

News Brief

♥For the members and friends of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsford ♥

April 2009

From the Pastor's Pen-Cell

Diet tip: Eat a chocolate Easter bunny before each meal. It'll take the edge off your appetite and you'll eat less.

Good Idea: Finding Easter eggs on Easter.

Bad Idea: Finding Easter eggs on Christmas.

So, at least you now have some Easter thoughts that are beginning to flit into the air space. It should be a bit warmer this Easter than last and that means that the potential for the canal to be free of ice for the Easter sunrise service is greater and you will find information in this NewsBrief about services on Palm/Passion Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday as well as Easter (3 services at 7:00am along the canal, 8:30am and 10:30am).

The services on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday are a bit more somber. They marinate us for the joy of Eastertide. Both of my children (now adult children) tell me that their most memorable and most meaningful times of worship have been those Holy Week experiences prior to the celebration of the resurrection. Those are the periods when we become more introspective, mourn our sinfulness, confront darkness and betrayal and abandonment. There can be a haunting beauty in coming to terms with the silence of it all as well as the emptiness as the sanctuary is stripped bare of its normal trappings. Gone are the candlesticks, the needlepoint, the antependia, those cherished vessels and implements of worship.

Empty place, empty space, and empty tomb! Emptiness has cosmic consequences. You don't really have to be an astronomer to sense it.

Mary Magdalene and two other women encountered a massive void when they showed up that Sunday morning and found the tomb to be empty.

We can only imagine and not really know how Mary felt during that sunrise. She had suffered through the crucifixion and mourned his burial and as she arrives to pay her respects she finds . . . nothing.

We know what this feels like.

It happens . . .

- when you give your heart to someone who doesn't accept the gift
- when you learn a sport, practice hard and still don't make the team
- when you study and pursue a profession, only to find you hate your work
- when you create something beautiful, and discover that no one's interested
- when you try to resist a temptation, but then give in to it again and again

- when you jump to a new job, then lose it in a downsizing
- when you put money into a home, only to see your equity disappear
- when you retire from a long career, and wake up with nothing to do
- when you lose a spouse to cancer, and find yourself all alone in the world.

We know about emptiness. Mary and her companions were seized by terror and they at first retreated into silence where they could ponder the meaning of it all.

Often we try to anesthetize the discomfort of emptiness. Sociologist Jean Twenge observes that young adults in particular have been told things such as “believe in yourself and you can do anything” — which is not very good advice. The truth is, bad things can happen to good people, and not every goal in life is realistic. You may believe that you’re going to earn a graduate degree and get a great job, along with a perfect family in a beautifully decorated home, but life doesn’t always give you what you anticipate. Twenge thinks that overblown expectations are to blame for recent rises in anxiety and depression in young adults. She says, “It’s depressing to realize that your unrealistic dreams are never going to come true.”

We make the same Easter mistake as the disciples. We think that Easter is about us and our emptiness and so we ruminate on traditions with bunnies, and chicks, pink and yellow and baskets and bonnets to soothe and smooth our sense of loss. We can miss that Easter is not about us. It is about God. It is about God filling the empty spaces in our lives with new and unexpected life. This is a life rallied around forgiveness, and sacrifice, and prodigal affection.

350 years ago mathematician-philosopher Blaise Pascal observed that the human heart is like an “infinite abyss.” He writes how human beings try in vain to fill the heart’s emptiness with education, jobs, homes, money, friends, and family. But usually few of these things are satisfactory. He wrote, “Since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.” A realization of God’s offer is the joy of Eastertide. God seeks to take away the darkness of emptiness and replace it with the light of purpose, redeemed lives to bring peace and hope to the rest of the world.

