those feelings of discomfort. Talking concretely about troublesome areas helps most people dispel the anxiety, depression or fear associated with those issues” (*Living Fully in the Shadow of Death*, page 20).

In light of this, the health ministry team is planning to host 2-3 adult ed sessions (sometime in next two months) that will help us begin a conversation about the transitions that occur in the third season of life. These sessions will mostly focus on practical ways one can begin to assess, discuss, and plan for these transitions.

Anyone whose parent(s) is aging as well as those entering or already in this season of life is invited to participate.

While we’re on the theme of aging and dying, we would like to invite you to a series of discussions on this theme with the goal of hearing what the Bible teaches us about dying and death, sharing our own experiences, hearing what others have said and are saying about dying and death.

We’ll be talking about living more than we’ll be talking about dying and death, with the awareness that life always leads to death. These times of discussion/dialogue will center on living life to the fullest, acknowledging the gift of life without avoiding the obvious. As part of our discussion we’ll ask the question about aging well so that we become elders who learn to

continued on the next page

continued from front page

give life away as we begin to notice that the years are passing. Ecclesiastes 7:2 teaches us that, *It is better to go to a house where people are mourning than it is to go to a house party.* None of us, I think, will dispute that the Bible speaks to us about the reality of death and the importance of living well in that reality.

Who would we like to see sitting in the circle? You, no matter what age. All of us will live with people who will leave our lives through death. How can we be present when death comes to those we love? All of us live with people whom we will leave. How can we let our own deaths be a gift to others? “Whenever there is much at stake, there is much to learn.” It might be that what we learn will enable us to help others live well.

The opening video entitled, “Griefwalker” will get us started and will take the whole first session.

We will begin in March, as soon as the audio visual machinery is in place in the new adult education class. Our initial thinking is to hold these sessions on Sunday afternoon from 4 - 5:30 pm. We will send out a church wide email and give notice via the church bulletin as well.

We hope you might find the inclination and the time to be with us for both of these offerings.



March Special Offerings

March 29

Habitat for Humanity, see following page



From the Parish Nurse—Tricky People

Barb Okonkwo, RN



Last month in this space I wrote about abuse that mostly applied to teens and adults. As I was sharing my idea for that article with a friend, she told me about a presentation she'd heard that gave good tips for keeping children safe. I thought I'd share this with

you this month. It comes via a blog <http://www.checklistmommy.com/2012/02/09/tricky-people-are-the-new-strangers/> and refers to a seminar given by Pattie Fitzgerald of Safely Ever After. (Ms Fitzgerald offers seminars to adults and children on “keeping kids safe from child molesters and abuse.” Check out her website at www.safelyeverafter.com)

Ms. Fitzgerald advises parents to “stop telling your kids not to talk to strangers. They might need to talk to a stranger one day. Instead, teach them which sorts of strangers are safe. You know who's safe? A mom with kids. Period. Your kid gets separated from you at the mall? Tell her to flag down the first mom with kids she sees.”

There are a number of useful tips, red flags and warnings, and check lists on the website but here are a few of them that *checklistmommy* presents:

- It is unlikely your child is going to be abused by a weirdo at the park.
- If there is a weirdo at the park, he is not going to fit the “stranger” model—he's going to come up to you child and introduce himself. Voila! He isn't a stranger anymore!
- Teach your children about TRICKY PEOPLE instead. TRICKY PEOPLE are grown-ups who ASK KIDS FOR HELP (no adult needs to ask a kid for help) or TELLS KIDS TO KEEP A SECRET FROM THEIR PARENTS (including IT'S OKAY TO COME OVER HERE BEHIND THIS TREE WITHOUT ASKING MOM FIRST. Not asking Mom is tantamount to KEEPING A SECRET)
- Teach your children not to DO ANYTHING, or GO ANYWHERE, with ANY ADULTS AT ALL, unless they ask for your permission first ... because:
- It's far more likely your child is going to be abused by someone they have a relationship with, because most cases of abuse follow long periods of grooming—both of the child and his or her family.

Thank You!

Rachel Bush

As my time as the Coordinator of Family & Youth Ministries comes to an end I am surprised by the roller coaster of emotions that I have been experiencing. I have fluctuated from pure excitement and giddiness (gain of personal time—I see a 9 a.m. bowl of ice cream quickly becoming a new tradition for me) to fear (loss of income—yikes!) to sadness (loss of workplace interactions—the laughs!) to determination (I WILL become a better wife and mother) to relief (I no longer have to be spread so thin). But the one emotion I return to the most is THANKFULNESS. So I would like to take this time to say “thank you” to all of you for:

- allowing me the past 6-1/2 years to serve you and your families
- your prayers, words of encouragement and appreciation, and cards over the years
- allowing me the flexibility to adjust my working rhythms to mesh with the ever changing demands of my growing family
- your grace when my attitude has been less-than-kind during busy Sunday mornings
- your enthusiasm
- your willingness to always fulfill the volunteer needs of the many Family and Youth programs

Thank you! I have truly been blessed by this Body.

