

# NewsBrief

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

## January, 2004

### From the Pastor's Pen-Cell

What is it about December 31st that spurs fantasies of self-reform? Is it too much food and drink? Seasonal exuberance? Lunacy induced by crowds? Every December, otherwise rational people make resolutions meant to transform them into organized, addiction-free souls with clean houses, healthy bodies, wholesome relationships, perfect children, and career paths soaring to the top -- the same vows they made last year and the year before that.

Sometimes we pastors are asked for New Years advice:

Q: Every year our best friends invite us over for New Year's brunch and make us watch home videos and help dismantle their Christmas tree.

A: Ah ha! Tortious -Invititious -Falsious- Pretentious.

Q: That sounds serious. What can we do?

A: Bring your own home videos and last year's fruit cake.

We are eager to make the New Year different. We want our lives to be meaningful, not just breathe and report our finances on our 1040. We want our lives to be important. Usually this is summed up as, "I want to do what I want to do this year." Popular books, movies and sentiment tell us that we won't discover life's meaning by looking within ourselves. We tried that last year, didn't we? Now we want to discover our life's purpose.

Rick Warren, in his best selling book this year tells us that the purpose of life is greater than our own personal fulfillment, peace of mind, or happiness. It is more than family, career, or ambitions. If the question that we pose is "What should I do with my life?" the answer that brings satisfaction may allude us until we begin to ask it as "What does God want to do with my life?"

Warren suggests that we were made for God, not vice versa and that life is about letting God use us for God's purposes. No amount of manipulation of religion or spirituality for our own self-actualization will bring us to the peace of mind we want. We can usually succeed by setting goals and working toward them, but being successful and fulfilling our life's purpose are not necessarily the same.

Where can we begin a new journey in 2004 that is purposeful? Can we begin it best by ourselves? Perhaps our year will unfold in a more satisfying way when we consider that God created us for mission. God planned us for God's pleasure. God populated the world and gave us the example of Jesus that we might become more like the Master. God has given us divine words in scripture with the hope that broken relationships might be restored and cultivated in community. God created us to worship God and as Eugene Peterson has paraphrased 1 Corinthians 13:3 in his New Testament, *The Message*: "No matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love."

Thank you God for bringing us through 2003. Forgive us for the mistakes we have made and the opportunities we have missed this past year. Please guide us in 2004 and help us to pursue your

intention for us. Amen. **Bruce**

## Prayerfully Pondering The Art of Life...

“A new year can begin only because the old year ends. In northern climates this is especially apparent. As rain turns to snow, puddles to ice, the sun rises later and sets earlier; and each day it climbs less high in the sky. Primitive people used to watch the sun drop lower on the horizon in great terror, because they were afraid that one day it was going to go so low that it would never rise again. Somewhere in the depths of our unconsciousness, we share that primordial fear and when there is the first indication that the days are going to lengthen, our hearts, too, lift with relief. The end has not come: joy! And so a new year makes its birth known.”<sup>1</sup> The writer and artist, Madeline L’Engle, begins her collection of daily devotions with this apt description of the New Year.

As we dismantle the tree, put away the Christmas decorations, and lament the five (or more!) pounds we gained over Christmas, many of us will turn our thoughts to making New Year’s resolutions. For those of us who decide to make them, most of us will not keep them. So I resolve not to resolve this year. Instead, I plan to give myself a gift and I invite you to do the same for yourself. Adopt the spiritual practice of making space for God. Creating a space in which we conscientiously seek God in our lives brings calmness, patience, peace, lowered heart rates, bliss, and all the good things we see touted on pharmaceutical, vacation and spa-getaway ads.

If you have tried doing this in the past and given up, take heart. Start small. Choose five minutes in your day – perhaps as you are waking or just before you go to sleep – when you slow your breathing, quiet your mind and talk with God. If that amount of silence is discomfiting, make use of a devotional to direct the conversation with God. I have several favorites of which Madeline L’Engle’s is one.<sup>2</sup> I like these devotionals because each of the entries is

<sup>1</sup> Madeline L’Engle. *Glimpses of Grace: Daily Thoughts and Reflections*. (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Two other recommendations are: Oswald Chambers’ classic *My Utmost for His Highest* or Frederick Buechner’s *Listening to Your Life*.

extremely short (perfect potty portions is what one wit dubs them) and they lend a centering rhythm to the day. Making devotions a habit frees the Spirit to creatively range within us and sets a positive tone for each day.

