By Jim Ash
Contributing Writer

Next Sunday, Christians will be celebrating Easter Sunday and the central events of their faith … Jesus of Nazareth was crucified and buried on Good Friday, then rose on the third day as the ultimate proof of his deity and victory over sin and death. Two weeks after Easter, many Marlborough area Christians will be celebrating another resurrection, the rebirth of Saint Ann’s Church.

Once a symbol of community life in the French Hill neighborhood, the church was unexpectedly closed in 2004. The landmark building on Lincoln Street in Marlborough has remained vacant and dark ever since.

This week, Holy Trinity Anglican Church of Marlborough is scheduled to close on the property. If all goes well with needed permitting, the first Mass will be held at Saint Ann’s on Sunday May 5th. “We hope to breathe new life into an old friend of the French Hill neighborhood,” said Father Michael McKinnon, Holy Trinity priest and pastor.

While the church will be known as Holy Trinity Anglican Church, the parish bishop, the Right Reverend Donald F. Harvey, has given permission to name the chapel after Saint Ann. “Many Anglican churches and chapels are named for Saint Ann,” commented Bishop Harvey. “This is one way we can honor the clergy and people of the former Saint Ann’s Parish who worshipped and ministered in that neighborhood for so many years and preserve part of their heritage.”

Continued on page 6

New life for an old friend

The long vacant Saint Ann’s Church building, once a thriving, integral part of the French Hill neighborhood, will soon come back to life thanks to the efforts of Holy Trinity Church.

The Anglican parish is scheduled to complete its purchase of the building and adjacent properties this week. If all goes well, the first Mass will be held at Saint Ann’s on Sunday May 5th. All former Saint Ann’s members are invited to join the reopening celebration.

Shown in picture, Father Michael McKinnon, Holy Trinity pastor, standing in front of Saint Ann’s. See story above for details.
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The “Easter Beacon” is a product of the Lighthouse Initiative in partnership with the Main Street Journal. In addition to the “Spirit of Christmas,” this is one of two publications with a church life theme published annually through this partnership.

**About the Lighthouse Initiative**

The Lighthouse Initiative was established in 2013 to partner with Marlborough area churches to spread the Gospel more effectively together. Philippians 1:27 serves as a foundational guide: “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ ... standing firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.”

There are four underlying goals that comprise the Lighthouse Initiative mission: encourage a culture of increased prayerfulness; cultivate a spirit of unity among Bible-believing churches; utilize the media to deliver faith life stories to the community; and engage in collective service together to aid people in need.

In keeping with the four goals cited above, the “Easter Beacon” is being published, for the first time this year, as a guide to church life and Easter celebrations in the greater Marlborough area, and to proclaim the Gospel message to anyone open to hear.

**Good News**

What is the Gospel? The word is synonymous with “good news” and refers specifically to the story of Jesus in the Bible. The Gospel proclaims that Jesus is God in human form who came to walk among us as Savior and to provide the pathway to heaven.

Why do we need a Savior? It is a fact of life that even the best among us have been rebellious and sinful in our lives. Sometimes, we know what we should not do, but do it anyway. Other times, we know of something good our Savior wants us to do, but refuse. No one is immune. The cycle repeats regularly. This raises the question, “How do we obtain pardon for our rebellion and make peace with God?”

In a speech recorded in the Book of Acts, the Apostle Peter explained that Jesus is central to God’s plan of forgiveness. “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” The Apostle John sums it up by explaining that Jesus came to offer complete reconciliation with God to any man or woman willing to repent of sin and become His disciple. With that choice comes a chance to start over, an opportunity to be born again with a new spirit.

Our goal with the “Easter Beacon” is simply to present the message: to outline the evidence; to tell stories of lives changed; to celebrate the good work being done in our area by people who follow Christ as Lord; and extend an invitation, so that those who are willing may enjoy new life made possible by the power of His Holy Spirit who can transform even the most lost of souls.

**Make this a priority ...**

Finally, it is important to note the Christian life was not meant to be lived independently. Quite to the contrary, the Christian Church remains the institution anointed by God through which He teaches and blesses people. If you are not currently participating in a church, we strongly encourage you to make it a priority to connect with a local congregation. As the author of the Book of Hebrews wrote, “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing.”

With this in mind, we hope you find this publication to be a useful tool to learn about Bible-based congregations in this area, and to make such a church part of your family. What better time to start than this coming Easter Sunday?

Don’t Miss Out on the Blessing

It is God’s design that you partake in a Bible-based church community

By Father Len Cowan
Contributing Pastor

One winter, my wife Hallie and I were cross-country skiing in the deep woods. It was a crisp and clear day, with the sound of the pine needles rustling in the wind accompanying the crunch of our skis moving along the snow. We seemed to have the trail all to ourselves.

But up in the distance ahead we could make out the shape of a small dwelling, all by itself in the forest. As we approached, we realized it was a little church or chapel, constructed of stone and wood, entirely appropriate to its surroundings. The door was open, so we took off our skis and walked inside.

The interior, though simple, was lovely, with clear glass windows on the sides looking out into the woods, and stained glass windows up front. After exploring it for a while, we sat down on one of its pews to rest, and to wonder.

We had been surrounded by the beauty of nature all morning, and yet this little church in its midst was also beautiful in its own way. It seemed to us a fitting testament to the beautiful God who created the snow, the wind, the trees, and the sky, and the One who came among us as Jesus of Nazareth. And so, Hallie and I gave thanks to Him in that beautiful church on that gorgeous day.

Many people report that they feel closer to God out in the beauty of nature, whether it be by the mountains, the lakes, or the seashore. Others experience a closeness to God in beautiful church buildings, in which they can sit in silence and encounter His presence.

However, fewer people would be apt to describe “the church” as beautiful, even though this is how God describes the church.

For most people, “church” is either a building, such as my wife and I encountered that snowy day, or, more likely, an ordinary structure for Christian worship. Or it’s a Sunday morning ritual that people participate in, either to fulfill their religious duty or to give thanks to God. In either case, how “church” is seen as a thing – a place or an occasion – and it’s shown in how they say that they “go to church,” or don’t. There have been studies conducted to gauge people’s view of “church” that reveal many do not experience God particularly well in these places or at those times. Many do not view “church” to be particularly beautiful.

By contrast, in the Bible, church is described as the people who have come to know the God who has revealed Himself in Jesus of Nazareth. They have come to believe that He is God “in the flesh,” who came to earth to live and die so that people might be brought very close to God, and who is risen from the dead and is alive both in the world and inside of them.

In the church of the Bible, we see people so filled with the love of Jesus that they reach out in compassion and care, not only to each other, but also to others around them. They share the resources He has given them, including the Good News that He is alive and available to help all who will come to Him, not only for this life, but also for the life to come. And though they, too, “went to church,” in whatever place they could gather, the beautiful church of the Bible was not a place, or an occasion, but a people made beautiful by the love of the God who saved them from the ugliness of life.

Now don’t get me wrong. The Bible paints a realistic portrait of the church where human failings do produce ugliness at times. In the story of the developing church in the New Testament there is quarrel and greed, pride, prejudice, hatred, ignorance, and more. The church is damaged because it’s full of damaged people like me, and, perhaps, you. And so many point to the ugly history of the church as evidence of why it should be avoided.

And yet, in the Bible, in history, and in my experience, the dominant description of the real church, the people that Jesus has called to Himself and sent into His world, is “beautiful.” All around the world are people who gather at “church” who are filled with the life and love of Jesus.

They have stood up to injustice, cared for the poor, taken the unloved into their homes, provided medical care, founded schools of learning, and helped countless numbers of find a better life in union with this Jesus who loves them and all. They are, in fact, the best evidence that Jesus is actually alive today, and that the Easter message of His victory over sin, death, and hell are real. They are the beautiful church, and they stand ready to invite you into that beauty with them.

So this Easter, as you consider whether you might “go to church,” I invite you to look for the church that Jesus is talking about, a place where people are striving as best as they can to follow their Leader, the One who rose from the dead on Easter morning.

Find a church of beautiful people that He has called to Himself, and that He has sent into your world to bring you the message and the actions that will show you His beautiful love. And then, perhaps, you too will become part of that beautiful group of people whom He calls, “My beautiful church.”

Reverend Len Cowan is the Rector at Church of the Nativity in Northborough.

**Philippians 1:27**

The “Easter Beacon” is published annually through this partnership.
CALLING THE CHURCH
Consider what might happen if we ...

By Jim Ash
Contributing Writer

About two thousand years ago, a small group of closely-knit men scattered in fear one night when their leader was arrested and taken away by armed soldiers. The following day he was killed and the eleven remaining men had little hope and no plan for what to do next.

