

# ...from the Heart

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## Giving it Up for Lent

When I was growing up, Lent was about giving something up. For me it was usually chocolate... that was no problem for me because mom didn't let us have chocolate, and she rarely had any chocolate around the house; so much for sacrifice.

It has been our custom at the Patchogue Church of the Nazarene to call for a fast during the forty days of Lent. Each week we suggest and encourage the congregation to fast or give up, for example, one of the following: the media (TV, CD's, movies, Facebook ... you get the idea); or unnecessary spending; or food. It is certainly not mandatory to participate, but doing so can be a very beneficial thing for us.

In Matthew 6:16 Jesus didn't say if you fast but, "When you fast." Fasting was something He expected us to do. Jesus knows that there are benefits to fasting; it helps us to gain spiritual strength, like He did when He fasted in the wilderness. Fasting helps reveal hidden things about us for future rehabilitation; some fast when they need deliverance because they are under attack. Fasting also helps us receive revelation from God, and it's a way to humble ourselves before God.

But what if we took the idea of fasting one step further and thought about things that God wants us to give up, not just for forty days, but forever.



### Giving Up Control

To seek God's will for our lives, rather than calling all the shots ourselves.

### Giving Up Expectations

We just don't know what the future holds, but we can trust that God will be with us through whatever circumstances we face. God will work with us, for us, and in us for what is best, even in the most hopeless places.

### Giving Up Superiority

God wants us to give up our judgmental attitudes.

### Giving Up Enemies

Jesus wants us to follow His example of loving our enemies.

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*Continued from front cover*

### **Giving Up Our Lives**

Jesus tells us that those who try to keep their lives will die, but those who give up their lives for others will live.

### **Giving Up Popularity**

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the people shouted, "Hosanna!" They were hailing Him as their king. Just a few days later, they were calling for His death by crucifixion. Popularity is fleeting, and if we put our faith in it, we will be disappointed. Instead, God calls us to put our faith in Him and His love and grace- something that will never go away, and will sustain us through the times when others have abandoned us.

### **Giving Up Death**

The Resurrection of Jesus shows us that Death does not have the last word. God has the last word, and that word is Life. Suffering and Death end, but God's Kingdom lasts forever.

Let's give up more than chocolate this year.

And that's...

F.T.H.  
Pastor Jerry



### ***"...From the Heart"***

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### **Stay Connected to Your**

### **Forever Family!**

Pastor Jerry's Good Morning message includes updates and announcements regarding church activities, prayer requests, a devotional, jokes (of course 😊) quotes, trivia, news, and so much more! To begin receiving "Good Morning", send an email address to: [pastor.jerry@verizon.net](mailto:pastor.jerry@verizon.net) to be added to the distribution list.

Check out our website at [www.patchnaz.net](http://www.patchnaz.net) for sermons, contact information, Bible studies, and so much more!!

# Sympathy and Prayers

Bonnie Holland passed suddenly on December 13. Bonnie was a member of our church since 1979 (35 years). She touched many lives and influenced many in their spiritual growth. She was a woman of faith who loved her Lord. She will be greatly missed.



George Brown Sr. went to be with his Lord on December 18. George was 92 years old. George served in the U.S. Navy during WWII. He retired from the Suffolk County Police department in 1972 as a Lieutenant. After that he was a security guard at Brookhaven Memorial Hospital. He has been a member of our church for 56 years (since 1958). However he was really a lifelong member having attended the church since he was a child. He served our church faithfully as treasurer, a church board member, and in many other church activities. He even helped in the actual building of our current church building (1961 until completion in 1963). George and his wife,

Betty hosted our Senior adult small group in their home. They are wonderful people. They moved to Pennsylvania a few years ago (but George remained a faithful NY Met fan). George is greatly missed.

