

# Maseru United Church Monthly News

Maseru United Church

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## “Amazing Grace” by Chuck Colson



“Built on the Rock, the Church  
does stand.”

At the end of December 1772, an Anglican priest in the poor parish of Olney worked by candlelight on his New Year’s Day sermon. He would preach on the text of 1 Chronicles 17, verses 16 and 17. That passage was David’s response to God after Nathan informed him that his descendants would be enthroned forever as kings of Israel. David, the once poor shepherd boy, the man who would have repented of adultery and murder, responded to the news by saying, “**Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my family, that you have brought me thus far?**”

That pastor was John Newton, and those words struck a deep chord in his heart.

In those last days of 1772, Newton found himself running out of empty pages in his journal, a bound book of 300 pages holding 16 years worth of entries. As he came to finish that journal and start another, his mind was drawn to the pages of his past: the story of his life from his days as an unregenerate slave-trader to becoming a child of God.

Newton would have remembered when his rebellious spirit got him thrown off numerous ships, publicly flogged, and ousted from His Majesty’s Navy. He would have remembered the shipwrecks and the mutinies—and then the transformation of his heart by the

power of the Gospel. As Newton considered those days gone by, he would have asked as David did, “Who am I, O Lord . . . that you have brought me this far?”

As was his habit, Newton set to work composing a hymn to illustrate his New Year’s Day sermon. In that hymn, he would tell his poor congregation of lace-makers and low-paid artisans about the dangers and snares he had faced. He would reflect on the amazing grace that had saved a wretch like him.

Those now-famous words of “Amazing Grace,” first sung in the small parish of Olney on New Year’s Day, 1773, lingered in obscurity for many years. Even as Newton counseled the young William Wilberforce and encouraged him to stay the course in the long battle against the slave trade, the words to “Amazing Grace” were little sung in England. But the Olney hymnal, later published by Newton, caught on in the Americas.

The words of “Amazing Grace” would surface again some 80 years later in a book that would change the course of this nation, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. In it, the slave, Tom, at his lowest point, sings the words of “Amazing Grace.” Two verses hardly sung today were sung by Tom: “And when this mortal life shall fail/And

flesh and sense shall cease,/ I shall possess within the veil,/ A life of joy and peace.” These words of the ultimate hope in God, even in the face of deep injustice, forever entwined the words of “Amazing Grace” with the plight of slaves.

But it all began in that dark little study in the waning days of a year gone by, when one man took the time to reflect on God’s goodness to him.

This New Year’s Day we would all do well to pay tribute to Newton by imitating his gratitude to God and his heart for the lost. We would do well also to set aside some time to reflect on what God has done in our lives—how He has delivered us from slavery to sin. And we would do well to consider how we, in this new year of 2009, can sing God’s praise with our lips and with our lives.

**“Amazing Grace,  
how sweet the sound,  
that saved a wretch like  
me.**

**I once was lost, but now  
am found.**

**‘Twas blind but now I see.”**

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### Special Point of Interest:

Did you know that there was a “leap second” added to the stroke of midnight, December 31, 2008? This was due to a miniscule slow down in the earth’s rotation over the past several years. The BBC marked it with a seven count beep before the hour instead of the usual six count.



# MUC Calendar — January 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			31 <b>5:00 –7:00 End of year Thanksgiving Service</b>	1 <b>HAPPY NEW YEAR, 2009!</b>	2	3
4 <b>Sermon:</b> Supremacy and sufficiency of Christ	5	6 1:00 Lunchtime fasting + prayer in the Hall.	7 5:00 Soup Kitchen	8	9	10
11 <b>Sermon:</b> Su- premacY and sufficiency of Christ	12 <b>5:00—6:00 p.m. Church family prayer time</b>	13 1:00 Lunchtime fasting + prayer in the Hall. 5:30 AA/AIAnon <b>6:00 MUC Council Mtg.</b>	14 5:00 Soup Kitchen	15	16	17 <b>8:00 a.m. Men's Fellow- ship Breakfast in the Hall</b>  1:00 AA/AIAnon
18 <b>Sermon:</b> Supremacy and sufficiency of Christ	19	20 1:00 Lunchtime fasting + prayer in the Hall.  5:30 AA/AIAnon	21 5:00 Soup Kitchen <b>5:30 Material Aid Committee Mtg.</b>	22	23	24  1:00 AA/AIAnon
25 <b>Sermon:</b> Spiritual Obstacles	26	27 1:00 Lunchtime fasting + prayer in the Hall.  5:30 AA/AIAnon	28 5:00 Soup Kitchen	29 <b>MIKE KRUGER coming (Jan 29—Feb. 8)</b>	30	31 1:00 AA/AIAnon <b>5:00 p.m. Fast- ing and Prayer meeting at church</b>

## DEVOTIONAL—Are you Fresh? (Oswald Chambers)

Sometimes we are fresh and eager to attend church or a prayer meeting, but do we feel that same freshness for such mundane tasks as polishing shoes? Being born again by the Spirit is an unmistakable work of God, as mysterious as the wind, and as surprising as God Himself. We don't know where it begins — it is hidden away in the depths of our soul. Being born again from above is an enduring, perpetual, and eternal beginning. It provides a freshness all the time in thinking, talking, and living — a continual surprise of the life of God. Staleness is an indication that something in our lives is out of step with God. We say to our-

selves, "I have to do this thing or it will never get done.: That is the first sign of staleness. Do we feel fresh this very moment or are we stale, frantically searching our minds for something to do? Freshness is not the result of obedience; it comes from the Holy Spirit. Obedience keeps us "in the light as He is in the light..." (1 John 1 : 7).

