

News Brief

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

May 2005

From the Pastor's Pen-Cell

White Smoke! That is what the world seems to be awaiting as we anticipate the coming of May. It is hard to imagine how the ancient traditions have so captured a global audience in this media age. Disagree as many would with Pope John Paul, II's approach and stance on many things, it was his sense of justice, respect for human dignity, and emphasis on peace that seemed to be important. He seemed to deal tenderly with our world's wounded.

Now the chimney is installed, the conclave debugged and gathered in shrouded secrecy. The world waits for white smoke. Surely the one the 117 cardinals have selected to wear the mitre will inherit an anxious world and an apprehensive church.

We can be just as apprehensive in our tradition about how decisions are reached or leadership and staff is chosen. We hope that you will celebrate white smoke with a supportive capital campaign to rebuild our building. We trust that the Session will be sending up "white smoke" as it approves the selection of two new staff people. Our selection process is different from our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters and is the direct result of lay decision-making. Nonetheless, we can be just as anxious, or just as enthusiastic (Enthusiasm comes from two Greek words, one meaning "in" and the root "theos" meaning "God" – enthusiasm means, "in God") in our trust. We can be angst-ridden about the future or pause to reflect that we are called to be people of faith and that God has a plan.

William Wilkinson and Nicole (Niky) Brodeur are two new names to learn as we head into May. They will soon be a part of our staff. William will be on board as a seminary intern from Colgate Rochester Crozier Divinity School. His position is funded as a part of our outreach committee's work and he will be working with Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network (RAIHN). William is a candidate under care of the Presbytery of Western New York. It feels to us that it is God's blessing to have William with us during the time when Carrie will be celebrating the arrival of a new life and will be on maternity leave. Ministry is a second career move for Dr. Wilkinson and we will be participating in his theological education and preparation by providing this internship. He will be with us during June, July, and August.

Niky Brodeur has been enthusiastically recommended by the Youth Ministry Search Committee to become the Director of Youth Ministry at First Presbyterian Church. She is a recent graduate of Gordon College with a concentration in Youth Ministry.

Dr. James Douthit, director of music at First Presbyterian Church, has just accepted the invitation from Nazareth College to be the chair of their music department. We think that Nazareth has completed its national search with an excellent choice and we wish James God's blessing in this new position. (James has been a tenured professor at Bloomsburg State University in Pennsylvania and made the weekly long commute between Pittsford and Bloomsburg.)

The white smoke signaling the completion of reconstruction hasn't yet gone up, but we are enthusiastic that the work progresses now at a more enhanced pace. There isn't white smoke on an organ selection to assist us in our praise of God yet, either, but many people are pursuing the best choices for this people of God. What do we do now? We pray, "Lord, thank you for those you have called to provide leadership for your church. Give them wisdom, courage, and trust in you. Help us to be patient, understanding, compassionate, and open to the blowing of your spirit for the Pentecost we anticipate, and for all of your surprises. Amen."

Bruce

Prayerfully Pondering Leadership Development...

Have you ever gone away to a camp, retreat setting or similar venue and gone through a “mountain-top” experience that changed your life? In a 2002 survey conducted by the Research Services of our PC(USA) denomination, more than one-fourth of Presbyterian Church members and almost half of pastors reported having an experience that significantly shaped their Christian faith and leadership development while at a camp, retreat or similar event. Talk to anyone of the teens or adults who went to Punta Gorda, FL this Christmas break to rebuild homes after the hurricanes and they will tell you of their life-altering experience. Ted Pollock’s wonderful aphorisms come to mind: we don’t go to build houses, we go because it changes lives.

Presbyterians have been involved in camp, retreat and conference ministry for more than 100 years. Nationally, we have 3 retreat centers (Stony Point in NY, Montreat in NC, and Ghost Ranch in NM) as well as 150 regional camps and retreat centers. Their creation was influenced by Chautauqua, the ecumenical conference center in our backyard of Jamestown, NY. Synods, presbyteries and individual congregations began purchasing land and establishing their own programs. For example, our Presbytery of the Genesee Valley supports the mission of Camp Whitman in Dresden on the shores of Seneca Lake. Check out <http://www.campwhitman.org/> for more details.

Camps experienced their heyday in the 1950s when mainline churches were flourishing. Today, one in five camps are in danger of closing, three in five are “doing a good job” and one in five is functioning at full capacity. The potential for many more lives to be changed is waiting for us in under-used resources all around us!