## Spring Events Calendar

Communion served the first Sunday of every month



- 1** 10am Jews for Jesus presents "Christ in the Passover"
- 5** 7pm CTMB meeting (HPYC Building)
- 7** CLOCKS GO AHEAD BEFORE BED!
- 12** 7 pm Church Board Meeting (HPYC Building)
- 13** 8pm Kairos Young Adult (18-40 year old) Bible Study (HPYC building– every Friday except the first Friday of the month)
- 14** 8am Special Men's Breakfast with guest speaker Pastor Larry Mancini, "Mission to Haiti" (note March Men's breakfast changed from March 7<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>)
- 29** 10am Palm Sunday Service



- 3** 7pm Good Friday Service
- 5** 8:45am Easter Sunday Breakfast  
10am Easter Sunday Service
- 26** 10am George Bundt Bridges Ministry



- 7-9** District Assembly in New Jersey
- 25** Memorial Day

# MISSIONS UPDATE

An update on the church builds in Ambato. As you remember, I went to Ecuador in October for a mission trip. I had left off last month, telling you that the construction process had come to a halt. The city had shut down construction at the site three days after our team left. I asked you to pray for the Ambato Church, that the issues are resolved and building can be resumed. I received an



We are Chris and Anndee Stringer. Chris is the Short Term Missions Manager and Anndee is the Short Term Missions Communications Coordinator. We are also the Cluster Coordinators for the Ambato Church Planting Team.

## Ambato Church Build: Update - February 2015

I'm so sorry that it's been so long since our prayer request. This is one of those situations where I think, if I just wait another few day, we'll have good news to share. So, I waited too long to update you.

As of today, we are still waiting on a decision from the city. The mayor referred our case back to the system and we had to begin again with the appeal process.

Please continue praying with us for the following:

- \* that we would find a new architect with the experience necessary to guide Pastor Lenilde and the District Superintendent through this process.

- \* that the family of believers at La Puerta Abierta in Ambato would have a permanent home soon.

- \* for the extra costs incurred by the Pastor and church each month that the new church building isn't completed. (The church plans include a pastoral apartment.)

Last month I also spoke to you about the Nazarene Missions International celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and they are asking the local churches to support two important projects. The Children with Disabilities in Guatemala, and the Caribbean Pastors Support. NMI asked for a contribution for \$100 a month from each church, monthly. Well, good news, last month – thanks to your generous heart, we collected enough for three months contributions. So we will not be taking an offering this month for these two worthwhile missionary projects. I would like to encourage our little children, our teens, our adults, and our seniors to continue their weekly contributions for our next collection which will be in April.

Lastly, the first Sunday of Lent, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, is Freedom Sunday.

Modern slavery is real. There are more people living in bondage today than at any other time in history – children, women, and men who have been forced into labor or prostitution through human trafficking. As the church, we affirm that we are called to embody a hopeful alternative to this oppression.

Please go to the website [NCM.org/FreedomSunday](http://NCM.org/FreedomSunday) to learn more and to join in support of church led ministries designed to prevent human trafficking and to minister to survivors of trafficking.

In His Service,

Barbara Brennan

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*Welcome Little Ones!*

*Jubilee Grace – November 18, 2014*



*(Barbara Brennan's new grand-daughter)*

*Evie Jean Carpenter – January 5, 2015*

*Dylan James Hearn – January 17, 2015*

*(PJ's new grand-nephew)*

## BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

The main building in our church complex dates back to circa 1962. In 2013 we completed the conversion of old office space into three new partitions: sanctuary overflow, crying room, and usher work area/ mailroom. But our sanctuary is showing its age, having received no major improvements since the late 1980's. Amazing how time flies by, isn't it?

God willing, we intend to implement a project called *Operation Face Lift*, sometime this spring. Committee members will gather information and present options to refurbish the sanctuary and entry including estimates for: new seating, floors, and painting. The Committee will report progress to the Church Board, who will in turn present a goal and plan to the church body. I encourage you to begin praying for God's guidance and your involvement in this undertaking.



