

NewsBrief

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

March, 2005

From the Preacher's Pen-Cell

Will Easter 2005 be greeted with snow? An ecumenical sunrise service intended for 7:00am along the canal on March 27 in Upstate New York makes this a reasonable possibility. (We will have two services at 8:30am and 10:30am on Easter morning at the Linehan Chapel on the campus of Nazareth). White is the color of Easter. It is the color of resurrection and hope and Easter eggs would be easier to see on a light blanket of white. I'm not trying to prophesy here, just recognize the symbolism and potential that could be ours. I could do without anyone crooning, "I'm Dreaming of a White Easter." But, no matter what the weather, it is a time to celebrate the glorious resurrection and new life of our Lord and I encourage you to worship on that day.

Prior to Easter we might be greeted with melting snow mixed with cinders, sand, salt and oil, piled along roadsides that would provide the Holy Week backdrop for Good Friday and Maundy Thursday. It nearly seems like the right dreary ambience for those days. (You will find those services scheduled in this *Newsbrief*, too. Maundy [from the Latin *Maundatum* meaning "command"] is the service of obligation – "Do this in remembrance of me." Holy Communion that recalls our Lord's last supper is a major part of this service.) On Good Friday we will provide an explanation of the Stations of the Cross that have surrounded us in Linehan Chapel and use those art carvings to understand Jesus' obedience on that dark Friday long ago. I encourage you to participate in all of the Holy Week Worship, beginning with Palm/Passion Sunday on March 20.

On Palm Sunday we will rejoice with Palms, read Matthew's Passion, and recall one of the stars of the day – the donkey on which Jesus rode. After all, the *disciples* are not particularly good Palm Sunday role models for us. They stood for Jesus then, but in a matter of days one betrayed him and another denied him. Nor are the *crowds* a model. They're worse than the disciples. They're curious, but not committed. In fact, their loyalties can be bought and sold and they can be whipped up to shout, "Crucify Him." Religious leaders? They were corrupt, mean-spirited and jealous. They offered and took bribes. They solicited false testimony. They created a bogus trial. They sent an innocent man to his death. This is troubling for me to consider as a "religious leader."

What's left? The donkey? The innocent, nearly unrecognizable one who bore the burden of the moment? Despite the pitfalls of equating people to a beast of burden, you will find that this *Newsbrief* is filled with indications that there have been faithful people carrying burdens for us, quietly, without expectation of recognition and glamour. They decorate the chancel with flowers, sing in the choir, and sit on countless committees planning for reconstruction, organs to help us with worship, and ways to engage us in mission. At times halting, stubborn, and uncertain, they trust the one who holds the reins.

Let us rejoice in this season – and dress appropriately if headed to the canal on Easter.

Bruce

**Prayerfully Pondering Presidents and
Presbyterian Processes...**

Although this Newsbrief is for March, many of you will receive it around Presidents' Day (February 21). In addition to kicking off the winter break, this day gives us a moment to celebrate the heritage we have been given in our representational democracy. Our forbearers worked hard to give us an equitable, yet effective structure in which people are empowered to preserve the greater good and revel in personal freedom. Much of that structure is based upon Presbyterian polity (governance structures) that was taught by John Witherspoon, the only clergyperson to sign the Declaration of Independence.

History has proven to us our forbearers laid the groundwork for a marvelous system of governance; even so, our country has faced both internal and external challenges. Over the course of our church's history, the congregation has faced the same. The external tragedy of the fire has forced us to make some tough internal decisions using our Presbyterian polity. It is my hope that we all understand more about that process and can allow god's grace to shine through our mutual endeavors and decision-making.

Presbyterian polity provides for connectionalism within the denomination while ensuring empowerment of the particular congregation. Why does this matter? We can both call upon the resources of the larger church as we are currently doing with a richer and more comprehensive insurance policy than we could have singly afforded *and* we can preserve our particular church identity and independence. Other denominations – such as Baptists or Congregational churches – have a different governance structure in which each person has a vote on every single issue. By contrast, Presbyterians “voluntarily put themselves under the leadership of their officers [Session], whom they elect. The law and government of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. presuppose the fellowship of women and men with their children in voluntary covenanted relationship with one another and with God through Jesus Christ. The organization rests upon the fellowship and is not designed to work without trust and love.”¹

When we ordained and installed our new officers on January 16, we asked God to bless them as they undertake their ministries and we promised to support them in their decisions. According to our Book of Order, the Session is “responsible for the mission and government of the particular church” and is both responsible and empowered for evangelism, new members, mission, worship, pastoral care, Sunday School, social healing, stewardship, budget, personal growth of officers, church administration, property management, relationships with Presbyterian governing bodies, and delegation and supervision of the work of the Boards of Trustees and

Deacons, as well as any other temporarily appointed task forces.

