

TOWER TOPICS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

First Baptist Church

NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK

IN THE MAY ISSUE:

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VOLUME 65

NUMBER 5

2013

First Baptist Church

554 Main Street

Corner of Main and Fourth

Niagara Falls, New York 14301-1584

May 2013

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>➤ The Rummage Sale is June 7 & 8. Have you cleaned out your closets?</p> <p>➤ The Annual Church Meeting is after service on May 26th. Every year we make the plea for everyone to come to Church and stay for the relatively short meeting. It really is one of the things that is important in the life of the Baptist Church. We have the privilege - and the responsibility - to decide things for ourselves. Read the article on page 11.</p>			<p>1</p> <p>12:15 Inasmuch lunch</p>  <p>May Day</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p> <p>10:00 AM Men's Coffee Time</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>5 SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER</p> <p>10:00 Pre-service Fellowship 11:00 Divine Worship with Holy Communion 5:00 L.I.F.E.</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p> <p>7:00 PM Trustees/ Diaconate Meeting</p>	<p>9</p> <p>ASCENSION OF THE LORD</p>	<p>10</p> <p>10:00 AM Men's Coffee Time</p>	<p>11</p>
<p>12 ASCENSION SUNDAY</p>  <p>10:00 Pre-service Fellowship 11:00 Divine Worship</p> <p>Mother's Day</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p> <p><i>Articles for the Annual Report are Due!</i></p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p> <p>10:00 AM Men's Coffee Time</p>	<p>18</p> <p>10:00 AM – 3:00 PM Architectural Tours</p>  <p>Armed Forces Day</p>
<p>19 PENTECOST</p> <p>10:00 Pre-service Fellowship 11:00 Divine Worship <i>Third Sunday Food Collection</i> 12:00 Noon – Architectural tours</p>	<p>20</p>  <p>Victoria Day</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p> <p>10:00 AM Men's Coffee Time</p>	<p>25</p>
<p>26 TRINITY SUNDAY</p> <p>10:00 Pre-service Fellowship 11:00 Divine Worship 12:15 ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING</p>	<p>27</p>  <p>Memorial Day</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p> <p>10:00 AM Men's Coffee Time</p> <p>VISITATION OF MARY TO ELIZABETH</p>	<p>The Visitation</p> 



MAY BIRTHDAYS

12	Toby Ordiway
13	Mary Metke
15	Janet Kundl
19	Jon Baxter
23	Hazel Baxter
29	Betty Einstein
30	Tyler Ordiway



PLEASE CONTINUE TO PRAY for Dominic Ligamarri, David Compton, Celia Krasinski, Neal Jacobs, Gisela Scott, Gladys Lewis, Robert Hogan, Dr. Gary Shull, Margaret Payne, Dawn (Schutz) Lynn, Mike Gunther, Tara Clifton, Bertha and Harold Bissell, our Church family, our Country and all those who serve our Country.



LOOKING AHEAD

May 1 Wed.

12:15 PM Inasmuch luncheon

May 5 Sun.

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

10:00 AM	Pre-service Fellowship
11:00 AM	Divine Worship - Holy Communion
	Mrs. Kathleen Ordiway, preaching
5:00 PM	L.I.F.E. "Flowers in May"

May 8 Wed.

7:00 PM Diaconate/Trustees Meeting

May 12 Sun.

ASCENSION SUNDAY

10:00 AM	Pre-service Fellowship
11:00 AM	Divine Worship
	Rev. Wesley R. Bourdette, preaching

May 15 Wed.

Articles for the Annual Report are Due!

May 18 Sat.

10:00 AM – 3:00 PM NYS Sacred Sites Conservancy. Historic architectural tours of church.

May 19 Sun.

PENTECOST

10:00 AM	Pre-service Fellowship
11:00 AM	Divine Worship
	Mrs. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching
	<i>Third Sunday Food Collection</i>
12:00 Noon – 2:00 PM	Historic Architectural tours of the church.