There are many areas in our church complex that are crying out for attention: restrooms, classrooms, and kitchen areas in the main building and office complex. All of these need serious consideration for refurbishment as well. But all this happens through your faithfulness in tithing and sacrificial giving. *<sup>38</sup> Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.” Luke 6: 38 NLT*

Replacement of stolen Air Conditioning units will shortly be underway, once the weather becomes more cooperative. If you have questions, suggestions, or a willingness to help in the matters of Buildings and Grounds, feel free to contact me.

Serving Him Together,

*John Mercurio*

(B & G Director)

## WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Time keeps moving forward, and here it is, time for our spring Newsletter. I think we all agree that spring will be quite welcome after this cold, snowy winter.

Our Tuesday night In-Touch group has had to cancel several times due to the freezing weather. We finished with the book we were reading entitled Choose Joy, which we all found to be a great encouragement. During Lent we will be focusing on the amazing love of Christ and the sacrifice He made for us in going to the Cross. We are considering a few different books to study after Easter. A good portion of our time on Tuesday nights is lifting up the prayer requests of our families, friends and congregation. We count it a privilege to intercede for the many needs spoken of during that time. We are hoping to have another Saturday Women's Event in late April. Right now it is in the planning stage, so no details are available. As soon as a date is finalized, we will start getting the information out to our ladies. Please pray for guidance as plans are being made.

Several of our ladies went to the breakfast on February 14 hosted by Lighthouse Mission. We were very blessed as we dined on a lovely breakfast and were reminded of how much our Savior loves us. It was nice meeting women from many different congregations who share our love for Jesus. They will be having a women's fellowship on Saturday, March 14 from 10:15 – 11:30am. All ladies are welcome. We hope to have a brunch in our fellowship hall at the end of March as well.

As we are inundated with the tragic happenings around our world, there is only one place that we can look and that is UP toward our heavenly Father. I pray that we will all take Pastor Jerry's challenge of making this Lenten season a time when we draw closer to Jesus through prayer, Bible reading and time spent in His presence, and that it will become a lasting part of our lives.

Be blessed and be a blessing as you seek and serve the Lord.

In His Service,

*Mary Ann*

### *Weekly Calendar of Events*

Every other **Monday** (Beginning March 2) M.E.N. (Men's Encouragement Network), 7pm

**Tuesdays** Ladies In-touch at Mary Ann Malcolm's home, 7pm

**Wednesdays** East End Home Fellowship at the Mercurio's home, 7pm

**Third Thursday** of the month Sewing Circle (65 Franklin St. building), 7pm

**First Friday** of the month Prayer meeting (sanctuary)

**First Saturday** of the month Men's Breakfast, 8am **and** Good News Bowlers (Bowl Long Island at Patchogue), 7pm



# Where Does My Help Come From?

I just saw a post with pictures of things we tail-end baby boomers had growing up in the 1970's and '80's. Atari before X-Box One, the wall phone, which I have to admit, I did enjoy slamming down in annoyance or frustration to the consternation of my parents. Teens nowadays can't get any satisfaction from hanging up a cellphone on someone. What a pity- ha ha ha! Having to use encyclopedias before Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and the Internet. I would get so excited to have a report to do, or better yet a research paper! The library was my Disney World! There was nothing like scouring books, encyclopedia pages and biographies; walking from one aisle to the next looking for the book that the catalogue card told you to get for your answers. I would sit for hours and hours, and no, I would never get bored. I could not wait to take more books home with me and finish up my notes so I could put them all together into nice, neat, precise sentences, thoughts and paragraphs.

We had things to look forward to. Dinner being cooked on a stove or in the oven, not 'nuked' in a microwave for ease. When a video channel was created on television, and for the first time, we weren't just hearing music on a radio or record, we would wait all day for school to be over so we could rush home, or to our friend's house, and see the first ever video from a recording artist. We wanted our MTV! All I know is it seems every child can't wait to grow up, and every grown up wants to relive their youth. Myself included.