Artists throughout the centuries attest to the need for time with God. For those of us not gifted with traditionally defined artistic talents like painting or acting, we can still be creative. Henry Thoreau said, “it is wonderful to create a work of art, but more important still to make one’s life, and the way one lives it, a work of art.” Quaker writer Parker Palmer calls that “letting your life speak.”

Should you be looking for explicit Bible devotions, consider reading the upcoming Sunday’s lectionary passages. We follow the Revised Common Lectionary developed by an ecumenical group that includes Presbyterian churches. The lectionary not only permits us to read through most of the Bible in three years, it also permits us to be in conversation with churches around the world. Chances are good when we talk to churchgoing friends around the country they will have covered the same texts we have.

For your convenience, I will include the lectionary citations in this space each month. Our weekly Wednesday Bible Studies (9:30-10:30am and 7-8pm) are based upon these same passages. I invite you to join fellow artists as we each work on our own Art of Life and may you find your time with God – however you create it – to be an enormous gift in this New Year. Blessings, *Carrie*

### January

Week of January 4 – Jer. 31:7-14; Ps. 147:12-20;  
Eph. 1:3-14; John 1: (1-9) 10-18

Week of January 11 – Isa. 43:1-7; Ps. 29; Acts 8:14-17  
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Week of January 18 – Isa. 62:1-5; Ps. 36:5-10;  
1 Cor. 12:1-11; John 2:1-11

Week of January 25 – Neh. 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Ps. 19  
1 Cor. 12:12-31a; Luke 4:14-21

## NOTES FROM JAMES

As I begin my work as the Director of Music, I would like to thank the members of the staff, music ensembles, and congregation for your warm welcome and encouragement. The staff members of the church have made the transition extremely easy, answering questions and providing information on a multitude of topics and tasks. The Adult Choir has been a pleasure to lead and from our first rehearsal, our work has been joyful and musically rewarding. I have enjoyed meeting many members of the congregation and have appreciated your warm hospitality. I look forward to building each of these relationships as we move ahead in our work together.

Many of you have asked about my background. I thought I would take a brief opportunity to provide some information for you. As Carrie mentioned in my commissioning, I have worked in the field of church music for over 25 years. I began my first church position in high school as the organist and choir director of the First United Methodist Church in my hometown of Bryson City, North Carolina. Though not a member of that church, I had been an active musician in the community and was called by the church after their previous organist moved to another community. Many of the members of the choir were my teachers in school, so it was a bit strange leading the adults on Sunday, that were leading me during the week!

From there, I took some time away from a regular church position as I began my education. I received my Bachelor of Music Degree in Piano Performance, summa cum laude, from Mars Hill College in North Carolina. I continued my education at Northwestern University where I received a Master of Music Degree in Piano Performance. For two years, I pursued additional studies at the University of Illinois. During my time at Illinois, I served as the Organist and Director of Instrumental Music for the First Presbyterian Church in Danville, Illinois.

Taking a brief break from academia, I moved to Corning, New York, and began my work as a teacher of piano and voice at 171 Cedar Arts Center, a community music school. Additionally, I served as the Director of Music for the First United Methodist Church in Corning.

I returned to school in 1989, when I enrolled at the Eastman School of Music to pursue a Doctor of Musical Arts in Piano Performance and Literature, which I received in 1992. I continued to be employed as a church musician as the Director of Music and Organist for the First Presbyterian Church of Seneca Falls and during the last year of my time in Rochester as the organist and choir director of the First Unitarian Universalist Church in downtown Rochester.

In 1994, my family and I moved to Shepherdstown, West Virginia, so that I could accept employment as an Assistant Professor of Music at Shepherd College. In addition to teaching at the college, I was the choir director for St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Martinsburg, WV, and eventually, the organist for Christ Church in Shepherdstown, WV. While living in Shepherdstown, my wife, Kathryn, was completing her work for a PhD in Counseling and Human Development. As she approached the end of her degree work, she accepted a position at Harrisburg Area Community College as a counselor in the math and science division. Previously, Kathryn was trained as an immunologist, so in this position her new study in the field of counseling became a natural extension of her background studies.

