

NewsBrief

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

December, 2003

From the Pastor's Pen-Cell

Appropriate. That describes what I would like to accomplish with gift giving this Christmas. I'd like to make sure that gifts are appropriate. Perhaps other parents have discovered that appropriate punishments for misbehavior need to be tailored to the personalities of children. I can recall having one model that when you put him into a corner with a book you only pleased him. This didn't work. But, appropriate gifts to affirm others and let you know of your affection and appreciation seems ever more challenging.

Madeleine Kane writes that exchanging gifts, while fun in theory, offers endless potential for aggravation: thronging crowds, ransacked stores, confusion, indecision, cash depletion and, finally, the belated knowledge that you bought the wrong thing. Even worse, perhaps, is receiving a spousal gift that you wouldn't buy for your worst enemy. Well, maybe for your worst enemy, but only if it's on sale.

Maybe the offer of a spousal gift-giving agreement would help a few families to find something appropriate:

AGREEMENT entered into this _____ (Date) by Husband and Wife, hereafter called "Couple."

WHEREAS, Couple sometimes whines over ill-chosen gifts; and

WHEREAS, a gift giving agreement may save Couple's marriage and/or reduce return trips to the mall; and

WHEREAS, family does truly love each other and want to give something appropriate during this Christmastide:

NOW, THEREFORE, Couple hereby agrees to these provisions:

GIFTS FOR WIFE:

1. Self-serving gifts shall be avoided. For example, Husband shall not buy Wife the following:
 - a. Chocolate when Wife is on a diet.
 - b. Tight clothing meant to encourage Wife to diet.
 - c. Anything transparent.
2. Husband shall not give Wife practical gifts such as an iron, a dish washer, or a vacuum cleaner... unless husband plans to use them.
3. Husband shall keep track of Wife's clothing sizes, except those Wife refuses to divulge.
4. Husband shall not give Wife anything that can be bought at an airport.
5. Husband shall not buy Wife earrings that weigh more than her head.

6. Husband shall remember that gifts should be personal. Gift certificates, checks, and wads of cash are not personal...unless large enough to buy a diamond watch.
7. Husband shall avoid all of the following:
 - a. His mother's favorite fragrance.
 - b. Anything Wife admires on someone else, unless Husband confirms candor of compliment.

GIFTS FOR HUSBAND:

1. Wife shall not give Husband anything that smells like perfume...no matter how macho its name or spokesman.
2. Wife shall not buy Husband home repair manuals.
3. Wife shall not give Husband anything "cute" or containing the word "organizer."
4. Wife shall not buy Husband silk boxers, unless she agrees to wear a matching pair.
5. Wife shall not give Husband anything that's for Husband's own good.
6. Wife is encouraged to buy husband items in the following categories:
 - a. Anything Couple's twelve year old son would like.
 - b. Stereo and electronic equipment, provided Husband can exchange it for something with more oomph.

GIFTS FOR THE CHILDREN:

1. Wife won't buy anything that requires assembly.
2. Husband won't buy children toys he plans to play with.

You can tuck this handy agreement into your pocket or purse when joining the hordes at Eastview or Marketplace or wandering near the four corners of Pittsford. Perhaps another agreement would be good to have around, too:

AGREEMENT entered into this _____ (Date) by _____ (Your Name) and God.

WHEREAS, (Name) is often unappreciative and disobedient; and

WHEREAS, a gift giving agreement may save (Name)'s sense of self-worth and;

WHEREAS, God loves (Name) and wants to give (Name) something appropriate:

NOW, THEREFORE, God and (Name) hereby agree to these provisions:

GIFTS FOR GOD:

1. Kindness, generosity, goodness, self-control, and gentleness shall always be an appropriate fashion statement.
2. Honor
3. Obedience to divine intention for creation
4. Love

GIFTS FOR (NAME)

1. Forgiveness
2. Only Son
3. Love
4. Eternal Life

Prayerfully Pondering Praise...

Advent – the four Sunday period of anticipatory waiting – begins November 30th this year. For what are we waiting? I like to tell people when a pastor or a Sunday School teacher asks a question, 9 times out of 10, the right answer is Jesus. So yes, in this case, the right answer is Jesus. But more might be said in response to the question, “for what are we waiting?”

Ask yourself: “What keeps me lying awake at night? What drives me? Why am I not happy? What would bring me satisfaction, purpose or fulfillment? Why am I addicted (to drugs, alcohol, work, television, controversy, gambling, pornography, abuse, you name it)?”

Perhaps we can all discover for what we are waiting by being thankful for what we already have. Thanksgiving is not the only time of the year in which we can take stock of that with which we have been blessed; nonetheless, it offers a communal reinforcement of a marvelous spiritual practice: giving praise to God and to one another.