Now everything is right at the push of a button or the swipe of a finger across a screen: music, Pandora, iCloud, Chrome and Netflix. Everything is so accessible, everything within reach. If this is the new age, then my question is this: How is there so much miscommunication out there? How can we be so connected, yet so distanced from one another's reality?

We are a family, but, as with every other family, there are times when we need a special touch of understanding from a unique group. Someone who has been there before, and has survived to live another day. Someone who is going through the same crisis you are. There are so many of us women who have gone through, or are going through, treatment for illness, that I feel it is time we band together as one to fight the questions, fear and doubt. In coming together, we can create a support network of experience, research, expertise and consolation that is so badly needed if you ever have the misfortune of hearing the catastrophic news of cancer, lupus, tumors, miscarriage, auto-immune disorders, or any of the other debilitating disease. We can sit among each other in solidarity, no matter the illness or need. It is a way to reach out to our friends and families who don't have Jesus to lean on, and show them the hope He gives in the darkness.

A women's illness support group in our church can be an asset since there are too many of us that have battled diseases and are fighting back from it, and just need the support of their sisters who know, understand, and can mentor and console as no other woman can.

Joy and Love, Annette Neff

# Light Deprivation

Winter Circa 2015 has been one for the record books, featuring Arctic blasts that produced record low temperatures and a storm that dropped almost three feet of snow on parts of Eastern Long Island. Then there was the gale force snow storm, reducing a romantic Valentine's Day, into an evening of huddling around the fireplace. Even the groundhog wasn't expecting weather like that!



For many who suffer with light deprivation, also known as Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD, lack of sunlight and shorter days can make the winter seem endless. They contend with melancholy, lack of energy, anxiety, depression and the urge to over eat.

"Principal investigator Gary Aston-Jones, now at the Medical University of South Carolina, speculates that the dark-induced effects stem from a disruption of the body's clock. 'When the circadian system is not receiving normal light that in turn might lead to changes in brain systems that regulate mood...'" (Scientific American magazine)

Light deprivation, though striking some more seriously than others, affects all of us. Genesis records how God, in the third day of His creative work, established a cycle of light for both man and animal. Knowing how critical they would be for physical and emotional health. "Then God said, 'Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth.' And that is what happened. God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good." Genesis 1:14 – 18 (NLT)

Isn't it amazing that even before God created the first man and woman, he established and provided an environment that would provide life sustaining light? Before humans had any knowledge or notion of science God, using incredible wisdom, fashioned a physical universe perfectly suited for our needs. Using personification, the eighth chapter of Proverbs describes wisdom's relationship with God, inviting us to join in. *Listen as Wisdom calls out!/Hear as understanding raises her voice! <sup>2</sup>On the hilltop along the road,/she takes her stand at the crossroads.<sup>3</sup>By the gates at the entrance to the town,/on the road leading in, she cries aloud,<sup>4</sup>"I call to you, to all of you!<sup>22</sup> I raise my voice to all people. /The LORD formed me from the beginning,/ before he created anything else. <sup>23</sup>I was appointed in ages past,/at the very first,/before the earth began."* Proverbs 8: 1–4, 22, 23 (NLT)

God is not only concerned with the great things of our universe, world and lives; He's concerned with the minute details as well. Whether facing the throes of winter, or any of life's challenges, we never stand alone. We have a friend and companion who loves us so much that He took on human form to enter His own creation through the birth canal of a teenage virgin. He did this to identify with the woes of our humanity, both great and small. We don't pray to a God who is remote or unfamiliar with our struggles and feelings. Combining the genius of creation with a sensitivity of suffering, He's the perfect high priest sitting on the right hand of our Heavenly Father making intercession for our needs. Jesus, full of wisdom and grace, is our personal advocate!

So as spring approaches, and Old Man winter loosens its grip, remember that God who made the seasons and the light, also by wisdom made you to be the unique person you are. Nothing is more important to Him than you and He proved it by leaving Heaven's throne to walk here among us. Are you ready to *spring* ahead with Jesus, the LIGHT of the world?

