

## My Journey with Jesus by Janice Baillie

I came to know Jesus right here in First Presbyterian Church as it has been my church home my entire life. Though I officially became a member in 1989, I've attended off and on since I was a very little girl. My parents were "two-fers", attending church on Christmas and Easter, and my earliest church memories were wearing a new holiday dress each time and falling asleep in the pew to Dr. Molyneaux's sermons. My mom's sister, my Aunt Marilyn Freeman, was a long time Chancel Choir member and she used to pick me up and bring me to Sunday school occasionally. I remember feeling a bit intimidated in Sunday school as I wasn't a regular attendee and therefore didn't know much about what was going on from week to week, but I received my 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Bible in October of 1968 and still have it.

I recall attending Pipe in junior high school once in a while with friends whose mothers would take turns driving us. I felt a continual pull to God's house and drove myself to church services in high school after getting my driver's license. After graduation, I pulled away from the church and stayed away during my 20s until the birth of my son, Daniel, at the age of 29. I wanted to raise my child in the church so Daniel James Clifford was baptized in August of 1989, and (finally!) his mom soon after in October. We are truly blessed to have such a wonderful children's program at First Pres., and Daniel was a full time participant, singing in the school of choirs, helping out in the Toddler Room (when he should have been in Sunday school!), performing solos in several musical programs and singing in the Praise Band in junior high.

As is often the case with our faith journeys, the separation of my marriage in 1997 was the *real* beginning of my relationship with the Lord. On my own for the first time with a small child to support, I remember going to my knees each night and telling God I had no where else to go but into His arms. As He is an ever faithful and loving Father, my dependence on Him was rewarded with blessings, strength and a determination to try my marriage again. After 11 long months, my husband and I reconciled and stayed married for another 5 years. Though we had tried again and I was convinced God wanted me to stay married, it was not to be. We separated again in March of 2003, and the divorce was final later that year. We parted amicably and shared custody of our son.

In 1999, I joined my first Bible study class, *Disciple Bible Study*, which was a 9 month commitment. Might as well jump right in the deep end! Reading over 70% of the Bible, I couldn't believe how much I learned and grew in the Lord. Jesus became not only a Savior, but a wonderful friend. I knew then that it was He who had

walked beside me through all of the difficulties and held my hand when I felt as if there were no one else around. Attending regular Bible study classes for the last 5 years has helped my faith increase and allowed me to get to know many wonderful ladies from within our church and several who attend other churches in the Flint area.

In 2004, I discovered the next thing our amazing God had in store for me when I met my husband Stephen. After we began dating, we were amazed at the coincidences in our lives as he had also grown up in First Pres., we had lived right around the corner from each other, and Steve had graduated with my older brother. In fact, our mothers were Cub Scout den mothers together back in the late 60s, and he and my brother were in the same pack! In July 2005, we were married at First Pres. and began a very bitter-sweet time in our marriage.

While we were so happy about our new life together, both of our children were experiencing extremely challenging and difficult periods in their lives. Just one month after our wedding, Steve's daughter, Sarah, had her jaw broken by the young man she had been dating for over 3 years. It was heart-breaking and difficult to watch her deal with the pain, both physical and emotional and the ensuing legal battles. Steve promised her that God was watching over her, He is involved, and if she would just trust in the Lord, He would show her the plan He had for her was better than what she had imagined for herself. After just 3 short years, (I can't believe how the time has flown!) she is engaged to Derek, a wonderful young man, and they will be married in our church in July 2010.

At almost exactly the same time, Daniel surprised us with a very negative reaction to our marriage and began a truly challenging rebellious period which I was not sure, at times, I would survive. There were many issues, but the worst was when he ran away for 3 days and no one knew where he was. The longest 3 days of my life, I found myself not just on my knees but flat on my face before God, again telling Him how helpless I was. This time, though, God had given me Stephen to support me, and he shared with me the same thing he did Sarah: God is involved in all

walked beside me through all of the difficulties and held my hand when I felt as if there were no one else around. Attending regular Bible study classes for the last 5 years has helped my faith increase and allowed me to get to know many wonderful ladies from within our church and several who attend other churches in the Flint area.

*"I knew then that it was He who had walked beside me through all of the difficulties and held my hand when I felt as if there were no one else around."*

*Continued on next page*

we do and I needed to trust Him; He would watch over Daniel and use this whole situation to teach *all* of us something. When Daniel came back, I then had to learn to accept the fact my son no longer wanted to live in the same house with me (us), and the next 15 months or so would be painful and difficult in ways I could not have imagined, even after going through my separation and divorce. Always encouraged by Steve and sustained by the Holy Spirit, at some point I finally came to the realization that the more I trusted God, the more He went out of His way, it seemed, to prove to me that I could!! We still have struggles just like any other family, but we are finally just that - a family.

