

Around The Conference ***Difficult Soil Conditions in Southern New England***

by Southern New England Area Representative Timothy Dubeau

Here in Southern New England, we live in an area rich in church history. On the one hand, we have Connecticut. It is the product of two of the strictest expressions of Puritanism in colonial America as they played themselves out in New Haven and Hartford under the leadership of John Davenport and Thomas Hooker respectively. On the other hand, we have Rhode Island, founded by Roger Williams, who led the way in religious toleration. It was he who gave the first safe haven to the early Baptists and Quakers in the colonies. Even today, this dichotomy is expressed in different ways, with Connecticut being home to a disproportionately large segment of more liberal Congregational Churches and Rhode Island being cited as the most Catholic state in the nation.



One of our CCCC churches, Sherman Congregational in Sherman, Connecticut, founded in 1744, building constructed in 1893.

As you can imagine, this makes southern New England very hard ground to plow. It's true this ground was turned over by the Lord a few times during the first and second Great Awakenings. But the soil of this present generation is laced with hardpan, clay and often rock. In what we refer to as The Parable of the Sower, Jesus taught us that when the Word of God is faithfully presented the result is greatly affected by the nature of the soil. We have observed for several generations the difficulty of reaping a spiritual harvest from the soil in Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Because many churches in the area were founded over 300 years ago, one would think that most of them would be well grounded in the essentials of the faith. Instead, so many have drifted away from a faith grounded in the Scriptures that they seem unaware of the judgment to come. Anyone ministering in the name of Christ in this region must understand that it takes hard, honest labor to produce any sort of crop. Even so, when the Lord gives a harvest, it seems all the more sweet since He has chosen and called us to be part of the process. We are the laborers sent out into His harvest field.

As hard as the work can be, we believe that God is rebuilding a foundation essential for renewal and revival. The men and women representing the CCCC here in southern New England are fully committed to bringing the Gospel and the sort of transformation that Paul speaks about in Romans 12:2, where we are commanded to *not conform any longer to the patterns of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds*. We here in Connecticut and Rhode Island, along with the rest of those plowing the fields of New England, covet your prayers, that we might once again flourish in the name of Christ.

On the inside...

From the Conference Minister	2
God is on the Move in Maine	3
Mission Notes	3
Joining Other Believers...	4
A Little "Tweak"	4
Timothy Dwight	5
Living Faithful Lives	6
Book Review	6&7
Tech Tips	7
Changes and Opportunities	7
Health Tips	7
Train a child in the way he should go	8

Church, What's in Our DNA?

Rev. Dr. Stephen Gammon, CCCC Conference Minister



Genesis 1 tells us God has created every kind of life *after its kind*. This means every new life inherits a genetic code from its family tree. In biology this is called DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). DNA is a nucleic acid containing the genetic instructions used in the development and function of all known organisms. It contains the genetic information that allows a living thing to function, grow and reproduce. DNA is sometimes compared to a set of blueprints. Within every cell DNA is organized into X shaped structures called chromosomes which are duplicated in a process called DNA replication. DNA can become damaged, however, by many different sorts of mutations, which

change the DNA sequence. Whenever that happens, the health of the body is compromised. I see parallels in the church.

The Church of Jesus Christ is a living organism too! Paul used such imagery when he called the church the Body of Christ, with each member as part of that living body. I would suggest that just as other living organisms inherit DNA that allows them to function, grow and reproduce, so does the church.

So what's in our DNA? What has God designed into the church enabling us to function, grow and produce for Him? One way of answering this question is to consider the first church, to see what church health looks like. I see eight preeminent qualities in the DNA of the first church in the book of Acts that I believe will be active in healthy 21st Century churches also. In each case I have provided Biblical evidence of these DNA qualities. All of these are possible for us because we have been born from above with such potential.

