

# NewsBrief

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

## March, 2004

### From the Pastor's Pen-Cell

"I am." Now that is a short sentence! Has it ever occurred to you how much our culture uses the words "I have" more than it does a form of the verb "to be." We say, "I have a cold." "I have a wife." We don't more normally say, "I am sick," or "I am married." We focus more on the nature of what we own and consume more than who we are.

As we move through Lent, our Sunday focus will be the "I am" statements of Jesus. On Youth Sunday, March 14, our senior high youth will walk around John 14 where Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." We will consider "I am the good shepherd," and supremely we will come to "I am the resurrection and the life" on Easter.

Recently during worship we read, but didn't pause to reflect on the Old Testament lesson which was God's call to Jeremiah. The Lord said, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." Jeremiah's reply was "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." But the Lord said to Jeremiah, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you, Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord." As this was read the thought hit me, "How often have I thought to myself, "I am ONLY, as if to excuse what God might choose to do. Have you said or thought those words? Have we ever thought this way corporately as a congregation?"

Back in 1958, a high school senior, Robert G. Heft, designed a 50-star American flag for a history class project. At the time, the U.S. had 48 states, but there was much talk of bringing Alaska and Hawaii into the Union. Robert's mother was "horrified" at his choice of a project; she insisted that he was desecrating the flag. Robert's history teacher gave him a failing grade on the project. When Robert questioned his grade, his teacher replied, "If you don't like the grade, go get the flag accepted in Washington!"

That's what 17-year-old Robert Heft did. He presented his flag to Ohio congressman Walter Moeller who took it to Washington and in 1959, when Alaska and Hawaii were admitted to the Union Robert Heft's flag was chosen as the new, official flag of the United States of America.<sup>1</sup> Imagine that. Only in high school--but he designed the flag millions of Americans salute today.

After I've really fouled something up, I've thought or said, "I'm only human." When giving in to temptation we say, "Well, I'm only human." I overslept this morning-- "Well, I'm only human." I ate that last piece of chocolate cake. "Well, I'm only human." As we approach Lent, maybe we need to reconsider that the Bible indicates that we were created "a little lower than the angels." We are the crown of God's creation. God sent Jesus to die in our behalf.

Whenever somebody we know does something right or when someone commends us for doing something extremely well, we say, "After all, I'm human." But, to be human is to be created in the image of God. As the writer of Ephesians says, "You are God's masterpiece."<sup>2</sup> We are? Does this mean that we shouldn't say, "I'm only this . . . I'm only that," because God intends to do great things through us?

**Prayerfully Pondering Coming Home...**

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Schneider, "A Grand New Flag," *Guideposts*, July 2003, pp. 36-41.

<sup>2</sup> Fred Craddock in *Ten Great Preachers*, edited by Bill Turpie (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), p. 45.

Bill and I awoke this morning to the sound of gentle raindrops against the roof and windows. I thanked God – not for the first time – for bringing us to Rochester, to this loving church community and to this cozy home. Housing is something many of us take for granted. But not everyone can.

In Monroe County in 2002, the Department of Health and Human Services made 8,533 emergency placements for homeless people. Considering that the county has only 429 beds for all homeless, one can quickly grasp the magnitude of the problem facing us. As we think of homelessness, it is tempting to call it an inner city problem. In fact, 60% of those classified living below the poverty line, live outside of downtown Rochester. The faces of homelessness are changing around the nation. A growing number of traditional families, one-parent families, veterans, working people, or victims of domestic or neighborhood violence find themselves without housing. Over half of the nation's homeless are women and children and families are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population.

Into this bleak picture, faith communities in our area are shedding light – and RAIHN. A coalition of churches, synagogues, and worship centers have formed the Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network (RAIHN). When RAIHN begins accepting guests later this year, it will be the 100<sup>th</sup> program formed in the nation since 1986 using this model. The mission statement of RAIHN is to assist homeless families achieve sustainable independence by supporting them with resources of food, shelter, personalized case management and a broad network of caring volunteers.

Families are referred to RAIHN from a number of social service agencies in Monroe County. A family coming into the RAIHN program is pre-screened and they sign a pledge to abide by the rules of the program before they are accepted.

In a typical "Day in the Life" of a guest of the RAIHN program, the family moves weekly from one host faith community to the next; typically spending four to six weeks in the program while they seek new housing through the professional counseling the guest families receive from RAIHN and other agencies. Over 70% of the families who participate in the nationwide parent program of RAIHN find permanent housing.

