

# NewsBrief

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

June 2005

## From the Pastor's Pen-Cell

Columnist David Gibson published a piece entitled "Copyright Crusaders" in this month's edition of *Fortune Magazine*. The article raises the question about who gets the royalties for prayers on coffee mugs and wars over other such intellectual property. His opening lines say, "In the warm and frothy bubble bath that is American spirituality today, it's hard to think of anything quite as familiar and comforting as the mini-homily known as 'Footprints in the Sand.'"

Now I am interested in knowing just who does have the legal rights to publish this stuff on mouse pads, greeting cards, and calendars, but it is also informative to read the characterization of American spirituality as "the warm and frothy bubble bath." Yes, there is a concern that we preachers can unknowingly infringe on the copyrights of others, but it is perhaps more disturbing that American spirituality is described this way.

I really don't want to argue for a militant faith, especially with passionate religious groups emerging in the media, justifying inhumane abuse in an effort to grab power. But it is disturbing to hear a columnist relegate expressions of faith to frothy bath water. Perhaps it isn't a great deal different from the disdain the writer of Revelation places on the lips of Jesus when he says to the church at Laodicea,

"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation: "I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth." (Revelation 3:14-16)

No lukewarm bubble baths for Pittsford Presbyterians! We want to be hot, "on fire" (a phrase we now use more carefully) for those things that have us pursuing mission. Before we get to June, we will have commissioned our confirmands to use their gifts and talents in the service of Jesus Christ. But, we should be giving thought to how each of us might have a commissioned ministry. Maybe some are hearing a call to touch with hope those executives who find themselves without employment. Are there those who sense God's nudging to step out of their comfort zone and build relationships with young single, adults that would help them feel included in the community faith? Anyone feel that they are a good listener and that God needs them in Stephen Ministry? The possibilities are limitless.

Toward the end of his look at the lawsuit regarding the ubiquitous ownership of the "Footprints in the sand" Gibson puts the ecclesiastical analysis of things into his own words when he suggests how historians of religion synthesize the history of Christianity by saying that Christianity was born in the Middle East as a religion, moved to Greece and became a philosophy, journeyed to Rome and became a legal system, spread through Europe as a culture - and when it migrated to America, Christianity became big business.

If Christianity only becomes a business, it will splash into froth. But, if it is a living faith, discovered in relationship with those who share the news that God loves them it will be transforming. If it is a faith whereby God calls people to discipleship at each stage of life and God's vision is pursued, then Christianity will be hot - and this is not just a reference to June temperatures in Linehan Chapel.

*Bruce*

## Prayerfully Pondering Purpose, Praise and Practices...

Rick Warren has been in the news again recently. Perhaps many of you recognize the author of *The Purpose Driven Life* or have been participating in our adult education discussion of the book after Sunday services. When the shooter in the Atlanta courthouse recently ran away, he spent time with a woman who credited her calm responses to her recent study of Warren's book. Rick Warren has also been writing a column for *Ladies Home Journal* and sharing a sense of spirituality with a world that seems hungry for God's message. Why is his work so popular these days?

Who of us hasn't asked ourselves at some point in our lives, "What is my purpose?" The great works of literature and the history books are replete with humanity's various answers to this question. As Christians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and people of this community one year after our lightning strike<sup>1</sup>, we too can ask this of ourselves.

Career counselors, self-help sections in book stores, therapists, spiritual directors, parents, and friends are great sounding boards for answering this question. Many assessment tools – like the Myers Briggs personality type test or Spiritual Gifts Inventories – can help us get a handle on who we are and with what we have been gifted. Knowing who we are (a child of God) and with what we have been gifted (God's grace) are two important steps to determining our purpose. As this year's confirmands wrote their faith statements, they too had to reflect on what they perceived their purpose at this point in their lives. Most wrote of sharing God's love in some form or fashion. I can't think of a better way of saying it.

I have witnessed a great deal of sharing God's love from members of this community over the past year. And I want to give hearty praise to God and thanks to the many different types of volunteers in our community who have found purpose for their lives in bearing witness to that love.<sup>2</sup> No list can be exhaustive, but I want to highlight three groups at this time.

On Sunday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, we will take a moment to recognize just one hard-working group: our Sunday School teachers. You might not know all of them as our worship and church school schedule precludes them from being in worship with us often; nonetheless, I encourage us all to seek them out and

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<sup>1</sup> We will have a remembrance ceremony of the Ascension Day Thursday lightning strike on Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup> at 8pm in our Fellowship Hall. Dress for the weather as we hope to process outside at the approximate time of the strike to light candles and give thanks to God for God's protection, grace and many gifts to us.