The DNA of a healthy church includes these:

1. We are born to be *Enthralled with Christ* and committed to Him — Acts 2:36–37 (We love Him and are committed to follow Jesus, personally and together!)
2. We are born to be *Biblically Informed* — Acts 2:42 (We are hungry for the Word of God)
3. We are born to be *Motivated by Love* — Acts 2:43–44; Matthew 22:37–40 (We love God and we love others because He first loved us)
4. We are born to be *Missionally Minded* — Acts 2:39–40, 47; 1:8; Matthew 28:18f (Making disciples is our shared passionate desire.)
5. We are born to be *Culturally Engaged* — Acts 2:46a; 3:1f; 5:12–14; 17:16–34 (We are going out, living our faith in the world.)
6. We are born to be *Communally Connected* — Acts 2:42; 46 (We are a household of faith together)
7. We are born to be *Generous Stewards* — Acts 2:45; 4:32–37 (We gladly give because 1.) God is the owner of all, 2.) We are stewards not owners, and 3.) We are blessed to be a blessing.)
8. We are born to be *Devoted in Prayer* — Acts 2:42; Colossians 4:2 (For us, He is the air we breathe; we need and want more of Him!)

This was the DNA of the first church. I believe we have inherited this DNA. Is it evident?

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God is on the Move in Maine

Rev. Terry H. Shanahan, Northeast Regional Minister

"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:7-8

There is so much going on in the Northeast, and I'd love to tell you all everything. But this month I want to tell about what is happening in Maine. Many of our Maine churches have been working through times of transition. The Second Congregational Church in Brewer, Good Shepherd's Cove in Arundel, First Parish Congregational in Lebanon, Faith Community in Lovell, and now, most recently announced, First Christian in Kittery, Maine have all had pastoral changes or vacancies. However, God is good. First Parish in Lebanon has called Pastor Mark Kraines as their settled pastor and we are all excited at the possibilities there. Second Congregational in Brewer is actively seeking a pastor, but is thriving with seasoned veteran Foster Williams as their intentional interim. Despite being in a time of transition, Good Shepherd's Cove has secured a new place to meet in a wonderful facility on Route 1 in Arundel. First Congregational Of Pittston has sought help from the Cornerstone Corps in replacing their pews and refurbishing their church. First Christian in Kittery has just said goodbye to Dr. Duane Kellogg after eleven years of faithful ministry there. They have pulpit supply in place for the summer and plans for an intentional interim starting in the fall.

The Maine Fellowship remains active in holding both spring and fall gatherings, as well as hosting quarterly breakfasts where all can gather for food, fellowship, worship and a time of prayer. I have not yet visited every church in Maine, but I have been able to meet most of the pastors through the fellowship activities.



One of the major highlights for me this year was an Evangelism Conference I participated in recently at Southwest Harbor Congregational Church. Pastor Blake Brown shared that this conference was an outgrowth of what the Lord had been laying on his heart for reaching the lost in our communities. The conference emphasized just how intentional, creative and missional the church must be to reach the lost. We learned that in Maine as well as the rest of New England, attendance at evangelical churches is at an all time low. The harvest is plentiful for those churches willing to move outside their four walls. The point was well made that as Christ's followers we need to get the focus off of ourselves and concentrate on the lost and dying.

Archbishop William Temple said, "The church is the only co-operative society in the world that exists for the benefit of its non-members." And it's true. The missional churches that are outwardly focused are the healthiest, most effective soul winners for Christ. The inwardly focused churches get sidetracked by their internal problems and ministry takes a back seat. The churches of Maine seem to understand that obedience to the Great Commission is of the highest priority. In that sense, they do keep the *main* thing the *Maine* thing.

In His Joy, Terry

Mission Notes

(Bruce and Carolyn Pinke are CCCC members working as missionaries with WEC International. Their ministry is with Muslims, particularly Somalis, in Minneapolis. The following came from a letter they sent to many of their supporters.)

God did a very special thing the other day. I (Carolyn) looked up to see a woman outside a house across the street. I knew that Thea, 93 years old and failing, lived there. I went over. It was Bonnie, a relative, sweeping the sidewalk for her mother-in-law. "Mom is failing seriously these last four days," she said softly. "May I go in and greet her?" I asked hesitantly. "Sure!"

When I greeted her and asked how she was feeling, she expressed sadness. I immediately offered to pray for her; she agreed and I did. Then she said that she didn't have peace. I then came to my knees beside her and took her hand. "Are you ready to meet the Father? Do you want to have peace?" She wanted prayer, so I basically led her in a "sinner's prayer." Bonnie brought back the coffee she had gone to get for me, and we all three visited a while longer. Then Bonnie went out with me, as I had offered the use of

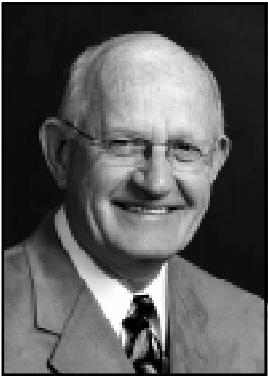
some friends' wheelchair. "Thank you so, so much for talking with her and for praying with her!" Bonnie said earnestly. "I am a believer — for just ten years now — and I have wanted to ask her but just couldn't get the words out. Her sons are also believers, but she just hasn't been open." (Thea just died yesterday morning, "at peace, and very ready to go!" her son said.)

