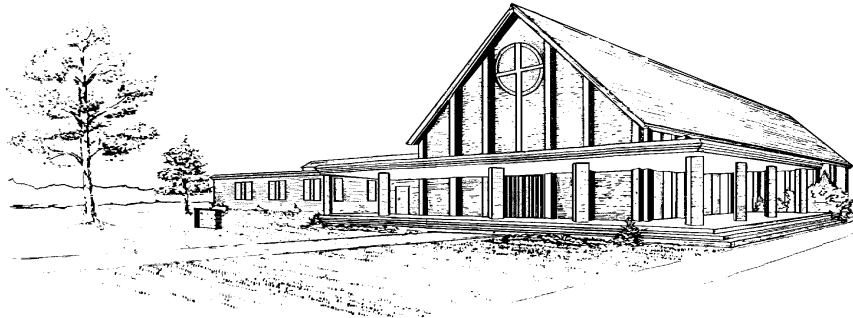


STEEPLE CHIMES

Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn

ISSUE: Two Hundred Nine

MARCH 2018



Message From the Pastor

Jesus told his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem where he would suffer, be killed, and be raised to new life (Mark 8:31). But Peter had a better idea. He wanted a way around the pain, Jesus' and his own. Masters at spiritual bypass, we too would prefer to save Jesus and ourselves from all the suffering that lies ahead. But the God whom Jesus came to reveal could no more escape the pain of loving us than could a parent in the love of her children. We may wish to avert the pain of God's suffering love for us but that would be to keep God from being God-with-us.

Jesus tells us that if we are to save our lives, we must lose them, that if we are to follow him, we must take up our own crosses. What is this strange calculus of dying and being born again, and what kind of dying and being born are we talking about? Whatever else, we may be talking about dying to our false selves, being born to the True.

Dying to false self means dying to the part of us that wants to live outside of the reach of God's love, the part of us that thinks we actually *can*. Dying to false self means dying to the self that strategizes for happiness and security apart from God's provisioning. Dying to false self means dying to the self caught up with the cultivation of its self-image with all its self-promotional and self-narrating agenda. Dying to false self means dying to our confidence that our knowledge, power and will can save us.

Dying to false self also means giving up our use of God as an instrumentality or prop. We often treat God like a vending machine into which we deposit our prayers, and then shake when nothing comes out (or curse when something drops down that we did not order). We lose faith in the God who has failed us, when it is really our childish idea of God that has let us down. In that same vein, we often treat God as something that we can add to our lives, and whose addition would leave them basically untouched. We want God on our terms, but God wants us on his.

Surrendering to God and dying to self means allowing God to subtract the props and presumption that we use to armor ourselves against the truth of who we are, the truth we need in order to become healed and whole. But this is painful, and we tend to avoid pain until our avoidance of pain becomes itself a source of still greater suffering. But the implicit promise of daily dying is that while we cannot avert pain in life, we can avert a great deal of the suffering that results from all our efforts at avoiding it. We can do that as we live fully and freely into our True Self, our basic and unchangeable identity in God whom we image, and into whose likeness we are meant to increasingly grow.

As we continue our Lenten journey to Jerusalem with Jesus, let us own up to our own ashes and participate in the pain of God. That means loving others with the same love with which God loves us, even when that love is without apparent effect. Let us follow our Lord wherever he leads us, and join God where God is already at work in our world "to make and to keep human life human."

See you in church,
Pastor Fred

The Continuing Invitation of Lent

Lent invites us to gently shift our focus from the surface of life toward its center where the Spirit of Christ indwells. In Lenten prayer and meditation we journey to our sacred core where we find freedom from our endlessly narrating minds (“monkey brain”). We heed the call to come back to the present because at the heart of the present, and at the heart of all life, is the divine. In prayer and meditation we return the divine gaze and become its reflection. Praying through Christ, we discover Christ praying through us. As that happens, we cooperate with what God has already begun to do through us; we consent to our own healing.

Submitted by Pastor Fred

Good Friday Worship: March 30, 2018 (7:30 p.m.)

Come join us for Good Friday worship on March 30th at 7:30 p.m. Why? Because there is no Easter without the cross. Because there is no good news without the bad news for which our good news is so very good.

Then, after a wonderful breakfast and Easter Egg hunt on Easter morning, join us for Easter worship on Sunday, April 1st at 10:30 a.m. when we will again flower the cross.