Our leadership has historically been excellent stewards of this congregation about which we have all come to know, love and care so deeply. Marvelous ministry has happened in a myriad of forms because so many dedicated individuals have agreed to work together to bring about God's kingdom right here on earth! Since the fire, the Session has delegated any number of tasks to the Trustees, Steering Committee, Deacons, Organ Replacement Committee, Organ Selection Committee, Capital Campaign Search Committee, and the Session's own subcommittees of Stewardship, Nominating, Membership & Evangelism, Personnel, Christian Education, Outreach, and Music & Worship. This delegation has made both the day-to-day operations and the long-term decisions possible.

Perhaps you have heard the joke, wherever there are four Presbyterians, there's a fifth (of alcohol). The truth behind that joke is wherever there are four Presbyterians, there are *at least* four different opinions. Our Book of Order recognizes this and says, “persons of good conscience will disagree.” As brothers and sisters in Christ, we look to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of the faith for a model of reconciliation to move beyond our differences². One of the first steps in reconciliation is speaking and listening openly to one another. Our leadership works hard to do that and it wants to do so in partnership with the entire congregation. The Session is not an exclusive body, a secretive society, or in any way closed to congregational input. In fact, Session meetings (third Monday of each month at Christ Clarion at 7:30pm) are open to visitors who can be accorded voice without vote.

As I continue to serve this congregation I love so deeply, it pains me to hear of individuals who feel left out of the congregations, its decisions, or governing processes for whatever reason. And as I speak with members, I have come to learn that many have different expectations for each person's ability to make the myriad of decisions facing our congregation every day. As we enjoy President's weekend, may we all celebrate the democratic and Presbyterian processes that have helped us build a wonderful nation and a phenomenal church. It is my hope that we can all feel better informed, more engaged, and empowered to play an ongoing and important role in this congregation—with all its imperfections—as we each strive to give our particular gift to the body of Christ. A

Go with God, Carrie

These are the lectionary texts for the month of March. Given our Lenten “Praying the Psalms”

¹ Presbyterian Church USA. *Book of Order*. G-0.7013.

² Hebrews 12:2

exhibition, you might want to pay particular attention to each week's Psalm. We welcome you to study in advance of their being incorporated into the Sunday worship services. Please join us for Bible Study on Wednesdays in Fellowship Hall at 9:30 AM or in the Library at 7:00 PM to discuss the upcoming Sunday's texts. No preparation is necessary – bring yourself, your bible and your questions.

**Week of Mar. 6 – 1 Sam. 16:1-13; Ps. 23; Eph. 5:8-14
John 9:1-41**

**Week of Mar. 13 – Ez. 37:1-14; Ps. 130; Rom. 8:6-11
John 11:1-45**

**Week of Feb. 20 – Matt. 21:1-11; Ps. 118:1-2, 19-29
Isa. 50:4-9a; Ps. 31:9-16; Phil. 2:5-11
Matt. 26:14-27:66 or Matt. 27:11-54**

**Week of Feb. 27 – Acts 10:34-43 or Jer. 31:1-6
Ps. 118:1-2, 14-24; Col. 3:1-4 or
Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-18 or
Matt. 28:1-10**



Save the Dates! JYF and MTC are back in full swing this term and all 7th – 12th graders are invited to join us at Christ Clarion Presbyterian Church on Thornell Road between 7-8:30 PM on March 13 and 20, April 10 and May 15 and 22. all are welcome: bring your friends! On March 13, the youth will have a fun outing (weather dependent: either sledding or bowling) and on the 20th, the youth will be climbing at Rock Ventures. Watch the bulletin and emails for details. If Carrie does not have your email, please send it to her at carrie.mitchell@pittsfordpres.org. A

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Confirmation: Come Claim the Creed! This is just a reminder to all mentors and confirmands that the date for our April gathering has been changed from April 3 to April 10. We'll still be at Christ Clarion, but we will meet downstairs. See you then. We'll be finalizing our faith statements so be thinking ahead! A

Do you admit to being over 55??? You are invited to join us for the Optimists meeting at 6:15 PM on March 4. It will be held at the United

Church of Pittsford, 123 South Main Street in Pittsford. In addition to your covered dish and place setting, this month we are asked to bring paper products for the Pittsford Food Cupboard—you know, bathroom tissue, facial tissue, or paper towels. If you have questions, or would like your name added to the calling list, please call Sue Suter, 381-5297. A