As we moved to Hummelstown, Pennsylvania, we were searching for housing for our family. We had decided to rent a house during our first year, so that we could take some time to study the area and make a more informed selection. As we visited our first potential house to rent, the occupant of this house was the organist at the Presbyterian Congregation of Middletown. She was leaving her position and thought I might be interested in working at her church. I contacted the minister and thus began a three-year period as the Director of Music. During this time, I was appointed as an Assistant Professor of Music at Bloomsburg University in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania. I was recently promoted to Associate Professor and awarded tenure.

Two years ago, my wife was offered an appointment as Assistant Professor of Counseling and Human Development in the Warner Graduate School of Education at the University of Rochester. Our family enjoyed living in Rochester. We had many friends here who were like family to us, so we returned to Rochester. During my first year here, I frequently served as a substitute organist at your church, before I accepted a regular church position at St. John's Episcopal Church in Honeoye Falls.

Our family includes our two sons, Jonathan and Eric Hogrefe. Jonathan is a sophomore at the University of Rochester majoring in economics. Eric is a senior at Pittsford Mendon High School. His college plans are undecided, but at this point, he is interested in history and political science. He is active as an athlete in track and field and competes in the triple jump, high jump, and relays.

We are delighted to be a part of your church family and look forward to getting to know your stories and backgrounds as we work together!

James

## MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS

from Trudy Bartleson, M & E Committee

We warmly welcome Lori Bajorek to our membership. She and her husband, Ron, work together at the Bajorek Agency (insurance). They have a 5-year-old daughter, Alia and a 4-month-old son, Ronald III, nicknamed "Trip". Lori enjoys crafts, sewing her daughter's and son's outfits as well as photography. Ron's interests are motorcycles and redoing houses. They reside at 64 French Road, Rochester, 14618 and their telephone number is 264-9560. U

It is the greatest pleasure for me personally to welcome my close neighbors, Rick and Julie Blowers. My granddaughter and I have loved throwing frisbees to their friendly dog, Albie. Rick and Julie are transferring from Third Presbyterian Church, Rochester and have daughters Lauren, 7 and Sarah, 5. Rick is Vice President of Sales and Debt Collections involving Debt Counseling Works, LLC. Julie is Special Events Coordinator at the University of Rochester. Both enjoy traveling with their children and bike riding and reside at 75 Kirklees Road, Pittsford and their phone number is 264-9713. U

We are delighted to have Tracy Hanretty rejoin us, as she had become a member with her confirmation class. She has a son Alex, 3 ½ and anticipates a July wedding, to Mike Edelstein. She is a Clinique consultant and he is a fireman at Ginna and a Fairport volunteer. She loves spending time at the park with Alex and resides at 47 Oak Manor Lane. Her phone number is 264-8972. U

We welcome to our church family L. Charles Hicks who is the president of Rochester Stampings, Inc., and in his free time enjoys ice hockey at the ESL Sports Center. Charles recently moved to Brighton and has two lovely daughters, Jennifer and Katie. Keep an eye out for Charles at sports events as he watches his daughter Jennifer who participates in all kinds of events from basketball to ice hockey as well as soccer. When you see Charles at the coffee hour be sure to ask him about Katie's lead role in Mendon's Les Miserables. I'm sure you will catch him beaming. U

We are so pleased to have James and Ann Hutton join us from Fairport. They have two grown children and are retired; James from RG&E and Ann from the Pittsford Library. Jim's hobby is genealogy and they both like biking, reading and traveling. They live at 3 Timberfields Way, Pittsford and their phone number is 381-8473. U

We are happy to welcome Lu Ann Jones as a member. She has a son Eric 5 ½ and a daughter Kristin 4 years old. Lu Ann works at the University of Rochester, as a Radiologist. She enjoys sports and skiing and they reside at 8 Coddington Grove, Pittsford. Their phone number is 218-9656. U

A warm welcome to Mary Alice Fournier, coming to us from Michigan. She had formerly lived on an island off the coast of Georgia. She has a grown daughter here and one in L.A. She resides at the Highlands in Pittsford. U

It is a joy to have Richard and Patricia Legge join us. They are returning from Venice, Florida, where they lived for 20 years. They had been members of our church for many years; Patricia having been a member of the Mary Weller Circle. They now live at 6 Summer Tree, Pittsford and their phone number is 586-0206. U

