

“THE MEADOWS MESSENGER”
A Communication of Quaker Meadows Presbyterian Church
February 2019, Issue



**December 2018 and January 2019
Financial Reports**

We hope that you find this information helpful as you pray for this congregation and evaluate your giving and participation in the worship, work and mission of this part of the Body of Christ. Sincerely, the Session and Pastor.

DECEMBER 2018

Total Tithes and Offerings needed (4 weeks)	\$8,722.40
Actual Tithes and Offerings received (4 weeks)	\$7,351.00
This results in a budget shortage for this month	(\$1,371.40)
Total Expenses (4 weeks) resulting in an overage for the month	(\$1,648.93)

YEAR TO DATE 2018

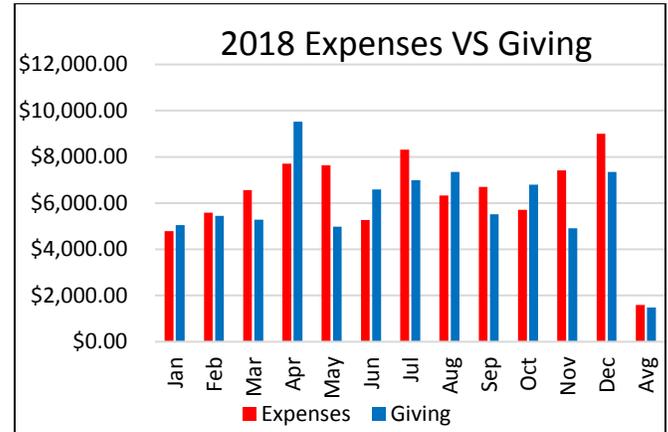
Total Tithes and Offerings needed (52 weeks)	\$90,173.00
Actual Tithes and Offerings (52 weeks) received	\$75,794.75
This results in a budget shortage to this point	(\$14,918.25)
Total Expenses (52 weeks) This results in a shortage to expenses for the year	(\$5,188.98)

Tithes and Offerings needed for each week of 2019 = \$1,700.73. This figure is based on a total 2019 budget of \$88,438.00 which was approved by the Session.

JANUARY 2019

Total Tithes and Offerings needed (2 weeks only)	\$3,401.46
Actual Tithes and Offerings received (2 weeks only)	\$2,135.00
This results in a budget shortage for this month	(\$1,266.46)
Total Expenses (2 weeks only) resulting in a shortage for the month	(\$1,354.20)

For those of you who understand a chart better than a bunch of numbers, below is the 'picture' of our YTD finances for December 2018 (through week 5 of 5):



Session Highlights

There is no new Session activity to report at the time of this printing.

Some Bible Trivia

1. What famous rabbi was Paul's teacher?
2. Who commissioned Ezra to teach the law of Israel?
3. According to Jesus, who would teach his followers all they needed to know?
4. Which apostle taught in Tyrannus' lecture hall?
5. What New Testament word means 'teacher'?

How We Might Respond to Trouble in Our Lives

Once upon a time a daughter complained to her father that her life was miserable and that she didn't know how she was going to make it. She was tired of fighting and struggling all the time. It seemed just as one problem was solved, another one soon followed.

Her father, who was a chef, took her to the kitchen. He filled three pots with water and placed each on a high heat setting. Once the three pots began to boil, he placed potatoes in one pot,

eggs in the second pot and ground coffee beans in the third pot. He then let them sit and boil, without saying a word to his daughter.

The daughter, moaned and impatiently waited, wondering what he was doing. After twenty minutes he turned off the burners. He took the potatoes out of the pot and placed them in a bowl. He pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. He then ladled the coffee out and placed it in a cup.

Turning to her, he asked: “Daughter, what do you see?”

“Potatoes, eggs and coffee,” she hastily replied.

“Look closer” he said, “Touch the potatoes.” She did and noticed that they were soft.

He then asked her to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg.

Finally, he asked her to sip the coffee. Its rich aroma brought a smile to her face.

“Father, what does this mean?” she asked.