“Challenging Decisions After the Fire” will be the topic of Dave Irwin's presentation for our program. Dave is on the Church Restoration Steering Committee, responsible for communications. We look forward to hearing some of the difficulties and issues this committee has faced and how they have worked toward their resolution. A



YOUTH MUSICAL

The Troubbable of Zerubbabel

By William Anderson

- Will be presented during worship on **June 12**
- Rehearsals begin **March 30** and will be held in the **Linehan Chapel at Nazareth** from **4:40-6:00 PM**
- Youth from **2nd** grade and up are encouraged to participate
- This is a great post Logos musical opportunity

This musical was first presented to our congregation in 1993. It is a charming tale of a descendant of King David named Zerubbabel who leads the Israelites back from exile to Jerusalem. Once there, he is expected to begin the daunting task of rebuilding the temple. Sounds familiar doesn't it? I hope many of our youth will be excited to join us in this timely drama of a story we can so readily identify with.

Yours in Christ,

Dede Holmes

(For more information feel free to call or e mail me at 624-4157 or dmh91654@aol.com). A



- Notes from James

The Chancel Choir is preparing music for Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. We are meeting each

Sunday night at Christ Clarion Church from 7:00-8:30. Some of our members have escaped the cold of Rochester and are visiting Florida. We welcome new members. If you are interested in singing with us only for Easter, we would welcome your participation as well. A short-term commitment can be a good way to "try-out" the choir and see if it's something you would like to do on a long-term basis.

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The Jubilate Choir has been working for Youth Sunday, which was last week. We will begin working on some music for Lent and Easter in our rehearsal next week. We rehearse each Sunday beginning around 11:20 and finishing by 12:00 noon in the front of Linehan Chapel.

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The church received a beautiful baby grand piano from Marvin Steklof of Brighton, which will be placed in the Fellowship Hall once our building is complete. I spoke with Mr. Steklof and his assistant Lee Olsen, almost immediately after the fire. A member of one of the Jewish temples in Brighton, Mr. Steklof was concerned about our loss. He thought it ironic that a church would be struck by lightning and was deeply sympathetic to our plight. He had a baby grand piano, which belonged to his late beloved wife, Carolyn, and thought that we might be able to make good use of the instrument. While the fire has brought destruction to our church, it has also brought many new friends and kind acts. We are grateful to Mr. Steklof and look forward to using the piano in our Fellowship Hall to accompany our services and fellowship activities for many years to come. There is a possibility that Mr. Steklof will visit our church in April, and we will look forward to acknowledging his donation at that time. The piano is currently being lovingly housed by the Peet family until we can put it in its permanent home.

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I hope that you will continue to share your ideas, concerns, and encouragement with the newly formed organ committee. This group of people is working diligently to discern the proper replacement for our Allen organ, which was destroyed during the fire. This is not an easy task. There are many items to consider. This group of people has been appointed by the Worship Committee to begin the selection process of an appropriate instrument as approved by the Session at the December meeting. No member of this group takes their

task lightly or without grave concern for the decision that faces our church. They have spent hours educating themselves in organ terminology and technology. At a point in their process, they will be sharing information with our church. I can't stress enough how difficult this job is. I trust that as a congregation, we will listen to their recommendations and prayerfully seek a collective path to follow. I assure you, there will be plenty of opportunities for discussion before any final selection has been made. A



Work Continues on Church Restoration

About 200 people from the congregation toured the church Feb. 13 to get a first-hand look at the work to be done in the coming months as construction shifts into high gear. The Restoration Steering Committee conducted the tours through the lobby, narthex and sanctuary. For many, it was the first visit to the church since the fire May 20, 2004.

"It felt good just to return to the building," said one member. "It was like coming home." Earlier in the week, the church conducted the Ash Wednesday service in Fellowship Hall. The wooden cross that hung in the front of the sanctuary was mounted on the wall in Fellowship Hall for the service.

The Steering Committee received approval from Session and Trustees to finalize a contract with Frank Marianacci, Inc. to be the general contractor for the project. The committee will be forwarding a contract to Trustees for action. Meanwhile, work continues on some of the infrastructural elements of the project. The new boilers were activated a couple of weeks ago and are working well and are now supplying heat to the west wing of the church. Someone said starting the new boilers was like re-starting the heart of a critically ill patient.

Each week brings progress toward insurance settlements from the fire. The committee is working toward fair settlements for recovery of damages to both the building and contents.