

NewsBrief

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

July/August, 2004

From the Pastor's Pen-Cell

Was it purely coincidence that the Tampa Bay LIGHTNING and the Calgary FLAMES were playing each other for the major trophy in professional hockey as First Presbyterian Church of Pittsford was struck by lightning? Questions like this ooze to the surface when we reflect on the events of that Thursday evening when Stephen Ministers were meeting and the choir was rehearsing. We have come through these past several weeks filled with a profound sense of gratitude. We are thankful to firefighters, schools, community, workers, construction people, and other churches. We are grateful that no lives were lost, that walls and windows are preserved and that people have been in prayer for our congregation. This NewsBrief will detail progress toward reconstruction and inform us about current activity.

What is a pastor to do? Speak more about the fire? I feel inadequate to express my thanks to all of you who have continued to adapt to temporary worship space, who have been patient in the face of these challenges and who have taken on ministry as we build for a new future. You are a magnificent church without your building. There will be days of grieving ahead as we mourn the cremated remains of our memories. A rebirth of mission for a new time will come and we will discern God's call. It is exciting.

Articles here will tell you about the steering committee and steps forward. Larry Cooper has kept us informed with photos on our church website. But, life continues. What is true in personal grief when we face loss is also true of corporate grief. In time novelty of borrowed worship space will fade and the world may even feel insensitive to what we are doing. I sometimes tell family members who have lost a loved one that during that period of ultimate trust they will be called on to minister to others more than others can minister to them. This is also true for you. You have the opportunity to witness to others who really don't know what to say. You do it by selling strawberry shortcake at Positively Pittsford and you do it when you put your arms on another's shoulders and express the best in Christian affection and affirmation. You will do it as you build the HIP (Habitat) house in partnership with others this summer and as you go or send people to do mission in Peru or Rochester, N.H.

July 4th comes on a Sunday this year. It has always seemed interesting to me that although many holidays shift their date so as to coincide with a long weekend, July 4 must be celebrated on the 4th. What better way than to spend some time in worship, giving thanks to Almighty God for freedom and the blessing to enjoy this land of opportunity. We are blessed to live in a land (one nation, under God) where the constitution begins with the words, "We, the people." These are the words which form a hallmark for our civil government. Consider this interchange from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* where King Arthur is speaking.

ARTHUR: I am your king!

WOMAN: Well, I didn't vote for you.

ARTHUR: You don't vote for kings.

WOMAN: Well, 'ow did you become king then?

ARTHUR: The Lady of the Lake, [angels sing] her arm clad in the purest shimmering samite, held aloft Excalibur from the bosom of the water signifying by Divine Providence that I, Arthur, was to carry Excalibur. [singing stops] That is why I am your king!

DENNIS: Listen — strange women lying in ponds distributing swords is no basis for a system of government. Supreme executive power derives from a mandate from the masses, not from some farcical aquatic ceremony.

We are a nation blessed with 228 years of independence. We don't have kings but we seem to look for heroes to save us. Presidential campaigns are full of promises and potential, and groups of people with wide and varied interests demand leaders who will meet their needs. In some ways, like our spiritual ancestors before us, we really do want a king.

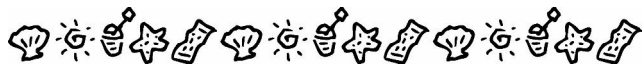
But the truth is that no matter who gets elected, who sits on the throne or who wins the battle — earthly kingship is a

finite office with a finite power. It may be good for us to note that as is suggested in the Theological Declaration of

Barmen (one of the confessions of our church in *The Book of Confessions*) our true allegiance is to the King of Kings — a sovereign whose power is realized in people, not just for them. We're not called to be passive, pining for Camelot or the shores of heaven, but to do the work of the kingdom, following the example of Christ, using the power of the Holy Spirit to lead others in the way of peace, salvation and hope. This is a truth that sets us all free. John Witherspoon, a Presbyterian and the only clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence once thundered, "There has never been a single instance in history when religious liberty has been lost and civil liberty preserved."

Perhaps as we move through the summer and many of our family traditions take shape and vacations give us time to reflect, we will be having moments when the fire is left behind and holidays like the 4th of July become even more meaningful.

Bruce



Prayerfully Pondering Good Grief...