He then explained that the potatoes, the eggs and coffee beans had each faced the same adversity – the boiling water. However, each one reacted differently. The potato went in strong and hard, but in boiling water, it became soft and weak. The egg was fragile, with the thin outer shell protecting its liquid interior until it was put in the boiling water. Then the inside of the egg became hard. However, the ground coffee beans were unique. After they were exposed to the boiling water, they changed the water and created something new.

“Which one are you?” he asked his daughter.

“When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a potato, an egg, or a coffee bean?”

¹ Homiletics, Volume 22, Number 1, January/February 2010, pp. 15-17 and Volume 19, Number 1, January/February 2007, pp. 12-14.

The Morale of the Story: In life, things happen around us and things happen to us, but the only thing that truly matters is how we choose to respond to them and what we make out of them. Life is all about leaning, adapting and converting all the struggles that we experience into something positive. We are especially able to respond positively to life’s challenges with the help of our friends and God’s Spirit who helps us to live as people of hope and creativity in the world.

The Pastor’s Ponderings

On January 13th (and on January 20th – due to an illness) this congregation installed three elders for a three-year term on the Session. As I was preparing the sermon for the 13th, I read several commentaries on Isaiah 43:1-7.¹ I could not include all the good nuggets of theological importance I found in that sermon, so I decided to include them here. Before I unpack the passage, it is important that you read it.

¹ But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. ³ For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. ⁴ Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. ⁵ Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; ⁶ I will say to the north, “Give them up,” and to the south, “Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth –

⁷ everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

This passage is part of a section of Isaiah (chapters 40-55) which biblical scholars call the “Consolation of Judah”. It is an oracle promising the people of Israel that, despite their suffering and fear, their God will ultimately deliver them from all that keeps them from fulfilling their identity as God’s chosen people.

The opening lines of the oracle are classic Hebrew parallelistic poetry:

“he (A)
who created you (B),
O Jacob (C)
he (A')
who formed you (B'),
O Israel (C).”

The language of this part of Isaiah has long been known to rely heavily on images of creation, and it is not accidental that this oracle includes two verbs – create and form – found in both creation narratives in Genesis. The Hebrew verb *bara*, “to create”, means to create something not from meta-physical nothingness (a concept known by the Latin phrase, *creatio ex nihilo*) but from that which is not humanly usable or useful.

Neither the story of creation in Genesis nor the several narratives of Israel’s origins suggest that either was created from nothing; rather, both were created by the deliberate action of God working on existent realities (the primordial watery chaos in the case of the creation; the distinct tribes and peoples in the case of Israel).

The parallel verb *yatzar*, “to form”, is used most frequently to describe the work of potters (e.g., Isaiah 29:16; 41:25; Jeremiah 18:4, 6) and woodcarvers (Isaiah 44:9-10, 12; Habakkuk 2:18, referring to graven images). *Yatzar* is also used in Genesis 2:7-8 to describe God’s forming the *’adam* from the *’adamah* – literally: the “earthling from the earth” (or the “human from the humus”, an intentional pun).

When I have taught previously the meaning of this phrase from Genesis, I have said it this way: We might miss the humor here, so let me say it some other ways: God created man out of the dust so he called him ‘Dusty.’ Or God created man out of Georgia red dirt so he called him ‘Clay.’

The Hebrew verb, *yatzar* (to form), does get extended in meaning to include forming thoughts and plans (e.g., Psalm 94:20), but this usage is less frequent. The word denotes external more than internal activity, which is the point the book of Isaiah makes frequently: Israel’s existence is not merely an idea but an actual physical reality dependent on the prior action of its God (Isaiah 27:11; 43:21; 44:2, 21, 22; 45:9; etc.).

The Hebrew verb, *gaal*, which is translated as “redeemed” has acquired enormous theological content over the centuries, but in its earliest use it simply meant “to act as kinsman” in two important areas: to restore a dead man’s name from oblivion by fathering offspring with his widow (the so-called “levirate marriage” dramatized in the book of Ruth), and to restore a family’s ancestral property which was lost through indebtedness. The *go`el* (“redeemer”) was the person who bore this responsibility, whether he fulfilled it or not (as in Job’s lament 19:25, where he complains that although he knows his redeemer lives, that redeemer is not, as expected, coming to Job’s aid).