May 26 Sun.

TRINITY SUNDAY

10:00 AM	Pre-service Fellowship
11:00 AM	Divine Worship
	Rev. Wesley R. Bourdette, preaching

L. I. F. E.

Lively Interesting Fellowship for Everyone

Sunday, May 5, 2013
5:00 PM

“Flowers in May”

Pot Luck
Bring a Dish to Pass
Sign up in the Friendship Room

Do We Have your birthday?

If your birthday doesn't appear on our list, please call the office to let us know your special date so we can include it.

New in the Library

A wonderful new book has been placed in our church library, “When Bad Things Happen to Good People” by Harold S. Kushner. This volume is highly recommended by Pastor Wes. It is an inspirational best seller with over four million copies sold. Read what is said about this touching, heartwarming book for all those who must contend with suffering, and that, or course, is all of us.

“When Harold Kushner’s three-year old son was diagnosed with a degenerative disease that meant the boy would only live until his early teens, he was faced with one of life’s most difficult questions: Why, God? Years later, Rabbi Kushner wrote this straightforward, elegant contemplation of the doubts and fears that arise when tragedy strikes. Kushner shares his wisdom as a rabbi, a parent, a reader, and a human being. Often imitated by never superseded, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* is a classic that offers clear thinking and consolation in times of sorrow.”

Two copies of this book are on display on the library display shelves in the Friendship Room. If you would like to take a copy to read, please do so. Just remember to bring it back for someone else to read!

First Baptist has quite a nice library. It is fairly extensive and has books and materials covering a large variety of subjects. Everything is available for loan to members of our congregation. All you have to do is fill out a library loan card and drop it in the basket. (Remember to take the card out of the basket and toss it away when you bring the item back.) The library is open to suggestions in case there is something you'd like to see on our shelves.





"Mission Rejected" or United Mission?

Rev. Dr. Ron Vallet

Ambassador for American Baptist United Mission

February 2013

**When we are united in God's mission,
our United Mission will grow.**

In the fourth chapter of Luke, we read these words spoken by Jesus' on his return to his hometown of Nazareth. Verses 18-19 give us Jesus' words:

*'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'*

It seemed to some that the unfolding of the hopes of centuries was at hand! The "days are coming" of the prophets was turning into "today." Jesus had proclaimed the "year of the Lord's favor" (v. 19). The next move was up to the people. How would they respond?

The immediate response of the "hometown folks" to Jesus' comment, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled," was very positive. They were amazed at his words and spoke well of him (v. 22).

However, there is an abrupt and grating turn at the end of verse 23. Dennis Bratcher described their final response that day as "murderous rage." Why did they change? Jesus understood the motivation of the people. They wanted to claim Jesus for themselves. They had heard about Jesus' earlier activity in Capernaum. It was as though they were saying: "Why didn't you start out doing those things here first, Jesus?"

There is little doubt about the people's response to Jesus' words in verse 23: "Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did in Capernaum." Their motive was laid bare! They wanted the future, but they wanted it for themselves!

They were willing to accept Jesus on their terms, for what he could do for them, for the personal advantage that they could claim and enjoy because he was one of them. Perhaps Jesus' words are a cautionary word to congregations today as well.

Even as they herded Jesus out of town to kill him, he slipped away. In Luke's Gospel, he never returned to Nazareth. The next passage tells of Jesus returning to Capernaum and again doing great and wonderful things there, and the reports of him circulated throughout the country.

The contrast could not be greater. Those who should have known Jesus' mission and participated in it, those who knew him best, could see no further than their own wants and their own interests. They drove him out because he had brought them face to face with their own narrowness and closed future. That day the people of Nazareth settled for a God just small enough to meet their own needs.

The shadow of the cross falls over this story. This would not be the last time that Jesus would take the good news to others who were not from his hometown. He would be rejected again.