We are indeed happy to have Diane Lockwood become a member. She is a director of Market Research at Kodak. Having grown up in Delaware, she has lived in Rochester for 22 years. She and her husband, who is a self-employed electrician, have one son, Luke, aged 6. Of special interest to Diane is spending time with both Scott and Luke. They live at 45 Winding Road, Rochester, 14618. Their phone number is 248-8492. U

We're glad to welcome Karen Maher, coming from Lakewood, NY. She has two grown children, Susan and David. Her interest and hobbies include tennis, gardening, flower arranging, reading and crafts. She resides at 53 Toby Court, Pittsford. Her phone number is 249-0531. U

We're delighted to have Elizabeth Merrill, a student at Mendon High School, Pittsford join our church family. In addition to her studies, she enjoys softball, drama and church activities and resides at 25 Burncoat Way. Her phone number is 385-3785. U

A warm welcome to a young mother, Jennifer Murray. Her husband Bill, a long time member, is a supervisor and claims manager at Sedgwick CMS. They have three children, "Sam" 5, "Maggie" 3 and "Max" 1. She finds time for rug hooking, jewelry making and scrap booking. Bill enjoys car racing and swimming. Their home is at 184 Vassar Street, Rochester, 14607 and their phone number is 242-4865. U

A cordial welcome to Eric and Susan Seber from St. Louis, Mo. Their son Derek is 14 and their daughter Janine is 13; both are very actively pursuing hobbies from lacrosse, running, fishing, hiking to soccer and skiing, in addition to their studies. Eric is director of Design Building at LaChase Construction. Susan is a cost engineering manager at Kodak. He enjoys lacrosse and computers and she, running, needlework and family activities. They reside at 7880 Hidden Oaks and their phone number is 742-3344. U

A special welcome to Kate Shepherd who comes all the way from Hereforshire, England. She has two sons; Jake 10 and Toby 5. Kate is a nurse at Strong Hospital. Her hobbies include horseback riding, home decorating, and walking 2 dogs. They live at 7 Landmark Lane, Pittsford and their phone number is 264-1169. U

We're glad to welcome Carl and Alice Ann Swetman who have 3 grown children and 7 grandchildren! Congratulations! Carl is Executive Director of Rochester chapter NECA and enjoys playing tennis and gardening. Alice Ann sits on the board of the Rochester Philharmonic League and Federated Garden Clubs of New York State. They live at 397 East Street, Pittsford and their phone number is 383-8172. U

It's a genuine pleasure to welcome Debra and Stewart Trisler to our church family; coming from Maplewood, NJ. They have one daughter, Hope, 8. Debra has had a career as an art director and graphic designer. Her hobbies are home decorating including tiling, dance and art. Stewart is editor for West Group and his hobbies are biking and hiking. Both are enthusiastic about the Arts, theater, antiquing and reading. Their home is at 54 French Road, Rochester 14618 and their phone number is 218-9113. U

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### **NEW BROCHURE**

from your M&E Committee

The Session Committee on Membership and Evangelism is trying to reach new area residents and invite them to visit our church. In order to accomplish this task our committee has created a full color brochure produced by one of our members, Peter Botting. The brochure features pictures that depict a sampling of the activities our church offers and an invitation to visit from our pastor. Our first mailing to over 400 people went out the first of

December. Its purpose is to attract people who are looking for a place to worship this Christmas. We plan three or more mailings of similar size over the next year. We ask your help welcoming any new comers with a friendly hello and a self-introduction. Perhaps already you have talked with a friend or neighbor who has received one of our flyers. The committee welcomes any comments on our project and let us know if you meet someone who visits as a result of the mailing.



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### **STEPHEN MINISTRIES AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

Over the next few weeks we will be telling you a little about the Stephen Ministry Program. There are Stephen Ministers at

First Presbyterian Church who are trained listeners. A phone call to Rev. Boak or Rev. Mitchell will put you in touch with one of these special helpers when you face the burdens of stress pressure, loneliness, recovery, grief, emptiness, and the pile-up of every day living. (585) 586-5688

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### **LOGOS**

#### Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

January 7 - Start off on the right foot

The word is new

January 14 - Cold and flu night (Wear pj's & act out).

The word is whole

January 21 - Bring a church chum or buddy night.

The word is friendship

January 28 - SURPRISE NIGHT

The word is aware

Sylvia

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### **WEB CLUB NEWS**

Wednesday Evening Book Club

Join us at 7:30 PM

January 14 –“**Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress**” by Dai Sijie

at home of Karin McNamara, 66 Stuyvesant

February 11 - “The DaVinci Code” by Dan Brown

## Thoughts on Dr. Charles Kimball's book *WHEN RELIGION BECOMES EVIL*

by Pierce Day.

