

N e w s B r i e f

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

February, 2003

From the Pastor's Pen-Cell

Cocoon month, month to marinate, hibernate, reflect. . . month of Valentine sweetness and presidential birthday sales. This is February, the heart of winter, and a time for skiing and cozy fires, walks in the snow and joy that sundown comes after 5:00pm once again. It's reveling-in-the-beauty-of- frosty-mornings month and a time to make plans for the future. It is a time of memory and reflection and dreams.

Planning happens in February. I've been thinking about Meredith's graduation walk in May and her Labor Day weekend wedding, some family time at the shore in early July, and Mozambique mission in August. Meredith has finished her academic work at Wake Forest. February brings a time for job searches and fittings. (At this point the wedding is scheduled for the Wells Memorial Presbyterian Church that summer chapel where the Boaks have vacationed for over thirty years.)

If the pieces fall into place I will attend the National Pastor's conference at the end of February. It is well located this year . . . in San Diego. A few lightweight theologians will spar a little and communion ware salesmen will hound and attack. Most meaningful will be program ideas and sharing with others. Opportunities to encounter those who ride the crests of new wave thinking gather us.

There is so much crammed into 2003 and you can be entertained just thinking about it all during the winter. This is the month when students and teachers pray for a snow day, just to have some time when nothing is scheduled. We like those spontaneous, unplanned days we can give to overdue correspondence, cookie baking for the sheer joy of it, and a round of Old Maid with the hot chocolate. We want a day to putter, put that album together, live out the priorities we sense are right.

What If? 2 is a series of essays edited by Robert Crowley. He has assembled the thinking of eminent historians who imagine what might have been. "Life must be lived forward," the philosopher Kierkegaard observes, "but can only be understood backwards." Broad trends seem to be everything these days and we seem to be left with the impression that history is inevitable and that what happened could not have happened any other way and that drama and contingency have no place in the scheme of human existence. We've almost out predestined the Presbyterian comprehension of this.

Crowley and his friends ask,

What if eunuch-explorer Zheng He had been allowed to continue his voyages?

What if Pope Pius XII had protested the Holocaust?

What if Pizarro had not found potatoes in Peru?

What if Socrates had died at Delium?

What if Pontius Pilate had spared Jesus of Nazareth?

February is a What-if month, a time to reflect. Rather than recall what might have been, let's use February to explore what might be.

What if we created our own "snow day?"

What if we randomly baked cookies for the widow down the street?

What if we worked at peace as hard as we work at war?

What if we offered ourselves to God?

What if . . .

Bruce

PRAYERFULLY

PONDERING...

Blessings...

As I write this to you in early January, Bill and I are taking down the Christmas tree, adjusting to the commuting demands of a new semester, and getting over colds. Blech... At the same time, we are keenly aware of how blessed we are to have the space to put up a Christmas tree, the freedom to pursue his education, and the promise of recovery. With the passage of time from Christmas to Epiphany, settling into the routine of things can give the feeling of a let down. As Rochesterians (even those of us newly acquiring that appellation) we can be even more affected by the persistent cold weather.

The apostle Paul tells us that even in the midst of this seasonal affect, we can boast. Boast?! What in the world does Paul mean? In Romans 5, Paul explains that our relationship with God gives us the ability to boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. Paul was writing this letter to the new converts in Rome who were facing trials in their faith. After the excitement of finding the Good News of Christ, they were now settling into the routine matters of growing in their discipleship. Paul asserts their efforts will lead to endurance, and "endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." *Romans 5:4-5*

Endurance can be hard for us to maintain. Think of all the years we might have made New Year's resolutions. Before we know it, we have slipped back into old habits and discarded our resolutions. But we know that growth in the Spirit is possible. Jesus said, "What is impossible for mortals is possible for God." *Luke 18:27*

How can we grow in the Spirit? Choose an attitude of gratitude. As we look at our lives, we have a choice to focus on what challenges us or what blessings we have. Count your blessings. Just as God has adopted us as God's children in our baptisms, we can adopt a "can-do" attitude that builds character and inspires hope.