This "hometown syndrome" affects who we perceive ourselves to be as God's people and how we carry out God's mission. We can become so preoccupied with our own corner of the world that God's work is trivialized into maintenance rather than mission. The mission has been passed on to his followers, to the church, to us. *It is not ours to reject*, because it is not our mission, but God's mission. It is not our church, but God's church. The whole world awaits.

A true embrace of mission—a true vision of the future—will call us out of our comfort zones and propel us into places that we would not choose. The journey may reach beyond our hometowns and our comfort zones.

Our gifts to United Mission are part of that journey. United Mission provides financial support for American Baptist International Ministries, the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, and to American Baptist Regions. Help all ABC ministries in the United States and around the globe come alive with your support of United Mission!

\$5,000 in OGHS Relief Funds for Thailand Refugee Camp Fire

\$5,000 in One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) funds have been made available through International Ministries (IM) for emergency needs at the Ban Mae Surin refugee camp on the Thailand-Myanmar (Burma) border after a fatal fire took 36 lives on March 22. The funds will be received and distributed by IM partner, The Border Consortium (TBC).

The victims reportedly included children, elderly and the disabled who were trapped in the fire. An additional 200 people sustained injuries, reported TBC. Over 400 houses were destroyed leaving 2,300 people homeless, while community buildings, schools, clinic and food warehouses were also destroyed, TBC continued.

The Royal Thai Government is leading a coordinated response to the disaster with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and non-governmental organizations,

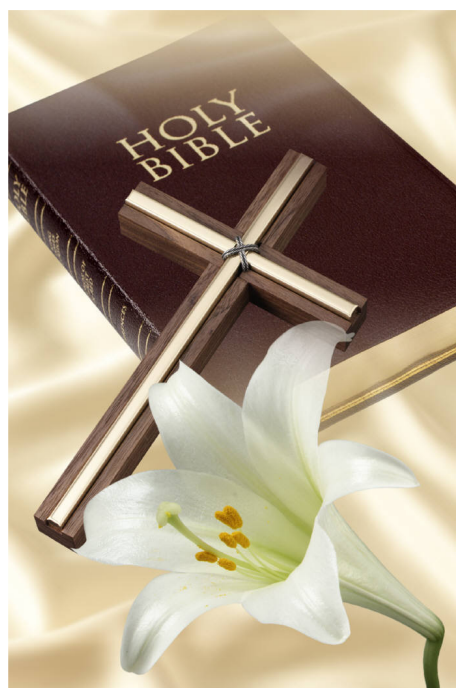
including TBC, providing needed assistance, reported TBC. “We at TBC will support this close community as it struggles to cope with such tremendous losses and grief, by ensuring basic food and shelter needs are met,” TBC added. “An important immediate concern is also to give due respect to families and appropriate religious rites for the victims of this tragedy.”

TBC reports that it will provide necessary assistance in the following areas:

FOOD: Emergency food will be provided for affected families staying in temporary sites or with relatives.

SHELTER: Areas suitable for temporary shelters have been identified. A major site clean-up is underway to remove debris and re-stabilize the burnt land.

FIELD COORDINATION: Coordination meeting was called by the Mae Hong Son Governor with participation by TBC and other agencies, camp commander, camp leaders and the Karenni Refugee Committee. TBC has been assigned as a focal point for shelter and food sectors.



INTRODUCING CHUCK COMPTON

IT'S WONDERFUL TO FIND OUT about the people that we worship with every Sunday – the things you would never know if you didn't come right out and ask! How do we keep these amazing stories to just a few paragraphs? We don't – it's just impossible to contain a personality in so few words!

Charles Lee Compton, has been married for twenty-one years to Moira. Chuck was blessed with a ready-made family! Moira brought with her three daughters: Alicia, Andrea and Elizabeth.

Born and raised in Niagara Falls, currently living on 81st Street in LaSalle, Chuck remembers his years living on 10th Street and then 6th Street, attending Fifth Street School, South Junior, Trott (where he studied electrical for three years) and then graduating from Niagara Falls High School in 1964 – especially enjoying American History. He has one full brother, a half-brother and a deceased half-sister.

