

Lessons From a Newborn: God Is Helping Us Grow

By BRIAN NICKLAUS

Staring at a newborn makes you wonder what she comprehends. She hears sounds and sees lights and recognizes my voice and smell. But does she know who I am? Is she aware of my love and affection? How many people in the world today are totally oblivious to God's love? We probably understand His love as well as a young child understands his parents' love.

My daughter has no idea how much time we spend on her: the preparations we made before she arrived, the lack of sleep we presently get, etc. In the same way, God does so much for us that we aren't aware of. He was working on us before we even knew Him - calling and working in our lives so that we might believe. He is currently working out our salvation (Phil 2:12-13) to make sure we keep it. He is planning things for the future - some great blessings and maybe some not-so-great things to teach us and help us grow.

When my daughter gets hungry, she screams. She thinks it is the end of the world and she is about to starve to death. How often do we overreact to life's problems? Like newborns, many of us are often so self-centered that one bad day or one inconvenient experience sends us spiraling - it's

the end of the world and we wonder where God is.

God is busy making a bottle. What? Yes, a bottle. While my daughter's screams escalate and my ears start bleeding, someone is preparing a bottle. Someone is working on her situation. Does that make her feel better and calm down? Absolutely not! She is hungry and wants the milk.

God is concerned with our concerns and working things out for us and His Glory. All the while, we scream and cry, never imagining that He is in control and already working on it. We just want the results now.

If the formula isn't mixed well or the milk isn't warmed to the right temperature, the baby won't get what she really needs. But she doesn't know that and continues to wait. It takes time and things must be done correctly to fix her problem. This is also true of God's working for us. He has a plan and is going to help us the right way at the right time. We have to realize this when we are overcome with self-pity, crying out for His help. Help is coming, don't be a baby!

This precious child is dependent on us to live. Left by herself, she would not survive long. This is also true of us and God. When we are separated from God, we won't last long spiritually. Sure, things might seem fine. We might keep breathing and walking and talking, but our soul will shrivel up and die if we are not in communion with Him.

Mr. Nicklaus is the minister at the Echo Lake Church of Christ, located at 419 Springfield Avenue in Westfield.

Presbyterian Church Sets Labyrinth Walk

CRANFORD - The First Presbyterian Church of Cranford will sponsor a series of open Labyrinth Walks, with the next one scheduled for Sunday, April 2. All are welcome.

Labyrinth walks take place in Bates Hall at the church, located at 11 Springfield Avenue. Participants are invited to walk the labyrinth any time between 1 and 4 p.m. but are asked to begin their walk by 3:30 p.m. Subsequent walks will be held the first Sunday of every month unless otherwise specified.

Walking the Labyrinth is an ancient spiritual practice of prayer and meditation. The 11-ringed pattern, painted on canvas, is modeled after the 13th century labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral in France. In Medieval times, walking the labyrinth symbolized the Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem for those who could not personally make the journey.

For more information on the labyrinth program or future walks, please call the church at (908) 276-8440.



PURIM FESTIVITIES...Rabbi George Nudell presides over a Purim celebration at Congregation Beth Israel in Scotch Plains on March 13 as children parade around in their costumes. Attendees also ate traditional Hamantaschen, while Rabbi Nudell, Cantor Matt Axelrod and others read the Megillah to all.

Scotch Plains Baptist Teens To Begin 30-Hour Famine

SCOTCH PLAINS - Teenagers representing the Scotch Plains Baptist Church youth group will participate in World Vision's 30-Hour Famine tomorrow and Saturday, March 31 and April 1, at the church and through a service project in the community.

They will join approximately half a million teens nationwide aiming to raise \$15 million this year to fight world hunger. During the 30 hours, participating youth go without food

(consuming only liquids), learn about world hunger and poverty and perform community service projects.

Now in its 15th year, World Vision's 30-Hour Famine is designed to raise awareness and money to fight hunger overseas and in the United States. Teens participate in groups through schools, churches, youth groups and civic organizations. More information is available online at www.30hourfamine.org.

World Vision is a Christian relief and development organization dedicated to helping children and their communities worldwide reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty. Last year, \$11.6 million was raised through the 30-Hour Famine, contributing to World Vision's response in countries where famine, conflict and other crises make children vulnerable to hunger and preventable disease. For more information, please visit www.worldvision.org.

Church Quilt-A-Thon To Benefit Ill Babies

WESTFIELD - The 13th Annual AIDS Babies Quilt-A-Thon will be held on Saturday, April 8, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, located at 250 Gallows Hill Road in Westfield.

All ages are invited to participate in this event, which is funded by the Ladies Philoptochos. The Reverend Peter Delvisis will bless the quilts on Sunday, April 9.