Thank you.



2015 House of Faith: 1301 Shirley Dr

Habitat for Humanity 2015 House of Faith, 1301 Shirley Dr., Ypsilanti

*by Marian Ijzerman
for the Service Deacons*

The Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church has a rich tradition of impacting the lives of those in our community by participating with other area churches in the Habitat for Humanity House of Faith project. Last year we worked on a house for Tamara Greene and her son Derik that was part of the 2014 Block of Faith project. This year we return to Gault Village, the same neighborhood where the 2013 House of Faith was located, to work on a new project house that will be renovated during the months of April and May.

How can I get involved?

- **Labor support at the house:** No previous experience is required. Training is provided and all tools are available on-site. Sixteen and 17 year olds are welcome accompanied by an adult. Four to six volunteers are needed on each of the following dates: April 10, 11, 17 & 18 (9 am to 4 pm).
- **Provide a lunch:** Volunteers are needed to provide lunch for 17 hungry volunteers. Lunches are delivered to the worksite by 11:45 am. One volunteer is needed on each of the following dates: April 10, 11, 17 & 18.
- **Take pictures:** Volunteers are needed to photograph our volunteers on workdays. Photos will be posted on the church website. A 2 hour commitment is required.
- **Donate money:** On March 29th and May 3rd, a special offering will be received during both morning services for the 2015 House of Faith project. Our goal is to raise \$2,500.
- **Pray:** Pray for God’s blessing on the project, wisdom for the leadership team and safety for all of the volunteers.

How do I sign up?

- A volunteer sign up form will be included as a bulletin insert beginning on March 22nd. Place the completed form in mailbox #153.
- Alternatively, you can e-mail me at mijzerman@comcast.net.

Meet Michael Le Roy, President of Calvin College

Sunday, March 8
5:30–7:00 pm

North Hills Christian Reformed Church
3150 N Adams Road
Troy, MI 48084

President Le Roy, the 10th president of Calvin College, will speak about the sustainability of higher education. He states: “Higher education is at a very challenging era of its history right now in the United States, and it’s not clear what paths forward are the best.” He is a strong believer in the role of Christian liberal arts in the landscape of Christian higher education: “You can’t diminish the importance of preparing students for meaningful work, and yet, that’s one part of a whole life lived well,” he said, “but a lot of it has to do with what we do after 5 o’clock, as parents, as citizens, as community members, as patrons of the arts ... Christian higher education then says all of faith is relevant to all of that life.”

Living With/In Diversity

by Pastor John

“My wife is so impossible. She can’t keep her friends. She won’t spend a dime. She’s impossible.” Would you dare disagree with this husband? Would he give you the freedom to think your own thoughts about the character of his wife?

If so, it would be highly unusual.

Most of the time when we have strong opinions about a situation or a person, or a group, we’d like others to agree with us.

What if someone wanted their group to think about you a certain way. What if false accusations were made? What if you were labeled as a certain kind of person with certain kinds of character defects? What if people, who didn’t like the organization you were a member of, said false things about it?

That would be hard to take.

What are we to do in these instances? Ignore what was said? Fight back? Shrink away into a place of hurt and isolation?

There’s a term that is used to define people who want to control the minds of others. The term is “Gatekeepers.” It’s a helpful term in understanding how and why people are intent on controlling information and reducing discussion to fit their own agenda.

“Gatekeepers” are a kind of thought police who fight against information that threaten them, their group, and it’s beliefs. They often perceive themselves as key people who control the conversation by countering any new information or blocking it altogether.

This is because any challenging information threatens their group identity and therefore questions their leadership, which is based on a certain power structure. But they are only as powerful as is perceived by the group.

I’ve seen such “Gatekeeping” activity in certain media conversations about Muslims, about minorities in our society, about certain ethnic groups. People want to control what I think, and then how I behave.

“Gatekeepers” not only attempt to control the conversations outside the group, but also from within it. If anyone in the group dares to challenge the “Gatekeeper,” they are corrected and marginalized.

“Gatekeepers” don’t like to be challenged. They have the “truth”. Just accept what they tell you as “truth,” and then act appropriately.

It’s sad to see “Gatekeepers” at work. And I am challenged to examine myself and ask, “Am I a ‘Gatekeeper?’” Do I want to control what people think? Do I give people the opportunity and privilege of thinking for themselves? Can I present what I believe about a certain situation without threatening people with separation from myself if they don’t agree? “

It’s important to share what we believe: to share information and to remain open to hear what others believe and think. It is important to learn how to listen and understand the people who think differently about things than we do. Why? So that we can pray effectively and love understandingly.

In I John 4:18, we learn that *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.* We have confidence in Jesus that we can speak up without losing our identity and without shying away from our calling to be salt and light in our communities.

God is the one who enables us to do this. And again, this verse from Matthew 2:12 comes to mind, *So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.* May God bless us in this.