

Dovetales, a newsletter of Gladwyne Presbyterian Church,
1321 Beaumont Drive 19035 610-649-2235 www.gladwynepres.org
P. Todd Stavrakos, Pastor
November 2008 edition



NOVEMBER

- 3 7:00 p.m. Deacons' meeting
4 ELECTION DAY 2008
11:00 a.m. Bible Study (every Tues.)
12 7:30 p.m. Session
13 7:00 p.m. Women's Book Group*
16 PLEDGE DEDICATION SUNDAY*
18 7:00 p.m. Knit or Knot
22 9 a.m. - Noon Deacons sponsored $\frac{1}{2}$ day retreat in
preparation for Advent*
Central Pres. Church - Meal serving*
27 HAPPY THANKSGIVING
28 Office closed
30 1st Sunday in Advent

DECEMBER dates to save now:

- Wed., December 3rd: 7:30 p.m. Howard Friend Book signing.
Talk, book signing, and refreshments
Fri., December 5th: Church gathering to decorate the church. Potluck
dinner
Sun., December 7th: Alternative Gift Market
Sun., December 14th: Christmas Caroling Party with soup and bread
supper

Look for sign-up sheets as these dates get closer



*described elsewhere in Dovetales



Giving Thanks

When we think of Thanksgiving I imagine we don't think about Israel wandering in the desert. The image of a people wandering in the wilderness, subsisting on manna and the rare water spring they found does not exactly jibe with our tables of bounty. No, we prefer to hold the image of the Pilgrims sitting at a table covered with the bounty of the land, sitting peacefully next to a Native American. That is a much nicer image for us to hold. Yet the closest example we have in the bible of a Thanksgiving style festival is Sukkot, or the Festival of Booths or Tabernacles.

Sukkot was one of the three major festivals in Judaic tradition in which people journeyed to the Temple to offer thanks. The other two festivals are Passover and Shavout (Pentecost). The tradition of Sukkot was to build booths in which one lived to remember the temporary dwellings, or booths, that Israel inhabited during the forty years in the Wilderness. This was a reminder to Israel of the struggle and journey through the Wilderness as well as the faithfulness of God. Sukkot is also an agricultural celebration in nature; it is a thanksgiving for the bounty of the land that God had given to Israel.

In a passage from Deuteronomy in the sixteenth chapter, we read of the command to celebrate the festival as a reminder of the bondage in which Israel lived while in Egypt. The harvest that they received in the land is an example of the blessing of the Lord and a reminder to be faithful to the Lord who has blessed Israel. In the twenty-sixth chapter, the Lord commands of Israel that after they have worked and tilled the land, they are to bring a tenth of their harvest, the finest tenth, and give it to the priest so that it would be dedicated to the Lord. Sukkot is a time of remembrance and a time of dedication, a time in which we recall the blessings that we have received and in offering our finest back to God we demonstrate our knowledge that what we have is a gift from God.

It is from this understanding that we get the term "tithe", for to tithe is to give a tenth of what we have to the Lord. Often when we consider what to offer God, we review our budgets and see what we have left over. However, to tithe in the fashion that God has commanded Israel, is to first take God's portion and set it aside and then divide the rest according to need.

November is a time of Thanksgiving, but it is also a time of dedication. During November we give thanks to God for all that we have received and as the Israelites were called to do, we give back the best to God; the best of ourselves, the best of our possessions. It is a statement of understanding that our blessings are a gift from God and that without God, we truly have nothing. November is also our stewardship campaign. During this campaign we dedicate ourselves to a new year of work and ministry on behalf of God. Stewardship is not just about giving money, but about declaring our intent to carry on the ministry that we have been called to, it is a visible symbol of our service to God and our intent to do God's Will.

This month as we all give thanks, I would pray that we would spend time in prayer and consider what we can offer to God. Let us then dedicate ourselves to another year of ministry in our Lord's name.

Peace

Todd

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Todd".