One of Chuck's favorite Christmas memories would be when he and his brother waited anxiously upstairs, positive they heard Santa on the roof, running down in the morning to see the tree and their presents – but often disappointed when the expected “big gifts” weren't there! His parents would hide those gifts at his aunt's house every year – usually soldiers... eventually they caught on! One of Chuck's earliest memories is sitting at the kitchen table, eating soft boiled eggs with his grandpa when he was only three years old!

Some of our fondest memories are the pets we had as children. Skipper, Chuck's parakeet, would fly around the house, land on his outstretched finger and “shake hands.” When asked to “Stamp this, Skipper,” he'd bite the paper handed to him!

And what's a boy without his dog? Chuck often found stray dogs to bring home, but the owners were usually found, too... until it came to King, who lived with the Comptons for a year, until he mysteriously “ran away.”

Many hours were spent upstairs with his brother, playing with hundreds of toy soldiers. They would load little toy canons with needles, pull the switch and shoot the soldiers dead! Chuck has always had a thing for collecting! Hundreds of baseball cards, Davy Crocket cards, airplane cards,

Elvis Presley cards, marbles and records – thousands of those! In fact he still has those records and is considering doing a little research to sell some of them. For some reason, when Chuck came home from the army, he found that his mom had thrown all those cards away – can you imagine what they would be worth today if he still had them?

Chuck attended First Baptist as a child, left for a while to attend St. Peter's Episcopal Church, but now has happily returned to us! When he was younger, he remembers singing in the choir, practicing in the home across the parking lot. He also attended Boy Scouts at First Baptist, played baseball and basketball. In fact, Chuck says that he remembers spending almost all day Sundays at church. He kind of remembers Hazel from days gone by as well as Les Arthur, the baseball coach.

While growing up, Chuck worked at what is now the Rapids Theatre as an usher (the old Bellevue Theatre at the time), was a delivery truck driver for Gugino's Supermarket and then enlisted in the Army in 1965, where he did his basic training at Fort Dix, his officer training at Fort Knox and became a company commander at Camp Drum, in Watertown. Chuck left the Army as a First Lieutenant.

Chuck has also worked for Carborundum, retired from Exelon-ESK and is now a part time Park Ranger at the State Park.

When asked about the things he's done and continues to do, Chuck lights up. His favorite vacation memory is a trip to Acapulco he took with Moira and her whole family. They swam, ate, played volleyball and enjoyed a few drinks. He'd love to travel to Hawaii some day, visit the Alamo, Custer's battlefield, take the five grandkids somewhere special – doing anything besides sitting around watching television!

Chuck loves to walk, alone or with his Shih Tzu, Gizzy; listen to music - especially 50s and 60s classic rock; and collect sports memorabilia, including autographed baseballs and photographs.

So I thought I'd get down to some serious business, starting by asking Chuck about his favorite hymn. That's when even more interesting tidbits came out! Did you know that Chuck was an Elvis Presley impersonator? Moria even made him two suits. He sang songs including "Viva Las

Vegas", "Can't Help Falling in Love" and "It's Now or Never"... so who would be surprised to know that his favorite hymns are "How Great Thou Art" and "Amazing Grace" – Elvis' favorites, too! Chuck did a few shows and weddings, but just never got all the equipment he needed so, other than getting up at karaoke night, he hasn't been Elvis in a year or two.

Although Chuck hasn't had the opportunity to read through the whole bible, he recently enjoyed watching *The Bible* mini-series on TV and especially loves Scripture that tells of Jesus' Resurrection and the forgiveness that Jesus freely offers to all of us for our sins. His favorite Scripture is the 23rd Psalm.

For quite a while, Chuck was only seen on Christmas Eve at First Baptist, but he tells his friends that he believes that he was called back, in fact "sent back" for a reason! He's glad to be able fill some of the holes here at First Baptist.

