



Greensboro Gleanings

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK ...

November 2009

Dear Friends,

One of the constant rhythms of my life has to do with balancing out my inclination for immediacy and spontaneity, on the one hand, with my need for order and organizing on the other. This need for balance takes several forms. One example comes from occasions when I speak in public. When I give a sermon or talk, I usually enjoy speaking 'off the cuff.' There can be, at times, a freshness, or a turn of phrase that emerges, which might not otherwise appear in a completely 'prepared.' talk. On the other hand, such talks are enhanced by the structure and clear sequence of ideas more likely present than in a carefully prepared talk. For me another ongoing example of this same dynamic is found in the physical state of my office. I like to have several things that I am working on out and at hand. Spending time filing things is not my favorite pursuit. It doesn't 'light me up.' But if there are too many papers lying around, I can't find much of anything, and I become inefficient in my use of time.

Both sides of this equation have their own benefits. One significant factor, though, is that in our culture, at least, the 'orderly' side of the equation gets the better press. Put another way, our culture tends to place a higher value on things that are neat, in place and under control. But things that are raw and unruly, and have a life of their own, can serve us well too.

Consider the case of the discovery of penicillin. In late August of 1928, Alexander Fleming left his office in northeast London and went on vacation. Great scientist that he was, Fleming was not neat and orderly. He left his work space so cluttered, it would not have passed 21st century hygienic code. Specifically, he had left out some open petri dishes with active bacterial cultures on them. These dishes were located near a window that he had left partly open. During the vacation, some mold blew in through the window and landed on some of the petri dishes.

When Fleming came back on September 3, 1928 he was confronted with the mess he had left behind, including the messy dishes. But instead of immediately and reflexively cleaning them up, something important happened first. He paused, if just for an instant, and looked at the dishes and noticed something. He noticed that a small patch of mold had blown in the window and had landed on some of the bacterial culture in a couple of the petri dishes. And he noticed further that in the areas that the mold had landed, the staphylococci growth that had overgrown the rest of the cultures had been kept at bay. From that basic observation sprang the discovery of penicillin.

Fleming went on to do a lot of detailed scientific work, including repeated experimentation and record keeping that, no doubt, involved a great deal of order and organization, structure and proper procedure. All of those more disciplined elements were essential to the long process that led from Fleming's initial, 'Aha!,' and the actual delivery of penicillin pills to ill patients. But if you look at that story in its fullness, an important part of that process included a significant role for disorder, imperfection, and lack of full rational control on the part of the key player in that discovery, Alexander Fleming.

What might this mean for us? Yes, of course, we should maintain....and build upon.....our life-giving routines and disciplines, including the beliefs and practices of our religion. But we should beware not to let them hold us too tightly. When uncontrollable events emerge from either beyond us or inside us; when we lapse into disorder or imperfection; when the unexpected or surprising take place.....such times often have gifts to bring us as well as the gifts that come through our choices, our disciplines and our achieved order. In a phrase from the Bible, when we are visited by the parts of life beyond our control, we may at a deeper level be being 'entertained by angels unawares.'

Your pastor,

Tony Acheson

*Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty firmament!*

*Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his surpassing greatness!*

*Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!*

*Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!*

*Praise him with clanging cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!*

Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord!

Psalm 150

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TONY'S VACATION AND SCHEDULE

On Monday, November 2, Nancy and I will be flying to San Francisco to take the final two weeks of our vacation for 2009. We will be spending our first four nights at the Green Gulch Meditation Center just north of the Bay area. After that we will have two stops with two of relatives of Nancy's, plus a couple of nights just outside Yosemite. It should be a great trip.

While I'm at it, I thought this might be a good opportunity to let you know about my agreements with the church regarding vacation time and Sundays off, especially since a few of you have asked questions about that. Under my contract with the church I have four weeks of vacation. In 2009 I have taken a week in March [to be with Emma when she was dealing with her medical issues] plus another week in late August; and now will take these two weeks in November.

Under my contract with the church, I also have 10 additional Sundays off per year [meaning that I am not leading worship for a total of 14 Sundays during the year.] The two Sundays I will be away in November will reach that total of 14 [and I will be with you Sunday mornings for all the remaining Sundays in 2009.]

In addition, according to my agreement with the church, I am officially considered to be working here on a part time [actually 7/8ths time] basis. Although these terms in my con-

tract are admittedly a bit unusual, they were put in place for a reason. When I first came to Greensboro in 1999, I was here as an interim pastor, and was here only on a 6 month contract. When the church and I started talking about the possibility of a longer term relationship, there were several issues that had to be resolved, partly between the church and myself, but also in our mutual relationship with the Vermont Conference of the UCC. The Conference generally disapproves of Interim Pastors becoming Settled Pastors, but does allow for that to happen under certain circumstances, one of which is for pastors who are less than full time. My officially less than full time status was a factor in legitimizing my transition from 'interim' to 'settled' in the eyes of the Conference [as was my desire to have some weekends free to do some of the kinds of things that most normal people do.]

Quite a number of you who are active in the church were not involved here when this arrangement was worked out 10 years ago, so it makes sense that some would ask about how and why the schedule works as it does. So I thought this note might be helpful as an update. I look forward to being back with you and in the office on November 16 and back in the pulpit on November 22.