I recently read an article in a women’s magazine of one family’s Thanksgiving tradition. Each year, they pull out the Thanksgiving tablecloth and with that year’s selected color, each family member records that for which he or she is thankful. They also read what has been recorded in past years: the births of new children, the achievement of awards or degrees, the addition of a new bride or groom to the family, the success of a favorite sports team. The tablecloth is a living record of this family’s praise.

A beloved Old Testament professor of mine, Dr. Patrick D. Miller, writes of the power of praise. "In a world that assumes the status is quo, that things have to be the way they are and that we must not assume too much about improving them, the doxologies [praises] of God's people are fundamental indicators that wonders have not ceased, that possibilities not yet dreamt of will happen, and that hope is an authentic stance."

Have you ever wondered why we sing the doxology after receiving the offering? Our word for doxology comes from the Greek word meaning praise. In the doxology we praise God for God’s bountiful gifts to us. By praising God, we affirm our anticipating additional blessings from God.

In addition, praising God is profoundly subversive. Fred Pratt Green expresses this subversive character of praise in hymn 264 of our hymnal.

When in our music God is glorified
and adoration leaves no room for pride,
it is as though the whole creation cried
Alleluia.

Praising God also manages to subvert the claims of any *other* person or structure to have ultimate place in our lives.

As we ask ourselves the question “for what are we waiting?” we can begin to discern our answer by praising God for what we already have. And we might just discover Jesus really is for whom we are waiting. *Carrie*

P.S. I want to give thanks and praise to the many members of the congregation who reacted to last month’s article on labyrinths with pictures, stories, and hopes for our future. Stay tuned! We might be gifted with our own labyrinth on which we might prayerfully ponder our journey with God.



We did it! When we complete this month’s readings, we will have read through the Bible in a year! Congratulations! Our Old Testament readings are from the minor prophets this month. They are called minor not because of their significance but because of their length. Remember, prophetic writings can be difficult to follow because they are not chronologically correct narratives. You will be better off simply reading through the books and looking for main themes and familiar passages. In the New Testament, we finish with the mysteriously apocalyptic writings of Revelation. John wrote these while imprisoned on the island of Patmos in an effort to encourage the faithful to persevere in the face of persecution. The fantastic imagery can be inspiring for those of us needing to persevere through the daily trials of our lives. May you delight in finishing your journey through the Bible this year and may this encourage you to frequent it as you would a familiar friend.

December

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|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Hos. 3-6/Rev. 1 | 17. Micah 4, 5/Rev. 12 |
| 2. Hos. 7, 8/Ps. 137, 138 | 18. Micah 6, 7/Rev. 13 |
| 3. Hos. 9, 10/Rev. 2 | 19. Nahum 1-3/Rev. 14 |
| 4. Hos. 11, 12/Rev. 3 | 20. Hab. 1-3/Ps. 145 |
| 5. Hos. 13, 14/Rev. 4 | 21. Zeph. 1-3/Rev. 15 |
| 6. Joel 1, 2/Ps. 139 | 22. Haggai 1, 2/Rev. 16 |
| 7. Joel 3/Rev. 5 | 23. Zech. 1, 2/Ps. 146, 147 |
| 8. Amos 1, 2/Rev. 6 | 24. Zech. 3, 4/Rev. 17 |
| 9. Amos 3, 4/Ps. 140, 141 | 25. Zech. 5, 6/Rev. 18 |
| 10. Amos 5, 6/Rev. 7 | 26. Zech. 7, 8/Rev. 19 |
| 11. Amos 7, 8/Rev. 8 | 27. Zech. 9, 10/Ps. 148 |
| 12. Amos 9/Rev. 9 | 28. Zech. 11, 12/Rev. 20 |
| 13. Obed. 1/Ps. 142, 143 | 29. Zech. 13, 14/Rev. 21 |
| 14. Jonah 1, 2/Rev. 10 | 30. Mal. 1, 2/Ps. 149, 150 |
| 15. Jonah 3, 4/Rev. 11 | 31. Mal. 3, 4/Rev. 22 |
| 16. Micah 1-3/Ps. 144 | |

What's Up with Youth Ministry

from Dan Kulp

It was about two years ago. I was on my way to The National Youth Workers Conference in California. Normally I looked forward to the conference all year and anticipated the time of my life. This was my fourth, and quite possibly my last.

On the flight I was seated next to my faithful volunteer leader who eagerly waited the convention. Just like I used to. I explained to her that I was completely burned out and was seriously considering leaving my position as the Director of Youth Ministries. This was the job that I had held for about three years. Most people in a part time youth ministry quit after about a year and a half. My time was well past due and now I was tired. Nothing was wrong. Ministry was fine. Relationships good. No dropping numbers. No scandal that was rocking the Church. I was just completely spent. I remember telling Debbie, "Unless God does something in me this week, I'm probably going to hand in my resignation when we return to Rochester."