Somalis are also in our prayers. We ask God to bring more to come to the literacy class. Only one older grandpa came last week! We met for the second time with our small group that yearns to see Somalis in the Kingdom. One Somali mosque leader in one area of Minneapolis wants to invite Christian church leaders in his area to dinner! Pray that God will use this to build deeper friendships, and that the Word will accomplish God's purpose in other lives.

Bruce and Carolyn

Joining Other Believers...

Dr. Ron Hamilton, CCCC Director of Church Multiplication



The vision statement of the Church Multiplication Committee begins by saying,

The CCCC has joined other Christians in our nation in making extraordinary followers of Jesus through a church planting movement that raises up new churches that love God, love others and make disciples.

Our commitment to church multiplication began in 1999, when a group of pastors went to a church planting training seminar in Indianapolis. This group of pastors not only learned about the ministry of church planting, they also witnessed the commitment of a large group of people from a variety of denominations to evangelistic outreach through church planting. This led us to join others in the work as a faithful response to what God was already doing in our nation.

There was a significant emphasis on church planting in the 1980s that involved many denominations. Thousands of new evangelical churches were planted across the nation late in the last century. We now find ourselves in a new era of church

planting, and the CCCC is actively a part of this new movement. The current emphasis in church multiplication is based on a Kingdom mission to make more disciples. In contrast, the last wave of church planting concentrated on adding churches. We believe that these are unusual times that provide a great opportunity to reach people with the Gospel through the development of new churches. We are joining God and others in that work.

I have received encouragement and practical advice from church multiplication leaders in other denominations. Our training from the Praxis Center for Church Development is based on the learning from other church leaders and bodies. I participate quarterly with other church multiplication leaders from this region to share ideas and pray for each other. The Mission America Coalition is convening a Church Planting Leadership Network to help denominational leaders connect and collaborate around church planting.

God is bringing people together today to lay the foundation for a time of renewal and revival in our land through the development of a broad-based church multiplication movement. We are excited to join other Christians in our nation in this work.

A Little “Tweak” Can Make a World of Difference

Dr. John Kimball, CCCC Director of Conference Care and Church Redevelopment

I will never forget the first time I was able to tour the battleship *Wisconsin*, now docked as part of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum in Norfolk, Virginia. Walking through the museum’s main gate and staring up at her several-story-high nose is actually breathtaking. You never get a grasp of how enormous these grand old ladies are until you walk the gangway. Very impressive!

While on board, I learned an important fact that has remained prominently with me all these years — in fact, it actually helps to motivate me in my ministry with the CCCC. It concerns those huge Mark 7 guns on her deck — 16-inch diameter, 66-foot-long barrels, firing a 2,700 pound projectile. A seemingly insignificant, fractional error in the angle of those guns when fired makes a difference of miles on the location where those shells will drop and do their destruction. Unlike today’s “smarter” bombs that can be directed in flight, those guns require precise accuracy when being aimed, or the consequences can be tragic.

There is a misunderstanding that our work in Church Redevelopment is for dying and dysfunctional churches. While that is certainly one of our main emphases (because the

church attrition rate is still increasing, as David Olson shared at our Annual Family Conference just concluded in Waterloo, Iowa), it is NOT true that only dysfunctional churches benefit from our help. Even healthy pastors and congregations will benefit from the *LifeFlow* Church Development Process

Through thorough assessment, strategic training and a season of coaching, virtually every local church will see a significant difference in her ministry over time. Like the difference a fractional adjustment makes on the aim of a Mark 7, a well-placed “tweak” in a church’s ministry planning and practice can produce incredible results further out. If you’d like more information, contact our office at (651) 739-1474 or use the Contact Us tab on our website at www.cccusa.com. Someone from the Church Redevelopment team will get back with you!