Another way to grow in the Spirit is to persevere in our prayerful commitment to read the Bible. See *Romans 12:12*. For those of us deciding to read the whole Bible in a year, the attached box has the readings for February. Hopefully, we can find times in our day to read the chapters, but take heart when days are missed. It's OK to catch up on another day.

We will continue to read the exciting story in Exodus of the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt and then learn much about the Levitical codes. Don't be bogged down – the world of laws and customs helps us to understand the grace given us in Jesus Christ. And our New Testament readings tell of the enthusiasm for the spread of Christianity with the disciples.

I leave you with a prayer for a month of Valentines: As we count our blessings and persevere in prayer, may God's love overflow in our hearts. A

Carrie

FEBRUARY

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Ex. 15, 16/Ps. 15, 16 | 15. Lev. 4, 5/Ps. 20, 21 |
| 2. Ex. 17, 18/Matt. 24 | 16. Lev. 6, 7/Acts 6 |
| 3. Ex. 19, 20/Matt. 25 | 17. Lev. 8, 9/Acts 7 |
| 4. Ex. 21, 22/Ps. 17 | 18. Lev 10-12/Ps. 22 |
| 5. Ex. 23, 24/Matt. 26 | 19. Lev. 13, 14/Acts 8 |
| 6. Ex. 25, 26/Matt. 27 | 20. Lev. 15, 16/Acts 9 |
| 7. Ex. 27, 28/Matt. 28 | 21. Lev. 17, 18/Acts 10 |
| 8. Ex. 29, 30/Ps. 18 | 22. Lev. 19, 20/Ps. 23, 24 |
| 9. Ex. 31, 32/Acts 1 | 23. Lev. 21, 22/Acts 11 |
| 10. Ex. 33, 34/Acts 2 | 24. Lev. 23, 24/Acts 12 |
| 11. Ex. 35, 36/Ps. 19 | 25. Lev. 25, 26/Ps. 25 |
| 12. Ex. 37, 38/Acts 3 | 26. Lev 27/Num. 1/Acts 13 |
| 13. Ex. 39, 40/Acts 4 | 27. Num. 2, 3/Acts 14 |
| 14. Lev. 1-3/Acts 5 | 28. Num. 4, 5/Acts 15 |

We are starting our second month of *The Year of the Bible*. By now, you have probably been able to settle into some sort of routine for your reading. By now, too, you may have fallen behind a few times. You should assume that this will happen occasionally in an undertaking like this! Try not to get too far behind, however, because then it is easy to give up on the entire project.

LOGOS

January 22 – SURPRISE NIGHT

The word is excited

January 29 – Winter Escape

The word is crisp

February 5 – Fabulous Friends

(Bring a Church chum or a buddy.) Please let the Church office know you are bringing a guest by Monday, February 3.

The word is include

February 12 – Give a Heart (The Highlands)

The word is care

February 19 – NO LOGOS – Winter Break

Sylvia

... *from SANDY'S Desk*

This "village" of OURS...

First Presbyterian Church, Pittsford New York, USA is a community with very proud traditions in children's education. This has always been a church with a Church School faculty of volunteers. Our tradition of teaching families, with parents either teaching or helping out in classrooms has made the strong, educationally focused program that we have.

A wonderful 12-year history of LOGOS on Wednesday evenings is reflected in a program that is as strong as ever. Many may not realize it, but this is a true record among the LOGOS programs in New York State and rivals longevity records of LOGOS programs across the nation.

And, this year, our PARENT COOPERATIVE NURSERY SCHOOL celebrates fifty... YES! that's 50 years of ministry to three and four year olds in the community of Pittsford. These programs are ONLY POSSIBLE because the wisest among us know that ***IT DOES TAKE A 'VILLAGE' TO RAISE A CHILD.*** Especially the parents of our congregation, supported by all those who have gone before, understand that teaching by the witness of participation is the very best way for our children to learn about our faith. The truth in the old saying that **children don't learn by what we say**, but rather **by what they see us do**, has never been more apparent than the visible witness of the parent volunteers that make our three children's education programs happen.