Jealously guard your relationship with God. Jesus prayed "that they may be one just as We are one" — with nothing in between (John17:22). Keep your whole life continually open to Jesus Christ. Don't pretend to be open with Him. Are you drawing your life from any source other than God Himself? If you are depending on

**" Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" (John 3:3)**

something else as your source of freshness and strength, you will not realize when His power is gone.

Being born of the Spirit means much more than we usually think. It gives us new vision and keeps us absolutely fresh for everything through the never-ending supply of the life of God.

## “Heart to Heart” — Reflections from the Interim Pastor

We began the year 2008 by exploring a theme of utmost importance- “Focused on Christ and grounded on His Word”. We concluded just before Christmas, that Christ is utterly sufficient. He is Jesus- because he saves us from our sins. He is Immanuel, because he is God with us- He sympathizes and empowers us. He is our king, because he is sovereign and in control of our lives and his world. He is Christ, because he is the source of our life. Only he can fill our hearts with lasting joy in the time of sadness. Only he can fill our hearts with hope in time of doubt. Only he can fill our troubled hearts with peace in times of fear and anxiety.

Today, as we begin the New Year 2009, we can confidently rest in the fact that, when life reaches its moments of desperation and hopelessness, the only hope is Christ. The apostle Paul’s secret of “Christ in you, the hope of Glory”- Colossians 1:27- is one, which the world cannot grasp. To have Christ is to have every spiritual resource and blessing. All we need is found in him. It is vital to realize, rather than attempting to add something to Christ, we must simply learn to use the resources that are already ours in him.

The nature of the heresy we find in the book of Colossians was rooted in an inadequate and erroneous view of the person and work of Christ. Therefore, Paul wrote an entire letter focusing on Christ – his place in the universe, his work in salvation, his preeminence as God, his position as head of Church, and his utter sufficiency for every human need. He warned the Colossians that attempting to add to or subtract from Christ always leads to spiritual disaster. The Colossian heretics were advocating a variety of artificial spiritual additions in the form of philosophy ( Col 2:8-10), mysticism(2:18-19) and asceticism (2:20-23). Paul strongly condemned any “Christ-plus philosophy” which is prevalent in these modern times.. Paul writes, “ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive phi-

losophy which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.” Col 2:8-9.

What am I saying? MUC will continue to focus on the theme of the “sufficiency of Christ during this year 2009, based on Col 2:6-7- “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord , continue to live in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness”. The pulpit ministry will continue to “proclaim Jesus, admonishing and teaching every one perfect with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ”. I pray that all the ministries will rally around this theme to make it a reality in MUC as people continue to encounter Jesus and fall in love with him more and more.

Since the 1960s the whole world has plunged into change with unprecedented rapidity and intensity. It seems as though everything and everybody is changing. We all feel the pressure of change on every side and these changes can be for better or for the worse .Let us continue to keep our focus on Jesus who will never change.

May God help MUC to receive Christ as Lord and continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as we are taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

**Have a wonderful, meaningful and fruitful new year 2009 as we continue our Journey with our Lord Jesus Christ.**



## NEWS and NOTES

**1. MUC Centenary Calendars for 2009 will be available for sale at the back of the church from January 4, after the service.**

**2. Nadisha and Gareth got married on the 15th of December and the blessing service was held on the 27th of December at MUC , which was organised by the Family care members. The Prithi family appreciates all the love and help received from the Church family. A BIG THANK YOU!! Prithi**

**3. The Men’s prayer breakfast and fellowship will be held on Saturday, January 17 in the church hall. All men are welcome to come and fellowship with us!**

**4. On Saturday, the 7th of February, there will be a seminar for all ministry team leaders and home cell group leaders from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Please put this on your calendars and plan to attend.**



**5. The church funded the annual prison Christmas party through the Material Aid Committee and it was a blessed time. Thank you, Ntate Neville, for all of your hard work in making this happen. Our Saviour came to “set the captives free” and that includes us. He set us free from the prison of sin. We have SO MUCH to praise and thank him for!**



**6. Mike Kruger will be returning to minister among us from January 29—February 8. Stay tuned for opportunities to meet with her.**

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**To God be the Glory, great  
things He has done!**

***Our vision*** at Maseru United Church is to grow into a vibrant interdenominational church with a holistic response to the Great Commission (Matt. 28) focusing on transforming the local and expatriate populations in Lesotho and its environs into a Godly, compassionate and caring community, to the glory of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

***Our mission*** at Maseru United Church is to seek to glorify God and further the expansion of His kingdom by providing facilities and a caring environment for pursuing religious activities aimed at discipling people of all walks of life and bringing many to a deeper knowledge of the saving grace of His Son, in conformity with our vision.

## From the Word — Psalm 103



Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits — who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord's works of righteousness and

justice for all the oppressed.

He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his

days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children— with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, O my soul. (NIV)