The fundamental sense of the verb *gaal* is to restore something to its rightful condition. God’s redemptive activity on Israel’s behalf was fully historical and physical: redemption from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 15:13; Deuteronomy 7:8), dispersion among the peoples (Nehemiah 1:10) and, here, Babylonian exile, among many other distresses.

The Lord speaks in the first person in verses 1 and 7 about calling his people by name. In many cultures, to name someone is to endow the person with special meaning or power. In Genesis 2:18-24 the Lord God brought created beings to the man/Adam to see what he would name them,

including the one closest to him, whom Man called Woman. In this passage from Isaiah, God tenderly remembers the people he has called, by God's very own name. And there is no stronger biblical name than God's name – Yahweh, sometimes translated as Jehovah. God will consequently show care for the Yahweh-named people of Jacob/Israel/Judah, because they belong to God; they were created and formed for God's own glory. (See Isaiah 40:25-31.) Some Christian traditions historically have name-giving as part of the baptism of a young child; and likewise, all followers of Jesus can come to the realization that we have the name of Jesus Christ placed upon us.

So, God's people have no need to fear (v. 1b and see also v. 5a), "for I [the Lord] have redeemed you." God is Judah's redeemer (*go`el*). In the culture of the time, if someone was in bondage to another person, the next of kin, as "redeemer", could ransom/buy back that person out of servitude. (See New Testament passages, where Jesus is our *go`el*, where he is understood to be the one who made ransom for us: Mark 10:45; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 5:9. Similarly Jesus is actually called our Redeemer: Luke 1:68-69; Galatians 3:13-14; Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 1:7-8a and Colossians 1:13-14.) The bottom line meaning is that neither Judah nor we can rescue/ransom/redeem ourselves from bondage; only God can.

Isaiah 43:2 ff. gives several analogical examples of how God will deliver Judah. God promises to be with them when they "pass through the waters" and "walk through fire" (v. 2). Because God is with them (see also v. 5a), they will not be utterly destroyed in such life-threatening situations. God is with us also, most completely fulfilled in Jesus, named Emmanuel (Matthew 1:23), which is taken from the Immanuel of Isaiah 7:14. God-with-Us bears us up through situations that would otherwise totally overwhelm us and lead to our doom.

The title, "Savior", is a verbal participle meaning "the one who is saving/rescuing you." The words

"Lord" and "Savior" are placed together elsewhere in Isaiah, in 43:11, 45:21, 49:26, and 60:16. Linguistically the Hebrew word *yasha'* is related to the name "Jesus", who is identified in the New Testament as the Lord who would save/deliver not only Jews (Judahites) but also the people of all the world (see for example, Matthew 1:21; John 3:16-18; Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9-13). Similarly, Jesus Christ is called "Lord" and "Savior" in the same verse, in such passages as Luke 2:11, Philippians 3:20; and 2 Peter 3:18.

God's great love for Israel, as well as his unique relationship with Israel, is reflected in the statement (vv. 3-4) that other nations have been given as Israel's "ransom" (v. 3) or "in exchange" for Israel (vv. 3, 4). The prophet is not implying that other nations have been literally sacrificed for the sake of Israel's prosperity but rather that divine favor was shown to a nation that did not deserve it any more than those nations that did not receive it. This was an important and overlooked component of Israel's theology of election: Israel did nothing to merit divine favor because its sins, as the prophets observed with thundering regularity, were often identical to those of the nations whom the Lord had rejected.

The oracle concludes, as it began, with the verbs of creation: "whom I created ... whom I formed and made" (v. 7). This "envelope structure" (technically called an "*inclusio*") reflects the literary artistry of the poet both in providing structural cohesion to the passage and also in emphasizing the link between the world's creation, Israel's creation and, in the face of imminent redemption, Israel's re-creation. The same applies to us as Christians. We have been created and recreated in the face of all kinds of threats, into God's people.

I hope that you have gotten a sense of the power and intimacy of this passage. God's work in us and among us is all about redemption and re-creation, because he loves us and wants us to fully be the people he has called us to be. Without God-

with-Us, in the person of Jesus and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we would indeed be lost in the mire of sin and darkness of evil of this world with no hope of salvation. But thanks be to God there is One who redeems and saves.