Well, obviously God did do something. I am still here and feeling very energized and confident about our youth ministry. What did God do that week? I'm not sure that I can describe exactly in words what he did, but I know who he used to do it.

His name was Mike Yaconelli. Mike has been called "the father of modern youth ministry". He founded and was co-president of Youth Specialties. This is the organization that, in my opinion, is responsible for publishing the finest in youth worker resources and curriculum. They also have trained, equipped and inspired probably millions of youth workers all over the world. Mr. Yaconelli was also a widely sought after speaker and teacher.

One reason I loved Mike was because he always looked at the Gospel from a different angle than most. He was extremely funny and dynamic, but whenever you listened to him you walked away changed. And, that is exactly what happened to me at this conference when I attended one of his seminars. I don't remember all of the details of what he said, but basically his messages all have a common theme of "lighten up, don't take life so seriously, just give what little you do have to give, relax in the grace of God."

Mike was killed in a car crash two weeks ago in California. I didn't know him personally, but I miss him as if he was a friend. In some ways he was a friend to millions of youth workers just like me. I'm glad that I was able to share with him how much he meant to me and had inspired me

over the years. I bumped into him in the hallway at last years' conference and just told him these things very quickly. He seemed a little embarrassed, but humbly listened as I fumbled for the words to say.

Next Week I travel to St. Louis for my sixth National Youth Workers Conference. I will hear the latest and greatest speakers from all over the country. I will purchase all new cutting edge materials for our youth. I will spend time meeting and discussing my trade with fellow youth people. I will rest, reflect and brainstorm new ideas for the coming year. Most of all, I will pay tribute to and celebrate the life of a man that I've called my hero.

From his book *Dangerous Wonder-The Adventure Of Childlike Faith*- "If I were to have a heart attack right at this moment, I hope I would have just enough air in my lungs and just enough strength in me to utter one last sentence as I fell to the floor: 'What a ride!' My life has been up and down, careening left then right, full of mistakes and bad decisions, and if I died right now, even though I would love to live longer, I could say from the depths of my soul, 'What a ride!'"

Passion is the roller coaster ride that can happen when you follow Jesus Christ. It is the breathtaking, thrill-filled, bone-rattling ride of a lifetime where every moment matters and all you can do is hang on for dear life. When you become a Christian, when you decide to follow Christ, you decide in favor of passion. Jesus came to forgive us of our sin, yes, but His mission was also to introduce us to the passion of living. Most people believe that following Jesus is all about living *right*. *Not true*. Following Jesus is all about living *fully*."

Mike Yaconelli has written several articles, as well as made appearances at many well-known churches and venues around the country. I have much of these materials on tape and video. In addition I have two of his books, *Dangerous Wonder-The Adventure Of Childlike Faith*, and *Messy Spirituality-God's Annoying Love For Imperfect People*. I would like to make all of these blessings available to you. Let me know.



Upcoming Youth Events:

Sunday: November 23 – JYF and MTC

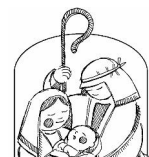
Saturday, December 6 – Senior High Semi-Formal Progressive dinner and Christmas Party. 6-11 PM

Friday, December 12 – *The Live Out Loud*

Coffeehouse with comedian David Hopper and Jaded Thorns. 9-11 PM

Saturday, December 13 – Junior High Semi-formal Christmas Dinner and Party. 4-6:30

JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM



**Experience It Live! Experience
It With Your Family!
Experience It Yourself!**

Experience what it is like to be lifted out of your seats and carried away on a journey through the timeless story of God's love. Follow the steps of Mary and Joseph on their journey to Bethlehem and re-ignite your sense of wonder at the birth of Jesus. The call has gone out from Caesar Augustus for a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire, and everyone must register at their hometown. Don't miss being counted! Don't miss the caravan! Don't miss the great miracle! You are part of God's family! Reunite this Christmas season on the Journey to Bethlehem. Join us on December 14, starting at 5:00 PM.

For more information contact Louise Thompson at 264-9233 or Sandy Pacyga at 586-5688.



'Tis the Season . . .

This year the family Advent supper will be held on Sunday, November 30 from 5:30 to 7:30 PM. Dinner will be a "Pasta Potluck". Sign up in Fellowship Hall to bring either a pasta dish, salad or a plate of cookies (2 dozen). Crafts and caroling will be in abundance! We are also asking families to share their Christmas spirit by bringing small gifts that can be donated to families in need. All this fun and fellowship for only \$2 a person or \$5 per family.



**THANK YOU FROM
IRAQI.SCHOOLS.COM**

Our church has sent a total of 90 lbs. of school supplies to aid our soldiers in reestablishing schools in Baghdad. We have already received a thank-you letter from Maj. Gregg Softy for the first shipment which arrived in two weeks' time. Many thanks to our Circles and to all church members who contributed to this worthwhile project.