For the most part, these men were uneducated, unaccomplished, and lacking in financial resources. Travel options were extremely limited as were means of communication. Freedom of speech was an unknown concept at the time and they all lived under the oppression of a powerful and hostile regime. Yet, in a matter of weeks, they launched the most successful, life-transforming movement in the history of the world, the Christian Church. By the power of the Holy Spirit, those men, who started from nothing, built an exploiting outreach ministry under the worst, most limiting conditions imaginable. Imagine if they did it in a similar way in this time and place. Imagine those with financial resources giving generously, those with technical skills using them for the Kingdom of God, media outlets reaching thousands in a moment. Now, imagine the Church of Greater Marlborough more closely resembling the Church we read about in the Book of Acts. What would that look like? What would it take to go beyond what is comfortable, and respond to our higher calling, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. How does the Church of Greater Marlborough compare?

While we cannot know how much time people spent in prayer during their personal time, we can surmise a problem when we see that our devotion to praying together as a body does not resemble the model laid out for us in Scripture. Local prayer gatherings are held infrequently by comparison to the Early Church model and, in some cases at least, only a small percentage of people attend when called to pray.

With this as a background let's consider the incomplete question posed in the headline above, “What might happen if ... we placed a renewed emphasis on Paul’s instructions by striving to become more devoted to prayer while working to cultivate genuine unity with our fellow churches?” We cannot know for sure what the outcome would be, but we do know what happened in the Early Church ... “Everyone was filled with awe ... and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” The Spirit provided the promise of Psalm 133, “How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity ... For there the Lord bestows his blessing.”

There are many wonderful churches in our area. I belong to one such church and I have experienced several others over the past year when I have had opportunities to visit local congregations. The challenge for us is to rise above our contentment, to go beyond what is comfortable, and respond to our higher calling. This is a hard task given the demands of our lives and the influence of our culture. May we who call Christ as Lord give serious thought to making whatever adjustments are needed to become more devoted to prayer and more united in love with our brothers and sisters in nearby congregations.

Jim Ash is founder of the Lighthouse Initiative and founder and president of the Main Street Journal.

EASTER, THE DAY EVERYTHING CHANGED

Carefully investigated reports offer compelling evidence that Jesus is alive

The following is an adaptation of commentary written by Rusty Wright who operates a website at www.RustyWright.com.

At Easter, some might wonder what all the fuss is about. Who cares? What difference does it make if Jesus rose from the dead? It makes all the difference in the world.

If Christ did not rise, then thousands of believers have died as martyrs for a hoax. Millions of Christians alive today would be wasting their lives on a lie. If he did rise, then He is still alive and can offer peace to troubled, hurting lives.

Countless scholars — among them Augustine, Sir Isaac Newton and C.S. Lewis — carefully considered the evidence and came to believe that the resurrection is real. We need not fear committing intellectual suicide by believing it also.

The Apostle Paul, skeptic-turned believer, wrote, “Christ is risen from the dead! Why do you doubt?” He said his book was based on eyewitness accounts. With those credentials, he reported that Jesus appeared in person to his disciples after he had been crucified. Let’s consider four primary pieces of evidence that confirm the resurrection — the growth of Christianity; the changed lives of the disciples; the empty tomb; and the reported appearances of Jesus after he had died.

Within a few weeks after Jesus was crucified, a movement arose which, by the later admission of its enemies, “upset the world.” What happened to ignite this movement shortly after its leader had been executed? How do you explain the phenomenal growth of Christianity under intense persecution if its leader was dead?

After Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion, the disciples forlornly waited. Peter denied three times that he was a follower of Jesus. Yet, despite this cowardice, the disciples established the church. Ten of them were martyred for their faith. According to traditions, Peter was crucified upside down; Thomas was skewered; John was boiled in oil but survived. What happened to these weak-kneed men into heroes? How else can you explain their transformation apart from seeing Jesus risen from the dead?

Next we have the life of the Apostle Paul who became famous, first, as an enemy of Jesus and a persecutor of Christians. But something changed. He became the most successful church builder of all time. What happened? Why the turnaround? According to his own writings, Paul said Jesus appeared to him alive.

The empty tomb offers more evidence. Jesus’ corpse had been removed from the cross, wrapped like a mummy and placed in a solid-rock cave. A huge boulder was rolled into a slightly depressed groove to seal the tomb’s entrance.

There was concern that his followers might attempt to remove Jesus from his grave so a unit of Roman soldiers was assigned to guard the site. On Easter morning, the stone was found rolled away and the body was gone, but the clothes Jesus had been wrapped in were still in place. What happened?

Did Christ’s friends steal the body? Perhaps one of the women sweet-talked the guards while the others moved the stone and tiptoed off with the body. Or maybe Peter (who denied Jesus) or Thomas (the doubter) overpower the guards, stole the body, then fabricated a resurrection myth.

These theories hardly seem plausible. The guard was too powerful, the stone too heavy and the disciples too spineless to attempt such a feat.

Did Christ’s enemies steal the body? If Romans or Jewish religious leaders had the body, surely they would have exposed it publicly to refute the resurrection claim, and Christianity would have died. They didn’t, and it didn’t.

The “Swoon Theory” supposes that Jesus did not really die but was only unconscious. After a few days in the tomb without food or medicine, the cool air revived him. In such a condition, this theory suggests Jesus rolled away the stone with his nail-pierced hands, scared the daylight out of the Roman soldiers, walked miles on wounded feet and convinced his disciples he’d been raised from the dead. This theory defies reasonable logic.

Given the different options and the evidence to support each, how would you explain the empty tomb?

Finally, we have the reported appearances of the risen Christ. During a period of forty days after his death, many different people said they saw Jesus alive. Witnesses included a woman, a shrewd tax collector, several fishermen and over five hundred people at once. These claims provide further eyewitness testimony for the resurrection.

And so, there is the exploding growth of the church; cowardly men who transformed into heroes who proclaimed Jesus was risen; well documented eyewitness accounts of Jesus’ appearances after his death; and we have an empty tomb.

The above does not constitute an exhaustive proof, rather a reasoned examination of the evidence. Each interested person should evaluate the evidence and decide if it makes sense. If the facts support the claim, one can conclude that he arose.

In any case, mere intellectual assent to the facts does little for one’s life. The major evidence comes in personally experiencing the changed life that comes when we seek Jesus’ gift of forgiveness. He said, “I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him (or her).” What will you do in response?

Rusty Wright is an author and lecturer who has spoken on six continents. He holds Bachelor of Science (psychology) and Master of Theology degrees from Duke and Oxford universities, respectively. To view his writings visit www.RustyWright.com.
ALL RELIGIOUS VIEWS ARE NOT EQUAL

Contrary to conventional wisdom, logic dictates only one can be true

The following is an adaptation of commentary written by Matt Slick who is president and founder of the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry and operates a website at www.carm.org.

There is a prevailing view in America that all faiths are equal in that they offer a valid pathway to God. As a result, critics often scoff at the bold claims of Christianity that asserts there is only one pathway to God, through Jesus. What makes faith in Jesus better than any other faith or belief? If God exists, why can’t God use different religions? Don’t all paths lead to God? These are reasonable questions and skeptics ask them all the time.

If we can see that there is such a thing as truth in the world, then we could also see that there can be spiritual truth as well. It is not absurd to believe in spiritual absolutes anymore than physical or logical absolutes. Even the statement that all religions lead to God is a statement held to be a spiritual absolute by many people. However, not all that is believed to be true actually is true.

The problem with the notion that all faiths are equal, or that they are all good, or that they all offer a pathway to God, is that the world’s religions contradict each other. Two conflicting views cannot both be true. In Christianity, we have a religion that is particularly unique in its claims. As a result, if Christianity is true, then all other beliefs must be false. Likewise, if any other religion is true, then Christianity must be false.

Mormonism teaches that there are many gods in existence and that you can become a god. Christianity teaches that there is only one God and that Jesus came to earth as God in human form. Islam teaches that Jesus is not God in flesh. Jesus cannot be both God and not God at the same time, so which is true?

Some religions teach that we reincarnate while others do not. Some teach there is a hell and others do not. They cannot all be true.

If God exists, it makes no sense that He would institute mutually exclusive and contradictory belief systems in an attempt to get people to believe in Him. With this in mind, let’s consider the facts. Let’s look specifically at the unique claims of Christianity and the evidence to support those claims.

First we have the words of Jesus. He claimed to be God and performed acts that proved his deity. Jesus said that he provided the only pathway to God and he claimed to be one with the God the Father. Likewise, the disciples called Him God. By default, if Jesus is God in flesh, then whatever He said and did would be true. Consequently, Jesus’ words become incredibly important for us to consider carefully.

Next we have the deeds of Jesus that were well documented through eyewitness accounts. Jesus changed water into wine; cast out demons; healed lepers and other diseases; raised people from the dead; restored sight to the blind; cured deafness; walked on water; calmed a storm with a command; rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples after resurrection. We can believe what Jesus said about Himself because He performed miracles in front of people who testified and wrote about what they saw Him do.

Now let’s consider the prophecies. Though there are other religions that have prophecies in them, none have the track record of the Bible’s predictions. The Old Testament was written hundreds of years before Jesus was born, yet Biblical writers prophesied many things that were fulfilled in Jesus. These prophecies that came true offer evidence of divine influence upon the Bible.