Christianity 101: Theodicy: The Question of Evil

Perhaps it is one of the first questions asked, "If God is good and created the world and humanity good, then why does evil exist?" The follow up question usually is, "If God is so powerful, why does God allow evil to exist and continue?" Thus begins the discussion of theodicy or the question of evil.

It is a discussion that has been with us from the beginning of time. The ancients assumed that if evil or suffering is present in one's life, then they are being cursed by a god or God. The debate of Job and his colleagues is based around this discussion, yet Job was not a bad person, so it could not stand to reason that he was being cursed by God. The story of Job tells us that it is not enough to describe evil as being sent by God as a way to punish, first it calls into question the "goodness" of God and second because in light of God's work in the world, it goes against everything that God is working to accomplish.

Yet the idea that one is punished by God for one's sin still was very present during the New Testament times and can be seen in the disciples' question of Jesus regarding a blind man, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" The implication was that the man would not be afflicted with blindness if he had not sinned. Yet Jesus' response is clear that neither sinned but that the man was born blind "so that God's works might be revealed in him." It is clear from the exchange that God does not curse or send evil or suffering to those who sin nor anyone else for that matter. Jesus again affirms the reality that evil is present in the world in the story found in Luke when Jesus refers to those who died when a tower fell on them. He points out that their sin was no greater than anyone else. Jesus is making a statement about the reality of evil in the world, but that it is not a form of punishment from God.

So if it is not a punishment from God, then what is evil and where does it come from? The early church saw evil as a by-product of human immaturity. Since God did not create automatons, humans have a choice to choose good or evil. Augustine took this argument one step further when he posits the beginning of evil as a form of temptation that Satan by which the serpent tempted Adam and Eve and then the fall of humanity. Through the fall, or Adam and Eve's disobedience to God, evil entered the world. More recent thought, such as Karl Barth's, speak of evil as being the "nothingness" that works against God. It is not "nothing" per se but a power acting counter to the will of God. It is nothing, because it was not created by God. Barth saw this "nothingness" embodied by the rise of Nazism in Germany.

While none of these answers completely the question of where did evil come from, they do affirm the real presence of evil in the world as well as demonstrate that evil is the power opposing God and not something of God. In addition they do affirm that evil is a choice that people can freely choose as part of our free will. So if evil is not of God and is real in the world, what is God's response to it? The Christian response is that God is opposed to evil and is working in the world to defeat evil. The clearest example is the cross. The crucifixion embodies the evil found in the world when an innocent man is killed,



NOVEMBER IS STEWARDSHIP MONTH!

Gladwyne Presbyterian Church has given witness to God's redeeming love for over 130 years. Our 50th year in this building was joyfully celebrated last month. Now, as we approach Thanksgiving and the beginning of the New Year, we are challenged to pledge our financial support for the work of GPC in 2009.

GPC is a caring community supporting each other and serving people in Norristown, and working with Broad Street Ministry and Presbyterian Children's Village. Worship, Christian Education, Youth programs (this year including a mission to Costa Rica), and the renovation of the Chapel in the Woods were all highlights of our journey together in 2008.

We are asking you to consider carefully your pledge to GPC this year. GPC faces a budget deficit in 2008 which we seek to overcome. We need to honor the witness of Bill Owen by picking up the role he played in our community – both spiritually and financially. In this spirit we ask each of you to consider increasing your pledge for 2009 by 10%.

Please complete your pledge card with prayerful consideration. November 16 is Dedication Sunday, but you may place your pledge in the offering plate any Sunday. We are the faces of hope that GPC will be supported in 2009 to be a beacon reflecting God's love for each of us.

Morris Williams
Sandy Day
Ralph Hall
Pastor Todd



November birthdays

8	Bill McGowan	21	Martha Ann Hanson
18	Natalie E. Pratt	24	Janet O'Leary
	Stephanie A. Pratt		Ginny Gallagher
19	Sue Althouse	26	Laura Cozzens
	Robert Denicola	30	Ileana Andruhovici
20	Johanna Andruhovici		

Heritage and History project. Then we enjoyed a catered dinner by Bridgeport Rib House. This was followed by a Square Dance complete with a live band and caller. Palmer and Greg Loux and the company of the **Run of the Mill Band** played for over two hours, and Ellie Knickman led us all in forming some very original formations of “squares,” with amazing combinations of dancers – ranging from 3-year-olds to 80+-yr. olds. It was a very joyous time!

