



Berean Baptist
Church

Berean Bell

January 2024

From the Pastor...

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **10** And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. **11** And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." Mark 1:9-11

I remember how cold it was when I waded into Three Brooks, the swimming hole in which the Blain Free Baptist Church conducted its baptisms. Running water in the spring of Aroostook County is no joke. It was frigid.

That isn't all that I remember about my baptism. I remember that I was required to meet with the deacons of the church. They were all men of course. Most were potato farmers whose hands were permanently stained a mix of brown from the soil and yellow from the chemical spray used to kill the potato plants making harvest easier every fall. I remember that as we met they remembered my grandfather Donald. I'd never met him. He died before I was born. He was a deacon and youth group leader in the church. He was their friend who had helped them make it through tough times and difficult harvests.

Aroostook County Maine was predominantly protestant, so many of my friends had their own memories of baptism. In Rhode Island many of us were born and raised Episcopalian or Catholic or Congregationalist and so there is no memory of baptism because you were infants.

When the apostle Paul referenced baptism, for instance in the letter to the Romans he said, 'For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.' We remember baptism so that we remember the hope and promise of the new. Paul is honestly more than a bit concerned that the religious and ethnic divisions of Roman society are being reconstructed in the church, and he believes that they should be resisted. Baptism means rising to new life in reconciliation, forgiveness and unity. But honestly, what an important thing for us to ponder and reflect on as we begin a new year. We have been baptized in new lives, lives of connection and compassion and wholesome community.

In the gospel of Mark when Jesus is baptized by John in the Jordan the voice of God is heard. You, God says to Jesus, are my beloved. When we remember our baptism, we remember that our identity is 'beloved one.' Baptism means we belong to and have committed ourselves to creating (with Jesus), what Dr Martin Luther King Jr called, the 'beloved community.'

Off the Beaten Path

"The Weirdest Flower in the Forest"



My ten-year old granddaughter and I were in the garden when she spied a clump of pretty yellow flowers growing outside the fence. "They're so pretty. What are they, Grandpa?" "They're celandine," I told her. "Look what happens when you tear the leaf." As she did so, a bright orange sap oozed out. I explained to her that celandine was a valuable medicinal plant that possessed strange healing properties for curing warts and skin blemishes. Even today it is used in Russia as a cancer cure. She touched a tiny drop to her tongue and gave a slight shudder as its acrid taste prompted a sharp reaction. "Wow," she responded. "That's strong! Let's see what other flowers we can find in the woods."

And so we set off. She had a very inquisitive mind and loved to collect and draw pictures of wildflowers she found in the woods near her home. I could sense her excitement as she forged ahead on this treasure-hunting expedition. The woods near my property are mostly oak and red maple, and the forest floor was carpeted with a monotonous expanse of their fallen duff-colored leaves. Wildflowers were few, and I could sense her lagging excitement. We found the ubiquitous wintergreen and some creeping partridgeberry along with laurel and some tiny wood anemones tucked under the forest duff, but nothing to create any sudden sense of wonder. She was growing impatient. But then she spied something most unusual.

There, under a grove of beech trees, stood a clump of strange-looking stalks that children everywhere would easily remember. "What are these strange plants, grandpa?" she eagerly asked. They were certainly most unusual. Dozens of them stood scattered around, about 4 to 6 inches tall with a waxy, translucent, white coloring making them look deathly pale. They resembled pipe stems stuck into the ground with their nodding bellflowered shaped bowls peering downwards. She plucked one out of the ground to examine it more closely. Then, the strangest thing occurred. Its fleshy stem began to turn black and slowly dissolve in the heat of her tiny fingers like melting ice. "That's why they call it the ice plant," I said. "And when its waxy flesh suddenly turns black and mushy, some call it the ghost plant. It has many names. Because of its appearance, most people know them as Indian pipes because that's what they look like." "Why aren't they green like all the other plants?" she asked in her typically inquisitive manner.

That question required a more nuanced answer. Indian pipes (*Monotropa uniflora*) were long thought to be simply parasitic. That is, they derive their nutrients by feeding on microscopic underground decaying matter. Since they have no need to manufacture their own food, they completely lack the green pigment chlorophyll and the leaves necessary to process sugars. They are the rare albinos of the plant world. Yet their uniqueness does not

Off The Beaten Path (continues...)

end there. They have baffled botanists for as long as they have been observed. If decaying matter were the key to their survival, then transplanting them would be possible, but, alas, that is not so. Other factors seem to be at work. Plant scientists now believe that there exists a complex relationship between the roots of Indian pipes, soil fungi, and specific mycorrhizal tree fungi that somehow exchange nutrients allowing Indian pipes to procure what they need to survive. It's all very strange, mysterious, and unique.