Each day starts with breakfast at the host facility, provided by the volunteers from each hosting or support organization. The guests are then transported to the Day Center established by RAIHN at Third Presbyterian

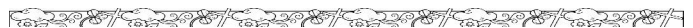
Church where they can receive their mail, meet the school buses, do their laundry, bathe/shower, and most importantly, receive counseling on jobs and housing.

At the end of their busy day, the guests return to the host faith community (a different hosting congregation each week), where they are provided with dinner and support (if needed) from the host volunteers. The evening hours are relaxation times, as they would be for any family. The day ends with a private place to lay their heads together as a family, under one roof.

This congregation has demonstrated its caring in the past by building three homes through Habitat for Humanity and we joyfully anticipate beginning our fourth home in 2004. Another way we can alleviate the problem of homelessness in Monroe County is by participating in RAIHN. We can either commit to being one of the host communities housing families four weeks out of the year, or commit resources and volunteers to assist a partnering faith community (like Third Presbyterian, Downtown Presbyterian, or St. Paul's Episcopal).

Direct participation in a program like this is a win-win proposition for our congregation, the guests, and the Monroe County social fabric in which we are all woven. If RAIHN sparks your interest and you would like to help shed some more light on its prospects, please let me know.

Blessings, *Carrie*



These are the lectionary texts for the month of March which we welcome you to study in advance of their being incorporated into the Sunday worship services. We welcome you to Bible Study on Wednesdays at 9:30 am and again at 7:00 pm to discuss the upcoming Sunday's texts.

Week of March 7 – Gen. 15:1-12, 17-18; Ps. 27 Phil. 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35
Week of March 14 – Isa. 55:10-9; Ps. 63:1-8 1 Cor. 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9
Week of March 21 – John. 5:9-12; Ps. 32; 2 Cor. 5:16-21 Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32
Week of March 28 – Isa. 43:16-21; Ps. 126; Phil. 3:4b-14 John 12:1-8



## Christian Education News:

**NURSERY NOTES:** You may have noticed some changes in the appearance of our nursery. We have recently removed some of the older toddler floor toys and some equipment that was not totally up to safety standards. There is now more open floor (crawling space) in both the infant and toddler rooms. In addition, the third space in the nursery, the crib room, has temporarily become storage space for some of the items set aside for the October Penney Pincher sale and some scenery for our pageants. This area is now blocked off from access by our infants and we believe that safety for our infants and convenience for our infant caregivers has improved even more than it had been.

We have an excellent team of caregivers, over fifteen registered for our September through June program year and overseen by Madge Herge and her able right hand, Claudia Williams. Our parent pager system is working well. Parents may participate in worship comfortable in the knowledge that if their child needs them, the small vibrator will alert them to their child's call. Volunteer caregivers are always welcome. Please see Madge or call her at 248-3615. It is only February, but we also urge you to consider the need for caregivers over the summer months. There is also a need for a large, comfy but in excellent condition, easy chair. It must be suitable for cuddling one or two children for story reading. Chairs with rockers are not usable due to the danger to little fingers while the chair is rocking and the instability which makes it dangerous for tiny ones to pull themselves upright by holding on to them. We believe our Nursery is the first place our littlest angels learn the love of Christian Community and we are proud to offer the best care possible.

**THE CHURCH SCHOOL CORNER:** Students in our Sunday Pre-school through 6<sup>th</sup> grade have had a busy first half of the 2003-04 program year. This January found them busily preparing for the Heifer Fair. This is one of several efforts on the part of our children to provide support for various outreach efforts. Last year's Children's collection went to the support of the mission effort led by Mr. Ted Pollock to Mozambique. The children also participate in our support for the One Great Hour of Sharing. The new curriculum, written in house by a curriculum writing task force is working well. Glitches and adjustments have been evaluated and "tweaked" along the way and the whole process will continue. This first year has been very encouraging. Over the months of

preparation, we have also slowly acquired excellent tools, equipment and materials to help make our learning programs exceptional. Our busy children, along with learning the Word of God for their lives also participate in pageants, music offering at worship and involvement in LOGOS. All in all, we have a very healthy, happy Children's ministry. We invite everyone of the older congregation to visit our classrooms on Sunday, February 29 after worship, to congratulate our teachers, students and parent helpers in the wonderful job they all do here in Christ's name.