Submitted by Pastor Fred

“America, America, God Shed His Grace On Thee”

“What if this darkness is not the darkness of the tomb, but the darkness of the womb? What if our nation is not dead but a country still waiting to be born? What if the story of America is one long labor? The midwife asks us to breathe and push. Because if we don't push we will die.” (Valerie Kaur, Scholar-in-Residence at Middle Collegiate Church, NYC)

Submitted by Pastor Fred

“I Hate Conflict”

Like most people I meet in the church today, I tend to be “conflict adverse.” I tend to forget that conflict in itself is neither good nor bad. In *bad* conflict I may feel defeated or powerless if I am on the losing side or gloating and triumphant if I am on the winning one. *Bad* conflict leaves me feeling distant or cut-off from others, and leads me to nurture grievances. In situations of negative conflict, I experience distrust or suspicion rather than harmony and trust. I become preoccupied with narrow or self-serving goals and rather than with group goals and visions. In a word, I circle the wagons, and adopt a closed and self-protective posture.

If I acknowledge my aversion to bad conflict, I may become a bit more open to the benefits of good conflict. Conflict is *good* when it creates positive energy for change. Conflict is *good* when it helps to bring old, concealed problems and injuries into the light where they can be better dealt with and healed. Conflict is *good* when it leads to new commitment to the group's goals. And conflict is *good* when it invites the exploration of new options and leads to the testing of preconceived ideas.

So maybe the next time our antennas detect signs of a conflict brewing, we might ask ourselves, is this *bad* conflict or *good*? Is this the *bad* sort of conflict that breaks our human spirit or the *good* sort that transforms it after the image of Christ? If we aren't sure, we might consider this test: “as I wade into this conflict, do I feel safe? Does the diversity of opinion here feel healthy and vitalizing, or does it leave me or other people feeling scared or in jeopardy?” And if the latter, we might ask ourselves what we can do by virtue of our own functioning that might transform the conflict for the sake of God's kingdom.

Submitted by Pastor Fred



Holy Week & Easter

Sunday, March 25 ~ Palm Sunday Worship ~ 10:30 am

March 30th ~ Good Friday Worship ~ 7:30 pm

April 1 ~ Easter Sunday

9:00 am ~ Easter Breakfast

9:45 am ~ Easter Egg Hunt

10:30 am ~ Worship with Flowering of the Cross



Easter Lily Memorials.

Memorials may be made in memory or in honor of loved ones and can be picked up after worship on Easter Sunday, or donated to a shut-in.

If you wish to place an order, Please contact Corinne Burdett (631-261-4636) or call the church office. Thank You!

Cost: \$20.00

Deadline: Sunday, March 25th

Make checks payable to the Church and specify for "Flower Fund."

Leave Taking

On February 25th, the congregation celebrated the ministry of our Director of Music, Catherine Mahler, and wished her every blessing, with flowers, cake and personal thanks, as she leaves to become Director of Music at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Commack, NY.

In June 2003 Session offered Catherine the position of organist on a weekly stipend. By March of 2004, Session directed the Personnel and Worship committees to create an expanded job description and title especially for Catherine. And so Catherine began to serve our church as its Director of Music, which she has done ably and professionally over the last 14 years.

The across-the-board salary cuts that the session instituted in 2017 to address a decade of deficit budgets proved a special hardship for members of our staff and Catherine specifically. And so I was saddened, but not surprised, when Catherine approached me in January 2017 to be her reference as she began to seek positions elsewhere that might offer her greater compensation.

By April of 2017, I was afraid that we had lost Catherine to an out-of-state church that had fallen quite in love with her. But the timing was not right, and so we had Catherine and Bill to ourselves for the next 10 months as she continued to search for a more congenial local fit.

But now the time has come to bid Catherine and Bill goodbye. The time has come to thank them for their years of faithful service, compensated and uncompensated, and to accept their leaving-taking that marks so very much of human life both in and outside the church.

We are grateful for Catherine's musical gifts, her able work with our choir, her special seasonal music, and the special concerts that she and her son Bennett helped to arrange over the last years. We will continue to hold both Catherine and Bill in our hearts, our thoughts and our prayers, even as we seek to honor the legacy of music leadership to which Catherine made her own special contribution.

Pastor Fred



One Great Hour of Sharing

During Lent we will once again be focusing on our denomination's mission program One Great Hour of Sharing. **The OGHS offering will be collected on Palm Sunday, March 25th.**

Our gifts through this program support three Presbyterian Programs –Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People.

May you find Joy through sharing resources and changing lives with a generous gift to One Great Hour of Sharing.