One of the motivations one might have for reading "When Religion Becomes Evil" is the provocative title and the question: why is it that "more evil is perpetrated in the name of religion than by any other institutional force in human history"? As Dr. Charles Kimball says, "the answers are neither straight forward nor easy". But formulating the right questions is a start.

For those of us who missed the group discussions with Dr. Kimball, reading the book was a priority - a matter of conscience. When Beverly Reeve (library committee) discovered I had read *When Religion Becomes Evil*, she asked me to share my thoughts. My sense is that this book is really a textbook to be used for study groups in comparative religion, or better yet a mandatory course for those responsible for foreign policy. My overview of this book is selective to those parts of the book I found particularly interesting.

As Dr. Kimball challenges his students in his comparative religion course for a definition of religion, he also challenges us to take a closer look at the "destructive attitudes" and "warning signs" that lead people of faith into evil behavior. "Distinguishing between . . . corrupt forms of religious expression and authentic, life-affirming forms is essential if we hope to reduce the global threat."

Given the ever-present threat of terrorist attacks both here and abroad, understanding the contributing causes should be a high personal priority. The following quote beautifully illustrates the precarious position we're in: "When you are standing on the edge of a cliff, progress is not defined as one step forward". We need to step back and find better ways to communicate our common concerns for the preservation of the planet - not to mention the civilized world as we know it. "A constructive outlook of religious pluralism can take us beyond simple tolerance of others; it can provide a framework for celebrating diversity and embracing it as a source of strength".

### IS RELIGION THE PROBLEM?

If you have some background in the sciences - the scientific approach - you would definitely have to read this section. But first, define the problem - if you can. The description given by Dr. Kimball's students, when asked to define religion, is priceless.

He gives two excellent discussions on "Why those who say yes are right - in part" and "Why those who say no are right - in part". References to Galileo and the Scopes trial I found particularly interesting because I had recently read "Galileo's Daughter"- beautifully written letters documenting his trial for heresy. It was an example of: "The rigid exclusivism embodied in the view that 'Christianity is the only

truth' . . . , is the foundation for a tribalism that will not serve us in the twenty-first century." "The rise of scientific inquiry challenged religious presuppositions . . . ."

And more recently he cites the case of the 1925 Scopes trial that "pitted evolutionary biology against a literalist approach to the creation accounts in Genesis." "It is obvious that the Bible is not a scientific text-book." However, the stories contain "rich and powerful teachings about the meaning, purpose, and human responsibility in creation."

So it's quite possible to be scientifically oriented and, at the same time, a person of faith - a Presbyterian. "Religion that requires adherents to disconnect the brain is often a big part of the problem."

Kimball suggests that the solution lies in using the "invaluable resources of religious traditions themselves . . ." to effect significant changes in communication and cooperation."

There are five warning signs of corruption in religion that Kimball identifies as evil - the evil perpetrated in the name of religion: Absolute Truth Claims, Blind Obedience, Establishing the "Ideal" Time, The End Justifies the Means, and Declaring Holy War. Dr. Kimball shows how all religions are susceptible to these basic corruptions with case study after case study of man's inhumanity to man- **when religion becomes evil.**

Two copies of Dr. Kimball's insightful, captivating book are available in our church library.

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### HELP US BUILD A HABITAT HOUSE AND PROVIDE A GREAT CHRISTMAS GIFT - ALL AT THE SAME TIME.

Habitat volunteers will be selling car wash tickets in the Fellowship Hall after church. When you purchase a ticket, you are not only helping us meet our financial goal to build a Habitat House in 2004. You are also enabling a loved one or friend to meet the wintry challenge to a clean car, drudgery free!



### WE NEED YOUR HELP TO PLAN FOR OUR NEXT HABITAT HOUSE

In 2004, as we continue our wonderful tradition of working with a needy family to build a decent and affordable home. Many exciting projects will be required to accomplish our goal, and we will need your prayers and the help of many volunteers as we, collectively, plan to do God's work right here in the Rochester area. Please contact Dianne Brown, Jan Horton, Elaine Johnson, Dan Murray or Dick Sprenkle if you can help or need more information.