We, as a congregation, must choose to step up to our responsibility and see that education for our children happens. With God's help we can work together to help these programs continue to flourish, just by being open, being present; being willing.

We as a Christian village tell the story of God through how we choose to live our lives. We must tell the story so well that our children can tell the story themselves. Isn't it amazing that there is no way we can earn our own or another's salvation. Instead, we are promised eternal life with God by being faithful. May our very lives tell that holy story and let God's light shine through us to all God's people, especially, our children.

God's grace is so simple a premise that we are sometimes tempted to ask "is that really all there is to it?" We can mistake our call to just be present and available so that God's work can happen through us as a much more difficult task. And sometimes, taking on 'one more task' is a daunting idea. Being a member of the "village" of God means just being there, being open, being willing we then teach our children in the Name of Jesus by our words, our actions, our presence. The joyous story of Jesus Christ is wondrously

uncomplicated and easily communicated to our children when we let the imagination participate in the great events of 'His-story'. By sharing this with the entire village, then our own spirits soar.

The Apostle Paul refers to the church as "the body of Christ". We, the called community, are to continue the ministry of Jesus. We are not called to unbelievable feats that would add to the burdens of the world on us. Community that ministers is blessed beyond measure. Those who demand to be served never know the joy of giving; never receive ten fold in return. To "disciple" our kids is to change lives forever in the name of Christ. If you haven't helped in our children's programs yet, what are you missing?

Please Prayerfully Support our Adult Ed. representatives, Jack Holzwarth and Dave Jenks as they travel to Denver on our behalf.
January 29-February 2. A



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS

The Christian Education Committee met January 7, 2003. The twelve members with 2 staff began with prayer and approval of last month's minutes. A report from Teresa Zatyko on our Parent Cooperative Nursery School noted that this weekday program now has 46 four year olds and the same number of threes. The board members and staff have been finding bits and pieces of interesting history in preparation for the celebration of 50 years of operation. They will be having an open house to encourage registration for the next school year in January and a 50th Anniversary celebration in May.

Dan Kulp, our Youth Minister reported gearing up for our two Youth programs, MTC (formerly SYF) and JYF and the continuation of the monthly Coffee House for the rest of our program year. There will be some participation by our senior high in the Presbytery's 'Movie Madness' coming up soon. Matt Wahl will chaperone our group. A DVD player has been purchased along with some sound equipment to be used by the youth and the Coffee House.

The LOGOS program report by Sylvia Fix noted that there are only eleven LOGOS nights left for this program year. Everything is going well. The food has been great thanks to an untiring kitchen crew. Teachers are doing a fine job and the music program is thriving. The dedicated volunteers, once again are making LOGOS a great success that our kids absolutely love. Sylvia noted themes of Renew, Respect, Surprise, Excitement and Winter Escape will be coming up soon.

C.E. has acquired two new computers, carts and connecting equipment as well as software and teaching materials as a beginning to bringing our Church School

Program into the technology age. The 6th grade will begin using the new equipment to supplement lessons after the Heifer Fair in March. Surprise Sunday themes have been Queen Esther “a woman of the Bible” and the season of Epiphany. Upcoming themes will focus on mission and “following the light”. The C.E. committee has agreed to start up a Parent/Shepherd team to be present for help if needed to tend our Church School flock. And a system of posters and flyers has been set up to help parents know where their children should go on C.S. Surprise Sundays.

Sandy will be out of town for two education conferences during the month of February. The first is the annual Presbyterian Association for Education conference to be held in Denver, Colorado; Jan. 27 to Feb. 2. at that conference Sandy will be taking a course for certification as a Presbyterian Christian Educator. She will be accompanied by Adult Ed. representatives Jack Holzwarth and Dave Jenks. All three look forward to bringing back new ideas for Adult Education here at First Pres. The second very pertinent conference Sandy will attend in mid Feb. is called “Will Our Faith have Children?”. She will be sharing what she learns with the committee upon her return.

