



MISSION STATEMENT

“As followers of Jesus Christ, we rejoice in God’s plan for a just, loving, and peaceful world, and we commit ourselves to making it a reality for all people everywhere.”

Winter 2006

Volume 23, Issue 1

RUTGERS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Renewal

From the Pastor’s Desk

The Reverend Dr. Byron E. Shafer

Sunday, March 19 will mark the third anniversary of our government’s war against Iraq. The only problem with preaching a sermon series on the Ten Commandments—from now through April 2—is that a whole lot of good stuff from the lectionary texts for those Sundays gets overlooked! So in order not to deprive you of the wisdom in all of those texts, I offer here for your re-consideration the sermon I preached on the first Sunday of February, Black History Month, three years ago, just a little over six weeks before that war was launched. The texts for the day were Deuteronomy 18:15–22 and Mark 1:21–28. Some of the examples I used in that sermon may be a bit dated, but, quite sad to say, the central point is not!

The Church of the Prophetic Edge.

I mean “Church” not as in “Presbyterians,” or “those with a particular denominational identity,” but as in “Christ-like community,” and “vigorous followers of Jesus.”

I mean “Prophetic” not as in “dreamy,” or “focused on the future,” but as in “confrontational,” and “contesting the current corrupt order of things in the name of God.”

And I mean “Edge” not as in “superiority,” or “holding the advantage,” but as in “sharpness,” and “cutting through the crap.”

The Church of the

Prophetic Edge—vigorous followers of Jesus willing, in the name of God, to cut through the crap, in order to confront and contest the current corrupt order of things. *That’s* what Christ is calling this community of faith to be.

In our First Lesson, Moses promises his people that, in the future, God will continue to raise up prophets like him—who fearlessly speak the sharp-edged word of God and courageously perform the kind of acts that liberate others from the forces of evil, just as Moses himself had spoken and acted when he was leading the people of Israel out of their bondage and slavery in Egypt.

Well, among the many things that Jesus was, Jesus proved to be a prophet like that, a prophet in the mold of Moses, a person with a sharp prophetic edge, and we, his followers, are called to keep that sharp prophetic edge of Christ’s honed and active today.

Now, the setting for this morning’s Gospel episode, which inaugurates Jesus’s public ministry, is both a sacred time—the weekly sabbath, a day of rest from labor, when people are free to gather for prayer and study—and a sacred space—the synagogue, where persons engage in such communal prayer and study.

Jesus strides into the synagogue on this sab-

bath day, and the conflict is engaged. Through the presentation of his distinctive teachings, Jesus confronts the established order of religious authority. And those assembled there are “astonished,” for the authority with which Jesus teaches is not at all like that of the scribes—that is, like that of the custodians of *traditional* biblical interpretation. The challenge to the scribes presented by Jesus’s teaching is more than just the challenge of differing content. It is fundamentally the challenge of differing authority. It raises the issue: “Who’s in charge here, anyway?”

Jesus’s teaching sets on edge the teeth of those scribes who are present and alarms all the others under their influence. But just then Jesus is himself confronted, confronted by an unclean spirit that has taken possession of a man, a spirit that, as Mark portrays it, represents all the powers and forces of the cosmos that are arrayed

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From the Pastor's Desk

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against Jesus, arrayed against the reign of God that he embodies and is bringing near.

The spirit cries out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: 'the holy one of God.'"

You see, this spirit is all too aware of the challenge posed to the corrupt order of things by Jesus, by this one who has come like a mighty prophet, like Elisha of old, who was also called "*'šb 'elohim qadōš*" (2 Kg 4:9), "a holy man of God."

As Mark understands it, the struggle between Jesus and the unclean spirit exposes for everyone to see what is really at stake here in the struggle for authority between Jesus and the scribes. For Jesus's subjugation of the unclean spirit, his freeing of this man from the grip of that which opposes God—this is a prophetic act, a sign that dramatizes Jesus's intent to liberate people from the false authority of any who misrepresent God.

Did Jesus heal this man? Yes, he certainly did. But did Jesus's action also go beyond that to have a much wider meaning, and purport, and consequence than simply the healing of a particular person in need? Yes, it certainly did that as well. For this exorcism signified Jesus's prophetic confronting of the corrupt social order and religious establishment of his day. It set in motion a mighty contest of powers and world-views in which Jesus asserted his alternative authority over the powers of this world, and Jesus emerged ascendant.

This prophetic act by Jesus, this sign in which he cut through the crap and confronted the corrupt order of things in the name of God, had the same kind of larger-than-life symbolic

power that other prophetic actions closer to us in time and culture have had.

Take, for example, Martin Luther, the founder of the Protestant Reformation. On one level, his posting in the town of Wittenberg of 95 theses for debate was simply the act of a monk posting a note on a door, just as Jesus's exorcism was on one level simply the act of a healer restoring wellness to a man. But on a far deeper level, Luther's deed was a prophetic act that asserted an alternative authority to the social order and religious establishment of his day, a sign on behalf of God that launched a revolution to liberate people from the false authority of those who were misrepresenting God. So, too, on a far deeper level, Jesus's healing of that spirit-possessed man was such a prophetic act, a sign on behalf of God, that launched a revolution challenging the social order and religious establishment of his day.