COME JOIN US

The Adult Choir is beginning our work on music for the Advent and Christmas Season. We would welcome new members who would like to either begin a long-term enrollment or a short-term commitment to the choir through the Christmas Eve services. All voice parts are welcome. You'll find our choir to be a warm, friendly, and skilled group of singers who are highly dedicated as they lead the music in our worship service.

Rehearsals are held on Thursday evenings at 7:30 in the Music Room of the Church. We are planning for an additional rehearsal on the morning of Saturday, December 20, as we prepare for our **Special Music Service** on Sunday, December 21.



THE AMAZING ~ JANUARY 22-25

Share your home with our Facilitators and Leaders for three nights. Meals (for all three days) will be provided at the Church except Sunday morning breakfast which host families will provide.

Please call: Kay Saxum 385-9807.
Hebrews 13:2



FAMILY NOTES

Deaths:

Gordon Brown (member) died 10/26/03,
Nancy Hildreth (member), died 9/27/03
Chalisse Hunter (non-member), died 9/28/03
Mary Steadman (member), died 10/5/03,
Ethel Ross (non-member), died 10/6/03
Mary Ellen Wideman (member), died 10/27/03,
Bennett Taylor (affiliate member), died 10/31/03



"The Sounds of Christmas"

December 21, 2003 ~ 10:00 AM Service
Featuring all of our musical ensembles at the church (as well as some special guests) in a service of special Christmas music and readings!

A REMINDER ~ that the Ham supper is coming. The date is December 14. Tickets will be on sale Nov. 23, 30, and Dec. 7 in Fellowship Hall. Adults \$5, children under 8 yrs.\$2. Come and join us for fun and fellowship to usher in the holiday season.



Your Deacons



UPDATE ON THE 2004 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

As of Tuesday, 18 November, we have received 329 pledges amounting to \$543,800. This works out to an average pledge of \$1650, a substantial increase over last year.

We now have 77% of our pledge goal of \$705,000 to fund the 2004 Operating Budget. The Operating Budget pays for: staff salaries; music & worship, Stephen Ministers, Christian Education and other programs; administrative services; utilities; building maintenance & repair; Outreach and Per Capita expenses.

We still need to receive pledges totaling over \$160,000 in the next week in order to meet our goal. An Operating Budget must be presented for approval to the Session and Trustees in early December before the start of the fiscal 2004 budget year. Thanks to all members who have so generously contributed to this request for funds to keep our church glowing and growing!

We look forward to receiving an additional 100 pledges which will enable the church to fund its 2004 obligations and provide outstanding music, worship and service programs.

The Stewardship Commission
Jeff Tyler, Anne Francis, Terry Skuse, Bruce Boak,
David Klein, Beth Collins, Cal Graziano



GIVING BOXES

from Janet Travis, Financial Secretary

If you did not receive a box of giving envelopes for 2003 and would like a box for 2004, please call me at 586-5688, ext. 23.



MISSION PROJECT from Tish Paddock

About ten years ago the staff of the nursery school at Calvary Saint Andrews' Church asked us to supply 44 pairs of mittens. 40 were for the children and four were for those who had lost their mittens. This year's mittens will be delivered soon and they are beautiful; stripes, patchwork, plain and one small sized red, white and blue pair. The staff, children and their parents will be pleased to receive your contributions.

For the rest of the winter the warm goods will be delivered to Cameron Community by those of our church volunteers who work in Cameron's kitchen. We have scarves, mittens, and hats of all sizes and colors but since this is an ongoing mission project, keep your shoulder at the wheel and add to the supply often. Our gifts will warm many hands and hearts.



Further Update on Tom Harris

Soon after I wrote the last update on Tom, I received word that he is being transferred to a Medium Security Facility. This is due to his impeccable behavior reports and the need to free up space in Maximum Security.

On one hand it is good news, because in the event of the upcoming appeal it will weigh in his favor to be in a medium security facility. On the other hand they are often less safe than a maximum setting as the inmates are often in a dorm like setting instead of in individual cells. This allows for less privacy and less protection. There is also no guarantee that Tom will be placed any closer to Rochester. He also will not be told where or when he will be going as a security precaution. As you can imagine this causes much anguish as well. We must continue to pray and write Tom, as both prayers and letters will be forwarded.

On a positive note he has a dear artist friend who has designed a seasonal card to be sold on his behalf to raise appeal funds. I hope to have these cards available soon so they can be purchased in time for Holiday Greetings.

Thank you again for your notes and prayers in this time of transition.

In faith, Dede Holmes

Tom W. Harris, #02B2363, PO Box 999, West Coxsackie,
New York 12051-0999