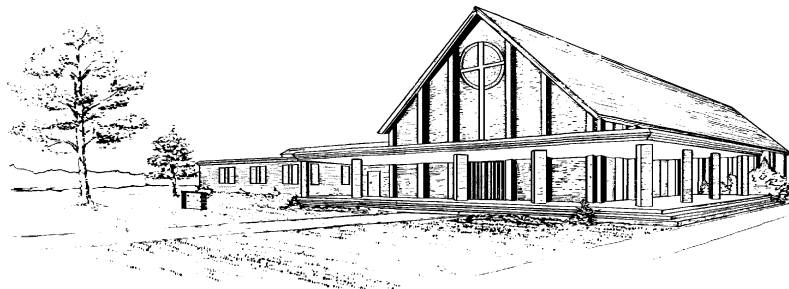


STEEPLE CHIMES

Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn

ISSUE: Two Hundred One

JUNE 2017



Message From the Pastor

On June 4th, we will celebrate Pentecost, which is sometimes called the “birthday of the church.” When I think of birthdays, I am gently reminded that it is not so much *how old we are*, but *how we are old*. Turning the question around that way may help to loosen the tentacles of the past and open us up to God’s future, especially if we can trust that our future as individuals and as the church is held in the heart of our loving God.

As we come again to Pentecost, I find myself reflecting again about what it was that turned a bunch of scared to death, self-absorbed, has-been followers of Jesus into a community on fire with love for one another, the world into which they are sent, and the God who equipped and sent them. Luke says it was the Holy Spirit, the very love of God unleashed in the world. That being so, we don’t have to huddle in fear for ourselves or for our church. We don’t have to desperately pray for the descent of the Spirit, but simply realize the Spirit’s presence already in our midst. We don’t have to anxiously seek God’s love, but simply ask God’s help in removing the barriers within ourselves against that love that won’t let us go.

As the church prepares for another yard sale the day before Pentecost, maybe it would be a good time for us to box up some of our worn-out practices and tired, old questions and put them out at curbside. Perhaps we could take a break from asking, “How do we bring new people in?”, as if “new people” were an instrumentality to solve our financial challenges, and ask instead, “How do we send our people, young and old, out?” Instead of asking, “What can we do to bring people to Christ?,” we might ask, “What’s God in Christ up to with us anyway, and how can we get out of God’s way?” And rather than wringing our hands over what is past and gone, or anxiously fretting about what shall become of us in the future, we could celebrate the reign of God that Jesus Christ has already inaugurated in our very midst. We could, in a word, become fully present and available to our lives together as they actually are, right here, right now.

See you in church,
Pastor Fred

Solar and Lunar Spirituality

A few Sundays ago I hinted at a distinction I found helpful between solar and lunar spirituality. In her book, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, Barbara Brown Taylor talks sadly about churches that express what she calls “full solar spirituality.” In such churches the members are relentlessly positive in attitude, and emphasize their ever sure sense of God’s presence, their certainty of belief, and their continuing sense of divine guidance in all things. That sounds great, of course, except that life is not all sunshine and roses and to pretend that it is falsifies the character of Christian experience. When we seek to ward off the intrusion of reality, suppress the negative, and seek refuge from everything that is ambiguous or cloaked in shadow, we are at risk of entering a zone of untruth that betrays the One we call the Way, the Truth and the Life.

When darkness falls on our lives, when because of a death or an illness or some other catastrophic event, the foundations of our faith are shaken to the very core, we may find ourselves drifting out of the church that is too brightly lit. The first time we try to tell the truth of our experience, our friends in the congregation may be all ears. They will probably tell us that God will not let us be tested beyond our strength, and that all that is required of us is that we believe. But eventually, if we don’t seem to be getting it, if say, our season of grieving extends past what is “normal,” we may hear the not-so-subtle message that the darkness is our own fault, that we lack sufficient faith.

One problem with full solar spirituality is that it tends to ignore our rich scriptural tradition that honors the hiddenness of God as much as God’s dazzling brightness. Another is that it fails to give us sufficient skills for operating in the dark where all of us must at times live our lives. Full solar spirituality may also express a strategy of spiritual bypass that pretends, but ultimately fails, to protect us from what we take to be the threat of darkness.

Those of us for whom “nothing but blue skies” is not our truth may wonder what is wrong with us. But perhaps the problem lies rather with a religious ideology that equates faith with sight and certitude, what Luther called a “theology of glory” as opposed to the “theology of the Cross.” Perhaps a lunar spirituality more faithfully represents the ebb and flow of our spiritual lives, in which the light of God waxes and wanes like the phases of the moon.

I had a friend who used to joke, “I have a deep and abiding faith that comes and goes.” Perhaps he was onto an important truth about spiritual life. Maybe if we were not so well-defended against the hiddenness of God, we would discover that our suffering may have less to do with all the things that go bump in the night, and more to do with our rush to turn on the lights at the first hint of darkness. As we come to appreciate that there are no viable spiritual bypasses to emotional and spiritual healing, that we cannot will away the darkness around us and in us through an act of jollied and resolute optimism, we may become more skillful in walking together in the dark, and more open to what, by God’s grace, we may discover there.