March Youth Happenings

**Want to know more about the Church Youth Group?
Contact Youth Director Debbie Eitel at debbie_eitel@ibi.com**

Sunday March 18- St Patrick's Day Bake Sale

Immediately following the church service
Youth Group - Please bring a baked item for the sale -



We will be attending the Wed night Lenten Soup Suppers whenever possible!

Meet at the church at 6:30 PM
Wednesday March 7, 14 & 21

THE MORE YOU GIVE

~Unknown

“The more you give, the more you get.
The more you laugh the less you fret.
The more you do unselfishly, the more you live abundantly.
The more of everything you share, the more you'll always have to spare.
The more you love, the more you'll find,
That life is good, and friends are kind.
For only what we give away, enriches us from day to day.”

Submitted by Betty Chatfield

Lenten Soup Suppers

Our annual Lenten Soup Suppers continue each Wednesday through March 21“.

Soup is served at 6:30 PM, so bring your appetites and some soup or bread to share

and join your church family during Lent.

PRAYER CORNER

MARCH 2018

—
A CHILD'S EVENING PRAYER

~Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Ere on my bed my limbs I lay, God grant me grace my prayers to say:
O God! Preserve my mother dear in strength and health for many a year;
And, O! preserve my father too, and may I pay him reverence due;
And may I my best thoughts employ to be my parents' hope and joy;
And O! preserve my brothers both from evil doings and from sloth,
And may we always love each other our friends, our father, and our mother:
And still, O Lord, to me impart an innocent and grateful heart,
That after my great sleep I may awake to thy eternal day!
Amen.

*"O God, overwhelm my anxious and troubled heart
with your love and peace. Deliver me from distractions
and free me from foolish anxieties to live
and serve in the center of your divine will. "*

~Leslie Brandt

*"If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which
are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you,
do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax,
to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God's giving.
People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things,
but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality,
God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out.
You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met."*

Matt 6:30-33 MSG



Rev. G Robert Geyer, D Min (Pastor Bob) slipped into the arms of his Savior Thursday, January 25, 2018. He was 90 years old and served as the pastor of Brighton Presbyterian Church from 1979 to 1997 during the Charismatic Renewal. He had served pastorates in Mingo Junction, Shelby and Fremont, Ohio and in Greenlawn, Long Island.

A graduate of Middletown High School, Lebanon Valley College and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, he also earned his Master's in Counseling from Long Island University and his doctorate from CRDS in Rochester. He served in the US Army from 1947 to 1950.

Pastor Bob was an evangelist, and was called to encourage everyone he met to trust in his Savior.

TO MY OLD FRIEND

~W. Anderson

Sending the same old message, quite in the same old way,
Piling wishes on wishes, all for the same old Day.

Pledging the same old friendship, toasting the Long Ago,
Thinking that nothing can equal the times that we used to know.

Praying the years may bring you all that I wish them to,
Grasping your hand in memory, proud of a friend like you.

Submitted by Betty Chatfield

A VERY BELATED THANK YOU!

As many of you know, it has become an annual Christmas tradition here at First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn to set up our "Giving Tree" in the Narthex with gift suggestions to help a particular family and/or person in need who becomes known to us.

I would like to thank everyone who chose a gift tag (or several) from the Giving Tree and generously donated a gift, gift card or cash. The recipient family was humbled and overwhelmed with gratitude for the beautiful basket they received on Christmas Eve with the many gifts you provided them! Many of you included cards with encouraging thoughts and prayers which were also greatly appreciated. I am so proud and blessed to be a member of this caring and loving church family! You made a difference! May the Lord continue to bless you all!

With sincere thanks again,
Susan Perrotta

First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn



497 Pulaski Road
Greenlawn, New York 11740
Phone: 631-261-2150

Sunday Worship

Sunday School

10:30 AM

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matt 19:14)

Pastor Fred's Office Hours

are from 11:00am through 5:00 pm Monday through Thursday... unless visiting or attending meetings. Outside the above hours, please call (631) 626-3702 for appointments and consultations.

OUR STAFF

Rev Frederick H. Woodward, Pastor

Linda Siegmann, Administrative Assistant

Debra Eitel, Youth Director

Margaret Negrelli, Clerk of Session

Jim Dean, Treasurer

Betty Chatfield, Financial Secretary

Nancy MacIntyre, Benevolence Treasurer

This is *Your* Church

As Christians, we are called to serve God by serving others. Here at Greenlawn, many members respond to that call by volunteering their time and talents in one or more of the activities that support our church and community. Volunteers care for our church and facilities, participate in our worship and music services, nurture each other in times of need, and reach out to lend a helping hand in communities near and far.

Ask yourself :

*"How is God calling **Me** to His Service?"*