For *World Communion Sunday*, October 5, the celebratory spirit continued as the **Central Presbyterian Latino Fellowship Band** provided the music for the service. This group and the youth joining it, represents one of Pastor Gadiel Gómez’ newest innovations in evangelization in the Latino community in Norristown – of working to reach and teach youth with music lessons and opportunities to “play in a band” – in a caring and spiritual environment. At least 20 members of the Latino Fellowship joined GPCers for the morning. Linda Stevenson interpreted most of the service between English and Spanish.

We also experienced “church-in-the-round” (well, horseshoe?), as we used the folding chairs borrowed for the dinner from the night before, left the covered pews outside for one more night, and arranged them in a circle around the altar. **Pastor Todd** gave the sermon. Leaders from two of our local mission partners also joined us for the worship. **Pastor David Sanchez from Presbyterian Children’s Village** celebrated the Communion – of many breads from around the world. **Pastor Erika Funk from Broad Street Ministries** led us in a new form of “Prayers of the People.”

The Worship Committee – currently Linda Stevenson, Hank Holmes, and Sally Stevenson and Pastor Todd - will soon convene (date TBA) to evaluate these recent experiences, and make plans for the coming Advent Season and beyond. If you have ideas or would like to join in making plans on this committee, please let Linda know.

Again MUCHAS GRACIAS – many, many thanks – to all who helped this happen.

Blessings to all.

Linda Stevenson

Gladwyne Church Teams for Refreshments

October: Team 4

November: Team 5

December Team 1

January: Team 3

February: Team 6

March: Team 2

* designates elder or deacon who serve as coordinators for THE TEAM

Work as a team to provide simple refreshments after Sunday services in community room.

*denotes Deacon or Session member

			WICKY	DAYTON*	4
BOBBIE	DAY	1	MARTHA ANN	HANSON	4
SANDY	DAY	1	PAT	MCCOLE*	4
CARRIE	KANZINGER	1	JEN	STAVRAKOS	4
BARBARA	KANZINGER*	1	LIBBY	FIFER	4
BRUCE	MAC CULLOUGH	1	HANK	HOLMES	5
NOREEN	MAC CULLOUGH	1	BARBARA	HOLMES*	5
DONNA	MCGOWAN	1	CHRIS	ZARIFIOU	5
WILLA	MCGOWAN	1	JESSICA	ZARIFIOU	5
PAUL	HOLLAND	1	MARY	BLACK	5
KATHLEEN	TRONCELLITI*	1	BARBARA	FRAZER	5
BETH	FEATHERMAN	2	LINDA	GERSTEIN	5
DENIS	ANDRUCHOVICI	2	JOANNE	MARKMAN*	5
ILEANA	ANDRUCHOVICI	2	JANA	MOSSEY*	5
MORRIS	WILLIAMS	2	JACK	HOLMES	5
RUTH	WILLIAMS	2	KARLA	HOLMES	5
SUE	ALTHOUSE*	2	CHASE	MARKMAN	5
DONNA	GUILE	2	ETHAN	MARKMAN	5
ANN	GUISE*	2	LARRY	COZZENS*	6
HELEN	KING	2	LAURA	COZZENS	6
CHARLES	LAMBDIN	2	ALFRED	REEVES	6
VALERIE	MACK	2	BETTY	REEVES	6
CAROLYN	MACK	2	SANDRA	STASHIK	6
CHRISTOPHER	MACK	2	SALLY	STEVENSON	6
PETE	DRAYER	3	LINDA	STEVENSON*	6
SANDRA	DRAYER	3	JOHN	WEISGERBER*	6
LIN	HALL*	3	BRIAN	GIBSON	6
RALPH	HALL*	3	EVAN	GIBSON*	6
GREG	LOUX	3	BRIANA	WEISGERBER	6
PALMER	LOUX	3	MEAGAN	WEISGERBER	6
JOYCE	BAKER	3			
VERONICA	HALL	3			
ADAM	LOUX	3			
BISSIE	LOUX	3			
JASON	LOUX	3			
GINGER	FIFER	4			
MARK	FIFER	4			
LYNN	BALLARD	4			



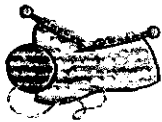
ROCK AND YOUTH GROUP.