Although Chuck would love to see young people active at our church – he would certainly be ready to step in to coach basketball - he remains active on the Grounds Committee, the Trustees, he has helped out as an usher, helps care for the boilers, he's served Communion and enjoys driving Hazel on her candy ingredient shopping, followed by helping to break up that yummy taste treat.

When asked where he sees himself in five years, Chuck first says "Hopefully still alive!" He says that he hopes Moira has retired by then so they can travel to some of the places they want to see. He looks forward to watching their grandchildren grow up. Their oldest is 12 and he would love to be there to see her get married.

With a little spare time, Chuck would sit back and reflect on his past, present and the future, especially remembering times with his parents. Chuck says, "I'd think about what I've done, both wrong and right; how I've helped people and what I can do with the rest of my life to help those less fortunate than me."

As his final words, Chuck told me of his days as a good partyer. That life is gone now – he only goes out occasionally. One Saturday, he was out with a group in Ellicottville. After having a few too many, Chuck turned to a friend and said, "I need to knock this off. I have grandkids I want to see grow up!" Wise words, wise decision – a better life to live, a legacy to create!

Your Roving Reporter, Kath

IM Missionaries Emerson and Ivy Wu Move Closer to Commissioning

Emerson and Ivy Wu, two of American Baptist International Ministries (IM) endorsed candidates, reached an important milestone on April 1 by being appointed for service as development workers in Macau, a special administrative region of China. The couple's home church is Karl Road Baptist in Columbus, OH.

The Wus will work in partnership with the Macau Bible Institute. They will assist in the training of Christian young workers of the Institute. In partnership with Evangelize China Fellowship International (ECF), they will assist the ministries of the Grace Community Chapel and Orphanage and youth outreach in Macau. They will also help to promote ECF and IM's work with relations in Mainland China.

The Wus were first endorsed by IM to form a Partnership Team (MPT). Assisted by their MPT and IM staff, the couple then began building a Partnership Network (MPN) to secure commitments of prayer and financial support from individuals and churches. Having built a network sufficient for an initial level of support, Emerson and Ivy moved from endorsement to development worker appointment.

Upon appointment, development workers become IM employees. This allows the Wus to complete cross-cultural orientation, security and other pre-field training to prepare them for international, cross-cultural ministry. Appointment also frees them to expand their MPN to secure the remaining personalized support needed to be commissioned by the IM Board for missionary service.

"There are lots of opportunities to share the gospel with people in Macau and with visitors who speak Mandarin. We know we may confront many uncomfortable zones such as cultural difference, casino environment, the language barrier and the possibility of rejection," described Ivy. Yet they are strengthened by the gospel. "Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith." (Hebrews 12:1-2)

When asked why they believe they have been called by God to this ministry, Ivy responded, "The Lord uses the hunger in my heart for His Word to feed others wherever there is spiritual hunger." Emerson added, "He keeps opening doors for us to serve the Chinese community. God's direction guides us to see His leading in being a part of His great commission. That is why we firmly step up to IM's mission."

"The American Baptist Churches of Ohio is blessed to recognize and support Emerson and Ivy for service in China under the auspices of IM," commented Dr. Lawrence O. Swain, ABC/Ohio Executive Minister. "The Wus are active members of the Karl Road Baptist Church in Columbus where their gifts are both recognized and used in the church's ministry. Emerson and Ivy have demonstrated faithfulness in their Christian life, and a clear sense of God's call and giftedness for missionary service. The Wus will become another mission couple that ABC/Ohio will be proud to call 'their own.' ABC/Ohio has a long supportive relationship with IM and a number of Ohio-based ABC missionaries who serve in many locations around the world," Dr. Swain added. "I am pleased to lend my blessing and support to the Wus as they develop their Partnership Team."

Individuals and churches may learn more about the Wus and their ministry in Macau, their journals and opportunities to participate in their ministry as part of their MPN on the IM website: www.internationalministries.org. Click on PEOPLE, then click on Wu.