<sup>2</sup> One great way to bear witness to God's love is to invite a friend to church. According to the 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Survey ([www.uscongregations.org](http://www.uscongregations.org)), most new worshipers (47%) report they first visited a congregation because someone invited them. By contrast, only 6% came because of advertising they saw.

let them know how much we appreciate their dedication to our young people.

This month will also mark the one-year anniversary of our Restoration Steering Committee meeting for the first time. These brave, hearty, generous, and persistent people have met long hours EVERY week (sometime multiple times in a week) since the lightning strike to help us continue our ministry through careful stewardship of our beloved facilities.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, on Sunday, June 5<sup>th</sup> we will commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ordination of women elders. Men and women of the universal church have historically borne witness to God's love for the world in many significant ways. This celebration of women being able to lead the decisions of our particular congregations in our denomination is a mark of how far we have come in our understanding of God's inclusive love. I welcome the day when we will be able to say the same thing for all groups we designate as "other" or outside the realm of God's grace. I give praise to God for these women – many of whom are still serving Christ among us – and for their finding purpose in bearing witness to God's love for the world.

How might each of us find a way to express our purpose in God's creation? Discerning God's purpose in our lives is helped by undertaking any combination of spiritual practices such as Bible Study, journaling, fasting, praying, Sabbath-keeping, walking a labyrinth, or meditating on God's word. The goal of these and other Christian spiritual practices is to create in our lives a kind of space, availability and willingness that will allow the Holy Spirit to transform us into more Christ-like people. The old adage rings true: practice makes perfect. In this case, what we are perfecting is our faith in a God who wants to be with us and for us. These practices reveal the purpose in our lives as bearing witness to the hope and healing that comes from knowing ourselves as beloved children of God, redeemed by Christ, and equipped with the Holy Spirit.

As I give praise for the many ways God has used a multitude of volunteers in our community over this past year, I pray each of us will find our particular purpose in Christ and put into practice the many gifts bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit.

Go with God,

*Carrie*

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<sup>3</sup> The Steering Committee is chaired by George Foster and includes six subcommittees: Design Assessment with Evelyn Frazee, Bill Smith, Jim Weick and Bob Huot; communication with David Irwin; construction with Bud Miller and Peter Hamilton; Inventory with Roxanne Skuse and Janette Henderson, Contracts with Dave Ferris and Duncan O'Dwyer, and Finance with Cal Graziano and Ken Anderson. Bruce Boak has served as pastoral liaison.

These are the lectionary texts for the month of June. We welcome you to study in advance of their being incorporated into the Sunday worship services.

**Week of June 5** – Gen. 12:1-9; Ps. 33:1-12;  
Rom. 4:13-25; Matt. 9:9-13, 18-26

**Week of June 12** – Gen. 18:1-15 (21:1-7); Ps. 116:1-2,  
12-19; Rom. 5:1-8; Matt. 9:35-10:8  
(9-23)

**Week of June 19** – Gen. 21:8-21; Ps. 86:1-10, 16-17;  
Rom. 6:1b-11; Matt. 10:24-39

**Week of June 26** – Gen. 22:1-14; Ps. 13; Rom. 6:12-23  
Matt. 10:40-42

*from Sandy's desk...*

Paul, in Romans 12, wanted to encourage Christians to see themselves as one body with one purpose. The purpose, Christ's GREAT COMMISSION: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation." (Mark 16:15).

Jesus taught his disciples, to "GO". For the disciples and for us, this command requires the same things. We are called to prepare ourselves to carry on the work of Jesus among those who are not part of the body. We are not called to see that our needs are met first. The disciples were sent out only with the knowledge they had learned from Jesus, and the clothes they were wearing. (Matt. 9:3)

When we allow ourselves, in our 21<sup>st</sup> Century affluent, American society to seek only that which pleases us, we must ask "if I consider myself a Christian and, as Paul taught, therefore part of the Body of Christ, how then, am I contributing to the health of this body?"

This Body of Christ to which we are invited to be a part, like any living thing, is a system. Paul points out that "...as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function." But to maintain a healthy body, all the body parts need to be working together for the health of the entire system. We are not a loosely banded together group of individuals, but a living system with the head of Christ and called for a single purpose. Much more important then, rather than confidently saying to ourselves "well, I do this and that and therefore I want this body to be..." is that, no matter what we each do individually, are we

supporting all the other necessary processes of the system?