A team has been established to look into the possibility of a Spiritual Renewal Event to be held here possibly in Mid-October. And, finally, the C.E. Task Force for Church School Curriculum will resume meeting this month in preparation for the September, 2003 Church School Program.

Important programs dates to be noted are 6th Grade SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY, January 26; the Heifer Fair March 2, Church School Open House on March 9 and the next Choral Worship on March 30. A

GOT THE URGE TO TRAVEL?

from Beverly Reeve

For those of you who have a hankering to do some world traveling, why not consider joining Ted Pollock, our worldwide missionary, on another of his mission trips next summer. Once again he and his volunteers will be church building – and this time in Ribaué, north central Mozambique. The trip is being scheduled for the month of August and you can choose to participate for all or part of the month. If you are interested enough to want the details as they become available, please email Ted's daughter, Penny, and get your name on the list. JMcFarland2@MSN.com. A

MARY/WELLER CIRCLE - Tuesday, February 10, 11:30 a.m.

Speaker – Carrie Mitchell, Associate Pastor

Bring – Sandwich, Least Coin

Hostesses – Trudy Cayo, Martha Cucci, Martha Wilmot

All women in our Church are invited – call Betty

Hancock, 473-3928. A

Prayer, be it Silent or Spoken - All are Welcome.

Through prayer, God places his children in the eye of the storm. When all around us is chaos and confusion, deep within, we know stability and serenity. In the midst of intense personal struggle we are still and relaxed. While a thousand frustrations seek to distract us, we remain focused and attentive. This is the fruit of prayer.

There is perhaps no more appealing invitation in all the Bible than Jesus' gracious words, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Nothing is more needed today than this rest of body, mind, and spirit. We live so much of our lives in "an intolerable scramble of panting feverishness, as Thomas Kelly calls it. All of the grasping and grabbing, all of the controlling, all of the manipulative dynamics of life exhaust us.

If only we could slip over into that life free from strain and anxiety and hurry! If only we could know that steady peace of God where all strain is gone and Christ is already victor over the world! If only...But listen, my friend, I am here to tell you that this way of living can be ours. We can know this reality of rest, and trust, and serenity, and firmness of life orientation.

Today, this very moment, Jesus is inviting you into his rest: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls". (Matt. 11:29).

Please join us in the library on Mondays between 4:30 and 5:30 p.m. A

In Christ, the Monday Prayer Group



LOCAL MISSION

Elaine Johnson

The Presbyterian Women wish to thank the members of our congregation who contributed to our local mission project this past year. Each month, three-dozen cookies were baked and delivered to both Haneayah Cottage at Industry School, and to Cottage 77 at Oatka. The boys look forward to this “homemade” treat, which to them is very nurturing, and evidence that they are not forgotten. At Christmas, each resident received a “stocking stuffer” package containing useful items. In addition, the boys at Haneayah received 61 gifts, and the Oatka boys, 43 wrapped gifts, given by members of our congregation. For many, those gifts represent the only Christmas they received, making them particularly special. The boys in both institutions received many Christmas cards for their

use in sending to family and friends, and a total of 400 stamps to facilitate mailing. Finally, Haneayah received a Circuit City gift certificate for \$100, and Oatka, a certificate of \$140, to be used at the discretion of the supervisors of the cottages toward enriching the cottages' electronic resources for the residents.

Kirkhaven residents received 46 wrapped gifts from us, which were distributed at their Christmas party on December 24. They also were given a large supply of both Christmas and non-holiday cards for their personal use.