Serving Him Together, John Mercurio

# Just Praise Jesus

As many of you know, my husband Michael and I are the new youth leaders and what a joy it is! Michael and I prayed for years that we would be led to do a ministry together; God worked all things out this past year, and it's been a huge blessing.



Our annual mission trip to West Virginia will be coming up in July!! Tentatively, the dates are July 9<sup>th</sup> through July 15<sup>th</sup>. We are excited to see who God calls on the trip this year and what God has in store for us. As you all know, we do bake sales to start fundraising for the trip early on; with that being said, the first one will be in March for St. Patrick's Day!

Along with the annual mission trip, we also lead youth group every other Monday night from 6:30-8:30 pm. We look forward to growing and getting more teens to join us; this past Monday we had an awesome bowling night with many laughs and a little friendly competition. We hope to plan a trip to the Times Square Church in NYC when the weather gets a bit warmer. We also will continue to work hand in hand with Annette (my mother & teen director) to brainstorm new ideas for events and fundraisers.

Just a little something to share that I learned this year: even when you're going through a storm, and it may be the most trying time of your life, God can still bring a blessing your way. This past year, most of you know, my family went through a very tough time with my mother's cancer returning and all that comes with that, but God still said "you and Michael will be leading the mission trip," which turned out to be the most blessed trip I remember. Just the feedback alone from the teens and adults melted my heart. Then God called me to lead youth group, and then opened it up for Michael and I to lead, all while we were going through this storm. God works all things out for his purpose: we may not understand it, we may not understand how God can use us through the hard times. We say, "I think I'm on overload God," but God's reply is "Who's in control? If I called you to it, I am with you all the way."

My point is this: just when I felt like 2014 was one of the worst years I could remember, God brought me out of that feeling. He showed me He will use anyone willing and able to do what He has called him/her to do.

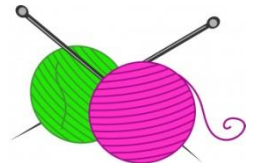
Thank you for the opportunity to share a little about youth group and the youth activities.

Blessings,

*Nicholle Messina*

## *Ladies' Sewing Circle*

Unfortunately, the frigid temps caused us to cancel our February meeting, but just because it is cold outside doesn't mean you can't be warm inside! And by inside I mean you can warm your heart and the hearts of others by participating in various programs that help keep others warm this winter. You can make a blanket, hat, or sweater to donate. There are numerous causes looking for donations year round. One is "Knit for Kids." Through World Vision's international distribution network, you can touch the lives of children in the US and other countries around the world. AC Moore is an official drop off center. You can find patterns (knit & crochet) and more information online at <http://knitforkids.org/get-involved/start-knitting/>



Join us when we meet the third Thursday of the month through June at His Place Youth Center, adjacent to the church building. Our next meeting will be March 19th at 7pm. Bring any craft or sewing project you are working on.

Keeping you in stitches,  
Corinne

# *Getting Real With God*

Recently, while on the way home from a long weekend trip to Washington DC, I had needed to grab something to eat before boarding my train back to New York. Union Station in DC has a variety of clean, nice restaurants to choose from. After much deliberation I picked up a slice of meat-stuffed pizza. It tasted OK for outside NY ☺. However, upon waking up I felt terrible. I immediately began exhibiting symptoms of food poisoning, which persisted for most of the day. While being both weak and dizzy, I cried out, “God, please help me!” a couple of times. Almost immediately the dizziness started to subside, and from that point forward I began to recover with the help and advice of others.

After a while, I looked back on that moment and said, “Hey, that was a prayer!” No, it wasn’t very eloquent, but it was heartfelt and to the point; God heard it and responded! So many times while praying (especially out loud) I struggle to find the correct words to say. I see this play out a lot: people in general don’t want to pray out loud, simply because they struggle with wording it. Thankfully, God cares more about genuine communication more than perfectly crafted prayers designed to please His ears. Consider:

“In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears. “ Psalm 18:6

“The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.” Psalm 145:18

King David, the author of Psalms 18 and 145, was a man who knew full well what it was like to be under duress. He, at times, found himself on the run for his life hiding in caves from those who were trying to kill him. Under those perilous conditions, David gave little thought to constructing perfect prayers. His cries were real, and as he wrote above, God heard them.