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church hosts the quilt-a-thon - which benefits babies with AIDS and other serious diseases - as a one-day Lenten project. Free and open to the public, it is coordinated through ABC Quilts, a national, non-profit organization.

Materials are provided for free but volunteers may bring in baby products such as baby food, wipes, disposable diapers and other items. These will be given to St. Claire's Home in Elizabeth. Volunteers will assemble the quilts - iron, cut, measure and knot - and a team of sewers sew them on sewing machines.

The quilts will be distributed to infants in eight hospitals and transitional homes in Newark, Elizabeth and Plainfield. Volunteers may stay for an hour or two or the entire day. Participants are asked to bring their lunch and a pair of scissors.

Matzah Bakery Classes On Tap For April 2

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Central New Jersey, located at 1391 Martine Avenue in Scotch Plains, will host matzah bakery classes on Sunday, April 2. Each class will last approximately one hour. The first class will begin at 10 a.m., with a new class starting on the hour, every hour. The last class will start at 2 p.m.

These classes are open to all area residents and are suitable for both children and adults. The fee is \$4 for JCC members and \$6 for non-members. For more details, please contact Jodi Baxter at jbaxter@jccnj.org or (908) 889-8800, extension no. 235.

Torah Center Announces Programs For Passover

WESTFIELD - A Family Model Matzah Bakery will take place this Sunday, April 2, from 11 a.m. to noon at the Union County Torah Center-Hebrew School, 728 Westfield Avenue in Westfield.

This hands-on activity, open to the public, will enable children and adults to mix, knead, roll and bake their own round "Shmura Matzah." Admission is \$5 per child ages three and up; adults may attend for free. A complimentary Shmura Matzah will be given to every family in attendance.

Rabbi Levi Block, director of the Union County Torah Center, said, "this program will help the children get excited about the upcoming holiday of Passover and to start looking forward to the Seder night."

On Tuesday, April 4, at 8 p.m., Rabbi Block will present a special Passover lecture, free and open to the public, at the Union County Torah Center, 418 Central Avenue in Westfield. The lecture will address many different commentaries on the Haggadah and offer participants insights and information to live up their own Seder tables. All in attendance will receive a complimentary

Shmura Matzah and holiday guide.

On Tuesday, April 11, from noon to 1 p.m., Fruma Wilschansky will lead a free class for women at the Torah Center entitled "What is True Freedom?" Participants will explore how Judaism sets the faithful free from their own "self-imposed slavery," according to a description of the class.

For more information on any of these activities and to obtain a free Passover Guide, please call the Torah Center at (908) 789-5252 or email info@torahcenter.org.

Free Requiem Concert Scheduled at Church

MOUNTAINSIDE - A "Requiem Concert," including compositions by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, will be performed on Friday, April 14, at 8 p.m. at the Community Presbyterian Church in Mountain Side.

The church is located at 1459 Deer Path. Admission will be free. For more information, please call (908) 232-9490.

Breakfast Workshop Slated On Lambeth Bible Study

SCOTCH PLAINS - A free breakfast and workshop on the "Lambeth Method of Bible Study," for men and women ages 16 and older, will be held on Saturday, April 8, from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. at the Willow Grove Presbyterian Church, 1961 Raritan Road in Scotch Plains.

Developed by the African Delegation to the Lambeth Conference, the Lambeth Method focuses on self-knowledge and how God speaks directly to people through the Bible; Bible study as a proactive experience and experiencing the effectiveness of praying for others.

Hosted by the church's Men's Group, the program will be led by Jeffrey Cochran-Camey, who will serve as interim pastor at the Kitchell Memorial Presbyterian Church in East Hanover. He will base the Bible study on scripture verse Matthew 21:1-11, which will be preached on by his wife and Willow Grove's pastor, the Reverend Cynthia Cochran-Camey, on Sunday, April 9.

Participants are encouraged to bring their Bible (no matter what the translation). Bibles will be available at the program for all those who need them.

Advance reservations by Thursday, April 6, would be appreciated, but are not required. A free will offering will be taken to help subsidize the cost of the breakfast. Babysitting may be available upon advance request only. Individuals are asked to let the church know the number and ages of the children requiring babysitting. The building is handicapped-accessible.

For more details or to make reservations, please call the church office at (908) 232-5678. Reservations also may be made by e-mail at wilgrv@netzero.com.

Caregivers Meeting To Be Held Monday

WESTFIELD - A support group for those caring for elderly or chronically ill loved ones will meet on Monday, April 3, at 8 p.m. in the parish center of St. Helen's Church on Lamberts Mill Road in Westfield.

Meetings take place on the first non-holiday Monday of each month. These are information and sharing sessions. For more information, please call Marilyn Ryan at (908) 233-8757.

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