**CONFIRMATION PREP. 2004:** Our seventh and eighth grade classes have been pressing forward in the preparation of our young adults to the exciting culmination of the Confirmation process. A dedicated group of adults leads them each to step out in faith and accept adult responsibility for their own Christian walk. This process that begins with baptism and lasts a lifetime, is marked by the rite of passage of Confirmation. This year as always, the promises between our confirmands and their God will be witnessed by the whole congregation on Pentecost Sunday. This year, the Sunday on which we mark the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit, is May 30. We urge you all to MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW and plan to be a part of this important, Christian, coming of age celebration. Plan to witness the commitment of these young Christians and welcome them as adult members into the body of Christ here at First Pres.

**THE FAITH ADVENTURE OF SR. HIGH FORUM:** Where are our young people? Well, most Sundays, upwards of 32 of them and their 5 adult leaders can be found "on high" in the upstairs Forum Room. A visit to this comfortable, faithful, curious group of young adults will lift your spirits and open your eyes to the work of God among our youth. While forming a safe, easy going community for each other where they can share and be heard who they are and what is happening in their lives, they are also learning and growing in their Christian walk.

For the next two months, they will be learning about the elements of worship. Why do we do what we do as worship? And, they will be designing their own worship service for participation by the entire congregation. This year, the Youth Worship Service will be held on Sunday, March 14 at the 10:00 o'clock service. Always an uplifting highlight of our worship year, this year's worship promises to be as meaningful and engaging as always. Plan to be a part of this offering by our youth. The theme for the service will be "I am the truth, the way and the life". John 14:6

**STEP BY SMALL STEP, ADULT SEEKERS ARE GIVING THEMSELVES THE GIFT OF DISCOVERY:**

Ever wonder where you could go on a Wednesday morning (9:30 am in room 201) or Wednesday evening (same room) to join with a wonderfully welcoming group who comes together to find God's Word and look at what it means in their lives? Well, have we got a place for you!!! Right now a cross section of men and women of all ages, faith walks and curiosity meet together each week to examine the upcoming Sunday's readings. They especially look at the Gospel but sometimes find great food for spiritual discuss from the other readings as well. There are no experts here, just people who are seeking meaning in their lives through the Bible. They seek meaning based on their own insight, new information, the Scripture itself, and through discussions led by our pastoral staff, Bruce, Carrie and Sandy who alternate leadership each week. Please consider joining our gathering. Maybe you would like to just try it our as a discipline for the upcoming Lenten Season. You will be enriched and we'd love to get to know you better. As these groups continue to grow, we are beginning to look for other times, places and even different content that might meet the needs of those who have not yet participated in an adult faith growth offering. If you would like to see us offer another kind of study, please let Bruce, Carrie or Sandy know.

**THE MONDAY AFTERNOON PRAYER**

**SUPPORT GROUP IS GROWING:** But there is always room for more!!! We receive regular prayer requests and encourage everyone to not hesitate to request prayer either on the prayer cards in the pews on Sunday or a call to the office or to any one of those who gather on Monday's at 4:30 p.m. to pray for the Praises, Prayers and Thanksgivings of our congregation. We, Kay Saxum, Jane Hunter, Carol Tiemann, Jim Higbee, Florence Cufari, Jim and Rose Morrow, Sister Carrie and Sandy Pacyga as well as several who drop in from time to time also invite you to come as you can and pray for our First Pres. family with us.

**ARE YOU DECIDING ON A LENTEN**

**SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE?** This Lent, as every year, we hope everyone will consider what would help them grow even closer to God. Lent is an excellent time for seeking out a Spiritual Mentor who, once a week through Lent will meet with you to hear where you have already journeyed with and grown in your relationship with God and perhaps help you identify God's desire for your next steps. If you would like to know more about this kind of personal faith process, please call Sandy, Carrie or Bruce to inquire.

**OPTIMISTS** next meeting will be held on Friday, March 5 at 6:15 PM in the Fellowship Hall. Our program will be "Pike Stained Glass" presented by Valerie O'Hara, present owner of the 75 year old family operated, Pike glass Studio (one of the oldest glass studios in the country). They designed, made and installed the windows in our sanctuary.

We welcome all visitors and newcomers – singles and couples 50 and over in age, who enjoy good fellowship, potluck suppers, and interesting programs. For more information, please call Sue Suter at 381-5297.

**ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING THE CHURCH?**

A new member class is scheduled for April 18 beginning at 4:00 PM and ending at 7:30 PM. A light supper will be included. April 25, at noon prospective members will enjoy a luncheon with Session members. New members will be received into the congregation on May 2 during the 10:00 AM Worship service. If you are interested please call Janet in the church office at 586-5688.

**SUNDAY A.M. VOLUNTEER ESCORTS NEEDED**

Every month, a different Volunteer Escort Family brings to 10:00 AM church services Friends from our church-owned A.R.C. house next door at 19 Church Street. Our Friends from the A.R.C. house choose church as their one permitted, extended weekly contact with the outside community.

Needed are at least three more families or individuals to fill the 12 month calendar. We have information about escorting and are willing to accompany and assist new Escorts. To volunteer or inquire, call Diane Graziano (586-4466) or email [coelhen2@frontiernet.net](mailto:coelhen2@frontiernet.net).

We welcome Maura Rouse and Betty Utterback who are willing to be scheduled to bring extra coffee servings to the A.R.C. table during the Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall. And, we thank all the present Escorts for their dependable monthly volunteering.

**Help! Cookie Bakers Needed!**

We still need cookie bakers for July (3), August (1), Sept. (1), Nov. (2), and Dec. (1). Call Elaine Johnson at 381-3018 to volunteer!

**UPDATE ON TOM HARRIS**  
From Dede Holmes

Tom was transferred Friday, February 6, to a medium security facility north of Albany.

He seems to be in good spirits in spite of the upheaval, and I'm sure once he is acclimated to his new surroundings, it will be a definite improvement over the institution at Coxsackie. This facility is actually up Mt. McGregor and has breathtaking views, which the inmates can actually enjoy through picture windows! Tom's stay here is expected to last around 6 months, after which he will be moved to a minimum facility, and hopefully closer to Rochester. Visiting is restricted to weekends and holidays from 9:00 AM to 2:45 PM. Directions can be found on the NYS prison system website.

His new address is:

**Tom W. Harris**  
**#02B2363**  
**1000 Mt. McGregor Road**  
**Wilton, NY 12831-5071**



**RESIDENT CAREGIVERS NEEDED AT  
ADVENT HOUSE**

We are currently in need of volunteers to work a four hour shift once a week or every other week helping to care for our Residents. There are various times available to suit your schedule, and full training and support is provided. Many of our present volunteers are temporarily out due to illness or travel, therefore we are seeking substitutes to ease the workload for all.

You will reap invaluable skills and rewards from being part of this ministry, and your life will be enriched by the peace and spirit of Advent House. Please call Glenda Hastings or Sue Lasher for information (223-6112). Fundraisers and housekeepers are always welcome also.



Dear Friends,

Thanks so much for the generous gift that recently arrived in the mail. I again enjoyed recalling with fondness the many wonderful friends at 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian, and many good, shared experiences.

I've been designing for years to take my recently retired wife to Italy later this year, and your gift will play a welcome role in our adventure.

My new church position has been very satisfying and supportive, and I am thankful each day for God's gifts to us all.

Cordially,  
Cary Ratcliff

**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



**The Vision of Stephen  
Ministries**

That each congregation would embody and express Jesus' command, "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John

13:34).

**A BIG THANK YOU**  
From East House

Please extend our heartfelt thanks on behalf of East House staff and clients to the good people of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsford. Their generous contribution of **45 angel gifts** to the East House Angel Project helped us to provide gifts for over **500** children and clients.

Our clients have told us how much it means to them not to have the extra anxiety worrying about how to provide gifts for their loved ones during the holiday season.

Thanks also to Madge Herge's Brownie troop who made 18 sets of scarves and matching hats for East House. The troop was mentioned in the Democrat and Chronicle's Thumb Up section for their contribution.

**LOGOS**

**February 18** – NO LOGOS – Happy  
Winter Break

**February 25** – Ash Wednesday – the word is *Follow*  
Adults – when you pick up your child follow them into the Ash Wednesday Service. You are welcome to join us for dinner that night. The charge is \$2.00. Reservations must be made at the Church office by Monday, February 23.

**March 3** – Fox & Geese – Bring a church  
chum/buddy. The word is *Choice*.

**March 10** – "*Kick the Can*" for the Food Cupboard –  
the word is *Score*

**March 17** – Kids Choice Awards – The word is  
*Proclaim*.

**March 24** – Grand Finale (Pot-luck) – The word is  
*United*.

**Sylvia Fix**