If I had my way, I would have us all arrive at the church on Easter outside. Inside the church would be empty. There would be no aroma of lilies, no Bible on the communion table, no decoration. The church would be empty, just like the tomb on that 1st Easter. Maybe some would even go into the empty church to sit in the darkness of it. Then, someone would break the news “The Lord is Risen” and all of the rest would all parade in, some carrying hymnals, others the flowers to decorate the chancel, others the Bibles, the banners, the candlesticks, the flags and together we would become the body of the risen Lord.

bgb

Prayerfully Pondering Living Longer...

Proverbial wisdom says, “an apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Science is beginning to corroborate what we have always suspected — that prayer keeps the doctor away. Since 2000, more than 6,000 studies of the link between prayer and health have been published in reputable journals.¹

These studies suggest that exercising our faith does indeed bring us health. People who attend

religious services have a lower risk of dying in any one year than people who don’t attend. Church attendance accounts for two to three additional years of life. Viruses are kept in check more easily because practicing our faith lowers our stress hormone levels.²

Members in our congregation have had the opportunity to add their own anecdotal evidence to these studies recently. As we began Lent, we concluded our first experiment with having every household of the congregation pray for and be prayed for by someone else in the

¹ Jeffrey Kluger. “The Biology of Belief.” *Time*. February 23, 2009, p. 66.

² Kluger, p. 63 and p. 66.

congregation. Some people prayed for people they did not previously know. They were in contact with the persons for whom they were praying and were able to enjoy the benefits of making a new friend in the congregation. Some people who had felt less connected to our family of faith remarked how good it felt to know someone was praying for them.

As we celebrate Easter, the Tuesday Prayer Team and I will once again invite everyone to pray for one another. Watch for your letter this month with the name of a different household for whom you will be praying for the 50 days between Easter Sunday (April 12th) and Pentecost Sunday (May 31st). Should you decide you do not want to participate, you need not. But somebody will still pray for you.

Our reciprocal prayer exercise will overlap with celebrating our congregation's 200th anniversary in May. The anniversary celebration will be a grand opportunity to remember the strong faith traditions practiced by this family of faith. Scientists are beginning to show that remembrances like this are easier for those who give their spirituality a workout. According to Dr. Andrew Newberg, professor of radiology, psychology and religious studies at the University of Pennsylvania, people who have practiced prayer for 15 years or more have thicker frontal lobes (the area of the brain where memories reside) than those who have not.³

Our Tuesday Prayer Team has delighted in making this journey with the congregation and anticipates offering more suggestions concerning how to pray with and for one another. This exercise has confirmed what many have known: those who give help feel even better than those who receive it.⁴ We look forward to everyone experiencing that joy this Eastertide.

Go with God (GWIG),
Carrie

Week of Apr. 5 – Passion/Palm Sunday
Mark 11:1-11 *or* John 12:12-16
Ps. 118:1-2, 19-29; Isa. 50:4-9a
Ps. 31:9-16; Phil. 2:5-11

³ Kluger, p. 64.

⁴ Kluger, p. 70.

Mark 14:1-15:47 *or*
Mark 15:1-39 (40-47)

Week of Apr. 12 – Easter Sunday
Acts 10:34-43 *or* Isa. 25:6-9
Ps. 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Cor. 15:1-11
or Acts 10:34-43

Week of Apr. 19 – Acts 4:32-34; *Ps. 133*
1 John 1:1-2:2; John 20:19-31

Week of Apr. 26 – Acts 3:12-19; *Ps. 4; 1 John 3:1-7*
Luke 24:36b-48



COUPLE'S NIGHT OUT:

It's spring!! Come enjoy fellowship at a potluck dinner on Saturday March 28 at Rochelle Ruffer and Tom Kim's home: 36 Sandpiper Lane. All are invited (singles and couples)! Bring your favorite spring dish! Please RSVP to Rochelle or Tom by March 26. 381-6057 or rlruffer@rochester.rr.com.

Let us Break Bread Together on Our Knees...

Attention parents of school-age children. Would you and your children like to know more about the Sacrament of the Lord's supper? Join us Thursday, March 26 in the Sanctuary at 3:45pm for an introduction.