I cannot believe that we are almost in November. It FEELS like yesterday that we were coming back from the mission trip. The last few months have flown by for the youth. This year we are focusing on the theme of decision making with God. In youth group we are going to discuss the hard decisions that come up in a young person's life and how God can help us through these difficult times. Along with our wonderful discussions the youth will also have many fun outings in the next few months. Upcoming events might include Rock climbing, laser tagging, and possibly a paint ball day. On the service side of things the GPC youth have decided that we are going to participate in the 30 hour famine again this year which will take place in February along with many other service days helping organizations like Good Works and Philabundance.

In Rock (Sunday school), the youth started the year with a wonderful presentation about the mission trip. Also in Rock the youth brushed up on their Bible knowledge with Bible Jeopardy. For the first half of the year the youth are going to be continuing the same theme in Rock as last year of Journeying. If you would like to see the wonderful bulletin board the youth put up you can see what the word Rock means to the Youth of GPC, along with people who are Rocks in their young lives.

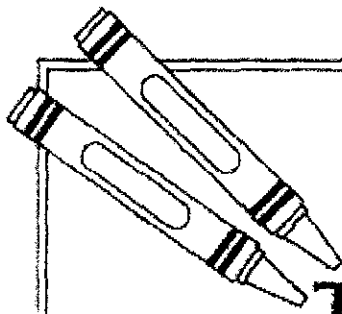
The youth have started this school year with our highest attendance yet and I hope to continue this great momentum throughout the year.

Laura Cozzens, Youth Director.



Knit or Knot

Our next meeting will be MONDAY, November 17th at 7 p.m. at Sandy Drayer's home. Update on our activities: Joyce has finished a Christmas present, newcomer Donna Guile knits like a pro and Betty Reeves knits backward faster than most of us knit forward. Come and join the fun!!!



Just for

KIDS

The Harvest

Harvest time was very important to the Israelites. They had three harvests each year: barley in spring; wheat in summer; fruits in autumn.



Find these foods that the Israelites harvested, and circle them.



GRAPES
BARLEY
ALMONDS
WHEAT

HERBS
NUTS
LEEKS
MELONS

OLIVES
BEANS
FIGS
RYE

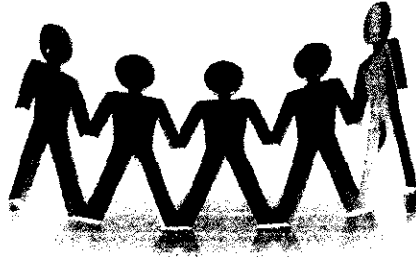
APPLES
ONIONS
CUCUMBERS
POMEGRANATES

GOURDS
LENTILS



H	A	C	B	R	Y	E	B	R	V	E	N
G	A	U	A	S	N	O	L	E	M	S	U
R	L	C	R	F	I	G	S	T	A	T	T
A	M	U	L	I	M	B	E	H	A	N	S
P	O	M	E	G	R	A	N	A	T	E	S
E	N	B	Y	E	S	E	L	P	P	A	K
S	D	E	H	R	O	N	I	O	N	S	E
V	S	R	E	S	G	O	U	R	D	S	E
T	I	S	M	E	S	L	I	T	N	E	L
S	E	V	I	L	O	W	H	E	A	T	H





GPC REFRESHMENT TEAMS

October began our first attempt at building community using a team approach to manage the refreshments during the time in the community room after Sunday services. Pat McCole and Wicky Dayton were the elders who coordinated the October team assisted by Ginger, Mark, and Libby Fifer, Martha Ann Hanson, Jen Stavarakos and Lynn Ballard.