Joshua 24:15 says, "**Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord**". What a privilege that we can! I strongly recommend it and promise you that God is involved in whatever we do. Let Him show you how if you allow Him to lead you, it's very likely His plans for you are better than you could ever have imagined.

.....

### God's Time – A Lenten Concert March 15th, 4:00pm

Concert Features Adults, Youth and Children

Two works of great beauty and meaning will be presented by our Chancel, Chapel and Cantus Choirs on Sunday, **March 15th at 4:00pm**. Following a chamber ensemble performance of Bach's Cantata 106, the combined choirs, assisted by guest soloists and members of the FPC Festival Orchestra, will present John Rutter's Mass of the Children. Both works arise from the Christian observance of death. Bach contrasts a dour view of death with the soul's joy at being reunited with God. John Rutter wrote Mass of the Children following the untimely death of his young son.

Rutter interweaves children's poetry with texts taken from the Christian liturgy. The result is a simple yet profoundly moving work of faith and reassurance. A printed children's program will be available for the Bach event.

All children are invited to participate in the Mass of the Children's concluding piece. You will be strongly engaged and deeply moved by both works. This is a concert with appeal for the whole family.

.....

**Check out the *Grapevine* on the church website at [www.fpcf.org](http://www.fpcf.org) under the Women's Ministry link. We would love to hear from you in the comment section!**



## A Recipe For: Peanut Butter Cake



Cake:

- ◆ 1 box yellow cake mix (w/pudding)
- ◆ ½ cup creamy peanut butter

Frosting:

- ◆ ¾ cup chocolate syrup
- ◆ 8 ounces semisweet baking chocolate
- ◆ 2 cups creamy peanut butter
- ◆ 1 cup powdered sugar
- ◆ ¼ cup milk

Garnish:

- ◆ Chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350. Grease and flour two 9-inch cake pans with 1 3/4 inch high sides. Prepare cake according to package directions, beating in ½ cup peanut butter. Divide between pans. Bake until toothpick inserted into centers comes clean (20 minutes). Cool completely.

Combine syrup and semisweet chocolate. Stir constantly over low heat until chocolate is melted and smooth. In large bowl, stir chocolate mixture, peanut butter, sugar and milk until smooth. Spread top of first layer with 1 ½ cups icing. Continue to ice remainder and garnish with chopped peanuts.

Thank you to Luz Ytterock for this scrumptious recipe!

.....

### New Opportunity May 2009

Our church has so many opportunities to learn and grow together as a community of faith. Sometimes these opportunities are in conflict with each other. Women's Ministry has decided not to coordinate the registration for the Winsome Women Retreat this year. Instead we would like to encourage you to be a part of the Jubilate celebration the week of May 10. This will be a wonderful time for gathering as a whole church for a variety of opportunities. One of the highlights of the week will be on Wednesday, May 13. The Jane Faner Sweets Foundation will be sponsoring Carol Kent, a popular international public speaker. Carol has a unique faith story to share with all of us. Her testimony will challenge and encourage you in your own journey of faith.



# Spiritual Enrichment Opportunities

When we study the Bible we are making ourselves available to God. As we make ourselves available we gain understanding. As we gain understanding we begin to ask questions. We begin to ask how can I obey. What can I do? Where can I go? When we read God's Word we discover the joy and happiness God has promised. Join one of our spring studies and continue your journey with God. Along the way celebrate the journey with some wonderful women!

*But the truly happy people are those who carefully study God's perfect law that makes people free, and they continue to study it. They do not forget what they heard, but they obey what God's teaching says. Those who do this will be made happy.* James 1:25

**Nehemiah: Overcoming Challenges**  
**Monday evenings at 7:00 pm**  
**Begins March 30 in Room 129**  
**Facilitated by Peggy Anderson**

**Thursday mornings at 9:15 am**  
**Begins April 2 in Room 211**  
**Facilitated by Kim Skaff**  
**Child care provided**

We all have challenges in our lives. None of us go through life without facing struggle, pain and heartache. The book of Nehemiah is a case study in overcoming life's challenges. Nehemiah faced many difficulties in his life and he faced them with prayer and action. One by one he faced his tough circumstances and overcame them. He held the hand of God in every detail and became a man of prayer, courage, ingenuity and perseverance. Join us as we study Nehemiah's story and discover the hope and victory that comes when we walk in God's wisdom through the challenges of life.

**Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World**  
**By Joanna Weaver**  
**Wednesday mornings at 10:30 am**  
**Begins March 25 in Room 129**  
**Facilitated by Kaye Hollitt and Carol Hostetler**  
**Child care provided**

Our life as a woman today is not that different from that of Mary and Martha in the New Testament. Like Mary we

long to sit at the Lord's feet but our busy world won't leave us alone. Like Martha, we love Jesus and want to serve him but struggle with weariness, resentment, and feelings of inadequacy. Jesus comes into the midst of our busy life and invites us to choose "the better part," a joyful life of intimacy with him that flows naturally into loving service. Join this study and draw closer to our Lord, deepening your devotion, strengthening your service, and doing both with less stress and greater joy.