So the voice may say, I comfort the other members of this body by sharing God's promises. And the ears may say I comfort the other parts of this body by listening and hearing the concerns of others. But because the left foot that has fallen asleep, neither the larynx nor the ears can reach anyone and so the body does not function and the entire system is impaired because the foot cannot move the body forward.

Neither Jesus nor Paul ever told the disciples that once they had done a certain chore they were finished. Neither said see that you feed this number of people, see that you clothe this many or see that this many are financially sound and then your job is done.

If the purpose we are called to is to "Go... and tell the good news, the point of providing for the needs of others is only to help them know the love and grace of our faithful God".

LEARN (equip yourself first), WORSHIP (honor the Lord your God), PRAY (grow in your own relationship with God), TEACH (by your own example to the other and the younger members of our body) and then prepared, GO OUT INTO the world together bearing Christ.

*How are you equipping yourself and the rest of this your body? How are you supporting the many different organs of this your body? How are you helping this body bear Christ to the rest of God's Creation?*

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***TEACHERS NEEDED: You don't have to be a parent...but you can be. You don't need to recite the entire Bible. In fact we wish you wouldn't. You don't need to be crafty. Our young disciples are all that and more. You don't have to do it alone. All classes must have a team of four teachers per grade level. You don't have to plan, write and prepare all lessons on your own. Our curriculum format is designed to be teacher friendly, adaptable and backed by resources and materials, ideas and assistance from experienced and dedicated educational staff. If you are willing to love and if you are willing to bear witness to Christ in your life...THEN WE NEED YOU NOW!***

**See Sandy**

## We are turning the corner...

The program year for 2004-2005 is coming to an end. That means that 2005-2006 is just around the bend. The excitement over the promise of returning "home" already hangs in the air around us. Weariness, and pride noting a successful year can be seen in the faces of our C. E. program ministry leaders.

A year long process to find the right person for our Youth Ministry is hopefully near an end. Our Adult Ed. Task force, having a successful year of fine offerings, is now looking toward new September studies and additional covenant groups. We will confirm 17 new members of our congregation. Caregivers bravely cared for Sunday morning nursery needs despite strained space. Our extraordinary volunteer teachers have done a wonderful job of maintaining a solid discipleship program for our children on Sundays. Our LOGOS program was very well received despite being housed in yet another facility.

Now we are looking at a new challenge. In September, when we return "home" we will need you and at least 50 others to team up to meet our Sunday morning challenge. We know there are persons very interested in the quality and success of our educational offerings. And, we encourage YOU to attend C.E. meetings (held the first Tuesday evening of each month at 7:30 pm in the C.E. Office - upstairs in the administration building). All are welcome.

For the months of May and June, please note the following important dates:

May 22 #1 Science/Faith con't.  
Regular Church School  
May 29 #2 Science/Faith con't.  
Regular Church School

June 5 #3 Science/Faith con't.  
Regular Church School  
Communion Sunday  
Cabaret Theatre (St Louis  
Church @ 6:30pm)

June 6 LOGOS Board Meeting  
(C.E. Office)

June 7 C.E. Committee meeting  
(C.E. Office)

June 12 #4 Science/Faith con't.  
10:00 am Worship  
w/Teacher Recognition (all  
teachers attending beginning  
of worship service).  
Scouting God & Country  
Awards.

Children's Musical Offering  
June 19 #5 Science/Faith (last one)  
Graduate Recognition  
Father's Day (Strawberry  
Social following service).

June 26 Summer Church School  
Begins for Nursery, Pre-K  
& K; 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> grades.

*Hopefully, beginning in mid to late June, we may be able to begin our resettlement process. This will take all the help we can get. There will be need for helping hands to wash down furniture, carry furniture, make classroom curtains, paint furniture, restock bookshelves, files and supplies and label cupboards and storage items. There will be laminating to do and catalog searches and orders placed for items which must be replaced. New items to be purchased must then also be carried, sorted and stocked. This is an exciting time, but many hands will be needed. Plan to be available to help our program year get off to a great start. Call Sandy Pacyga Ext. 30 to volunteer. WE WILL NEED TEACHERS!  
**HOW IS GOD CALLING YOU?***

### Youth Musical Update – *The Troubbable of Zerubbabel*

- Rehearsals are well under way for our musical that will be shared in worship the morning of June 12. This timely story tells of the Israelites return from exile in Babylon, only to find their temple in ruins. Though not by choice, Zerubbabel is chosen to lead the task of rebuilding. With god's help and guidance the people persevere and the temple walls are rebuilt. **Please join us for the exciting day of worship and praise.**
- **Children** will be in worship that day and will be able to participate in one of the songs as the cast members parade around the chapel in the symbolic walk from Babylon to Jerusalem.
- **Can you Help??** We are looking for big stackable boxes to paint for our temple blocks. Give me a call if you have some available.
- **Prior cast members** from 1993 are invited to join us in worship that day and if any of you would like to join the cast in singing Show Me a Rainbow or Eternal Prayer give me a call or e-mail with the following contact information.