Looking back, when God prompted me to become the young adult ministry head, he gave me one goal: to make sure that we can hear Him. Of course, the Bible studies are a part of that, but equally important is prayer. Genuine, from-the-heart prayer (well worded or otherwise) is our main line of communication with God; it’s how He speaks to us and us to Him.

Shortly after an impromptu mid-week prayer meeting, God reminded me of this goal. I felt Him calling me to take a more active role in instilling this idea into those who attend Kairos, which led to the Kairos ministry sponsoring the prayer meetings on the first Friday of every month. Please consider attending either this meeting, or the one at 9:30am on Sunday. Both will offer you opportunities to get real with God and hear Him speak to you.

In Christ,

Frank Donato

## **So...You Want To Help Build a...Church, School, Hospital, Home...You Can!**

When You Give Your Alabaster Offering!

February and September are designated Alabaster months in the Church of the Nazarene. Alabaster offering provides funds for property and buildings around the world.

Alabaster funds help provide land for many Work & Witness projects, and the entire Alabaster Offering goes toward the purchase of land and construction of churches, schools, medical facilities, and homes for missionaries and national workers.

The Alabaster Offering gets to the mission field via several avenues. The most widely used is the Alabaster Box. Individuals are challenged to regularly contribute the cost of items they desire, but do not need. The boxes also serve as reminders to pray for those people who will benefit from Alabaster buildings. Both Adult and Children's Alabaster boxes are available at the church. We encourage you to pick one up and start filling it with coins. You will be surprised how they add up! Last year's total giving to Alabaster was \$699.46. It's amazing how those pennies, nickels and dimes add up. Bring your filled boxes back in September! You can find the history of the Alabaster offering at <http://nmi.nazarene.org/10167/story.html>

\*Excerpts taken from [nmi.nazarene.org](http://nmi.nazarene.org)

- submitted by Corinne Franco





# God Loves Us – Anyway!



***“This is my Son, the Beloved; with Him I am well pleased.” Matt. 17:5***

Janet gave me a little devotional with very short little paragraphs to read each day. One of them resonated with me regarding how we may view ourselves vs. how God views us. PJ, John and I meet weekly (as we can), and currently we are working our way through a book and workbook called *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* by Peter Scazzero. This time together has revealed some things about ourselves that we may not have recognized unless we took a deliberate look under the surface of our lives and our Christianity.

The devotional uses the above verse to start the process of recognizing the difference with what the world and others think or say vs. what God thinks and said. It mentions that it is not easy to hear God’s voice speaking well to us when we may more regularly hear... “You are no good, you are ugly; you are worthless, you are despicable, you are nobody – unless you can demonstrate the opposite.”<sup>1</sup>

These negative things could be what you are hearing now in various ways – a bad marriage – a stressful job situation – peers – even siblings or friends, OR they could be things you heard or were exposed to when you were growing up as a child/adolescent. In any case, they are very damaging things to deal with. In the case of these things being what you received in the distant past, you may not have had occasion to deal with them at all. We can certainly keep things pushed down in our lives and “rise above the ashes.” However, they may still be things in our lives that can hamper our open and honest relationship with God. We usually just don’t think about them and never deal with them.

This is part of what the pastoral staff is discussing for now. We may pursue this further as a Small Group effort or preaching series. However, I really think there are many out there that think they have their spiritual act somewhat together, and yet have baggage like this in their lives and are not even aware of it, or think they need to deal with it.