**Ruth: Trusting That God Will Provide**  
**Thursday mornings at 9:45 am**  
**Begins May 7 in Room 207**  
**(This class will not meet during the month of April)**  
**Facilitated by Corinne Kage**  
**Child care provided**

The story of Ruth is an illustration of trusting the Lord through faith and action in difficult times. Ruth left her homeland for a strange country because she believed God and wanted to live with his people. She learned to find joy and celebrate life as God provided for her physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Join this study and you'll discover God is doing the same for you. In the midst of the challenges of your life God provides for your every need. There is joy and hope in that for each of us.



## SpringHill Women's Retreat May 1 to 3

SpringHill Women's Retreat is a wonderful opportunity for a life-affirming, faith-renewing time to feed your body and soul. SpringHill does everything with excellence. It provides a beautiful setting for you to spend time being rejuvenated through encouraging messages, uplifting music, challenging and practical workshops, thrilling activities and meaningful connection with other women. You will also have some quiet time for personal reflection. Consider gathering some friends together and sharing this weekend of spiritual refreshment and connect with each other on a deeper level.

# The Grapevine

*Women Reaching Women*

*John 15:5: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit because apart from me you can do nothing."*

*Hello Ladies,*

We all know life can be challenging and for some the challenges are many. The question is not if we will have challenges, but how we will respond to them. The prophet Habakkuk turned to God for the answers to difficult questions. He cried out and he waited for God to respond. God answered and Habakkuk had a new understanding of God's power and love. In the final chapter of the book of Habakkuk he rejoices with a prayer of joy in response to who God is and what he will do.

*Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength, he enables me to go on the heights.*

**Habakkuk 3:17-19**

Habakkuk describes a time when everything is lost, where all income is gone; yet he rejoices. He rejoices that God is good. He rejoices that God is in control and He knows what He is doing. Our strength is in the Lord and He will enable us to climb the heights. When nothing makes sense and troubles seem more than we can bear, remember that God gives us strength. When we take our eyes off our difficulties and look to God, there is hope and joy.

This issue of the *Grapevine* offers blessings and opportunities. Janice Baillie shares her story of God's faithfulness and love during the challenges of her life. She rejoices at God's involvement in her whole life and shares the hope and joy she experienced when she allowed God to lead her. Take time to read her story. Our small group Bible studies will each begin a new study this spring. Look over what is being offered, pray for God's direction and join one of these groups. You will be blessed as you read and study God's word with some wonderful women! SpringHill Camps is offering a Women's Retreat in May. SpringHill is a beautiful place to spend a spring weekend. Consider joining others for a time of spiritual refreshment and relaxation.

Ash Wednesday was February 25 and we began our Lenten journey. The Easter cycle begins with ashes as we follow Christ's walk to the cross. The preparation for Lent, the truth of the Resurrection and the coming of the Spirit acted out in our lives brings the fire. During our Jubilate Festival Week in May we will be celebrating the transformation of *Ashes to Fire*. Watch for details in the coming weeks.

There are many opportunities to worship through music and Word during the Lenten season, along with many ways to study and serve. I encourage each of you to seek ways to enrich your life in Christ as we celebrate the journey to the cross and the resurrection.

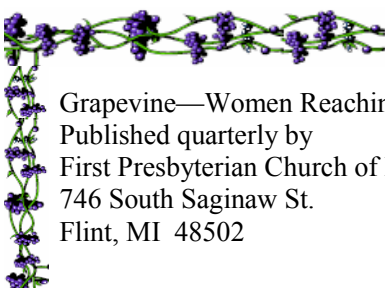
Celebrating Together,

*Kim Skaff*

## Jubilate Festival Week May 10-17

**Ashes to Fire** and **Faith in Flint** will be the emphasis of our Jubilate Festival Week this year. Each of the ministries of the church will participate in rejuvenating ministries and starting new ones. As a community of faith we will not be defined by economic downturn or the world. We will be defined as children of God, called to follow Christ, bringing transformation to our world!

Faith in Flint will be the acting out of our faith in the community. During April, May and June we are committing 5,000 hours of volunteer work to the greater community of Flint. Each week we will acknowledge members in worship and on the website who are volunteering in our community bringing the transformation of Jesus. You will be hearing of ways you can volunteer. On the Saturday before Pentecost, May 30, we will send out the whole church to volunteer in the community and return for a potluck on the grounds of the church. The next day, Pentecost, we will truly proclaim our ashes have been turned into fire!



Grapevine—Women Reaching Women  
Published quarterly by  
First Presbyterian Church of Flint  
746 South Saginaw St.  
Flint, MI 48502

Non Profit Organization  
US Postage Paid  
Flint, Michigan  
Permit No. 272