Timothy Dwight, President of Yale College

The career of Timothy Dwight illustrates how, with godly leadership, institutions of higher learning can be powerful instruments for the kingdom of God. Timothy Dwight's preaching and teaching brought a spiritual awakening to the students of Yale College. Many went on to give their lives to the gospel ministry.

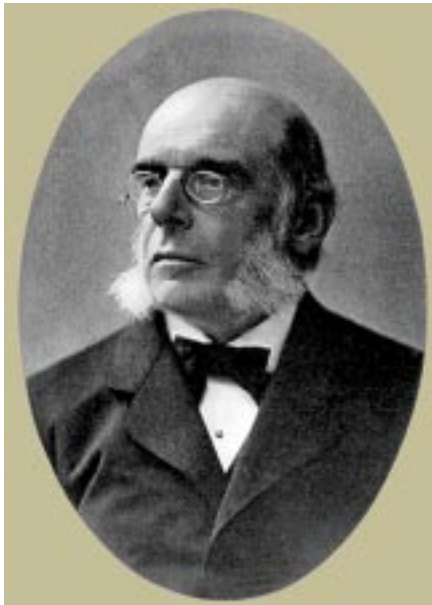
He was a grandson of Jonathan Edwards, the son of Jonathan and Sarah's third daughter Mary. He was born in Northampton, Massachusetts May 14, 1752. As was true of many in the Edwards clan, he showed remarkable precocity. He is said to have learned the alphabet at a single lesson, and to have been able to read the Bible before he was four years old. He graduated from Yale College at the age of seventeen, and became a tutor at the college when he was twenty. His eyesight became impaired as a result of illness and his intense studies, and he required the help of an assistant to read to him and take dictation.

Dwight served as a chaplain during the American Revolution, inspiring the troops with his sermons and the patriotic songs he wrote. Because of his father's death, he resigned his commission in the army and returned to Northampton to manage the family farm. He also taught school and served two terms in the Massachusetts legislature.

In 1783 he accepted a call to a church in Greenfield Hill (now Southport), Connecticut. While there he established an academy that drew students from a wide area. He emerged as a leader among the evangelical "New Divinity" party within Congregationalism. He was elected to the presidency of Yale College upon the death of president Ezra Stiles in 1795, despite the fact that Stiles, as a religious moderate, had personally disapproved of him.

He began his presidency of Yale during a troubled period in its history. Many of the students were attracted to the skeptical philosophy and political radicalism of the French Revolution. Orthodox Christianity was despised by most of the students, and some took the name of a favorite French radical, such

as Voltaire or Rousseau, as their nickname. President Dwight met the skepticism of the students head-on. He led a discussion with students on the question, "Is the Bible the Word of God?" and invited those who took the negative position to do their best. He followed this with a series of lectures in which the inspiration of the Bible was defended. After this, as Rev. Lyman Beecher would later record in his memoirs, "all infidelity skulked and hid its head." (*Autobiography*, Vol. 1, p. 43) According to J. Edwin Orr, "The tide began to turn at Yale and came in full flood in 1802. One third of the student body made profession of faith that year." (*Campus Aflame*, p. 40) Under Dwight's leadership, Yale produced a continuing stream of notable Christian leaders. Until his death in 1817, he remained a powerful spiritual influence upon the students.



He was well known as an author, preacher and theologian. He wrote the well-known hymn "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord." His five-volume set of sermons entitled *Theology Explained and Defended* became a standard work in the first half of the nineteenth century,

and has recently been republished by Solid Ground Christian Books. His *Travels in New England and New York* (four volumes) has also been reprinted in modern times, and remains a valuable historical source on social and economic conditions in the Northeast at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He was also active in public life, becoming one of the founders of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and Andover Theological Seminary.

Timothy Dwight had eight sons. His son Sereno Edwards Dwight has previously been profiled (*Foresee*, February 2009) as the second pastor of Park Street Church in Boston. A grandson of Timothy Dwight who shared his name also became president of Yale, serving from 1886-1899, just one instance of the remarkable giftedness and usefulness displayed by the descendants of Jonathan Edwards through many generations.

