

## The Boxes I Put You In

By Don Ober

That is likely the title of a song I've been contemplating writing, if I ever get it done. Are you possibly saying, like a once more pompous version of myself would have said, "Not me! I don't put God in boxes!"?

Oh really? It starts with a mere vision of what God will look like when we meet him. Will He be a white haired, Charlton Heston looking, wise God? Will He be the younger Jesus, possibly holding you in his arms? Will He be the buff Carpenter, Healer, Teacher, Savior, reaching out His hand and saying, "Well done My good and faithful servant"? Or will you awake to a throne room with one preconceived look of God in one throne with the glowing powerful righteous warrior Jesus in the other throne? Will it be "thunderous" or "mystifying"? We all have these pre-conceived notions, whether we want to admit it or not. Or we at least contemplated some of them enough to drive us on a deeper quest.

Then I find myself feeling quite puffed up that "I" am wise enough to "know Jesus." Some of us wear this conviction around our necks, almost as our own version of virtue signaling. I often wonder if we ever bragged to Jesus how well we knew Him, if maybe He would say, "Then explain why all the divisions in My church." We all have dogma that becomes very deeply held with conviction, and to a degree, maybe it's necessary? Maybe not? I'm not equipped to answer that.

I once tuned a piano at a church that was held in a building, no bigger than a very small home. The church had an unusual name but I'll refrain from telling it. Just a few houses down from there was another church, almost as small. I

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**A time of fellowship and lunch was enjoyed after the children's presentation of the Christmas Story. Many thanks to Tom and Kate Taylor for all their work with the children's Sunday School.**



## **“The Boxes I Put You In,” continued...**

mentioned to the lady in our conversations, “You are so small and that other church is as well. Have you ever thought of combining your mission?” Her reply floored me. It was, “Absolutely not! They are foot washers!” I thought to myself, “How bizarre.” She explained that the other church had a custom of replicating Christ doing this each year and they did not approve. These two bodies of believers were deeply divided over that? Makes me momentarily feel quite proud of myself that I am not so petty as them. That is until I realize we all are at times.

Is God’s power so awesome that we cannot really understand it? But we allow ourselves to be so utterly committed to tenants of faith that others disagree with. I don’t understand the debate entirely on all these differences. There are many of these, and I’m not really prepared to defend my own much less everyone else’s. However, the more I learn the more I realize I’m a work in progress.

Is it possible God does not want us to know him? Did I just suggest God is hiding something about himself, from the ones He loved so much that He died for? How preposterous? Not really, if He is trying to tell us to, “know His heart”?

That becomes much deeper! How do we do that? By reading His Word, of course. But there is so much more in this quest. If it’s not an insatiable hunger of yours, may I suggest it should be. In talking to God each day, as a friend, someone to praise, confess, beg and use all the other human expressions we have, openly along with Him, as if He is there in the room with us. Because He is! That is one of my convictions. Ironic, that it comes up huh?

I pontificated the other day this concept of our putting God inside our preconceived boxes to a friend. He is a great born-again Christian

friend of mine, and yet he answered me with an unusual response. He said, “Some believe that if you can say you totally understand God, then that god is probably not God, because He is unfathomable.” That got me thinking, has God ever acted like that though?

Well, yes, possibly! When Moses asked the burning bush for the name of God, what was God’s response? *“Tell them I am who I am.”* It sounds like, “You can’t possibly understand Me. I just am who I am. If you tried to look directly at Me you would surely die. That’s all you need to know.” Noah heard a voice from heaven, so did others in the Bible, and yet people tremble at this voice because that voice is unimaginable! Man has come up with many names for God, but many of these names, ironically, come from a human desire to put a name to character traits of our God. God is indescribable. Is He not?

Getting closer to Christ and further away from boxes can only empower us! Boxes serve to limit God’s power in our lives, due to our faith in these limits, rather than Him. In Christ all things are possible if we have the faith of a mustard seed! This conversation with a believer friend made me more convinced now that I’ll never be able to totally describe God! Isn’t that wonderful?

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## **New Email Address?**

If you have changed your email address or are not receiving the weekly Windsor Chapel emails containing the links for the live streaming of our worship service, please send your new email address to Dorothy at chapel@windsorchapel.org, and we’ll update our database. This will also enable you to participate in the live streaming of the Budget and Annual Meetings and receive regular email updates from Windsor Chapel regarding winter weather closings and other important chapel news. Please also let us know if you have changed your home address or phone numbers.