Some believe the New Testament was written and altered to make it look like Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. For this theory to be true, we must conclude the New Testament writers were dishonest and deliberately trying to deceive their audience. There is no evidence to support that view. Quite to the contrary, these writers appear to be men of high moral character.

But the central core of Christianity is Jesus’ resurrection. No other religion was founded by a leader who died in full view of trained executioners and later disappeared from a guarded tomb. Without the resurrection the Christian faith is useless. With the resurrection, it stands above every other religion.

Buddha did not rise from the dead. Muhammad did not rise from the dead. Confucius did not rise from the dead. Krishna did not rise from the dead. Christianity is distinct.

In Christianity, there are fulfilled prophecies of a coming Messiah. In Christianity, we have the extremely accurate transmission of documents that contain eyewitness accounts so we can trust what was originally written. In Christianity, we have the person of Christ who claimed to be God, performed many miracles to prove His claim of divinity, who died and rose from the dead.

And so we return to the original thesis, either Christianity is true and all other religions are false or another religion is true and Christianity is false. I have examined the evidence and made my choice. I choose to follow the risen Lord Jesus.
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Saint Ann’s Church is reopening in May
Continued from front page

Planted in 1887 by St. Marks of Southborough, Holy Trinity once was housed in the building on Main Street currently occupied by Dunkin Donuts. The congregation thrived as an intimate member of the Marlborough community for nearly one hundred years before experiencing several changes and some difficult times in the 1970s and beyond. More recently, Holy Trinity settled into a temporary home, renting space from the First United Methodist Church.

Two years ago, Holy Trinity committed to the French Hill area by opening a second location, a small chapel just across the street from Saint Ann’s. Since then, the parish has been fully invested in serving the neighborhood. The chapel has been host to regular services every week and members of the parish have been visible in the neighborhood. Prayer walks and delivery of gift bags is done weekly. A depression and anxiety support group has been established, and the church has also supported the nearby SMOC house.

The purchase of Saint Ann’s and adjacent property brings new and exciting possibilities. In addition to the 72,000 square foot church building, Holy Trinity is buying the two-floor, 48,000 square foot Community Outreach Center next door, along with a 12,000 square foot administration building and a huge parking lot with a capacity for about one hundred fifty cars.

"For many years we have felt called to minister in French Hill and to reopen this church," commented Father McKinnon. "We are so grateful to God that Saint Ann’s will once again be a church where the Mass is offered and may now serve again as a center for outreach in French Hill." Members of the parish are especially excited about the potential impact on the neighborhood with the planned reopening of the Community Outreach Center. They envision offering free and low cost meals to people in need, creating a place for youth activities, offering emergency shelter for battered women and children, and offering the building in other ways to serve the city.

“We hope this will become a great center for Christian activity on French Hill and a gathering place for the neighborhood, especially those in need of a helping hand," said Father McKinnon. While there is much excitement about the acquisition, Holy Trinity has taken a huge leap of faith that is stretching the parish beyond its current financial means. With typical Sunday attendance under one hundred and only thirty actual pledging units (families and singles), the new mortgage alone will increase the $170K annual budget by about 15%.

Devoted members of the parish already contribute roughly $5,000 per year on average, not quite enough to cover the current budget. In addition, the cost to bring all of the buildings up to full operational potential is projected to be in the range of $200K to $300K.

As word about the Saint Ann’s purchase has spread throughout the Christian community, there is already talk of offering financial and manpower aid to help get Holy Trinity up to speed. Lynn Faust, lead organizer of the monthly Second Saturday outreach is planning to send a work group to Saint Ann’s every month for as long as will be needed. In addition, feasibility discussions are underway to organize a huge group of volunteers, perhaps between fifty and one hundred people, to devote an entire week to building improvements during the summer.

The long abandoned parking lot has drawn the attention of local Eagle Scout Dom Mauro. He is planning an Eagle project that will clear out debris and weeds from the lot. In addition, Liam Dunphy will be rebuilding a handicap access ramp as his Eagle Scout project.

Holy Trinity Church is part of the Anglican Church in North America. Although not Roman Catholic, the Anglican Church regards itself as a branch of the once undivided Catholic Church.

"Anglicans maintain the same Scriptures, sacraments, creeds and ministry as the Catholic Church of the first Christian millennium," explained Father McKinnon. "However, we are also an evangelical church. Our preaching and teaching is grounded in the Bible as God’s Word."

While all are welcome to Holy Trinity, Father McKinnon said he is not looking to attract people who already have a church home. “Our mission is specifically to people who are not part of a church,” he said. “We are especially hopeful that former members of Saint Ann’s who have not connected with a parish since it closed will return to celebrate a reunion with us.”

Father McKinnon and the Holy Trinity staff may be reached by phone at 508-481-8493. Those who would like to support the capital campaign may forward donations payable to the Saint Ann’s Building Fund and send to Holy Trinity’s mailing address at 197 M Boston Post Road West, #204, Marlborough, MA 01752, or through the donations page on their website at HolyTrinityMarlborough.org
SECOND SATURDAY OUTREACH
Community service program still going strong

By Bill Burger
Contributing Writer

For over seven years, between 60 to 120 volunteers have met on the Second Saturday of each month at Grace Baptist Church in Hudson, then spent the morning in the local community working on service projects at homes, schools, food banks, nursing homes and assisted care facilities, elderly housing communities, parks, and vocational training facilities.

Why do people volunteer to serve others? Several themes emerged from interviews with regular Second Saturday participants. All volunteers expressed a desire to help others in their community, some motivated by the desire to do the right thing, and others describing service as a response to God’s blessings and teachings. Regardless of their initial motivation, most volunteers are enthusiastic about the experience.

Among the regular activities at Second Saturday are visits to the homes and apartments of elderly, disabled, ill or shut-in people to perform cleaning, yard work, handyman work or other tasks while also spending some time in conversation. Joe Don Richardson recently did some cleaning at the home of an elderly couple and felt blessed in return. “I heard their stories. The husband was 83 years old and just retired. That reinforced for me that God wants us to give one hundred percent.”

Paul Hale, an elder at Grace Baptist Church, said he volunteers because, “I like doing things, blessing people, hearing their stories, seeing their faces. I am responding to the blessings God has given me.” Paul recently saw an interview in which Pastor Rick Warren said there are over 2,000 Scripture verses that call us to serve the poor. “And where should we do that? Right here,” Paul said.

Steve Dembro says, “It feels good, knowing that I am able to help, that I have the skill set.” For the last two years, Steve has been donating his skills and his cooking facilities at his Marlborough restaurant, Stevie’s Eatery, to do the initial preparation and cooking of the meals delivered to area soup kitchens and shelters.

After the meat portions for the meals are cut and cooked at Stevie’s Eatery, a team of volunteers at Grace Baptist cook and pack the rest of 150 to 300 meals each month. Those meals are served to hungry and sometimes homeless people at shelters, churches and soup kitchens in the area, including at Roland’s House in Marlborough, and Pleasant Street Baptist in downtown Worcester. Tina Nolan, who has been serving at Second Saturday for six years, appreciates the ministry because it provides meaningful service opportunities for any volunteer without the need to get involved in the planning and preparation of the service project. “You are not going to find an easier way to serve God and the community than at Second Saturday,” she said. “There are projects ready to join each month for anybody. It’s a no-brainer.”

Even though the process of joining a service project is simple at Second Saturday, the impact of the projects on the care receivers and the volunteers can be profound. Reverend Jim Camacho values the relationships between volunteers and care receivers that sometimes grow after they meet during a Second Saturday project.

Jim met an elderly woman who was living alone in Marlborough when Second Saturday organized a series of volunteer projects to mow her lawn, help her care for her roses, repair a collapsed deck and do other repairs around her house. Jim said, “At first, the woman didn’t want to talk. But, after mowing the lawn several times, my wife, Bonnie, and I began to visit her during the week just to spend time, talk and share the Lord. When she eventually died, I had the great privilege of being asked by her family to conduct the funeral.”

People of all ages and backgrounds serve at Second Saturday including families with children, couples, singles and teenagers; churchgoers from Grace Baptist, other churches, and people who are not active in any church; people who have volunteered many times before and those who are volunteering for the first time.

In order to equip volunteers to serve and connect with care receivers more effectively, Second Saturday now hosts a seminar each month right before volunteers leave for their service projects. Seminar topics have included how to connect with new care receivers, how to pray with, and for, someone, and how to recognize hoarding issues and what resources are available for assistance.

Phil Peacock, now age 20, has been serving since he was in middle school. “I generally do schlepping, because I can be the brute force that some people cannot be,” he said. The term “schlepping” refers to projects involving heavy lifting, such as moving furniture or doing clean-up work.

Since its inception seven years ago, Lynn Faust has been managing Second Saturday as a volunteer from Grace Baptist Church’s community service ministry. Lynn sums up mission of Second Saturday by saying, “We offer hope in Jesus’ name to those in need in our community, and provide participants with opportunities to discover the joy of serving their neighbors with the magnificent gifts God has given them.”