In Faith and Song.

**Dede Holmes – 624-4157 or**

**[dmh91654@aol.com](mailto:dmh91654@aol.com).**

**Come celebrate “Dads and Grads”** on June 19 after the morning service. Your Deacons will be serving delicious strawberries and tempting ice cream in Café Sorrelle, beneath Linehan Chapel. Join us for fellowship and fun.



### OPTIMISTS

“What is so rare as a day in June? Then, if ever, come perfect days.”

While it may not be perfect, a traditional June picnic, with pie for desert, sounds like a lot of fun! Join the Optimists in Eyer Park, East Rochester, on June 3, at 6:15 PM. (Eyer Park is at the end of chestnut Street, off Lincoln avenue, just before the RR viaduct.) Entertainment will be provided by Jim Kimball. Remember to bring your own place settings, and you can enjoy this evening for the nominal sum of \$7.00 per person. Tickets will be available after church (near the elevator) on May 22 and 29, or in the church office.

“RESTORING – RENEWING – REACHING OUT”  
from Jack Holzwarth

These words will sound familiar now that the Nehemiah Campaign is well underway. Following months of prayerful preparation, the May 22 kickoff date is now upon us. What a significant milestone in the life of our church! Reports of campaign progress will be forth coming.

Yes, restoring, renewing and reaching out have been keywords in the campaign as monies have been sought to keep the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsford strong for the next 200 years. The words have been used in a financial sense but surely are not new concepts, in the life of our church, as we continue to grow in Christian fellowship and as we continue to wrestle with our individual journeys of faith.

A year, and a few days, have passed since the night sky was illuminated in the form of a fierce lightning bolt that struck our church. We have been restoring, renewing and reaching out to a heightened degree ever since. Much of the strength for this stems from what our church has meant to us, individually, in the past.

In Nehemiah 8:10 one reads...”the joy of the Lord is your strength.” May our joy know no bounds in the weeks, months and years ahead!

### Michael Scholarship A Working Memorial

This scholarship was established in the memory of Elmer J. Michael, Jr. to create and maintain a fund to assist seminary and college students who are pursuing a Christian oriented vocation.

The Session’s Outreach Committee is pleased to report that 22 students have been assisted by 31 scholarships. These scholarships have been funded by interest earned of \$28,950 on the E. James Michael Jr. Scholarship fund.

We trust that our church is fulfilling the desires of those who established the memorial and that the students assisted will bring Honor to our Lord for many years.

Your Outreach Committee:

Dianne Brown, Eunsun Cho, Lee Fox, Bill Gavett, James Higbee, David Klein, Ted Pollock, Bob Shone, Maria Smith, William Smith, Dick Sprengle

### Update on Abraham Thon Bol Akol: Refugee from Sudan Sponsored by Our Congregation

After many months of submitting job applications and some interviews, Abraham is working at Harris Seed and Nursery in a short-term job. Because he is now employed, he will be losing his benefits from the county. The Harris job is temporary and therefore offers no benefits. This is of course the conundrum of the working poor in the US.

I am asking for your help in finding Abraham a full time permanent position. His background is in agriculture and he has a 2-year college degree. His English is excellent and he has been working on his computer skills since he arrived last November. He is very personable, adaptable and punctual. He does not currently have a driver’s license and must work within walking distance of a bus line. Abraham brings with him the life skills that allowed him to prevail in Sudan and Egypt and to arrive in Rochester legally.

He would love to work at Strong or Highland Hospitals (he lives across the street from Highland). He applied to Wegman’s but could use some connections to get his foot in the door. Our Congregation and your Session agreed to sponsor him and this is the most crucial aspect of your sponsorship if we want him to succeed in his new life here in Rochester.

Please contact me with suggestions, job offers and/or to set up a meeting with Abraham. If you would like to give Abraham driving lessons, please also let me know. Your life will be richer

for your offers. Lee Fox, 385-5996,  
leefox@rochester.rr.com