Our church’s leadership has consistently benefited from retreat weekends. In the past two years alone, we have had several growth-oriented events. In April 2003 (remember the ice storm weekend?), the Deacons and Stephen Ministers identified individual spiritual gifts, accepted leadership opportunities, and built greater community between these two marvelous care giving boards. In November 2003 and again in 2004, the Session shared fellowship, trained its newly nominated members, and discerned its missional goals for the upcoming year. The 2004 retreat was enhanced with the leadership of Deacons, Trustees, the Steering Committee, Stephen Ministers and Presbyterian Women as representatives of each of these bodies met with Presbyterian Disaster

Assistance to move through the grief each person had experienced in conjunction with the fire. The Session is currently planning to retreat again the weekend of November 11.

Our young people have also developed leadership skills from retreat experiences and will do so again this year. For the past several years, two major mission trips have been offered: a work camp and a Christian motivational week. This year’s work camp, July 3rd – July 9th in New Jersey, is dubbed “Building God’s Kingdom.” The motivational week, dubbed Kingdom Bound, is a chance for youth to hear inspirational Christian speakers and bands while camping, sharing fellowship and enjoying the facilities at Darien Lake.

In order to defray the costs of these trips, the youth will hold an entertainment cabaret showcasing their many talents on Sunday, June 5 at St. Louis Catholic Church’s gymnasium between 6:30 and 9pm. See the related article in this issue for details and how you can support our youth toward these faith-building leadership experiences.

One of the greatest gifts our denomination offers the world is that of shared leadership. In contrast to many religious traditions, we treasure the “priesthood of all believers” and the shared ordination of ministers, elders and deacons. By virtue of our baptisms, we are all called to be leaders in the way of Jesus Christ.

The historian James MacGregor Burns distinguishes between two kinds of leaders.¹ *Transactional* leaders lead by exchanging favors or rewards with followers to achieve their goals. *Transforming* leaders lead by engaging people in such a way that both the leaders and the people are raised to higher levels of community, motivation and morality. As humans, we are more inclined to be transactional leaders; by contrast, Jesus demonstrates how revolutionary transformational leadership is and God both calls and equips us for this shared leadership ministry.

As we celebrate our confirmands beginning to take on a leadership role in the church with their publicly professing their faith on Pentecost Sunday, May 15, may each of us reflect upon how we might further our own development as transformational leaders. Consider participating in a spiritual or leadership retreat this summer or during the upcoming year – I can suggest many wonderful events through our presbytery, synod or national structure. And prayerfully consider supporting our young people as they embark upon their own “mountain-top” experience.

Go with God, *Carrie*

¹ James MacGregor Burns. *Leadership*. Perennial, 1982.

These are the lectionary texts for the month of May. 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 9:30am or in the Library at 7:00pm to discuss the upcoming Sunday's texts. No preparation is necessary – bringing yourself, your Bible and your questions.

Week of May 1 – Acts 17:22-31; Ps. 66:8-20;
1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

Week of May 8 – Acts 1:6-14; Ps. 68:1-10, 32-35
1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11; John 17:1-11

Week of May 15 – Acts 2:1-21 or Num. 11:24-30
Ps. 104:24-34, 35b; 1 Cor. 12:3b or
Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-23 or
John 7:37-39

Week of May 22 – Gen. 1:1-2:4a; Ps. 8; 2 Cor. 13:11-13
Matt. 28:16-20

Week of May 29 – Gen. 6:9-22; 7:24; 8:14-19; Ps. 46
Rom. 1:16-17; 3:22b-28 (29-31)
Matt. 7:21-29

Save the Dates! JYF and MTC are wrapping up this term and all 7th – 12th graders are invited to join us for some special events in May. On May 21, after the Presbytery-sponsored Mission Madness, JYF will reconvene at the Werner's home between 6 and 9 PM for a fun picnic and volleyball. MTC will gather May 22 between 4-7 PM at the Wahl's for a hot tub, gaming and dinner party. All are welcome: bring your friends! Watch the bulletin and emails for details. If Carrie does not have your email, please send it to her at carrie.mitchell@pittsfordpres.org.



SUMMER MISSION TRIP TO GROUP

WORK CAMP – An opportunity for our Senior High Youth to participate in a summer work camp this July is being planned. They will spend 7 days in New Monmouth, NJ learning how to put their faith into action. These experiences are life changing for our teens. They build solid relationships with each other, adult leaders and others from around the country. They make the lives of others better and gain a sense of fulfillment. For some it is their only manual labor experience for a full 8-hour day.

The success of past youth mission trips has helped to build enthusiasm for this summer's plan. Even if you cannot participate in this meaningful outreach program, you can help by buying tickets for the Cabaret Theatre on Sunday June 5 from 6:30 – 9:00 PM at St. Louis Church. See enclosed poster for details.



WHAT PRESBYTERIANS DO NOT BELIEVE

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(1) It's all up to us. (2) Nothing is up to us.