Tony Acheson

MILESTONES & MISCELLANY

Happy November Birthday to:

Susan Lukens, Etta Peabody, Halley Greaves, Marcy Larrabee, John C. Cannon, Linda Lee Hall, Madeline Gebbie, Marcy Travers Larrabee, and Wanda Niemi and ...happy anniversary to Paula and Peter Ratchford!

Is your birthday listed this month when it shouldn't be? Have we missed you in our celebrations? Contact the church office and let us know if your birthday is listed incorrectly or has been missed completely. You can call 802-533-2223 or email gucc@guccvt.org to update your birthday info.

Our prayers are asked for Annegret Pollard's sister,

Carole, who is still recuperating from a serious car accident in Africa on October 10....and is scheduled to be back in Austria by the time of this mailing. Annegret reports that, 'the optimistic prognosis: she will be fit again by February/March....' Prayers are also asked for John Rohnert's wife, Natalie Hays, who is recuperating for a respiratory problem. Let's also keep Pete and Paula Ratchford in our prayers as Pete struggles with a serious neurological condition. We send our condolences as well to the family of Aral Rogers, formerly of Hardwick, who died on October 13.

WINTER COAT GIVE-AWAY

An Outdoor Winter Clothing Give-away will take place at the Woodbury-Calais Church on Saturday, November 7 from 9 a.m.—1 p.m. Cassandra Brush is accepting donations throughout the month of October for this annual event which helps clothe many of our neighbors. Acceptable donations include new



or used outdoor winter clothes, such as coats, jackets, snow- or ski- pants, mittens, gloves, hats, scarves or boots. Children's items are especially needed. Please no "indoor" clothing. Call 472-8044 or email woodburycalais-church@gmail.com for more info, or drop off donations in the (Greensboro) church office.

November 2009

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

1	2 Tony on vacation 3:30 p.m.—Strong Living	3	4 3:30 p.m.—Strong Living	5 7 p.m.—Bible Study, Library, read John 15 & 16	6	7
8 Anne Peck, Guest Speaker 5 -7 p.m. Youth Group, United Church of Hardwick	9 3:30 p.m.—Strong Living	10	11 3:30 p.m.—Strong Living 4:30 p.m.—Mission Board, FH	12 7 p.m.—Bible Study, Library, read John 17—19	13	14
15 Rev. Herb Perry, Guest Speaker	16 Tony back from vacation 3:30 p.m.—Strong Living	17 4 p.m.—Diaconate, Library	18 3:30 p.m.—Strong Living	19 7 p.m.—Bible Study, Library, read John 20 & 21	20 Church School Baking Party (after school)	21 Alternative Giving Fair (lunch will be served)
22 Youth Group, time and place TBA	23 Community Thanksgiving Ser- vice	24	25	26 Happy Thanksgiving! 	27	28
29 First Sunday in Advent	30 3:30 p.m.—Strong Living	<p>Thanks to our November Coffee Time Hosts!</p> <p>November 1—Bobbie Nisbet</p> <p>November 8—Pattie Foster</p> <p>November 15—Sara Behrsing</p> <p>November 22—Alden & Pat Launer</p> <p>November 29—Anne Harbison</p> 				

NEWS FROM
THE GREENSBORO UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Upcoming Lectionary Readings:

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Nov 1 ~ Ruth 1:1-8~Psalm 146~Hebrews 9:11-14~Mark 12:28-34

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Nov 8 ~ Ruth 3:1-5~Psalm 127 or 1 Kings 17:8-16~Hebrews 9:24-28~Mark 38:28-44

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Nov 15 ~ 1 Samuel 1:4-20~1 Samuel 2:1-10 or Daniel 12:1-3~Psalm 16~Hebrews 10:11-125~Mark 13:1-8

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Nov 22 ~ 2 Samuel 23:1-7~Psalm 132:1-18 or Daniel 7:9-14~Psalm 93~Rev. 1:4-8~John 18:33-37

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Nov 29 ~ Jeremiah 33:14-16~Psalm 25:1-10~1 Thesalonians 3:9-13~Luke 21:25-36

For more news and calendar listings go to
www.guccvt.org



SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

by Christian Education Director Cara Hill

Thanks to Paul Fixx and Sara Behrsing for meeting with Anne Mcpherson and I to set up the current Sunday School unit. This transition from one teacher to another really is important for the children. They do much better when the adults communicate often. Anne and Irene Nagle Gilmartin will be covering the second unit of the year for us. Thanks to you both for making the time in your busy lives.

YOUTH GROUP NEWS

Thanks to all the youth who came to our first meeting on October 4th. We had a good time eating pizza and getting to know one another. Youth members came from Craftsbury and Hardwick and here in Greensboro. We held our second meeting on Sunday, October 25, featuring a bonfire at the Craftsbury church. We meet again on Sunday, November 8, from 5—7 p.m. at the United Church of Hardwick, and on November 22, place and time TBA. Hope to see you there!



BAKING PARTY! November

19 - THURSDAY AFTER SCHOOL 3:30

till we're done, we'll be baking with youth and children for a bake sale at the Alternative Giving Fair. Pizza will be provided. Bake sale benefits our Summer Camp Scholarship programming in 2010.