American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (operating as International Ministries) began its pioneer mission work in 1814 in Burma and today works in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and the Americas serving more than 1,800 long-term and short-term missionaries in more than 70 countries. Its central mission is to help people come to faith in Jesus, grow in their relationship with God, and change their worlds through the power of the Spirit.

Celebrating 200 Years • 1814 - 2014

AND FROM THE MODERATOR...

ACCORDING TO OUR CHURCH BY-LAWS, our congregation needs to meet, receive and give reports, and vote on a slate of officers, trustees, and deacons once a year. This year we will meet Sunday, May 26. All committee chair persons should have their reports into the office by May 15.

The ABW (American Baptist Women) are collecting items for migrant kits. The list of items was in the bulletin, more are available and due in by May 2nd. Our contributions go to Church Women United and sent on to those in need.

Rummage is being collected for our Rummage and Soup Sale on June 7 & 8. Any clean, gently used item in working condition is accepted. Pick up is available by calling the church office or e-mailing me at dmflood@roadrunner.com.

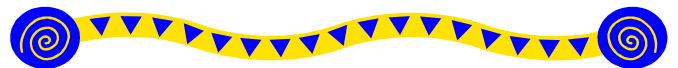
Camp Vick early bird registrations for the camping experience of your choice are May 15. Several camps fill up early causing campers to be closed out of their favorite sessions. Encourage your camper to choose now and call the First Baptist Church office for a "Campership". We subsidize 50% of the fee for church member's children and grandchildren, especially those attending our LIFE program. The office number is 282-4666.

On the first Sunday of April, we celebrated the infant dedication of baby Joseph Hoopsick III (Trey), child of new member Lydia and Joseph Hoopsick II, and grandson of Katona and Joseph Hoopsick I. Congratulations to the family and please note that child or infant dedication information is available at the office. We have Christian Education materials ready and waiting for members or new members at this time. The infant/young child room is being prepared in the balcony and is ready for immediate use. Sunday school could be around the corner for those community members who sign up for their children. Call the office for details.

Our mission for May is our church building fund. See Jim Flood's article regarding this four year project. We're moving on to East side of the

Camp Vick and Pathfinder Lodge

Our regional American Baptist Camps have released their 2013 schedule of activities and camp weeks. The schedules are listed on the bulletin board. Bear in mind that First Baptist Church provides one-half "Camperships" to anyone associated with our church who wants to go to one of these very worthwhile weeks. A \$25.00 discount is available for those who sign up by May 15. Many of us remember fondly our weeks at Church Camp (albeit quite a few years ago!). This is just another example of our mission commitment.



building for brick and mortar work and window restoration. Installing replacement windows is very expensive, so keeping them in good repair is important. Envelopes for contributions are on the piano and in pews. You may contribute by the month or all at one time.

The Building Fund brings me to the NYS Landmark Conservancy Open House which we will have on Saturday and Sunday, May 18 & 19. Look for further information on the church bulletin board and in the Sunday bulletins. We will need tour guides as well as informed individuals who can discuss our renovations and our history. There is a well written brochure with pictures to assist in the discussion. The church is a part of the Park Place Historic district and an historic landmark. The organ and windows are also of historic interest so sign up with Donna if you'd like to be a church ambassador.

Donna Flood



CWS Blankets+ Update

January 2013

Your gifts to the CWS Blankets+ Program are making a difference for neighbors in need, near and far!

Hurricane Sandy – Hurricane Sandy severely hit Haiti and Cuba in late October 2012. Dozens were killed in the Caribbean by the storm. In Cuba, more than 188,000 homes were damaged and the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba was particularly devastated.

In **Haiti**, Sandy brought devastating flooding, including northwest Haiti, where CWS has supported the work of agricultural cooperatives. The hurricane damaged and blocked infrastructure and roads, damaged or destroyed homes, and caused loss of livestock and severe damage to agricultural fields.