“Anyone interested in volunteering at Second Saturday can simply show up ready to work at Grace Baptist at 8:30 AM, April 12th, May 10th, or any Second Saturday thereafter. Those who may have a need or know of someone who could use help, can contact Grace Baptist at 978-562-8550.”

Card making to show appreciation for soldiers is a task parents can enjoy with their kids on Second Saturday. Shown above, Jesse Carrie with mom, Donna.
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**BUILDING BETTER MARRIAGES**

“10 Great Dates” offers couples a chance to grow and have fun doing it

By Jim Ash
Contributing Writer

A ten-week marriage enrichment program, titled “10 Great Dates,” began last January at ConnectingPoint Church in Marlborough and has been well received by the couples who are participating. An invitation went out to members of the church as well as the general public and ten couples took advantage of the opportunity.

The program runs twice a month on Saturdays, not necessarily every other week. The schedule is set up to avoid holiday conflicts. Each night begins with social time followed by a twenty-minute video that covers a certain topic and offers some tips and tools for discussion. After the video, all couples are free to go out on a date.

Couples are asked to arrange for their own babysitter if possible but limited child care is available at the church for those who may need it. Those who use the service are required to return to the church to pick up their children at 8:00 PM. Otherwise, the dates can last as long as each couple desires.

The program comes with a workbook and both husband and wife are given homework to complete prior to each date. The video for the night supplements the reading material and couples are advised to discuss the questions during their date.

George and Mary Ann Stein facilitate the sessions each week. They had noted that there are programs available locally for people who have been divorced but were not aware of anything to help build stronger marriages.

“We just thought we should offer something pre-emptive that could help couples improve their relationships,” said George.

ConnectingPoint Pastor Eric Sahlberg was excited to see the Steins take the initiative to get the program off the ground. “Personally, I’ve spent many nights of the week and countless numbers of hours providing pastoral counseling to couples who are experiencing a rough patch in their marriage,” he said. “Life in the suburbs of Boston is stressful and marriages go sideways pretty quickly around here. I’m convinced there are thousands of couples in the MetroWest area whose marriages are hanging on by a thread and they don’t know how to experience a great marriage.”

Sahlberg noted that even marriages seemingly destined for failure can literally be transformed when couples are willing to pursue reconciliation and invest time in rebuilding their relationship with the encouragement and support of other couples who are doing the same.

The “10 Great Dates” program was created by Claudia and David Arp, founders of Marriage Alive International. Among the topics covered are communication, resolving conflict, becoming an encourager, building unity, developing a creative sex life, sharing responsibility, working together, developing spiritual intimacy and balancing busy lifestyles.

So far, the participating couples have completed five sessions. “Many have expressed that they really appreciate the structure,” commented George. “Lives are so busy for most of us that a date gets pushed down to the bottom of the list, especially for couples with children.” A key benefit of the program is that it commits couples to spending time together alone at least twice a month while setting up some interesting topics to talk about.

George made a point of noting that “10 Great Dates” is not a support group or ten-step program where couples are required to discuss their issues in the group session. While participating couples do support each other, the key discussions are meant to be held in private between the spouses. “The other key point,” said George, “is that the program is designed for couples to have fun.”

The only cost associated with the program is $10 for the workbook. Childcare is optional at $10 per child each night. While George said it is possible to join in the middle of the series, he feels it makes more sense to come in at the beginning. He and Mary Ann are pretty sure they will be offering the program again possibly starting in August.

“We want to see people experience awesome marriages,” commented Sahlberg. “10 Great Dates is opportunity for couples to energize their marriage.”

ConnectingPoint Church (connectingpointchurch.org) is located at 72 Jefferson Street, Suite 202, opposite Kelleher Field in Marlborough. According to Sahlberg, the church draws upon many centuries of heritage as a Christian Church seeking to love and know God, walk-out life together and to love, serve and transform people.

Among the programs offered by the church are Homework Help on Wednesday nights from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM and the Couch to 5K fitness program. Also available is a Craftswomen Program that meets every Monday at 6:00 PM at the church. The group enjoys tea, coffee and snacks and share stories about faith and life while working on crafts and encouraging each other.

Sunday service is held at 10:00 AM every week, preceded by fellowship time for adults and Sunday School for junior and senior high school students from 9:00 AM to 9:45 AM. To contact the church, call 508-596-1121.
CONVOY OF HOPE IS RETURNING
Part of an ongoing effort to support French Hill

By Jim Ash
Contributing Writer

It was early last year when a small group of people, primarily from a few local churches, began to imagine together what might be possible if the various segments of a community pooled their collective resources together for one event on one day to serve people in need. Several months later, on Saturday, October 12, 2013, their best expectations were met when the first Marlborough Convoy of Hope was held to serve the people of French Hill.

Mayor Arthur Vigeant, City Councilor Don Landers, Lunch Coordinator Bob Kays, local police officers assigned to the site, and others who have seen big events held in the city over the years, expressed amazement at the efficiency of the operation and the overall spirit that prevailed as more than one thousand guests were served by more than three hundred volunteers.

Churches, civic organizations, businesses, social service organizations and community volunteers partnered together to provide supplies, practical resources, entertainment, and friendship to people who could use a helping hand. French Hill residents and others in need were literally treated as guests of honor while receiving free goods and services made possible by roughly $15,000 in generous contributions that fully funded the event.

While the concept may be unfamiliar to people in the New England area, elsewhere in America people in despair have been uplifted, broken marriages have been restored, and families in crisis have been transformed by Convoy of Hope events and the follow up care that has been provided afterwards.

Convoy of Hope is an international faith-based organization with a long track record of excellence in providing disaster relief and support to at risk and impoverished people. The Convoy community event is designed to unite churches, businesses, government agencies and other nonprofits to provide help and hope to people in poverty. More than 1.6 million “honored guests” have attended Convoy community events in more than two hundred United States cities.

Jason Bachman, outreach director for Convoy, was assigned to oversee the Marlborough operation. On the day of the event, he explained the essence of the outreach, “We are here to provide help for today and hope for tomorrow.”

The “help” came in the form of lunch, haircuts, shoes, family portraits, vision screenings, flu shots, prayer and other supplies and services, all for free. In addition, there was entertainment in the form of a Kids Zone play area, a small petting zoo, and live music. Upon leaving the park, every adult walked away with at least two bags of groceries.

The “hope” came with knowledge that the outreach was not a one day, see you next year, event. It marked what is hoped to be an ongoing, many year effort to breath new life into the neighborhood. Late last year, organizers assessed the impact of the event and made a decision to hold Convoy this year on October 11th, with the intent to continue annually into the foreseeable future on the Saturday of Columbus Day weekend.

Based on attendance trends, Bachman estimates the 2014 Marlborough Convoy could attract between 2,000 and 3,000 guests this year. As a result, more volunteers and a bigger budget will be needed to cover the added demand.

Churches are being asked to designate October 11, 2014 as a day of outreach for their members. Companies are invited to send a group of employees to work together in service. Likewise, the Convoy of Hope offers an excellent opportunity for civic groups to plug into a well-planned event that will have a meaningful impact on people’s lives. Aside from those holding leadership positions, no prior training is required. Volunteers need only show up the morning of the event ready to help and everyone will be assigned to a place of need.

Companies, organizations, churches and individuals are also being asked to give financially to support the effort. Full scale fundraising has not officially begun but Grace Baptist Church was first to sign on with a $5,000 pledge to match last year’s contribution.

Meanwhile, New Hope Community Church is taking the lead again with all of the organizational details. Last year’s assistant coordinator, Debbie Kerr, will be serving as head coordinator this year, replacing Rob Woods, who is stepping down as New Hope pastor this month to pursue a new calling.

Bachman was in town this week to hold meetings with team leaders to prepare for the 2014 event. There are no firm details on any possible changes but one recent development could prove to be a big boost. Holy Trinity Church is purchasing the long vacant Saint Ann’s Church building and grounds on Lincoln Street, not far from Stevens Park. Father Michael McKinnon has indicated the church will be made available to help Convoy.

Of particular note, Saint Ann’s has a large lot, with a capacity for about 150 cars that can be used for event parking. Due to the limited parking at Stevens Park, shuttle bus service was needed last year to transport volunteers and guests from remote locations. Access to the Saint Ann’s lot will save money and provide greater convenience for all involved.

To sign up a group to volunteer for this year’s Convoy, contact New Hope Church at 508-485-7023. Donations should be made payable to Marlborough Convoy of Hope and sent to the Convoy of Hope, PO Box 204, Marlborough, MA 01752.

The hair cutting tent at Convoy is always a popular attraction for adults and children.
Divorce Support for Adults and Kids

“I needed to get together with people who related to what I was going through”

By Jim Ash
Contributing Writer

It was a day just like any other day for Rodney, or so it seemed until his world turned upside-down. Everything changed when his wife of fourteen years announced she wanted a divorce. Soon Rodney became aware he would need support beyond his regular circle of friends, but he had no idea where to turn.

“Friends will give you bad advice and you get tired of hearing it,” he said. “I knew I needed to get together with people who could actually relate to what I was going through.” So he went to the Internet in search for help and learned about the DivorceCare program being offered at Grace Baptist Church.