The lazy hazy days of summer are upon us — as far as the weather is concerned. Charlie Brown, Linus, Snoopy and the Peanuts crew would be out enjoying the sunny days. But our days at First Presbyterian are anything but lazy this summer. In the aftermath of the lightning strike, members, staff, contractors, and friends have been in a flurry of activity to return us as quickly as possible to our facilities. Everyone has bent over backwards to accommodate one another and the necessity of changing both our routines and our surroundings. I give praise to God nobody was hurt and I give thanks for everyone's stupendous reactions to these changes over the past few weeks.

All the changes have brought many logistical questions. Where will we worship and hold Sunday School? What happens to the Pittsford Cooperative Nursery School? Can anybody use any part of our building? A talented Steering Committee headed by George Foster (see the article in this edition introducing the members) is hard at work helping the Session and staff to discern answers to these and other questions.

Theological questions have arisen as well. What is God doing in the midst of this happening? I give thanks nobody with whom I have spoken thinks the lightning strike was the work of a vengeful god. Our loss is not God's punishment or God's attempt to test us. Know that God shares our hurt and wants to

lead us to new hope and peace. Know that God grieves with us (see Barb Smith's article in this edition) through all the phases of our hurting and in all the stages of our lives.

Sometimes our grief can be so overwhelming because it encompasses the grieving we never did for other, earlier losses in our lives. For a time in our society, grief was unacceptable and everyone was expected to be back to normal within a few days. Public grieving has taken on a new dimension in our society in the past 20 years. Witness the outpouring at the deaths of the Princess of Wales and President Reagan. Don't be surprised if you found yourself transfixed by some portion of the memorials for President Reagan. We have all witnessed the burning of many of our memories, not just the burning of a building. Healing comes when we let ourselves feel the pain of this loss and of our own earlier losses.

In some ways, we never "get over" a significant loss. The loss inevitably changes us. For example, I know I will never think the same way about lightning storms and I am more empathetic to individuals who have experienced devastating losses due to natural occurrences. While change can be difficult, we can choose whether or not change is for the better.

And many of you have demonstrated how this change is for our collective benefit. I have seen tremendous leadership emerge from our four boards of Elders, Deacons, Trustees, and Presbyterian Women. I have also been delightfully surprised in many instances by the unknown talents of persons who had not contributed to the life of our congregation recently.

Collectively, we have internalized the early church wisdom of Christ's church being the body of Christ — a.k.a. the people — not a building. We have learned to gratefully accept many others' generosity: from Mozambique to Monroe County, people far and wide have offered us their prayers, time, talent and treasures. We have also learned we are not always in control of life's circumstances. We can use this new awareness to become more in rhythm with the flow of life, more in harmony with its song.

Our grieving is among the most sacred and most human things we will ever do. It will plummet us into the mystery of life...and death...and resurrection. Honor it, for it is good grief.

In Christ's love,

Carrie

Barb Smith, a school psychologist and member active in both Deacons and Stephen Ministry, offers her helpful perspective...

A crisis like the fire in our church causes stress in all of us. This particular crisis is certainly not the most tragic event – there was no loss of life, for instance, but it is certainly in the “top forty” of life stresses. Stress can present itself immediately at and after the event but it may also become evident days or weeks later. People experience the stress of a crisis through physical reactions (tension, fatigue, difficulty sleeping, appetite loss or overeating, hyperactivity, to name a few). People may also experience the stress of crisis through emotional reactions (shock, fear, grief, anger, resentment, guilt, shame, emotional numbness). And people may experience cognitive reactions (such as confusion, disorientation, worry, shortened attention span, forgetfulness or difficulty concentrating). The loss of our church as a result of the fire may cause a grief reaction similar to the reaction which follows the death of a loved one.

Children experience the same reactions and feelings of grief as adults do. Children are reacting to the loss but also to changed behavior in family and others around them. Crisis often results in changes in routine and may cause anxiety, fear or feelings of insecurity in children. Young children may need extra attention from adults. It is often helpful to provide comforting routines. School age children may experience fears, become more whiny or have unexplained physical symptoms. It may be a time for relaxed expectations, opportunities to talk about feelings and giving reassurances. Information should be provided in an honest, open way that is appropriate for the age and understanding of the child.

So first we react, then we begin to grieve, then we come together with our church family and work to heal and rebuild. We need to “normalize” and follow the comforting routines of our church program. We need to gather together and stay connected. We need to take care of ourselves and others. We need to continue the hugs and talking and caring that we have begun to experience during worship on our first Sundays following “the fire”.