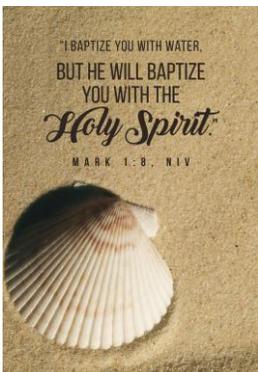


## Happy Birthday!

Blessings to all who celebrate a birthday this month. May you feel the love, joy and presence of the Lord as we all celebrate your special day with prayers and warmest wishes.

Nathaniel Ventura January 1  
Elena Yamamoto January 8  
Merkle Cherry January 11  
Kristin Westbrook January 25  
Timothy MacQueen January 26

## Believer's Baptism



Baptism is an outward act symbolizing an inward change and an important step in the journey of a believer. It is an opportunity for believers to make a public profession of their faith in Jesus. Through baptism we identify with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A Believers Baptism will be held on Sunday, January 21, at Windsor Chapel, during the worship service. If you are interested in a Believer's Baptism, please contact Pastor Andy at [andrew.straubel@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.straubel@gmail.com).

## 2024 Congregational Meetings

### Budget Information Meeting

Please attend in person, or virtually, the Budget Information Meeting on Sunday, January 14, at 11:00 am, to hear about the Chapel's finances and the proposed budget for 2024. This will be the time to ask questions in preparation for the vote on the budget at the Annual Meeting. There will be a private live stream set up for this meeting with a chat feature that will enable people at home to submit questions to the moderator.

### Annual Meeting

Join us on Sunday, January 28, at 11:00 am, to hear and celebrate in retrospect the events and activities of 2023, and to vote on the 2024 budget and leaders. Since a quorum of 50% of members is required, please plan to attend or submit a proxy ballot by mail or drop it off in the special ballot box on the front porch of the chapel house. There will also be a private live stream of this meeting, and the method for virtual voting and links for the live stream will be emailed.

## Perisseia

Our women's growth group will begin a new, eight-week series on Thursday, January 25, 7:00-8:30. This series will be remote, via Zoom. If you have not participated in Perisseia recently and would like a Zoom invitation, please see or contact Cindy Bills ([cynthialbills@gmail.com](mailto:cynthialbills@gmail.com)). We will be looking at the continuity from the Old Testament, to the New Testament, to our current lives of faith.

## Elders' Corner

By Ed MacQueen

On behalf of the elders, welcome to the new year! I praise God for all He did in and through us in 2023. Was God faithful to you this past year? He never fails. *If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.* No matter what may come, His word promises *God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.* He is good, and holds all things in His hands.

As we enter the new year, the elders are seeking God's wisdom and for our body for 2024. We pray God will guide us in His perfect will, strengthening we who believe to grow more like Christ. We also praise God for the new faces among us throughout 2023! May He continue to draw all people to Himself.

It seems fitting as we begin 2024 to take a moment to express the elders' gratitude for everyone who serves in so many different ways. Without you, Windsor Chapel couldn't function! There are some who serve front and center, and there are some who serve behind the scenes, and *all of it* is critical to the proper working of His body. When we serve we are blessing one another, and ultimately we are blessing the Lord. Thank you for everything you do.

If you sense you have the capacity to serve in new or different ways in 2024, please don't let the opportunity pass you by! Bring what you have to the Lord, for He is able to multiply our labors in ways we cannot anticipate.

On behalf of the elders, may 2024 be a wonderful year for you. My prayer is that together we would continue being conformed to the image of his Son, *being transformed in the renewing of our mind.*

## *Perisseia* *Christmas Cookie Exchange*



It was a relaxing and festive evening in December at Straubels', our Christmas tradition of sharing and eating cookies. All women were welcome!

**You never know how much you really  
believe anything until its truth or  
falsehood becomes a matter of life and  
death to you.  
C. S. Lewis**

## Further Up and Further In

*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in  
and among us*



By Cindy Bills

### Time and Eternity

Although much of the Old Testament seems far removed from our modern-day lives and even from our New Testament-based faith, we can learn a good bit from the Old Testament. As we come face-to-face with a new year, I believe that it is instructive and constructive to consider what the Old Testament can teach us about the passing of time that we traditionally celebrate as we come upon a new year.

A reading of Genesis 1 reveals that first and foremost, the passing of time is inherent in God's creation and in His plan for His creatures: the cycle of days and nights and the coming and going of seasons bring us through each year; the reproduction and development of all living things define lifetimes.

*Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years."*

And with the passage of time comes the memory of shared events, intended by the Lord to build our faith before Him and to build and deepen relationships with one another. We read about the Sabbath, celebrated weekly, to remember and honor the Lord as a community. There is Rosh Hashanah, a gathering to prepare the people for Yom Kippur, the day of recognizing the sin problem among us and looking for atonement by fasting and making sacrifices. There is Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, to commemorate the LORD leading His people out of slavery in Egypt, and the Feast of Booths, in memory of the time the people lived in booths after leaving

Egypt. The Feast of First Fruits reminds God's people of His faithfulness as they entered the Promised Land and exercising their trust in that faithfulness as they offer the first fruits of each year's harvest to Him. The Feast of Weeks is a similar exercise in remembering the Lord's faithfulness and exercising trust in Him. Purim celebrates the LORD's protection of His people in the days of Esther. Hanukkah, the Feast of Lights, is celebrated in memory of the rededication of the temple after it was defiled.

Rosh Hashanah marks the Jewish New Year. It is a time of reflection, but beyond that, it is, according to one Jewish writer, a time of remembering God almighty as the Lord of time and space and renewing a commitment to a faithful relationship with Him. It seems to me that we would do well to view our New Year with the same intention: to reflect on the Lord's personal faithfulness and universal sovereignty that encompasses the whole of time and space and beyond. The New Year is not about finding a way to get by another year. It is about accepting the Lord's invitation to seek His glory and participate in His glorious kingdom's work in the here and now.

The prophet Isaiah wrote about the new heaven and the new earth (Chapters 65-66): Eventually, when Christ returns, when there is a new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21), the rhythms of creation will be merged with eternity. What that will look like is almost impossible for us as finite, time-bound creatures to imagine. But at the present, as we find ourselves in another new year, we have the opportunity to appreciate time as the context in which we receive the Lord's goodness and participate in His work in us and through us. May this be for us a year of our Lord's.

***Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557) or  
cynthialbills@gmail.com to continue the dialogue....***

## Do-Overs

By Janet Berrill

I had an idea of what to write my January Chapel Challenge article about in the beginning of December. My intent was to get it done early, so I wouldn't have to be writing it toward the end of the month when I knew I would be busy with Christmas preparations. Although that was my intent, it never happened; I found myself two days before it was due sitting at my computer trying to put my thoughts down in a coherent way. Unfortunately, the article wasn't taking shape as I had envisioned it. It just wasn't coming together as I had hoped.

So here I am, two days later, the day the article is due, starting over. I've ditched my first idea completely and decided to write about something entirely different: "Do-overs." The idea came to me yesterday when I was trying to figure out how I could fix my first article. I realized I wasn't committed to that topic and if I wanted to I could write about something completely new. The relevance here is that God is a God of do-overs, of second, third, fourth, fifth, etc., chances.

God has infinite patience and unfailing love. His heart's desire for us is to be freed from our sin; that's why Jesus died on the cross. Jesus set us free from being a slave to sin, but we still have our sinful nature. Although it no longer has control over us, too often we choose to follow it anyway. God knows sin is bad for us, so the Holy Spirit works to convict us of our sin and enable us to change our ways.

When the Holy Spirit is working in us, often we are presented with a similar situation where we made the wrong choice in the past. God is not tempting us, but rather He is giving us the opportunity to rely on His power to make a different choice this time – a do-over. We have

the opportunity to get right what we previously got wrong. But if we fail, God does not give up. He continues to patiently work in us to help us to change. Do not mistake God's love and patience for acceptance. He hates sin, all sin. We tend to categorize sin as big or little, but to God all sin is the same. When we are given a second chance, the attitude of, "Well, if I give into my sinful nature and make the wrong choice again, God will forgive me and give me another chance" is not pleasing to God. All sin matters. We should not exploit God's forgiving nature, but rather respond in gratitude to His grace and strive for a life that pleases Him.

God knows we struggle with sin, but He has given us the power to overcome it. When we walk in obedience to His will, we are better off because of it. For the times when we fail, God convicts us, forgives us, works in us to enable us to change, and gives us do-overs. He allows us to face similar situations that caused us to sin in the past so that we can triumph over our sinful nature now and in the future. The more we resist the sin, the less the sin is appealing, until hopefully that particular sin is no longer tempting to us.

I am very thankful to God for do-overs! I am not just referring to starting my article over again with a new subject. I like the analogy, though. My first article wasn't working out, so I began again. When I mess up, I can start all over again with God. I can try again and again and again until I finally get it right. Fortunately, with God there is no deadline, but there is with my article. Thanks, God, for helping me to get it done in time!

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**If you have any items or information you would like to share in the newsletter, please e-mail:**

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**[susan@quiltingsquare.com](mailto:susan@quiltingsquare.com)**

**Dorothy Soi at**

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**Contributing photographer: Janice Straubel**