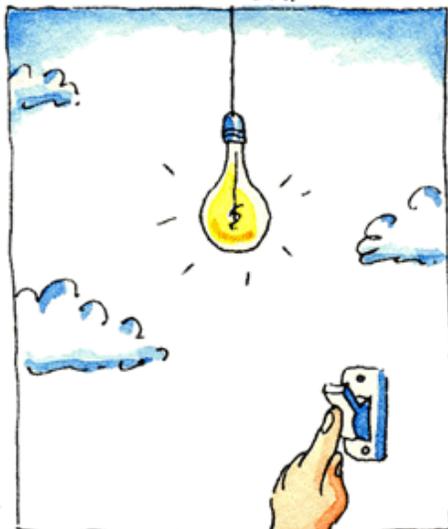
Pastor Yvonne

**An Alternative Interpretation of Creation
by Jewish Humorist Richard Codor**

<https://littleblogofjewishhumor.com/2008/02/>

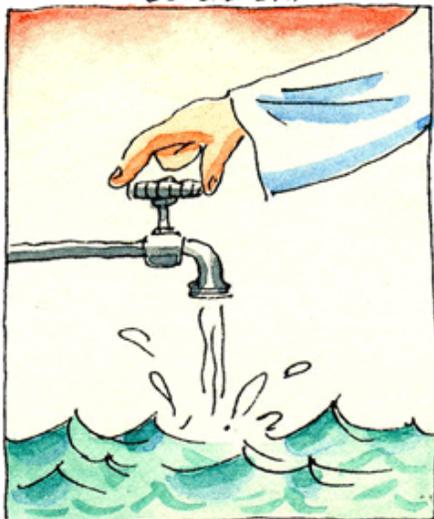
THE SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION

FIRST DAY



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SECOND DAY



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THIRD DAY



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FOURTH DAY

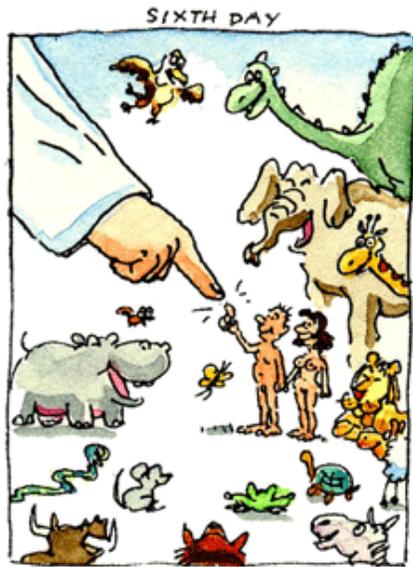


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FIFTH DAY



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Some Bible Trivia Answers

1. Gamaliel – Acts 22:3
2. King Artaxerxes – Ezra 7:25
3. The Holy Spirit – John 14:26
4. Paul – Acts 18:24-26
5. Rabbi – John 1:38

From NECCO Wafer to Candy Heart²

Valentine’s Day means chalky candy hearts with a lot to say, otherwise known as conversation hearts. But what’s behind these little candies?

The story of conversation hearts began in 1847, when a Boston pharmacist named Oliver Chase longed for a way to get in on the apothecary lozenge craze. Lozenges were quickly gaining steam as the medicine system of choice, and were also popular remedies for sore throats and bad breath. But making lozenges was complicated and time-consuming – the process involved a mortar and pestle, kneading dough, rolling it out, and cutting it into discs that would eventually become lozenges.

There had to be a better way, and Oliver came up with it. Inspired by the new wave of gadgets and tools that hit America as it industrialized, he invented a machine that rolled lozenge dough and pressed wafers into perfect discs. Oliver had inadvertently created America’s first candy-making machine, and before long, he had abandoned his pharmacy business to crank out miles of what would become New England Confectionery Company (NECCO) wafers.



Legend has it that Oliver’s NECCO wafers were carried by Civil War soldiers, and some speculate that the tradition of sending loving

² Adapted from “The Origin of the Conversation Heart By Erin Blakemore: <http://mentalfloss.com/article/61510/history-conversation-heart>