Hands Against Hunger
from Outreach

PC (USA) missionaries Chris and Hala Doyle will be speaking at
1st Presbyterian Church of Brockport
Saturday, June 26th at 7 pm
Reception at 8 pm

Chris and Hala live in Amman, Jordan. Chris is a companionship facilitator for the Joining Hands Against Hunger program in Palestine and in Egypt, which gathers churches, non-governmental organizations, and grassroots groups that are involved in hunger ministries. Their work involves relief of chronic hunger, public policy advocacy, development assistance, lifestyle integrity issues, and hunger education. For more information, call Peggy Hale at 637-4857



Stewardship Corner

Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for him is a waste of time or effort.

I Corinthians 15:58

Thanks to so many people who have done so many things, large and small, to help our church in these trying times. All of your efforts, gifts and prayers have helped us get off to a great start in our rebuilding efforts, as well as keeping things running. There will be a lot of work to do throughout the transition period. Never has the need for time, talents and treasures been so apparent for our congregation. At the same time, it has been a truly rewarding experience to see the outpouring of fellowship in our church. This summer, there is still a need for help in the summer session Sunday school classes. Thanks to everyone. In Christ's love, Lucien Rouse



Let's Honor Dads, "Berry" Special People

The Deacons are sponsoring a Strawberry Social in honor of fathers and graduates on Sunday, June 20. Scrumptious strawberries and ice cream will be served after our 9:30 service. Don't miss this delicious opportunity for fellowship!!



Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

Attention all LOGOS Fans...LOGOS will be in full swing this September and do we have a year for you! Watch for details and look forward to a year you will never forget!

Your LOGOS Board



PROJECT NEEDLEPOINT

Update from Sally Day

Your kind thoughts have been so appreciated. From the moment of our lightning strike, our congregation had concern for the beautiful needlepoint within the Sanctuary, the Narthex and the Lobby. Stitched by members, 100 women and 3 men, over the course of 10 years for the 3 phases, and taught by a committee of dedicated women: Lee Eldredge, Barbara Nelson - [who moved after Phase I], Dorothy Dessloch and Sally Day who Chaired the Project.

"THE FIRST THING I THOUGHT OF WAS THE NEEDLEPOINT" At Mendon High School for our first Service I was overwhelmed by the hundreds in the Congregation who touched me and repeated the above quote.

Current statistics: 27 water soaked with debris attached currently in the process of restoration.

3 totally missing

22 in perfect condition in the R. Sacristy Cedar Closet

5 antique antependiums [pulpit falls] in Lobby showcase and

4 in Cedar Closet

Pierce Day has taken pictures of each damaged piece and will be making a Photo Album for the Library this summer. There will be a set in the Church Office as well.

Thank you all for your kind thoughts and prayers. Be assured the Needlework is "Prime on my Mind" and we will keep positive about the Restoration Project.

I would like to add my own personal thanks to the many people who were so helpful the day after the fire.

To Doug McLaine, who was here first thing Friday morning, getting the phone changed over, first to his cell phone where he took innumerable calls and then to a phone at the Masonic Lodge where he was able to set up a temporary office.

To Greg Connors, who was also on his cell phone first thing in the morning, looking for a place to have Sunday's service.

To Betty Willert and Kay Saxum, who went out and purchased coffee, bagels, pastries and all that goes with them, and set up an area at the Masonic Lodge for people to be refreshed.

To Janet Travis, who gave up her day off to come in and help answer phones, and do any odd jobs that needed to be done and just to be here.

To Bruce and Carrie, who were called in a dozen different directions, but still could be counted on to give someone a hug or to be there for all who needed comforting.

To Jim Weick, who was so quick to get things rolling, so we could have use of the Masonic Lodge, not only for that day, but for on-going meetings until we can find a permanent space.

To Ernie for being everywhere for everyone, but still had times for hugs and comfort.

To the many of you who came by or called to say they were thinking of us and to offer to help answer phones or run errands, to offer encouragement, to those who were seeking comfort and to those who just called to let us know they cared, a huge, huge, thanks.

Ephesians 3:20, 21

A HUGE THANKS
from Doris Goodemote

Steering Committee Focused on Restoring Our Church

The Church Restoration Steering Committee has begun its challenging task by acting quickly on protecting the current property while formulating strategies and gathering information for rebuilding our church.

The Session established the steering committee and approved its members, and the committee has the objective of “rebuilding the church as quickly as practical, maintaining the outside character of the church building from past years, while considering internal improvements of beauty, function and reverence within fit and form of the space.”

“It’s a formidable task but we have a strong committee and we will move forward expeditiously but cautiously,” said Committee Chairman George Foster. “There are numerous and sometimes complicated aspects of a project of this magnitude, but the expertise we have assembled on our committee will serve us well in accomplishing our goals.” (Sketches of the committee members are published elsewhere in *NewsBrief*).