November deacon and elder coordinators are Barbara Holmes and Joanne Markman. Members of the November team are Hank, Carla, Jack Holmes, Chase and Ethan Markman, Barbara Frazer, Chris and Jessica Zarifiour, Mary Black, Linda Gerstein, and Jana Mossey. The idea is many hands make light work setting up and cleaning up. If you aren't going to be in church, that's understandable, just let the coordinator know.

There are frozen plastic containers of ice for water and lemonade (in the top of first cabinet as you enter kitchen from the community room).

Questions: Call Ann Guise 215-748-5454

Again we are including the complete team listing in this issue of Dovetales.



Wonderful Commemoration and Celebration of GPC's 50th Anniversary!

Note: If you are seeking ways to support meaningful and dynamic worship at GPC, please see the opportunities listed below in *italics*, and contact Linda Stevenson.

Thanks to the work of many extremely dedicated GPC members, we were able to commemorate and celebrate the 50th Anniversary of our present church site the weekend of October 4 and 5, 2008.

The **COMMEMORATION** was directed by Linda Stevenson, with the diligent support of Sue Althouse and Sally Stevenson among others, who began the excavation and sorting through of our church archives for our GPC Heritage and History Exhibit, which debuted in the Community Room on Saturday October 4. In this process, one afternoon there was a historical summit of a number of the senior-seniors of our congregation and community to discuss some of the material in the archives – particularly to identify people in older pictures. This included: Charles Lambdin, Doris Oleweiler, Paul Holland, Holly Harvey Reed, Sue and Sally. Wow. What a wonderful and rare meeting and trip down memory lane.

In addition, Mark Fifer, Sandra Stashik and Linda made the “final cut” from the sorted archival material for this Exhibit, organized and labeled an exhibit of “heritage” – from GPC’s original founding in 1874 (complete with some fantastic old pictures of Gladwyne and the church at the corner of Righters Mill and Black Rock Rd. in the village) to 1957. There followed the last 50 years of “history,” organized by decades, with an open-ended, incomplete display for our current time.

Please take time to enjoy and learn from our past... as we consider what’s next for our future! The exhibit will continue to be in our Community Room through mid-late November, and then we’ll see what’s next for that collection.

Meanwhile, this “beginning of the excavation of our archives” has led to the formation of an Ad Hoc Archives Preservation Committee, so far comprised of Linda and Sue Althouse, looking for a little company in completing the task of properly preserving some of the gems of our heritage, culling through other more recent documents, and organizing them for easy access for generations to come. LET US KNOW IF YOU CAN HELP - even if it’s just for a few hours.

Then, we pushed back the pews – so to speak – from the Sanctuary, and the **CELEBRATION** began! (Huge thanks to all those on the “Movin’-the-Pews” committee – it was quite a feat!). Starting around 5:30pm, we shared a wonderful array of appetizers provided by many church members (thanks to you all!). There was a brief presentation made by Linda Stevenson and Mark Fifer highlighting some of their reflections from the

but God does not allow evil to be the last word and instead of allowing evil to win, God enters into the evil and brings good out of it.

Elie Weisel, one of the great Jewish theologians, struggled to make sense of the Holocaust. In going back into Old Testament scripture, he saw a strong trend within scripture that showed that God continually protests against the presence of evil and suffering in the world. It is this action of God that Jurgen Moltmann speaks of in describing how God, out of God's great love, enters into the suffering and evil and suffers with humanity. Daniel Migliore speaks eloquently of God's determination to work not just where life is sustained but directly where life is threatened. God's activity is constant, preparing the world for the reign of God, planting seeds, renewing and transforming all things. Scripture, both Old and New Testament, is full of stories of God bring life from death. Whether it is the barrenness of Sarah and Hannah, the death Lazarus or Jesus himself, or even non-Israelites like the widow of Zarephath that Elijah cares for or Naaman, God is continually at work fighting and protesting against evil and suffering in the world.