The devotional says this: ***“These negative voices are so loud and so persistent that it is easy to believe them. That’s the great trap.”***<sup>1</sup> These are lies. The truth is that, ***“When we come to believe in the voices that call us worthless and unlovable, then success, popularity and power are easily perceived as attractive solutions.”***<sup>1</sup>

Why do we do what we do? Why do we think the way we think? Why do we react the way we react? Why do we feel the way we feel? We may not even realize why! It could be partially because of the things we have heard about us or are hearing about us. It could be the way we were treated or brought up as a child in the culture and family make-up we came from. It may be something we should consider and delve deeper into if we want a true and pure and holy relationship with God. He loves us so much and is there to bring us to the point of realization, and then to resolution in an attempt to bring us closer to Him.

Lent is a time to do some serious reflection on our lives and actions. Please use this time to discover who you are so you can know better who God is. It means everything to Him – why not to you too? It is not God who condemns. He loves us, and is waiting for our turning to Him for peace, love, forgiveness, and grace.

In His Love, Pastor Nick

<sup>1</sup> A Wondrous Love, Henri J.M. Nouwen and C.S. Lewis, Daily Lenten Meditations and Prayers, p. 2-3

# Teen Ministry

I'm sitting here underneath 2 quilts with socks and slippers on and a bathrobe, pants, long sleeves, a heating pad and I am still freezing. I look over and there's my dog Mocha, curled at the end of the bed in a ball of sunlight. Smart puppy.

If you can, picture what children look like when they start to ease themselves into a pool and they decide it is too cold. They jump quickly, half submerged, back out into the warm air too afraid to get fully wet? That's me in the cold winter air. I take a few steps outside, screech "Ooooh," then quickly hightail it back into the house. Unless, of course, there is ice outside, then I do not venture out at all. I am a wimp now, and I'm not ashamed to say it.

All kidding aside, cold or no cold, I do what I need to do. Life is funny like that. Sometimes we don't have a choice where we will be running to, and sometimes we do have a choice. I can say Yes, I am able to do this right now. Other days I am exhausted, I just need to take it easy, and maybe I nap a little. I cut myself some slack. I've learned a lot about myself these past few months. I see life a little differently; I take one day at a time a little more often, whereas before my cancer diagnosis, treatment, and cure, I planned ahead all the time. I mean, I really had my calendar full. I was always the person to put things together. Gatherings, events, dinners and BBQs at my house. Never a dull moment. I liked it that way. Now, the month of March is booked solid, and I'm almost panicking. What if I'm tired? What if it's too cold to go, too much ice? This is all new for me; a different way to be me. It's ok though. I'm learning how to navigate through this part of my journey. It's rocky sometimes, other times, calm and tranquil which is more often now than before. I know God has me; He has never left my side. He knows where I am right now, and where I am heading. If I didn't have my faith, I would never have been able to

get to this point. I'm not ashamed to tell anyone that my God, our Savior, He healed me and gave me my life back. No matter how long it takes me to fully recover and regain my strength, I am so grateful I am alive and can praise His name!

The Teen Ministry is running full steam ahead. The mission trip is being planned for July with Michael and Nicholle Messina leading it again this year. All the information will be forthcoming.

Anyone interested in going on the trip this year please see Michael or Nicholle M.

I would like to get our craft fair going since we had such success last year. As soon as I have a date and all the particulars, it will be announced and placed on the church calendar.

This summer the teen group will have planned events in lieu of bi weekly meetings. A calendar will be provided for all teens to view. We will be reaching out to area teen groups/churches this summer to meet new people, and hopefully host an event at PatchNaz such as our Coney Island BBQ .

If your teen has a friend in a neighboring teen group that would like to partner up with our group on an outing or teen night, have them contact me at [annettemneff@gmail.com](mailto:annettemneff@gmail.com)

If you are new to our church and your teen is interested in finding out about our teen programs and teen youth group, please feel free to see Nicholle or Mike Messina after church, or contact them via email at [nichollen89@gmail.com](mailto:nichollen89@gmail.com)

I hope you all enjoy your Spring and Summer. I'm looking forward to the sunshine and sand between my toes.

With a Grateful & Joyous Heart

Peace Always,

Annette M. Neff