Early projections of being back in a new sanctuary by next Easter may have been optimistic as the committee learns more about the scope of reconstruction. “We really don’t know at this point when the restoration will be completed because we don’t know the total extent of the damage and what needs to be done,” says Foster. “We’re working with engineers to ascertain that as soon as possible.”

The committee has identified two phases of the restoration: Emergency Protection and Rebuilding. The church remains in the first phase, which is an effort to protect the structure and assets from further damage. Contractors have shored up the outside walls of the sanctuary with braces and the inside is being cleared of debris. Contractors also have begun placing a temporary roof over the sanctuary to protect it from additional damage from outside elements. It appears that the falling roof may have damaged some of the sanctuary floor joists, meaning the floor and the basement may need considerable attention in the reconstruction. For now, engineers are not allowing non-construction personnel in the sanctuary or the east and west wings of the church, including Fellowship Hall and the kitchen until they can confirm the structural integrity of the buildings. The exceptions to that are the church office and the library, which engineers have declared sound.

In the meantime, workers continue to remove items from the affected areas so they can be assessed for insurance purposes. If any church members removed items from the church for cleaning or protection, please return them to the office to be included in the comprehensive inventory that is being prepared for the insurance company. The church has hired an insurance adjustor, National Fire Adjustment Company Inc. (NFA) to work with our insurer, Utica National. NFA is assessing the damage and inventorying the contents of our building and the company will help the church through the claims process.

The rebuilding phase involves hiring an architect, a general contractor, and initiating all of the other elements of constructing the new facility. “This first phase is preparing the damaged areas for reconstruction,” said Bud Miller, who is overseeing construction for the Steering Committee. Request for proposals from architects will go out within a couple of weeks and the committee hopes to have a firm on board by the middle of summer.

Evelyn Frazee, who is chairing the Design Changes and Improvements Subcommittee, has already met with numerous groups in the church gathering feedback on how they would like the new worship space to unfold. “I’ve received excellent input on the entire range of structural and non-structural elements and we will weigh all of this feedback carefully before formulating possible plans for the congregation to consider,” says Evelyn. “I have no doubt we will create a functional, comfortable, beautiful and historically sensitive worship space within the budget that we will have.”

The Steering Committee is meeting weekly and is committed to keeping the congregation informed on its progress. “We want to make sure everyone is aware of what we’re doing to move this important project forward,” said Communications Subcommittee Chair Dave Irwin. “We will do that through periodic mailing of updates, through announcements and meeting visits, and through the church Web site.”

Anyone wishing to receive updates via e-mail should notify Dave of your e-mail address if you haven’t already done so. His e-mail address is dirwin1@rochester.rr.com.

Meet the Members of Your Church Restoration Steering Committee

One of the first actions Session took following the fire was the establishment of a Steering Committee for the Restoration of the Church. The committee of seven brings extensive experience in the disciplines that comprise the restoration project. "I think we have exactly the right people on this steering committee," said Rev. Boak. "They will get the job done in the most expedient, cost-effective manner and will make sure that they carefully consider input from the congregation on all aspects of this monumental task."

Here are the members of the Steering Committee and a brief biographical sketch:

CHAIRMAN – George Foster

George and his wife, Peggy, have been members of the church since 1981 except for a five-year interim move to Buffalo. He has served as a member of the Board of Trustees for six years, five of those as chairman of the Buildings and Grounds Committee. He was involved with the Steeple Restoration Project and the New York State Restoration Grant Program. He served on the Personnel Committee and chaired the committee that wrote the current personnel manual. Now retired, George served as President of the Optical Products Group of the Leica Corp. Prior to that, he was President of the Optical Systems Division of Bausch & Lomb. George and Peggy's daughter, Rebecca, and son, David, were both married in the church and all four of their grandchildren were baptized here.

FINANCE – Cal Graziano

Cal has been attending the church for 24 years. He has been a Trustee for 12 years and has served as church Treasurer for seven years. He also has chaired the Finance and Planning and the Investment Committees of the Board of Trustees. Cal served on the Pastor Nominating Committee, the Capital Campaign Committee, the Stewardship Committee and the Presbytery Budget Committee. He also has served as a Supply Pastor in Danbury, N.Y., and as a Lay Preacher in Army chapels and churches in Germany. He has an MBA from Cornell in marketing and finance and has been the chief financial and administrative officer for Kodak's Graphics Imaging Systems Division, a business adviser in private practice and for Coopers and Lybrand Management Consulting Services, and was president and CEO of Allen-Bailey Tag and Label, Inc. Cal and his wife, Diane, have two children, Gary and Adrienne, and two grandchildren.