The church's work for justice can run off the rails if we lose sight of what this means. If we forget that our justice work is a sign of *God's* restoration of creation, we may start to assume that everything is up to us, and salvation is the product of our own efforts. Such assumptions give rise to bitter disappointments when our efforts fail. They also lead to a loss of humility with its attendant capacity for self-criticism.

If everything hinges on our own efforts, then how dare anyone criticize the program plan! If our ultimate hope is in God, however, we can joyfully strive for justice as a sign of God's promised restoration, without the crippling burden of assuming it all rests in our hands.

The flip side of this problem is when we assume that nothing is up to us, and lose sight altogether of God's intention to restore human social relationships along with human hearts. Christians have sometimes embraced the very un-Biblical idea that salvation is simply a matter of disembodied souls getting into heaven after they die. This sort of tunnel vision gives rise to an utterly false dichotomy between evangelism and social justice.

Evangelism and justice work *would* be at odds with one another if we assumed-against the Bible's witness-that God's plan for salvation had nothing to do with restoring the world. But a re-constituted social order is as much a part of God's plan for salvation as redeemed souls and resurrection bodies. So we can be confident that our justice work, no less than our preaching, proclaims the joyous hope of God's coming kingdom to a needy and waiting world.

(By Mark Achtemeir, an associate professor of systematic theology at the University of Debuque Theological Seminary.)

Stewardship Corner
from Lucien Rouse

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-7 NRSV).

Stewardship includes giving of time, TALENTS and treasure. There are many opportunities to serve God in the life of the church. Please prayerfully consider how your natural gifts can be used in the ministries of our church. Perhaps they lie in music or teaching or worship assistance or administration. Regardless of your skills and talents, God has a purpose for you in ministering to others.



Trustees are looking for a few good people!

No, we aren't asking for people to serve on the board, but we are looking for a few volunteers. We have some small restoration projects that, if we do them ourselves, would save us some money. If you think you can help, please contact Peter Hamilton (427-7244) or Bob Huot (248-2578). Thanks!!!!



INQUIRER'S CLASS – An inquirer's class is forming that is designed to welcome families and individuals in Christian Fellowship, provide information about the Christian Faith, and to discover the uniqueness of our journey with Christ. There is only one session for people who are seeking church membership and for those who are just seeking. It is a time to explore and see if this might be a good place for you to call your spiritual home. It will be held at the home of Bruce and Martha Boak on Sunday May 15 from 4:30 PM to 7:00 PM with a light supper provided. New members will be received on Sunday May 22 at a continental breakfast with Session at 9:00 AM and during the Worship Service that same morning. If you are interested, please speak to one of the ministers today, or call the Church Office at 586-5688, for more information.



OPTIMISTS – Whether you are a “regular” or have been meaning to attend an Optimist Meeting, please join us for the meeting on May 6. It will be held at 6:15 PM at The United Church of Pittsford, 123 South Main Street. We are asked to bring personal products for the Pittsford Food Cupboard this month in addition to a covered dish and place setting. The

program will be “Why Does the Civil War Excite Me?” Presented by Tim Smith. Please call Sue Suter, 381-5297, with questions.



ELDERBERRY EXPRESS

First Presbyterian Church has been given permission to use the Elderberry Express Van on Sundays to transport some of our senior members to and from our church services. We would like to start this service as soon as possible to pick up a number of our members who reside at Valley Manor at 1570 East Ave. We will need drivers for this endeavor and would appreciate hearing from those of you could help out with the driving. Elderberry Express will train you to drive the van. If we have enough people sign up to drive, it would mean only having to drive once every month or two.

If there is anyone in need of this service residing at Valley Manor please call and we will put you on our list. If you are in need of this service but do not reside at Valley Manor, we would like to hear from you and we will see what we can do to accommodate you as well.

We, the Outreach Committee, feel this is an important service to provide to our members who no longer drive, or prefer not to drive. Please call Dianne Brown at 381-4298 or the church office if you are able to volunteer to drive or if you need transportation to church on Sundays.



Y'all come! ~ On **Sunday, May 1**, we welcome the Reverend Rebekah Maul of first Presbyterian Church, Brandon, FL to deliver the sermon for **Stephen Ministry Sunday**. Rebekah has also graciously agreed to lead an adult education offering in our normal 8:45 class in the 7th grade classroom and a larger community gathering after worship at 11:30 in the Youth Forum Room. During the 8:45 class, she will be talking about the merits of small groups as a building block of the church and during the 11:30 class, she will share about a specific small group ministry facilitated by Stephen Ministries, called ChristCare Group Ministry. Should you have any questions, please ask any of our Stephen Leaders: Dick Sprenkle, Jane Hunter, Carol Tiemann, Kay Saxum, Bruce Boak or Carrie Mitchell.