We will talk about:

- What are the Sacraments?
- Why do we celebrate them?
- Who can participate?
- What happens during the Lord's Supper?
- When can it be celebrated?

And then we will take Communion together. If you have any questions, please contact Carrie Mitchell at 586-5688 x32.



Invisible.

Sometimes we feel; like this –as if no one sees us or cares about us. We feel lonely, forgotten.

When you feel like this, a Stephen Minister can give you the caring Christian concern and listening you need...

... speak to one of our Stephen Ministry Leaders: *Jane Hunter, Alice O'Dwyer, Kay Saxum, Barbara Smith, Dick Sprenkle or Carol Tiemann*

(223-1466). **Our Stephen Ministers are there to care!**



REMINDER ~ The deadline for next month's NewsBrief is April 5. Please leave it in the mailbox in the workroom or email it to doris.goodemote@pittsfordpres.org.

Concert Series News:

The next concert features Harold McAulliffe directing the University of Rochester Men's glee Club on Friday March 27 at 7:30 PM. Spirituals and traditional glee club melodies will be offered by this capable college group.

The final concert in the 2008-2009 Series will be on Sunday June 7 at 4:00 PM when the voices of The Concentus Chorus will again fill our sanctuary. Dede Holmes is a member of this very talented, select women's group.

All donations go to the organ maintenance fund and to help fund future concerts.

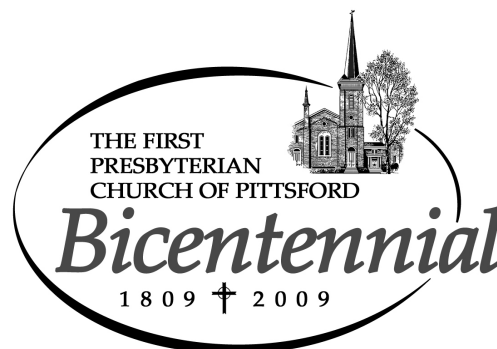


"The Eyes Have It!" will be the topic at the April meeting of the **Optimists**. Our speaker, Dr. Robert Olsen, has been treating eye problems for twenty-five years. His expertise and reflections on looking from the outside in will be of interest to those of us who are experiencing common and not-so-common eye

problems. Please bring your table service and covered dish and join us in Fellowship Hall at 6:15 PM on Friday, April 3. For questions, please call Pat Campbell, 385-8593.



Good News Jail and Prison Ministry ~ your invitation to join us for our annual Sheriff's Appreciation Banquet on Friday, April 24, 2009 at 7:00 PM at the Monroe county Dome Arena. The evening will be a joyous time of fellowship, food and praising the Lord for His many blessings we have seen this past year in the jail. At the conclusion of the evening, there will be an offering taken to support this life changing ministry. Please see Doris for free tickets.



Bicentennial Celebration Planning Taking Shape

Members of the Bicentennial Planning Committee are immersing themselves in the details of church's 200th anniversary celebration, focusing on the theme "Embracing Our Heritage, Expanding Our Vision." Some are pouring over historical records and photos, others are planning special events for the summer and fall, all are excited about the prospect of sharing the church's incredible faith journey with fellow members and the community.

"Our hope for the Bicentennial celebration is for the congregation and the community to learn more about the wonderful heritage of this

church, spanning 200 years," said Dave and Anne Ferris, who are co-chairing the committee. "We are developing a series of celebrations that hopefully will appeal to all."

Also on the committee are Anne B. Francis; Bruce Boak; Faye Casey; Beth A. Collins; Richard R. Crawford; David Irwin; Dorothy Meusburger; Alan Roberts; Alison Valenti; Cynthia VanHoute-Purpura; and Nathan Zampella.

The celebrations begin May 1, with a weekend lecture series with Rodger Nishioka, associate professor of Christian Education at the Columbia Theological Seminary. Following that will be a Bicentennial dinner May 8 and a Sunday Bicentennial worship service.