CONSTRUCTION PROJECT – Bud Miller

Bud was born and raised in Pittsford and has been a life-long member of the church. He is a church Trustee and has served on that board's Buildings and Grounds Committee. He also has served as a deacon. Bud has an electrical engineering degree from RIT and worked for Xerox for 21 years in engineering program management. He started his own remodeling and construction company in 1990 and has had extensive building experience in both residential and light commercial construction. He's been a member of the Professional Engineering Society since 1986. Bud and his wife, Joan, a cardiologist, have three daughters: Kim, Tammy and Jodi, and also enjoy six grandchildren.

DESIGN CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS – Evelyn Frazee

Evelyn joined the church ten years ago and was drawn here by the warmth of the congregation, the depth of the pastoral staff, and the simple beauty of the sanctuary. She moved to Rochester in 1978 to work for a law firm after graduating from law school. She is now a New York State Supreme Court Justice and believes her experience in listening to people, organizing and synthesizing information and communicating will serve her well in chairing this committee. She and fellow committee members Bill Smith, Bob Huot and Jim Weick are responsible for finding an architect to design the worship space and other areas that may need restoration, and for gathering ideas from the congregation and others on the restoration. An extra advantage for Evelyn is that she and her husband, Tom Klonick, also an attorney, have some knowledge of construction since they have restored two historical properties. Evelyn and Tom have two children: Kate, who is in college, and Alexander, who attends Mendon High School.

INSURANCE – Duncan O’Dwyer

Duncan has been a member of the church for more than 30 years. He is an active member of the church’s Board of Trustees. Duncan is the managing partner of Forsyth, Howe, O’Dwyer, Kalb and Murphy, where he has worked since 1967. He graduated from the Cornell University School of Law. Duncan specializes in all facets of real estate, banking, tax certiorari and higher education law. He is a member of the New York and Kansas bars, is a retired Army JAGC with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and is a certified military judge. Duncan is also a trustee at Roberts Wesleyan College and is the college’s general counsel. Duncan and his wife, Alice, have been married for 42 years, and were both baptized in the Larchmont Avenue Presbyterian Church and attended the same elementary and secondary schools. They have two children, Pamela and Jeffrey, and three grandchildren.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATION –

Roxanne Skuse

Roxanne has been a member of the church for 12 years and for much of that time has been a faithful member of the choir. She also is an elder, has been chair of the Christian Education Committee, was on the search committee for a new choir director, and has been involved in the LOGOS Program in a variety of ways for many years. She also has taught Bible School, helped with the youth choir program, and has co-organized the Heifer Fair with the Sunday School teachers. She also was a mentor for this year’s confirmation group and is a member of Anthony Circle. Roxanne is a substitute teacher and is a docent for the Landmark Society. She and her husband, Robert, have two children: Paige, age 15, and Schuyler, age 12.

COMMUNICATIONS – Dave Irwin

Dave has been member of the church for ten years. He is an elder, has been a member of the church’s Personnel Committee, co-chaired the search committee for a new choir director and has served as a confirmation class mentor. Dave has held a variety of communications positions, primarily in higher education. He’s managed programs at the University of Rochester Medical Center, Ohio State University, the College of Wooster and the University of Missouri. He is currently a freelance writer, editor, and consultant. He has a master’s degree in journalism from the University of Missouri. Dave and his wife, Joy, have two sons: Will, an entrepreneur, and Greg, who is in college.

Thanks to our Fired Up Presbyterians who made our presence at Sunday afternoon’s *Positively Pittsford* celebration a tremendous success! Many adults and young people picked and cleaned berries on Saturday and shared food, fun and fellowship with members of the community on Sunday from our booth on the corner of Church and Main Street. Special thanks go to the major organizers: Roxanne Skuse, Laura Hamilton-Frank, Janette Henderson, Madge Herge, and Claudia Williams. This would not have happened so wonderfully without all your hard work!!! And our sincere thanks to everyone who picked, sorted, cleaned, sold, consumed and cleaned up!!! This is just one of the ways volunteers throughout our church family are making their gifts known to God and the community. Should you have other ideas or want to offer your own gifts, please contact Roxanne Skuse (385-6727), our volunteer coordination team-leader of the Steering Committee (see other updates on the Steering Committee in this *NewsBrief*). Presbyterians of Pittsford are Positively Fired Up!