Living Faithful Lives

by Pastor Larry Wood, pastor of Emmanuel Bethel Church in Royal Oak, Michigan and President of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference

I believe we face a crisis in American Christianity. This crisis is rooted in our thinking that belief means simply intellectual assent. When the question is asked, “Do you believe in Jesus?” We answer, “Yes.” What we are really saying with our Yes is that we have heard that Jesus is the Savior and that we have no particular intellectual objection to that idea. The problem, and hence crisis, is that belief or faith in the Biblical usage of the term means more than knowledge or assent.

Real Christian belief or faith only begins with knowledge. It begins with hearing and understanding the Word of God. Patriarchs, prophets and apostles spoke the Word of the Lord as the Holy Spirit directed them for the benefit of God’s people. So we do begin with the concept of mental assent, affirming that what God has said is true. The second step requires a commitment of trust. When we have heard God’s invitation, we must decide to trust Him and follow. The question becomes, “Do we REALLY believe that what God has said is true and trustworthy?” If we believe, we will commit our lives to follow Him and we’ll arrive where He has promised.

There is another step in Biblical faith or belief. That next step requires a significant change in our lives. When God speaks, He always invites us to change our position. He invites us to step out in faith, trusting Him and beginning a life journey of obedience. Change means letting go of my old world view, my old habits, and even possibly old friends. Jesus leads us into the new life of obedience, service, worship and joy.

We struggle with this issue of releasing the past. Take, for example, the word repentance. In much modern Christian thinking repentance simply means saying, “I’m sorry.” We admit we erred and acknowledge it with an expression of regret. If we move a little deeper, it may mean, “I ask your forgiveness.” I may be willing to confront you, admit my error or failing and ask for your forgiveness. But what is missing is a Biblical understanding of repentance, which means turning away and not repeating the action.

You are intimately familiar with the text from James 1:22 ^{RSV}, *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* You have heard countless sermons on the subject, and examined it in various Bible study groups. But in truth, aren’t we primarily hearers and not doers?

What am I really getting at, or what is it I want from this thread? I want us to recommit (or begin in some cases) to living faithful lives. Not in part or on occasion but in the entirety of every day. Let us begin today to put away everything that does not honor Christ. Start with your thinking patterns. I recognize, that we live in challenging times. Stock markets, bankruptcies, job losses, wars, reduced income streams and an untold host of frustrating cultural issues overwhelm us. YET THE TRUTH IS THAT GOD LOVES US, IS IN CONTROL OF ALL THINGS, PLACED US WHERE WE ARE AND WATCHES OVER US IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES. Furthermore, He has a plan designed for us to maximize our usefulness and effectiveness. We need to grasp these truths and begin to think in agreement with Him.

Next, we must change what and how we do things to agree with God’s plan and purpose. We must begin to live righteous lives. Notice I didn’t say perfect. Rather, I commit myself to always doing the right thing. Yes, I know that WWJD (what would Jesus do) is tired and overworked; however, the basic truth encompassed in the slogan is the essence of righteousness. We begin this by making the commitment and then acting upon it.

Notice I have not asked or mentioned how you feel about any of this. The reason is simple. Wise life choices are made on the basis of rational evaluation of reliable, accurate, information — not on any “gut feelings.” Just because I don’t feel like it doesn’t mean it’s not the right and best decision to make and action to take. We need to live intentional, thoughtful lives that strive to honor God. The rational, intentional decision to follow Jesus, when acted upon with complete abandon, brings joy, peace and gladness. Emotion is our response to the volitional decision of faithful obedience. The real secret of Godly success is walking the talk.

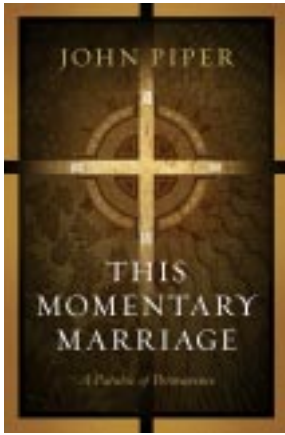
Book Review: *This Momentary Marriage* by John L. Piper

Reviewed by Jeff Holton, pastor of Spring Valley Congregational Church, Spring Valley, Wisconsin

I have read a lot of books on marriage. The funny thing though is that most books on marriage (whether written by a Christian author or not) have very little to say that is actually helpful or even realistic. Most books focus on how to “stay in love” or “keep the flame burning” in your marriage relationship. Let’s face it, if anyone reading this review is married you know of the difficulties that come with marriage and the fact is we cannot sustain our

marriages based only on feelings or staying in love. Granted, being in love is a very important part of marriage but sometimes people think that marriage is only about this “Staying in love.” Then when we no longer “feel” like we are in love we think this is grounds for separation or divorce.