The thirteen-week program meets Tuesdays at 7:00 PM at the church, 353 River Road in Hudson. During each session, a video presentation features a nationally recognized expert who covers such topics as loneliness, depression, financial struggles, childcare, forgiveness and reconciliation. Small group discussion follows. The overall goal of the program is to help people learn how to deal with the pain and look forward to rebuilding a new life.

When he learned about the program, Rodney was immediately convinced he needed to go, but he could not bring himself to do it when the night of the first session arrived. “I was embarrassed and apprehensive,” he recalled.

The second week, he mustered up the courage and it was not long after he arrived when he knew he had found something that would be a big help. Rodney said he was mostly silent the first night he attended but group facilitator Lenny Hutt took him aside for a private conversation afterward and it helped to break the ice. He has been attending regularly ever since.

“It has become a very intimate part of my life and still is,” said Rodney. “It has helped me get through all of the emotional baggage that comes with divorce.”

Rodney has been particularly impressed with the video series and the insights offered by the speakers. In fact, he thinks all married couples should view the videos. “The speakers teach you about marriage, the mistakes you make, and how to do it right. If my wife and I had taken this course, maybe we would not be getting divorced.”

Lenny Hutt experienced divorce twenty-five years ago and found help in a different type of situation, “I needed to get together with people who related to what I was going through.”

He said that DivorceCare provides teaching and insight that will help people succeed if they remarry.

Ask the program content, Lenny said the sessions on finances and children are particularly important. Divorce creates a host of challenging money problems and the guidance provided by the video is quite helpful. As for children, Lenny said, “They are often the forgotten ones.” Here again, the video content is very helpful in teaching parents how to help their kids through the pain.

Speaking of kids, there is a related series ongoing at Grace Baptist at the same time every Tuesday, DivorceCare for Kids. The premise is the same but the video sessions are made specifically for children in the age five to fifteen range.

Odette Castro and her husband Hector, facilitate the kids program. Odette has not suffered through a divorce but she has a lot of experience working with children. She wanted to take her skills and use them to help kids who are dealing with the pain of divorce.

Like their adult counterparts, Odette reports that kids are apprehensive at first, but they also grow to appreciate the program. “We hear it back from the parents,” she said. "They tell us how much the program is changing and helping their kids.”

Like others before him, Rodney agrees the hardest part of getting involved in DivorceCare is taking that first step. To anyone facing divorce, he says, “Put your pride aside and put your embarrassment aside. If you get yourself to do that and just come in once, you will see and feel the value of it.”

The program is free, but workbooks are available for $15. All are welcome. Each session is self-contained and people can jump in at anytime. The current series will conclude on May 6th but will restart the following week. For additional information, contact Lenny Hutt at 508-366-5567.

“People who break up after living together go through the same pain and will benefit from this program,” he said.

Another point made by Lenny is the importance of the program in terms of preventing a second failed marriage. “The probability of divorce gets greater with each subsequent marriage,” he explained.

He said that DivorceCare provides teaching and insight that will help people succeed if they remarry.

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LIVING JESUS AS A WAY OF LIFE
“An opportunity to connect on a deeper level”

By Jim Ash
Contributing Writer

It was the late 1950s, Northborough was a town of less than five thousand residents when the first thoughts of planting an Episcopal church were discussed. Before long, sixty signatures were obtained on a petition to the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts to start a Mission church, and $10,000 was raised to seed its beginnings.

Northborough’s Grange Hall was selected for services, the first of which was held on January 3, 1960. Three weeks later the name “Church of the Nativity” was chosen by popular vote for the new congregation. Over the years since then, Nativity has blossomed to become a vibrant center of Christian life and ministry.

The Diocese soon purchased a seven-acre farm on Howard Street as the site of its planned church building. Through fundraising and moneys advanced from the diocese, ground was broken on Easter Sunday, 1963. The first worship service in the new church building was held on November 26, 1963.

The fall of 1989 saw the start of the Church of the Nativity Community Nursery School, which provides a Christian environment for learning and play, offering two and three-day programs for fifty students.

More recently, Nativity has developed a Spiritual Life Center called “The Refuge.” The church buildings, grounds and programs have been reconfigured to provide opportunities for members and guests to meet God through prayer, quiet, and reflection, both individual and group, structured and unstructured.

The Nativity website expresses the church’s mission as follows.

“We the Church of the Nativity are called together by God to be and to make faithful followers of our Lord Jesus Christ ... Recognizing that we are all at different places in our spiritual journeys, we seek to help one another to turn towards Christ, to draw closer to Him and others, and to go into the world to serve others with His grace and truth.”

Members of the parish come from different backgrounds and in different stages of life and have found a loving home to grow spiritually at Nativity.

“Nativity has been a homecoming for me,” commented Betty Hummell. “It’s caused me to grow up both spiritually and emotionally.” Hummell was particularly drawn to the prayer ministry at the church. “I realized how much I really wanted a place that valued and practiced and appreciated inner healing prayer.”

Al Krevis was invited to Nativity by his future wife, Norma, while they were dating. “From the very beginning, I heard the Word of God preached each and every week,” he said. Krevis has benefited from participating in a small group that has helped to gain a deeper understanding of God’s love. “I suffer, just like all of us do, from heart disease and it’s not the one that causes heart attacks,” Krevis said. “It’s the one that causes spiritual deadness. Now I am feeling his love.”

Austin and Jessica Miller visited several churches before attending Nativity where they felt an immediate connection. “The congregation really resonated with us here,” said Austin. “We felt people really had strong faith and that inspired us.”

Commenting on small groups, Jessica said, “You just have an opportunity to connect on a deeper level with members of the congregation.” She also said the kids program at Nativity has had an obvious affect on her young children who are now speaking more about God. “The stories come to life a little bit more for them and puts it on a level they can understand.”

At the age of fifteen, James Fischetti was invited by a friend to try something different on a Sunday night. “After the first day of youth group, I was hooked,” he said. “I have experienced many great things during the time of youth group.” A major moment came during a Missions trip to New Mexico when another member of the youth group provided guidance that inspired his faith. In particular, Fischetti said he has found the church to be a very supportive community even to the point of helping him pay medical bills in a time of need.

Nativity hosts a contemporary Mass on Saturday evenings at 5:00 PM and two services on Sunday, Traditional Eucharist at 7:45 AM and Renewal-Praise Eucharist at 10:00 AM. Nursery care for ages six months to three is open during each service.

The “Godly Play” program, Sundays at 10:00 AM, allows children in pre-K through grade five to experience the Bible through story telling, prayer, and creative arts. Also at 10:00 on Sundays, kids in middle school are offered a more in-depth study and discussion based on material designed especially for young teens. In addition, Nativity offers middle school and high school youth groups for fellowship, games, entertainment and topical discussions.

“What we are about at Nativity is living Jesus as a way of life,” commented Father Len Cowan, pastor, “and we have a Spiritual Life Center to help people do that. We try to discover and share with others very practical ways to live a rich life with God that makes a positive difference in the world.”

As with all Christian congregations, the weekend worship services are central to church life. “You’ll experience great music, both contemporary and classic, and a relevant message that focuses on you and God in everyday life,” explained Father Cowan.

“Our friendly people will help to orient you, so that you can relax and be comfortable.”

A comfortable atmosphere of fellowship prevails at Church of Nativity gatherings. Church of the Nativity members grow spiritually and make connections in small groups.
**KIDS ARE LEARNING AND HAVING FUN**

*The Awana program “has been great to get my children to open their Bibles”*

By Alicia Campbell  
Contributing Writer

Since September of 2007, Rice Memorial Baptist Church of Northborough has sponsored the Awana program for children ages 3-12. Awana is a Bible club that provides game time, Bible lessons, Scripture memory activities, snacks and crafts for its members.

Founded in 1950, Awana is a non-denominational ministry that hosts meetings in over 6,500 churches in the United States and another 1,300 in eighty countries around the world. The goal of Awana is “to reach boys and girls with the gospel of Christ and train them to serve Him.” The name Awana is an acronym for “Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed,” from 2 Timothy 2:15.

Children gather each Sunday afternoon at Rice Memorial from 4:30 PM to 6:30 PM and are grouped according to their age and grade level. Preschoolers are in the Cubs group, which brings Bible stories to life with the use of puppets, crafts, colorful scenery, felt boards and music. The Sparks club is for kindergarten through second grade. The Truth and Training group, known as “T&T” is for children in third through sixth grade. Each Sparks and T&T club meeting consists of a Bible lesson, a time for gym games such as stealing the bacon and line tag, and discipleship time with a club leader.

Pastor Steve Georgeason of Rice Memorial has marveled at how the community has responded to the program. “We started out with seven children that first night and it grew and grew. I think by the end of the first year, we had just over twenty. The next year was over thirty, then we’ve been hovering in the high thirties, low forties ever since.”

Georgeason says the decision to host Awana was made largely because the church is located between two schools, and the congregation wanted to offer something that would appeal to children in their congregation, and also to children in the local communities.