CWS is supporting initial efforts with \$50,000, which will focus on restoring food security efforts in the co-ops.

In **Cuba**, CWS is supporting \$50,000 of an ACT Alliance appeal, with support going to assist with emergency family food packages and water provision as part of initial recovery efforts. Our long-time partner, the Cuban Council of Churches, has also identified shelter construction as a key priority. The CWS-supported response includes emergency relief to 210 families initially with food and water, and then supporting 1,000 families with psycho-social activities, shelter (reconstruction) and livelihood restoration.

Food security work will include supporting 210 families from the community of Rancho Cruz, with food distribution and then a second phase of restoring livelihoods by providing agricultural tools and seeds. Also, an irrigation system will be restored on 10 acres of land and short-cycle crops will be planted.

CWS-supported work will also include selecting 145 houses in Rancho Cruz to be reinforced with steel columns embedded in concrete bases, girders

and a covering of zinc aluminum. In the community of Rondon, the project will provide for installation of a proper roof for 204 houses. The project will be implemented by a mutually assisted, constructive process. Each working group will have masons, mechanics, welders and electricians.

CWS has also provided the Cuban Council of Churches with a shipment of material goods that was in process before the hurricane. The shipment includes 3,300 CWS Blankets; 9,000 CWS Hygiene Kits; 1,125 Baby Care Kits; and 1,500 School Kits.

In the **U.S.**, Hurricane Sandy made landfall on Oct. 29, 2012, in New Jersey and left a trail of

destruction, floods, and power outages for millions of people across the northeast United States, as it did earlier in the Caribbean.

CWS provided material resources, including 11,400 CWS Blankets; 18,420 Hygiene kits; 16,440 School kits; 11,415 Baby Care kits and 2,013 Emergency Cleanup Buckets to local agencies in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

CWS Disaster Response Specialists continue working with state, regional and local organizations, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, our member denominations and other agencies to determine where further assistance is needed.



Pre-positioned CWS Blankets were also distributed in San Juan de la Maguana, Dominican Republic, following Hurricane Sandy. Photo: CWS

Your gifts and offerings for the Blankets+ Program of Church World Service are urgently needed. Contributions may be sent through your church or directly to Church World Service, P.O. Box 968, Elkhart, IN 46515. Credit card contributions may be made by calling-800-297-1516 or at www.cwsglobal.org/blanketsplus. To SUBSCRIBE or UNSUBSCRIBE, please register at www.cwsglobal.org and indicate your email preferences.

The ANNUAL Meeting Or Why Do I Need To Sit Through That?

AS AMERICAN BAPTISTS we are unique in many ways. One of the most important ways is that we operate on the “Congregational System” of church government. Without getting into a lengthy discussion of other forms of church governance, suffice it to say that “we are the captains of our ship.” There is no diocese, conference, synod, or presbytery that can tell us what to do, tell us to close the church, or tell us what to think. We have recently seen here in Niagara Falls the closing or merger of several churches against the will of the congregations. This can only happen to us if we do it to ourselves.

In many churches the congregation is supposed to say a creed every Sunday, many times written fifteen centuries ago or more, whether they believe it or not. We are a non-creedal church and do not pretend to expect people to subscribe to such things. We do expect, however, that people will take seriously the call of our Lord and learn as much as we can about Him and His Church.

So, what’s all that got to do with an Annual Meeting? Because we believe as we do and subscribe to our form of church governance, it’s up to all of us to take an active part in the activities and the running of the temporal church. No one else is going to do it for us. It is *our* church. Let’s take an interest, vote for our leaders, and as our commitment when joining the church says, support it with our prayers, presence and praise.