Submitted by Pastor Fred

**DEACON
SPRING FESTIVAL &
CRAFT FAIR
SATURDAY, JUNE 3RD
9:00 AM ~ 4:00 PM
VENDORS ON THE FRONT LAWN
CAFÉ WITH FOOD AND DRINKS**

**DONATIONS FROM THE CONGREGATION WELCOMED
(NO BOOKS, SHOES OR CLOTHING, PLEASE)**

**Annual Mother ~ Daughter Breakfast 2017
Team of men who helped cook and serve!!
Many thanks to all of you
From all the women of your church family!**

June Youth Happenings

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

Friday June 2 Hope for the Future

Make sandwiches at the Farmingdale warehouse
(For their Outreach program in NYC)

****Meet at the warehouse at 6:30 pm ~ 131 Verdi Street Farmingdale, NY**

Sunday June 18 Father's Day/Youth Sunday/10:30AM

Youth will help lead the Father's Day service

Sunday June 25 - Car Wash

2-5 PM in the church driveway

Please come out and join us for some
fun & fellowship for a good cause!

Congratulations to All our 2017 Graduates!

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES!

PLEASE LET US KNOW WHO WILL BE GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL
OR COLLEGE SO THAT WE MAY RECOGNIZE THEM IN THE BULLETIN.

Let the church office know their name, where they are graduating from, their degree, where they will be attending school or working, and who they are related to.

We'll need the information in the church by Monday, June 12th.

PRAYER CORNER

June 2017

—
*My son, keep your father's commands, and do not forsake your mother's teaching.
Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck.
When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you;
and when you awake, they will speak to you. Proverbs 6:20-22 NIV*

—
—
Give Us, O Lord, a Steadfast Heart
~ Thomas Aquinas

Give us, O Lord, a steadfast heart,
which no unworthy affection may drag down;
Give us an unconquered heart,
which no tribulation can wear out;
Give us an upright heart,
which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside.
Bestow upon us also, O Lord our God,
understanding to know Thee,
diligence to seek Thee,
wisdom to find Thee,
and a faithfulness that may
finally embrace Thee,
even through Jesus Christ our Lord.

FOR OUR MALE GRADUATES:

IF

~Rudyard Kipling

(1865-1936)

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or, being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on";

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings - nor lose the common touch;
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run -
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man my son!

Submitted by Betty Chatfield

AND FOR OUR FEMALE GRADUATES:

"IF" For Girls

~ J.P. McEvoy
(1895-1958)

If you can hear the whispering about you,
And never yield to deal in whispers, too;
If you can bravely smile when loved ones doubt you,
And never doubt, in turn, what loved ones do;
If you can keep a sweet and gentle spirit
In spite of fame or fortune, rank or place,
And though you win your goal or only near it,
Can win with poise and lose with equal grace;

If you can meet with Unbelief, believing,
And hallow in your heart a simple Creed,
If you can meet Deception, undeceiving,
And learn to look to God for all you need;
If you can be what girls should be to mothers:
Chums in joy and comrades in distress,
And be unto others as you'd have the others
Be unto you - No more, and yet no less;

If you can keep within your heart the power
To say that firm, unconquerable "No";
If you can brave a present shadowed hour,
Rather than yield to build a future woe;
If you can love, yet not let loving master,
But keep yourself within your own self's clasp,
And not let dreaming lead you to disaster,
Nor pity's fascination loose your grasp;

If you can lock your heart on confidences,
Nor ever needlessly in turn confide;
If you can put behind you all pretenses
Of mock humility or foolish pride:
If you can keep the simple, homely virtue
Of walking right with God - then have no fear
That anything in all the world can hurt you-
And - which is more - you'll be a Woman, dear.

submitted by Betty Chatfield

Healthy Giving

One of the realizations of Christian faith is that as we get our minds off of ourselves and our narrow concerns, as we give of ourselves, even lose ourselves in the act of giving, we begin to find ourselves. In Christian discipleship, healthy living is marked by healthy giving. Healthy giving, an expression of stewardship, is our response to God's grace, not an exchange intended to win God's favor—we already have that.

There are two ways we can die of asphyxiation, the one, when we are unable to breathe in, and the other when, as in an acute asthma attack, we are unable to breathe out. There is a parallel with our spiritual lives. The experience of the amazing love of God in Jesus Christ is a kind of in-breath. Service in Christ's name is our out breath. Both are necessary for fully oxygenated spiritual well-being.

But it is easy to slip into patterns of unhealthy giving, to gasp and hyperventilate. If my "charitable acts" are motivated by shame, guilt, pity, or other forms of moral superiority, my faith life becomes short of breath. If through my giving I am trying to create a sense of obligation or dependency in others, I am choking off our common air supply. If I am giving because I am afraid to say "no"; or if I am catering to others to such an extent that I am beginning to live in resentment, I am poisoning the air we are breathing together. If my giving is manipulative, if, that is, I am giving so as to control people, places or things, I am at risk of asphyxiation. If I am giving to prove to myself, others or God that I am worthy, if, in summary, my giving evidences compulsion, addiction and idolatry, I am smothering the Spirit and doing no one any favors, least of all, God.

But God is merciful and intends our healing in Jesus Christ teaches. The invitation, should we accept it without reservation, is to share what and who we are and have with an attitude of respect and love for ourselves and others. As we better discern to whom to give, when and how much, we will no longer feel victimized by our own giving and will, along with those to whom we offer ourselves, breathe at last a sigh of relief.

Submitted by Pastor Fred

First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn



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

Sunday Worship

**Please Join us every Sunday
at 10:30 AM for Worship!**

**Preschool and Sunday School are
offered for all children!**

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
Catherine Mahler, Director of Music
Debra Eitel, Youth Director
Margaret Negrelli, Clerk of Session
Jim Dean, Treasurer
Ed Close, Asst. 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?"