Kathy Burmeister’s children have attended Awana for five years. She says, “Awana has been a great tool to get my children to open their Bibles and commit to memory key scriptures. My prayer is that they will recall these verses for years to come, and gain more wisdom and understanding of the God of the Bible as they grow older.”

Awana runs from September to May, and costs $50 per child for the year, with a maximum of $85 per family. Special events throughout the year include Crazy Hat Night, Ice Cream Sundae Night, and Backwards Night.

During the month of November, children fill shoe boxes with small gifts, toiletries and school supplies to donate to Operation Christmas Child. During the month of March, Awana club members compete in the annual Grand Prix, a pinewood derby competition.

Awana is open to children of all religious backgrounds. For information or to register a child for the 2014-2015 year, call the Rice office at 508-393-3481.
WELCOMING FAITH COMMUNITY

Metro Church aims to inspire excellence in service

By Virginia Gehrig
Contributing Writer

Just beside I-95 northbound on Elm Street in Marlborough, a sleek industrial building serves as home to Metro Church and a group of people who want Marlborough and the surrounding communities to know that they love them. Among the objectives listed in their mission statement, Metro Church strives to provide a welcoming faith community where every person may explore, discover and develop faith in Christ, and friendships with others; to exalt Christ in worship and in word; to provide cutting-edge ministry to every age demographic; to inspire excellence in Christian service; and to provide practical aid to the less fortunate.

The manifestation of their desire to serve the community and aid people in need is a program called Metro Church Cares. Rather than have a specific focus, Metro Church Cares simply identifies a need and provides whatever help is necessary to lift burdens, and let people know someone cares about them. They commit random acts of kindness that benefit the community. This “randomness” is not truly random, but a combination of being open to the opportunities that God presents and maintaining a good relationship with the city and other assistance organizations.

These acts of kindness span a wide range of activities, reflective of the wide range of needs in the area. Last year a clothing drive donated enough clothing for 250 families of four.

During the summer, the kitchen in their facility is the storage and prep location for the Marlborough Summer Lunch Program for kids, a program that provides free lunches during the summer for children who qualify for free or reduced lunches during the school year. Members of Metro Church conduct a monthly worship service for seniors at Marlborough Hills Healthcare Center.

Some acts of kindness have become less random, as Metro Church begins to make connections with events and participate annually. This year they will once again partner with the Marlborough Fraternal Order of the Eagles for their Rock and Stroll to raise money for cancer research.

Metro Church is committed to assisting the Marlborough Food Pantry by holding a monthly food drive called One Big Push. The pantry identifies the need for a specific item, and the people of Metro Church work together to fill the need.

Last year, members of the church were a major participant in the local Convoy of Hope and will be involved again this year. This spring they will once again be assisting Marlborough Department of Public Works in the annual Clean Sweep, a city-wide clean-up held on or near Earth Day.

For the last three years, Metro Church has been a supporter of the Salvation Army’s Wish Upon A Star program, where they have helped provide over 750 children’s Christmas with presents to unwrap, showing the love of Christ to their families.

Rather than reinvent program, Metro Church works with existing organizations as reliable partners to provide assistance to those who need it. “We want to work with groups who do good for people,” explained Chad Braswell, Associate Pastor at Metro Church. “If it’s going to do good, we want God’s name on it. We want MetroWest to know that we love them.”

While, currently, Metro Church Cares focuses primarily on the city of Marlborough, their vision extends beyond the city limits. Braswell said, “This is only a fraction of what we want to do. There is no shortage of people who need help. We are God’s hands and feet. We are just doing what Jesus did – helping people.”

As for mobilizing all those hands and feet, the members of Metro Church have consistently been faithful and generous in meeting needs. Braswell says of his fellow workers in faith, “People understand that it’s a small thing to go out and show Christ’s love for us by loving others.”

While reluctant to publicize exact amounts of clothing and food donated, as well as how many people participate in the public activities, Braswell is proud of Metro Church’s outpouring of care. “We want to be overwhelming.”

Metro Church is a non-denominational Christian congregation, Christ-centered, Bible-based, and community/missions focused, while that offering a fresh approach to “church.” in a unique facility. Members strive to promote Jesus and to bring hope to the world.

They have converted the lower floor of an industrial building at 401 Elm Street into an inviting space for Sunday worship and gatherings during the week. Kids especially enjoy the specially designed children’s section, while dynamic youth programs are designed to relate to the millennial mindset.

Unusual Sunday worship times of 9:22 and 11:22 am are carefully selected to provide consideration for people’s time. Even the local love of coffee is catered to in the Metro Café, which also provides a selection of reading material, children’s videos, and contemporary music.

According to Braswell, Metro Church services promise “a unique experience where ordinary people come and encounter an extraordinary God, where undeserved grace is felt and real hope is given.”

For more information about Metro Church including Metro Church Cares, visit their website at http://www.metrochurch.tv.
By Lynn Faust
Contributing Writer

More than one hundred area volunteers gathered for one hour at Grace Baptist Church in Hudson last month to package 16,000 nutritious servings of ready to cook meals for area hungry families.

The project was part of the monthly Second Saturday outreach and was primarily aimed to help families who are being sheltered by the state in local hotels with only a microwave to prepare hot foods. Currently, hundreds of homeless families and children live in area hotels.

The food packaged at Grace Baptist under the supervision of Feeding Children Everywhere were balanced meals that can be cooked on a stovetop or in a microwave, after adding only water. Feeding Children Everywhere is a social charity that mobilizes people to assemble healthy meals for hungry children and was the selected vendor from among three vendors considered for the packing event.

The meals consist of rice, lentils, vegetables, and seasoning, and cost twenty five cents per serving to produce. The food was chosen due to its taste, nutrition, and its non-allergenic ingredients.

Hotel-housed families have few choices for how to provide themselves and their children with nutritious food. Grocery stores are seldom located within walking distance of the hotels, and with only a microwave to prepare food, options are very limited.

Grace Baptist funded the food packaging effort with assistance from Church of the Nativity in Northborough. Church of the Nativity had also joined in a food packing effort in February in Westborough, where area churches packed macaroni and cheese meals for hotel families and food pantries.

In addition to the food, more than $1,000 worth of two-quart Pyrex bowls and large spoons were donated to the hotel-housed families by Carmel Mar Thoma Church in Hudson. These supplies have been very well received by the hotel families, as they facilitate food preparation in the microwaves.

The food is being distributed to the families through Friends of Families in Transition and through local food pantries. The families also receive ready-to-heat meals from local churches and charities through the coordination of Friends of Families in Transition, http://friendsoffit.org.

Not all hungry families live in hotels, and the packaged food has been made available at Marlborough’s and Hudson’s food pantries. Additionally, churches who desire to distribute the packaged food from their church may request food by calling Grace Baptist Church at 978-562-8550.
THRIVING CHRISTIAN CHURCH
“Grace Baptist is here to serve in tangible ways”

By Alicia Campbell
Contributing Writer

In September 2012, Grace Baptist Church welcomed its new senior pastor, Marc Pena, to the pulpit. Originally from Brooklyn, NY, Pena and his wife Mary were living and serving in San Diego with their three children when they accepted the invitation to move their family across the country to a town they had never heard of before - Hudson, MA. A thriving Christian church before his arrival, Grace Baptist has increased in size, membership and scope in the last year and a half.

“Grace Baptist Church has seen a lot of new faces this past year, most notably, younger couples and families,” observed Pena. “Grace is starting to reach the next generation. All of our ministries are expanding, particularly family ministries.” In fact, families of all ages have joined together on Sundays and throughout the week to take advantage of the programs and ministries of the church, located at 353 River Road.

Services are held each Sunday at 9:00 AM and 10:45 AM. With about 250 children ranging in age from newborn through fifth grade, the church’s children’s ministry offers a variety of programs.

There are middle school and high school gatherings for older kids on Sundays and during the week, along with a college-age/young adult program that meets regularly. In addition, small groups for adults are held during both Sunday morning services.

Throughout the year, children can enjoy special events such as roller skating parties and movie nights. Each summer, the church hosts a Vacation Bible School (VBS) that is open to the community. This year’s VBS is scheduled for August 4-8 and will feature “Weird Animals.”

Marlborough High School student Zoë Traforos has grown up at Grace Baptist. “The relationships are really personal,” she said. “This church feels like a family to me.” Roughly 65 to 75 high school students from the area participate in the Sunday morning programs and the youth group that meets on Sunday evenings. About 90 middle school students are enrolled in the middle school group, called ROC, which meets on Friday nights.

Youth in the church have the opportunity to attend an annual retreat, participate in international and domestic mission trips, volunteer in local service projects, and participate in seasonal events such as bon fires, Christmas parties, and pool parties.

Sean Cummings of Berlin first visited Grace with his wife in the spring of 2010. Following the birth of their daughter Sumantha, the couple became regular attendees. “In the short time we have been attending, we have developed great relationships with several members of the church,” Cummings said. “Pastor Marc Pena’s weekly sermons really resonate with me and remind me of the importance of being involved in a church community.”