ABC/NYS Moves Forward

THE SEARCH COMMITTEE seeking an Associate Executive Minister for the ABC/NYS is delighted to announce that the position has been offered to Rev. Jerrod Hugenot, and he has accepted. Jerrod wrote in his acceptance letter:

“Regional ministry is a vital part of the American Baptist tradition. Such work is fundamentally about equipping the saints in local congregations, providing support and encouragement to pastors and lay leaders and working together to navigate changing contexts for our ministry and mission. I look forward to collaborative work with Dr. Kelsey, the Board of Mission, the Regional Enhancement Team, and each of the 300+ local churches within the ABC/NYS family.”

Jim Kelsey writes of Jerrod: “He brings a deep appreciation and knowledge of our Baptist distinctives and history and belief. His expertise will help our churches sharpen their sense of identity and clarify their place and purpose in their communities.”

A lifelong American Baptist, the Rev. Jerrod H. Hugenot comes to ABC/NYS Regional staff with pastoral experience in congregations in rural Kansas, metro Kansas City and most recently as the Coordinating Minister of the First Baptist Church of Bennington, Vermont (2006-2013).

Ordained in 2004 to ABC ministry, Rev. Hugenot brings his pastoral experience with missional church development, small church ministry, and ecumenical and interfaith work.

During his Bennington pastorate, Hugenot offered leadership in fostering missional thinking and collaborative action among his congregants and in his efforts within the Bennington area interfaith movement, particularly in the area of basic human needs initiatives.

Denominationally, Hugenot has board experience with the ABC General Board (2002-07), including the AB Home Mission Societies, the Committee on Christian Unity, and the former Board of Educational Ministries.

Presently, he serves on the Christian Ethics

Commission of the Baptist World Alliance (2011-15). His writings and book reviews appear in various Baptist-related journals as well as *Sharing the Practice*, the journal of the Academy of Parish Clergy.

Jerrod received a B.A. in Religious Studies from Ottawa University (Kansas) and a M.Div. and a M.A. from Central Baptist Theological Seminary (Kansas). He did a semester of study at Spurgeon's College, London (UK).

Rev. Huguenot will reside in the Albany area with his wife, Kerry Shermer, and their peaceable (!) kingdom of three cats (Biblia, Paige and Codex) and a refined elder beagle mix (Gentil). He will begin work in June.

Haiti MISSION Trip: March 2013

In March 2013, twelve individuals headed to Grand Goave, Haiti, to work with Conscience International in rebuilding homes using rubble left from the 2010 Earthquake. Some of the responses from the team were:

"One of the most special moments for [some of the returnees] was the opportunity to visit our October 2011 house and meet the mother and her 2 young children who live there now, be invited in to see the inside of the home and pray with her."

"This trip was the most incredible experience of my life. I learned the meaning of love and service, saw God's face everywhere I looked, and deepened my awareness of God's guidance in my life. I found Haiti to be a beautiful and resilient place."

Last Article, but certainly Not the Least...THE BUILDING FUND

IT'S GETTING WARMER, little bit by little bit, and so the Trustees will be turning their attention to the east side (the porch side) of the church. We've made wonderful progress in the last two years, having the north side and the south side and tower of the church pointed and repaired as necessary. Now it is time for the east side. View the pictures on the piano in the Friendship Room to see what work has been done. On the east side we have pointing to do and window painting. As the weather gets nicer we'll be able to schedule work by the same company that has been doing the work in the past, Ajax-Smith of Tonawanda, NY. They are specialists in the field of building restoration, and were the ones who found the Roman brick for the replacements in the tower.

That is why the Building Fund envelope is included in this issue of Tower Topics. There are also new smaller Building Fund envelopes newly placed in the pew card holders. Whatever you can do to help out is most sincerely appreciated. We have a real legacy and a responsibility with our historic architecturally significant worship space. Everyone without exception who visits our church comments on the beauty of the architecture and also how well we maintain and care for it.

On May 18th and 19th, in conjunction with the New York State Sacred Sites Conservancy, we will be holding an open house for interested parties to view our church inside and out. As the "anchor" of the southwest corner of the Park Place Historic District we are doing our part for the community's historic preservation. We can be justly proud of our building and commitment to it. A HUGE thank you to all!