John Piper tackles the issues of what true marriage is in his latest book, *This Momentary Marriage*. Piper notes in his opening chapter that we as Americans have such a low attitude



towards marriage that the Biblical model actually seems ridiculous to people all around (even Christians). One of his key statements in this book is “Staying married is not about staying in love... it’s about keeping covenant.” He writes, “Most foundationally, marriage is the doing of God. Most ultimately, marriage is the display of God. It is designed by God to display His glory that no other event or institution does.” He goes on to show how Jesus displayed marriage by his commitment to the body of Christ (the Church), and the fact that He will never leave her or divorce her. Ultimately what Piper

suggests is that if Christians would truly view marriage in this way divorce would be reduced. In addition to the idea “marriage is not about staying in love..., it’s about keeping covenant.” Piper also spends a number of chapters on headship, fearless submission, raising children, singleness, sex and even touches on divorce (this chapter is very insightful).

This *Momentary Marriage* is the best book I have read on marriage for no other reason than John L. Piper is able to use Biblical proofs for every statement he makes (regardless of how outrageous some may sound). I know if I had read this book before I got married I would have had a healthier view on what marriage is, and would have entered into this covenant relationship much differently. Thankfully, by the grace of God I have a marriage that is centered in Christ and is a healthy marriage (since I am involved it is far from perfect). I would highly recommend this book for any married or engaged couple. This book will be a resource that will be invaluable to you and your spouse.

Changes and Opportunities

Pastoral Changes:

Avon, MN Avon Community Church (Youth and Family Pastor) *
Joshua Ottoson

Pastoral Openings:

Brighton, CO Zion Congregational Church * (Associate Pastor)
Wethersfield, CT First Church of Christ
Buffalo Center, IA First Congregational Church *
Garner, IA Zion Evangelical and Reformed Church *
Paul, ID Ebenezer Congregational Church *
Rockland, ID Rockland Congregational Church (Part-time) *
Round Lake, IL Community Church of Round Lake *
Billerica, MA Community Congregational Church *
Boxford, MA First Church Congregational * (Minister of Youth & Music)
South Grafton, MA Union Congregational Church * (Part-time)
Brewer, ME Second Congregational Church *
Maple Rapids, MI Maple Rapids Congregational Christian Church *
(Youth Pastor)
Mantorville, MN First Congregational Church *
Kulm, ND First Congregational Church *
Loysburg, PA St. John’s Reformed Church *
Suffolk, VA Cypress Chapel Christian Church *
Wilton, WI Faith Congregational Church *

* = Conference member

+ = In process

Tech Tips

by Teddie Techie

New Computers

When upgrading to a new computer, be sure to plan on unforeseen expenses. Most likely, your new computer will have a different operating system. You may be changing from PC to Mac or from Windows XP to Windows Vista. Whichever one you choose, no doubt some of your software will not work with the new system. For some there will be downloads that enable the transition, but for others you will simply have to buy new software. I would recommend looking carefully at which software packages will have to be replaced, so you can include them in your budget.

Health Tips

Remembering

As it ages, the brain needs more time to recall information from memory and to learn new information. Daily functioning should not be affected. We can continue to learn as we age but it will take more time. Aging causes our long term recent memory (what did I have for breakfast) to decline. High level language tasks, such as crossword puzzles and reading are beneficial. Some strategies to help with recall are writing information down and always placing items in the same place.

Source: carelink news briefs, june/july 2009

Staying Energized

Adults need between seven and nine hours of sleep each night. Having a regular sleep pattern will help you stay energized during the day. Eating a breakfast containing protein and carbohydrates will help with energy and concentration during the day. Munching on healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables can help beat an energy slump during the day. Increasing your exercise, even moderately to 20–30 minutes a day will make you feel more energetic. If you feel you must nap, keep it to 10–30 minutes to prevent you from getting too groggy. Check with your doctor if fatigue lasts for a few weeks or interferes with your daily activities.

Source: Healthy Living, Spring 2009

Betty Mitchell, RN, Parish Nurse
Emmanuel Bethel Church



Conservative
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Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6



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there's a lot to choose from.

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