We have received lovely, heart-felt thank you notes from the residents of these institutions, which serve to reinforce the belief that these are extremely important projects that this congregation undertakes. Especially for the residents of Industry and Oatka, who are away from their families and friends at that time of the year when family comes together in celebration, our gifts are symbols of the love and care which Jesus lived, a witness to them that they are loved.

In all, \$1000 of the PW mission budget is designated for this local mission project. (The cookies are priceless!) A



HELP!! Cookie Bakers and Cookie Run Drivers Needed!

from Elaine Johnson

We are in the process of signing up cookie bakers and drivers for 2003. Sign-ups are in Fellowship Hall following both morning services. Instructions will be provided. A

Stephen Ministry Corner Musings from Carol Tiemann

Jean Vanier, the founder of the L'Arche communities for mentally handicapped people, often explains with a simple illustration, his approach to those who live at L'Arche. He will cup his hands lightly and say, "Suppose I have a wounded bird in my hands. What would happen if I closed my hands completely?" The response is immediate: "Why, the bird will be crushed and die." "Well, then, what would happen if I opened my hands completely?" "Oh, no, then the bird will try to fly away, and it will fall and die." Vanier smiles and says, "The right place is like my cupped hand, neither totally open nor totally closed. It is the space where growth can take place."

For us, too, the hands of God are cupped lightly. We have enough freedom so that we can stretch and grow, but also we have enough protection so that we will not be injured—and so we can be healed.

Please consider, in your heart how Stephen Ministry could fit into your life.

NEW BOOKS!!!

Look for these new books in our church library:

The Faith of Fifty Million

Edited by Christopher H. Evens and Wm. R. Intrigueing

This book, edited by two theologians on the faculty of Colgate Rochester Crozier Divinity School, is a compilation of the work of several authors and provides some fresh perspective on what was once called our national pastime. According to the editors, the collection represents an attempt to understand the sacred meaning of baseball. Several chapters describe the role of baseball in our society and attempt to put the game into its religious and historical context. As an embodiment of civil religion, baseball is considered as a metaphor for the highest hopes and dreams of America. An interesting and intriguing case is made for this thesis but it would be easier to follow if it was made in words more familiar to the average fan than to students of theology. Such words as eschatological, alembic, hermeneutics, hegemonic and Shekinal sent me scurrying to my dictionary. This volume also takes another look at some baseball icons. Was Christy Matthewson the model for Frank Merriwell? Did Grover Cleveland Alexander go out on a bender the night before? Did that ragged little urchin actually plead, "Say it ain't so, Joe!" Was Jackie Robinson Branch Rickey's first choice? Answers to these questions added insight on these figures from baseball's past are provided by authors whose viewpoints differ from those of typical sportswriters.

A quibble. Looking at the rosters of the Yankees in recent years and their success in the '90's and recalling the behavior of Yankee fans as observed on TV, one could take issue with the contention that the Yankee reputation resides in white, upper-class America and that the team is a symbol of America's white Anglo past.

Nitpicking, the heavyweight champion was Joe Louis, not Lewis. Also, a number of Rochester Red Wing fans can tell you that Specs Toporcer never pitched for the St. Louis Cardinals but was a good infielder for both the Cardinals and the Red Wings.

In the concluding chapters, the authors assert that it is ridiculous to believe that God cares about the outcome of a sporting event. Rather, they believe that success is based on the fact that those who win have the greatest talent and money and have the best luck. Optimistically, they end on the note that a baseball holds out hope that fairness in life, as in baseball, will prevail.

Reviewed by Rod Ormandy

THE MITFORD SERIES

By Jan Karon

If you have not read any of the best selling author Jan Karon, you are in for a treat. Our church library now has a six-volume set of the Mitford Series with Father Kavanagh and all of the other delightful characters waiting for you in Mitford, "the little town with the big heart". Included in this series: *A Home in Mitford*; *A light in the Window*; *These High, Green Hills*; *Out to Canaan*; *A new Song* and *A Common Life*.

"You'll find that a visit to Mitford is good for the soul". A

Reviewed by Jeanette Benson