The celebrations will include sharing historical documents and photos with the community and hosting special events during the year. An old-style family picnic is in the works for September. Oral histories of many of our senior members will be created by our senior high students and preserved for present and future generations. The committee also is working on establishing a special Bicentennial Fund for members wishing to participate with their own celebratory gifts and remembrances.

Watch and listen for more information on this very special time in the life of our church, and embrace the hand of God in celebrating our history and future.



REQUEST

The following request has been received from Judy Lee Hay, pastor of Calvary St. Andrew's Presbyterian Parish, a city church which our church supports: "We are in need of two pianos in very good condition—either an upright or console, or if we could dream a baby grand. We would need the pianos gifted to us or at a very reasonable cost. The two pianos we presently own are well over 100 years old and badly in need of replacement. Perhaps someone is downsizing or moving to an apartment and would like to find a good home for a beloved

instrument. (Pittsford spoiled us when we had your baby grand during your reconstruction process)." Please contact Dick Sprenkle at 381-8990 if you can help.



Recycling for Habitat – Thanks for putting your used printer cartridges (inkjets, lasers, maintenance kits, drums and fusers), cell phones and PDAs into the Habitat recycling bin display near the Outreach bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall. *Imagine It* has recently expanded to include digital cameras, portable DVDs, MP3s, satellite radios and other small electronic devices. They take all the elements they receive and broker them to companies for re-manufacture or recycling. A high percentage of what they receive is returned to us for our Habitat House Fund; this will help pay for the next house that we plan to help build next year. (See www.ImagineRecyclingIt.com)

WATCH OUT for a letter coming your way soon, which will urge your participation in our annual One Great Hour of Sharing. This collection, which takes place every year at Easter time, helps to support three important programs: Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People. Donations are being accepted throughout Lent.

Members of our congregation have worked with PDA to help families devastated by hurricane Katrina and more recent storms in the Louisiana area.

Once again a matching gift is being offered dollar for dollar up to \$10,000 by a gracious member of our congregation; thus your donation will be doubly rewarded and be greatly appreciated during a time of much suffering due to the economic crisis. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21).



CONFIRMATION:

COME CLAIM THE CREED!

8TH grade confirmands and mentors meet for their last regular class on Sunday April 5 between 11:30 AM and 1:00 PM for faith-building exercises and fun! In April, we will focus on the Sacraments. What are they? Why do we perform them? What happens to us in them or does not happen to us if we do not do them? Confirmands and mentors will discover the answers together. We are anticipating a fun-filled May with a celebratory brunch on May 17 where confirmands will share their Faith Statements with Session Members. On Pentecost Sunday, May 31, the confirmands will be dedicated before the congregation and have a festive celebration after the worship services.

and Organ



IN MEMORIAM CORNER

Lester Goda – January 22, 2009

John Allen – January 27, 2009

Eleanor Kujowski – February 2, 2009

Leonard Hart – February 18, 2009

William Pedersen – February 26, 2009



UPCOMING SERVICES DURING THE SPECIAL SEASON OF LENT:

April 5 - 8:30 & 10:00 AM - Palm Sunday Service

Joyful Noise Handbell Choir, Sharon Peet,
Director; Children's Choir, Dede Holmes,
Director

April 9 - 7:30 PM - Maundy Thursday Service

Jubilate Choral Ensemble, Dr. James
Douthit, Director; Kirkringers Handbell
Ensemble,

Ruth Hugenbruch, Director, Communion

April 10 - 7:30 PM - Good Friday Service

John Stainer's "The Crucifixion", Harold
McAulliffe, tenor; Dr. J.J. Hudson, baritone;
Eunyoung Kim, Organist; Chancel Choir;
Dr. James Douthit, Director of Music

April 12 - 7:00 AM - Easter Sunrise Service

April 12 - 8:30 & 10:30 AM - Easter Service

Emerald Brass Quintet. Handbells. Choir.