Grace Baptist sees about 850-950 in attendance every Sunday, and has welcomed close to forty new members within the last year. Membership is a formal process whereby people commit to the mission of the church and its people. The mission, simply stated is “to love God, love others and make disciples.” According to its website, the Grace congregation is comprised of a “community of people of diverse ages, life stages and circumstances, backgrounds, races and cultures who have discovered what it is to know God through Jesus Christ and are growing in that relationship.”

“Youth in the church have the opportunity to attend an annual retreat, participate in international and domestic mission trips, volunteer in local service projects, and participate in seasonal events such as bon fires, Christmas parties, and pool parties.”

Pastor Marc Pena was called from California two years ago to serve as Grace Baptist’s senior pastor. He and his wife, Mary, and three children, have settled down and made a home in Marlborough.

Grace Baptist offers programs for children, youth and adults. The emphasis for teens is to create a fun place to gather, develop solid friendships, and grow in their faith.
Churches have much planned for Holy Week

Continued from front page

two on Easter Sunday morning in Marlborough.

Special events include interactive, dramatic presentations of “Walk to Calvary” throughout Holy Week; a presentation of “Messiah in the Passover” on Good Friday; and an offering of a free family portrait at one church on Easter Sunday.

Egg hunts

The First Federated Church will hold an hunt on Palm Sunday, April 13th after the regularly scheduled 10:30 AM service. The church is located at 200 Central Street in Hudson. For more information, call 978-562-9207.

The Church of the Nativity will hold an egg hunt at 4:30 PM on Saturday, Easter Eve, on the church grounds at 45 Howard Street, Northborough. For more information, call 508-393-3146.

Saint Matthias Church will offer an egg hunt after its 9:00 AM Easter Sunday Mass. Refreshments will be served. The church is located at 409 Hemenway Street in Marlborough. For more information, call 508-460-9255.

Also in Marlborough, ConnectingPoint Church will host two hunts on Easter Sunday at Kelleher Field immediately following the 10:00 AM worship service. The first hunt will be for children in kindergarten and younger at 11:30 AM. The second hunt will be at 11:45 AM for children in grades one through five. ConnectingPoint holds services at 72 Jefferson Street, across the street from Kelleher Field. For more information, call 508-596-1121.

Sunrise services

In Hudson, the First Federated Church will hold its sunrise service at 6:00 AM at 200 Central Street.

In Marlborough, the grounds of Marlborough Country Club will make for a scenic setting for a 6:00 AM sunrise service hosted by First Church of Marlborough.

Greater Grace Christian Fellowship of Marlborough is planning a 7:00 AM sunrise service. Call the church office for location, 508-460-1541.

In Northborough, the Church of the Nativity will host a sunrise Eucharist service at 5:30 AM at the Ellsworth McAfee Park pavilion on Route 135, and Rice Memorial Baptist Church will host a 6:00 AM sunrise service on the field behind the church at 85 Lincoln Street.

Walk to Calvary

For the past several years Greater Grace Christian Fellowship church has hosted increasingly larger crowds to its three-day Passion Play series entitled “A Walk To Calvary.” These dramatic presentations depict the last seven days of the life of Jesus Christ from a troupe of 130-plus church members. This year the church is adding an extra day of performances in anticipation of the growing interest.

Performances will be held at the church, 187 Pleasant Street in Marlborough, on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, April 16th through the April 19th. There will be five performances on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, beginning at 7:00 PM. Performances will begin every thirty minutes and last about an hour.

On Saturday, there will be seven performances that will run from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM.

Parts of the presentation will be outdoors. Attendees should dress accordingly. Each performance includes six major scenes including Jesus entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the Last Supper in the upper room, the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus’ trial, crucifixion and resurrection.

Pastor James Morrison commented, “We have been thrilled to welcome more and more guests each year. These performances are powerful depictions of the Christian faith and the cast is passionate about the message being presented.”

Based on past experience, Pastor Morrison anticipates an increase in guests in part due to the growing number of local churches involved in this year’s production. “It is a blessing to see such an interest by families, couples and individuals,” added the pastor. “We often see that guests are visibly moved by these performances.”

The event is free but advance registration is required. Guests must sign up for their specific time slots to be led throughout the church property by a set of assigned guides. For more details or to register call 508-460-1541 or visit http://www.gecfmarlboro.org/Walk-to-calvary.

Greater Grace Christian Fellowship is a non-denominational church. “Our desire is to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to all people who are not familiar with its message of salvation,” commented Pastor Morrison. “The teaching of the Bible, God’s Word, is a central activity of our church because we believe that the Bible brings real life to the human spirit.”

Messiah in the Passover

On Good Friday, New Hope Community Church will host Chosen People Ministries presentation of “Messiah in the Passover,” at 7:00 PM.

The Messiah in the Passover presentation gives the Christian community insight into Jewish traditions so that the Jewish roots of Christianity can be better understood. “The program is designed to give participants a deeper understanding of both the Passover and the Communion table. The presentation will include a traditional Passover Seder table, complete with all of the articles that normally accompany the table.

Chosen People Ministries was founded in Brooklyn, New York in 1894 by Rabbi Leopold Cohn, a Hungarian Jewish immigrant with a zeal to share the knowledge of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah with God’s chosen people.

Free family portraits

Metro Church has a unique special offering for families on Easter Sunday morning, a free family picture and gift at both services, 9:22 AM and 11:22 AM.
There are four underlying goals that comprise the Lighthouse Initiative mission ......

- Encourage a culture of increased prayerfulness.
- Cultivate a spirit of unity among Bible-believing churches.
- Utilize the media to deliver faith life stories to the community.
- Engage in collective service together to aid people in need.

We are gathering a team of spiritual mentors, prayer supporters, writers, graphic artists, photographers, videographers, editors, and project managers to support this effort.

If you are interested in helping or learning more, contact Jim Ash at 508-393-9163, jandlash@verizon.net

Philippians 1:27

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.
Christianity and church attendance mean different things to different people, with many missing the full picture and losing out on the intended experience. To those who follow the Bible, scripture clearly indicates God desires people to participate in an authentic faith community and practice real Christianity. The following excerpt from a sermon delivered by Grace Baptist Church Pastor Marc Pena serves to illustrate that point.

To those who are Christians what does faith look like in our lives? We believe the central tenets of our Christian faith but faith is more than just content, theological content. It also has to be conviction. In other words, what we believe in our heads and in our hearts should find expression in how we live our lives. If faith is real, if it is genuine, if it is authentic, if it is Biblical, it is going to find expression in every area of our life - how we speak to our children, how we speak to our spouses, how we work, how we live our lives.

The goal of this directory is to offer useful information to those people interested in partaking of the Christian experience. The intent is to develop profiles that fully reflect each church’s mission and goals. The information here was compiled from direct submissions to the Main Street Journal or obtained on church websites. To help in the process, churches are invited to submit change requests and updates by email to news@msjnews.com or call 508-460-1166.

Church of the Nativity
ordinary people...Extraordinary Life
www.churchofthenativity.org
508-393-3146
45 Howard St.
Northborough, MA 01532

Nativity represents the three streams of classic Anglican Christianity: evangelical, focusing on the witness of the Scriptures to contemporary life and the importance of a deep commitment to Jesus Christ as crucified Savior and risen Lord; catholic, upholding the historic emphasis on the sacraments and the incarnation of Christ transforming the very nature of human life; and charismatic, recognizing the power of the Holy Spirit in the church, gathered and dispersed in worship and witness. Anglicanism at its core is generously orthodox, thoroughly biblical, and liturgically beautiful.

Palm Sunday - 7:45 AM and 10:00 AM
Holy Thursday - 5:30 PM
Seder Supper and Eucharist
Good Friday service – 12:00 noon to 2:00 PM
Children’s Stations of Love - 2:30 PM to 3:00 PM
Easter Saturday Egg Hunt – 4:30 PM
Easter Eve Communion Celebration – 5:00 PM
Bonfire/music for youth - 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM.
Easter Sunday sunrise service – 5:30 AM
At the Ellsworth MacAfee Park Pavilion.
Easter Sunday Holy Eucharist - 7:45 AM
Easter Sunday Festal Eucharist - 10:00 AM

ConnectingPoint Church
Gospel. Community. Mission
www.connectingpointchurch.org
508-596-1121
72 Jefferson Street
Marlborough, MA

ConnectingPoint Church is a unique church with a vision to "connect" Marlborough to Christ through modern expressions of Christian spirituality. In other respects, the church draws upon many centuries of heritage as a Christian Church seeking to love and know God, walk-out life together and to love, serve and transform people. During the week, the church exists all around the city in several communities where there is friendship and a sense belonging as members put faith into action. For example, the church offers greater Marlborough students with free Homework Help on Wednesday nights from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM. There is also a walking and jogging group, the Couch to 5K program. This group helps the community live healthier lives by taking people from the couch to jogging a 5K race in ten weeks. The Marlborough Couch to 5K program meets from March to November on the Assabet River Rail Trail next to 72 Jefferson Street.