Then I told her a story I once heard about the Puritan view of this ghostly and most unusual wildflower. Ever mindful of the Devil's handiwork in the untamed wilds of New England, Puritans closely noted how the degenerate Indian pipes hang their heads in shame, how they grow black after being picked because of wickedness, and how they grew apart from the beauty of other flowers due to their lack of fragrance. They surely were the Devil's favorite and placed on this earth to remind the unwary that the Devil's presence can lurk in the most unexpected of places. So beware!

"Wow! Grandpa. These are certainly weird and eerie flowers. They don't act like any flowers I've ever seen. Let's go on and find some nice flowers, some that smell pretty and we can pick and bring home to make a bouquet. But I think I'll always remember the weirdest flower that I ever encountered. No wonder they call it the ghost flower. They can't be picked because no one would ever want to bring them home."



Berean's Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 28, 2024
after the 10:00am service with a pot luck.

There will be a sign up sheet in the front of the church.

Worship and Fellowship



Many brought poinsettias this year to help decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. There were so many and they looked spectacular. Thanks to all who brought them in.



There were two services on Christmas Eve. The service at 10AM and the candlelight service at 5PM. The music for both services was phenomenal. Emma and Bill had many guests singers and musicians. Great job!!!



The Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 28th with a potluck afterwards.



We are updating the church directory. If there have been any changes to your address, phone number or email address please forward to Barbara our church secretary at Bereanbaptistchurchri@gmail.com.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!!!!

Reflecting on the example of Dr. Martin Luther

Conviction of mission and purpose in life is a blessing. The pursuit of a mission superimposes the passage of time; rendering it, ideally, irrelevant.

A powerful example of conviction of Mission was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King delivered "I've Been to the Mountaintop" one day prior to his assassination. In this speech delivered in Memphis, when Dr. King was 44; he spoke of non-violent means to provoke cultural, legal, and societal change to racial and economic injustice. He spoke of unity, and how these nonviolent measures could be attained; but only if those fighting injustice remained unified. By the time Dr. King made this speech, he had endured seventeen years of personal threats [to be shot, to blow up his home], assaults [including being stabbed with a letter opener at a book signing, and another time by an American Nazi Party member], witnessed violence: clubbings, beatings, firehoses, dogs; and political in-fighting; of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Nationally, notably by J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, who attempted to derail Dr. King's political power and influence with salacious rumors. Some of the highs included the Supreme Court ruling that the segregation laws in Montgomery, Alabama were unconstitutional, publishing several books, being asked to deliver speeches at the Capital, being named Time 'Man of the Year,' and a Nobel Peace Prize. The highs and lows endured in Dr. King's life are too numerous to list here, however, success could have, in another person's hands, distracted from the mission.

In writings regarding Dr. King, his conviction and purpose was obtained, and maintained, by a spiritual revelation brought on by prayer. His life had been threatened, and following his prayer, he received a guidance from within: to stand up for righteousness, justice and truth, and that the Lord would be with him always until the end of time.

The day before the end of his life, Dr. King described in his speech that he had seen the Promised Land. That he may not get to the Promised Land with those he was speaking to; but that they would get there. He had spiritually experienced his mission; his purpose; and knew change would come. He proclaimed he was not in fear or worried; that he was happy.

His strong conviction and purpose, prayed for and given, had made time irrelevant. The goal, for him, was to do God's Will as he had been directed.

Though I do not know anyone tested as Dr. King was, with his highs and lows; I do, like many of us, pray for God's will; and the ability to listen to his direction.

ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

The anniversary committee has been busy organizing events for the anniversary celebration in October.

We have begun looking into the feasibility of a banner to hang across the street in front of the church.

Christmas ornaments were received and Marge Fenley has been busy selling them. They will be available for sale for the entire year.

Pastor Darin has started to put together favorite sermons and Don Waterman his "Off the Beaten Path" articles as we begin to plan our anniversary booklet.

Don and Marge are going through our historical information and list of pastors.

We will be reaching out to our state representatives and Senators and Representatives for resolutions from the state and Congress for our 150th year.





January Birthdays

Jan. 2—Marge Fenley

Jan. 3—John Bonoyer

Jan. 9—Jared Morin

Jan 11—Jack Collins

Jan. 12—Julia Breault

Jan. 24— Smith Landry

Jan 22—Robert Davies

Jan. 25—Jen Breault

Jan 31—Andrew Capron

****If I forgot your birthday,
please let me know so I can add it****

January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 9:00am Blue Book Put Together	4	5	6 8:30-11:00am Family Clothing Resource & Helping Hand
7 10:00am Worship (Communion) 11:30am Anniversary Mtg.	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 10:00am Worship 11:30am W & F Mtg.	15	16	17	18	19	20 8:30-11:00am Family Clothing Resource & Helping Hand Food pantry
21 10:00am Worship 11:30am Deaconate Mtg.	22	23	24	25 Newsletter Articles Due	26	27
28 10:00am Worship ANNUAL MEETING	29	30	31			