The Christian hope is found in the recognition that evil is present in the world, but that it will not overcome the power and love of God. Do we understand where evil came from or why it exists, no, but we do know of God's love and power over evil. In awareness of the reality of evil and the continual struggle of God against evil, it then falls upon us to be active in that struggle.

The final question left unanswered is, "why does God then not just destroy evil once and for all and remove it from the world?" While no one answer suffices to answer this question, I am drawn back to the work of Karl Barth, who views humanity as being co-creators with God. As such then perhaps God desires to join our efforts, or more importantly, perhaps God is waiting for us to join God's efforts to end evil in the world. Just as God did not create automatons and gave us free will, so we too have a responsibility for our own actions as well as the promotion of good over evil. God's desire is for us to love God and perhaps the continued presence of evil in the world is a sign that our efforts to love God have not been significant enough. As we love God and one another we truly join in God's battle against evil. Through this love, one day the Kingdom will come.

Pastor Todd



OUTREACH COMMITTEE

JUST ONE MORE: Basket and carton are filling up. Remember how hard it is for food banks to help everyone who asks. The Norristown community uses Central Pres including the Latino community there. Ask Linda for suggestions for foods particularly needed to prepare Latino foods. Also remember that Thanksgiving is on the horizon and food appropriate to the holiday will be welcome by everybody.

It seems that this congregation could be better at remembering **JUST ONE MORE**. Maybe we need a ribbon around the finger! Perhaps the youth would help us out, since we old folks have such poor memories.

CENTRAL PRES: Another group went to the church to help with serving dinner on the 11th. It seems that everyone who goes wants to go back. The next time will be on November 22nd. We won't go in December at all. Please let me know if you are free on the 22nd. The first 6 people to sign up will go, with a couple of back-ups.

ALTERNATIVE MARKET: Coming up the first Sunday in December. We will need to get together a few folks in the next week or two to plan this. It will be announced in Sparrowtales and in church. Please share your ideas and, if interested in this event, come to this meeting.

NEW: Hold the date, Saturday, January 17th for a special day to join with other faith based congregations in the Philadelphia area to work toward ending gun violence. Many of us have been touched by this violence. We can either join with other groups or hold a specific prayer and action meeting in our church, inviting others in our area to join with us. More information will come in the December Dovetales. Hold the date!

Pat McCole, Outreach Elder



WOMEN'S BOOK GROUP

Many thanks to Martha Ann for leading our last discussion on *Mama Day*. We welcomed Donna to our group and hope that she can attend in the future. By the way, for those who have not read it and would like to, I have a copy of *Mama Day* I can lend to you. I recommend it.

November's book is

The Book Thief, by Markus Zusak. Pat McCole will lead us in a discussion of this fascinating book. We'll meet November 13 at 7 PM.

Zusak has created a work that deserves the attention of sophisticated teen and adult readers. Death himself narrates the World War II-era story of Liesel Meminger from the time she is taken, at age nine, to live in Molching, Germany, with a foster family in a working-class neighborhood of tough kids, acid-tongued mothers, and loving fathers who earn their living by the work of their hands. The child arrives having just stolen her first book—although she has not yet learned how to read—and her foster father uses it, *The Gravediggers Handbook*, to lull her to sleep when she's roused by regular nightmares about her younger brother's death. Across the ensuing years of the late 1930s and into the 1940s, Liesel collects more stolen books as well as a peculiar set of friends: the boy Rudy, the Jewish refugee Max, the mayor's reclusive wife (who has a whole library from which she allows Liesel to steal), and especially her foster parents. Zusak not only creates a mesmerizing and original story but also writes with poetic syntax, causing readers to deliberate over phrases and lines, even as the action impels them forward. Death is not a sentimental storyteller, but he does attend to an array of satisfying details, giving Liesel's story all the nuances of chance, folly, and fulfilled expectation that it deserves. An extraordinary narrative.—*Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley Public Library, CA*

December Potluck gathering will be at Donna McGowan's home on Dec. 11th-

January - We'll read the One Book One Lower Merion Book Selection *People of the Book*.