Good Friday service - 7:00 PM
Easter Sunday service - 10:00 AM
Easter Sunday Egg Hunt at Kelleher Park
11:30 AM - infants to kindergarten
11:45 AM – first to fifth grade

First Church Marlborough
www.firstchurchnet.com
508-485-6297
37 High Street
Marlborough, MA 01752

The mission of First Church in Marlborough (Congregational) is to welcome all to a positive environment for personal and spiritual growth through the worship of God; to foster a caring, friendly and inviting ministry of people who are committed to knowing God, God’s will and the teachings of Jesus Christ; and to reach out to all with faith and love.

Palm Sunday service - 10:00 AM
Maundy Thursday service - 7:00 PM
Good Friday service - 7:00 PM
Easter vigil - 8:00 PM
Easter sunrise service - 6:00 AM
at Marlborough Country Club
Easter Sunday service - 10:00 AM

First Federated Church
Your Community Church
No website address available
978-562-9207
200 Central St.
Hudson, MA 01749

As a Church of Jesus Christ, we will endeavor by example and effort to draw persons into a saving relationship with Christ and into the fellowship of His Church. We will continually seek to demonstrate our love for Christ and fellowshipping service to each other and to the world beyond our doors. Acknowledging Jesus Christ to be our Savior and Lord, and accepting the Holy Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice, we covenant with the Lord and with one another, and pledge ourselves in the presence of God to walk together in His holy ways.

Palm Sunday service – 10:30 AM
With Egg Hunt
Maundy Thursday service - 7:00 PM
Good Friday service - 12:00 noon
Easter Sunday sunrise service - 6:00 AM
Easter Sunday service - 10:30 AM

Grace Baptist Church
Contemporary, Christ-centered Worship
www.gracehudson.org
978-562-8550
353 River Rd.
Hudson, MA 01749

The purpose of Grace Baptist Church is to bring glory to God through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Grace Baptist Church seeks to benefit the people of the Greater Hudson and Marlborough area by providing opportunities to discover God's love and His purpose for their lives.

Palm Sunday service – 9:00 AM and 10:45 AM
Good Friday services - 6:00 PM and 7:30 PM
Special arrangements for children and infants.
Easter Sunday – 8:30 AM, 10:00 AM, 11:30 AM
Children's programs provided each service.
No middle school, high school or adult classes

Greater Grace Christian Fellowship
www.ggcfmarlboro.org
508-460-1541
187 Pleasant St.
Marlborough MA 01752

Greater Grace Christian Fellowship is a non-denominational Christian church. Our desire is to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people who are not familiar with its message of
salvation. The teaching of the Bible, God’s Word, is a central activity of our church because we believe that the Bible brings real life to the human spirit. The vision of our church is to glorify Christ, our God and Savior, and to make His love known to others. We seek to practice and promote the Christian lifestyle within our sphere of influence.

Easter Sunday sunrise service - 7:00 AM
Call the church for location.
Easter Sunday - 10:30 AM and 6:00 PM

Holy Trinity Anglican Church
www.holytrinitymarlborough.org
508-481-8493
52 Church Street
Marlborough, MA 01752
French Hill Chapel
469 Lincoln Street
At Holy Trinity and French Hill Chapel, our goals are: to call all persons to repentance and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ; to proclaim, preach and teach, with authority and conviction, the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Gospel of life and salvation, leading persons into a living faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; to unite persons of faith to the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the saving waters of holy baptism and to continually nourish this new life through Spirit-filled ministry, Christian fellowship, preaching, teaching and worship, and above all, by partaking regularly of the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Lord’s Supper; and to enable persons, through Word and Sacrament, to become partakers in the very life of God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

52 Church Street:
Palm Sunday Sung Mass - 9:00 AM
Holy Thursday Sung Mass - 7:30 PM
Good Friday service - 7:30 PM
Easter Vigil solemn High Mass - 7:30 PM
Easter Sunday Sung Mass - 9:00 AM
469 Lincoln Street:
Holy Tuesday Sung Mass - 7:00 PM
Holy Wednesday Said Mass - 8:00 AM

Immaculate Conception Catholic Parish
www.icmarlboro.org
508-485-0016
11 Prospect Street
Marlborough, MA 01752
508-485-0016
Palm Sunday Weekend
Saturday - 4:30 PM
Sunday - 7:30 AM, 9:00 AM, 11:00 AM, 5:00 PM
Sunday Spanish Mass - 12:30 PM
Sunday Portuguese Mass - 7:00 PM
Holy Week
Monday and Tuesday - 7:30 AM
Wednesday - 7:30 AM and 9:00 AM
Holy Thursday
Morning prayer - 9:00 AM
Mass of the Lord’s Supper - 7:00 PM
Followed by Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament until midnight.
Good Friday
Spanish Stations of the Cross - 12:00 noon
Portuguese Stations of the Cross - 1:00 PM
English Stations of the Cross - 3:00 PM
Celebration of the Lord’s Passion - 7:00 PM
Holy Saturday
The Solemn Vigil of Easter - 7:30 PM
Easter Sunday - 7:30 AM, 9:00 AM, 11:00 AM
Easter Sunday Spanish Mass - 12:30 PM
Easter Sunday Brazilian Mass - 6:00 PM

Metro Church
Dynamic, Relevant, Uplifting Worship
www.metro-church.net
508-460-0771
401 Elm St.
Marlborough, MA 01752

The mission of Metro Church is to provide a welcoming faith community where every person may explore, discover and develop faith in Christ, and friendships with others; to exalt Christ in worship and in word; to inspire excellence in Christian service; to assist believers in discovering and developing their spiritual gifts; to make disciples through teaching and baptizing those who come to faith in Jesus; to engender friendships which strengthen the faith community; to provide cutting-edge ministry to every age demographic; to provide practical aid to the less fortunate; to resource the ministries of Metro Church to accomplish Christ’s mission in our region and in our world through missions.

Easter Sunday services - 9:22 AM and 11:22 AM
Free family picture and gift at both services.

New Hope Community Church
A Spirit filled, Bible centered church
www.nhccag.org
508-485-7023
204 Main St. (P.O. Box 204)
Marlborough, MA 01752

New Hope Community Church is part of the Assemblies of God fellowship. Our purpose as a church is found in Matthew 28:19-20, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Simply put, we are a community of Christ followers who love God, love people and make disciples.

Palm Sunday service - 10:00 AM
Good Friday service - 7:00 PM
Chosen People Ministries presents “Messiah In The Passover”
Easter Sunday service - 10:00 AM

Rice Memorial Baptist Church
A small church with a big God
www.ricememorialchurch.org
508-393-3483
85 Lincoln St.
Northborough, MA 01532

Rice Memorial Baptist Church joyfully praises, honors and gloriﬁes God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. As we build a foundation through God’s word, we nurture one another and love others through outreach and service to the community. We dedicate ourselves to the development of Christ-like character.

Good Friday service - 7:00 PM
Easter Sunday sunrise service - 6:00 AM
Easter Sunday service - 11:00 AM

Saints Anargyroi Greek Orthodox Church
www.stsanargyroi.org
508-485-2575
9 Central Street
Marlborough, MA 01752

Palm Sunday service - 10:00 AM
Holy Wednesday service - 6:30 PM
Good Friday service - 6:30 PM
Easter Vigil service - 11:00 AM
Easter Sunday service - 11:00 AM

St. Matthias Catholic Church
www.stmattpar.org
508-460-9255
409 Hemenway Street
Marlborough, MA 01752

Palm Sunday service - 10:00 AM
Holy Thursday Lord’s Supper - 7:00 PM
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament until 9:30 PM
Good Friday Passion of the Lord - 7:00 PM
Good Friday Stations of the Cross - 3:00 PM
Easter Vigil - 8:30 PM
Followed by refreshments in the parish hall
Easter Sunday Masses - 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM
Refreshments and Easter Egg Hunt after 9:00 AM service

St. Stephen Lutheran Church
www.saintstephenlutheran.com
508-485-9585
537 Bolton Street
Marlborough, MA 01752

St. Stephen Lutheran is a community of Jesus people who believe that God calls upon us to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God - to pray daily, to worship weekly, to study the bible together, to nurture friendships, to give generously, and to serve others in need.

Maundy Thursday - 7:00 PM
Good Friday - 7:00 PM
Easter Sunday 8:30 AM and 10:30 AM
Easter Sunday brunch - 9:30 AM
Join us in being safe in God's Love, shaped in God's Image, serving in God's mission

Weekly Worship:
Saturday Contemporary Mass - 5:00 PM
Sunday Traditional Eucharist - 7:45 AM
Renewal-Praise Eucharist - 10:00 AM

Easter Saturday
Egg Hunt - 4:30 PM
Communion Celebration - 5:00 PM
Bonfire/music for youth - 6:30 PM

Easter Sunday
Sunrise Service - 5:30 AM
Holy Eucharist - 7:45 AM
Festal Eucharist - 10:00 AM

508-393-3146 • www.churchofthenativity.org
45 Howard St., Northborough, MA 01532