Or take, for another example, Martin Luther's namesake, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the fulfiller of the 20th-century America's Civil Rights Movement. On one level, his kneeling and praying in the face of police dogs and water cannons was simply the act of a black person seeking justice. But on a far deeper level, Dr. King's deed was a prophetic act that asserted an alternative authority to the racist social order and corrupt religious establishment of his day, a sign on behalf of God that brought to fulfillment a revolution to liberate people from the false, oppressive authority of those who were misrepresenting God. Well, Jesus's healing of the spirit-possessed man had that same sort of deeper-level meaning.

The symbolic acts of Jesus and of his followers Martin Luther and Martin Luther

King, Jr. challenged, in the name of God, the corrupt structures of their contemporary society in order to liberate persons from the false authority of those who were misrepresenting God. And it is to this same kind of sharp-edged prophetic action that Christ is calling you and me today, to this same kind of action that is not dulled by the complicity of accepting or acquiescing to a status quo that is corrupt.

And on what contemporary social issue is God calling the American church to speak out today with an undulled prophetic edge? Well, is it not the manifest commitment of our government's executive branch to "solving" the world's problems through warfare rather than non-violent means?

It was on April 4, 1967, that the above-mentioned Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. proclaimed from the pulpit of Riverside Church, here in New York City, his evaluation of the government's ongoing war in Vietnam. He called America the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world today." (Quoted in James H. Cone, *Martin And Malcolm And America*, p. 237)

Many supporters of Dr. King's civil rights agenda told him to keep silent about the war, because he was alienating not only President Johnson but also his own financial supporters. But with a sharp prophetic edge, Dr. King replied: "I'm sorry, you don't know me.... I don't determine what is right and wrong by looking at the budget of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, or by taking a Gallup Poll of the majority opinion." (Quoted in Cone, p. 238) "Before I was a civil rights leader, I answered a call, and when God speaks, who can but prophesy? I answered a call ... to tell the truth as God

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Dr. King's Forgotten Legacy

Excerpts from a MLK Day address given by Dr. Jeh C. Johnson, printed with his permission

...Thanks to the national holiday each year, the name Martin Luther King Jr. is now one of the best known in the American vocabulary, alongside George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Almost every major city in America has a street named for him. Almost every elementary school in America has his picture in a classroom.

However, we are in danger of forgetting what Martin Luther King, Jr. actually challenged our nation to do, particularly in the last three years of his life. Ask many 4th or 5th grade students my kids' age to identify one thing Dr. King said, and they will all tell you "I Have a Dream." ... What words do you think of when you think of "a dream"? You think of sleep. You think of white sheep. You think of fantasy. You think of bed pillows. You think of softness. You think of comfort....

The reality is that Dr. King challenged the status quo. He was divisive. He pushed people out of their comfort zones. His stated goal was, through nonviolent action, to create crisis in quiet and complacent communities. When he came to Albany, Georgia, Birmingham, Chicago, and Memphis, he was not greeted as the national icon he is today. The leaders in those cities viewed his approach with dread. The Mayor of Selma referred to him publicly as "Martin Luther Coon." Dr. King was harassed by the FBI. He received death threats. He was murdered for his efforts....

From 1965 until April 4, 1968, Dr. King devoted himself principally to two very ambitious agendas: peace and poverty—agendas that encompassed blacks, whites, and everybody in between.

In 1966, Dr. King and his family literally moved to Chicago and rented an apartment there. He took off his preacher's suit and shoveled garbage, all to demonstrate the need for better housing and living conditions in Chicago.

In the final year of his life, Dr. King devoted himself to his grand plan for a Poor People's March on Washington. On January 15, 1968, ... he presided over a meeting in the basement of Ebenezer Baptist Church and talked about a great assembly of blacks, American Indians, organized labor, and Appalachian whites that would converge on Washington later that year, to demand that the richest nation on earth address the poverty in its midst.

In challenging the nation to address poverty, Dr. King knew he was taking on a daunting task. He said it didn't cost the nation one penny to desegregate lunch counters, but he was now asking the nation to spend billions to address poverty. ... [I]n a sermon at Riverside Church in New York City, Dr. King reminded us that every American "is endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among those the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But if a man does not have a job or an income, he has neither life, liberty, nor the possibility for the pursuit of happiness. He merely exists." Dr. King said then, "We have the resources to eliminate poverty. The only question is do we have the will."

...His final march was not a civil rights march; it was a march in support of better wages [for striking sanitation workers in Memphis, TN].... That night, Dr. King recalled Jesus's parable about the Good Samaritan on the road to Jeri-

cho. Dr. King applied the story to Memphis 1968 and said, "the question is not, if I stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to me or my job? The question is, if I do not stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to them? That's the question." Dr. King saw that the "whole Jericho road must be transformed. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that **nations that produce beggars need restructuring.**"

But, by far the most controversial and difficult stand Dr. King took ... was against the war in Vietnam.... Beginning in April 1967, Dr. King gave three eloquent and impassioned arguments against the war:

First, the war was an enemy of the poor ... a "destructive suction tube," devastating the hopes of the poor at home in the War Against Poverty, and sending their sons, fathers, and brothers off to fight and die in a distant land at a disproportionately high rate. Dr. King noted the cruel irony of sending a young black man off to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia that he could not find in Southwest Georgia, and sending blacks and whites off to kill and die together for a nation unable to seat them in the same schools together.

Second, Dr. King said he could not credibly counsel angry young militants at home against Molotov cocktails and rifles as the answer to their problems, and face the response: what about Vietnam? Quoting the words spoken five years before by John F. Kennedy..., King said: "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible make violent revolution inevitable."

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Rutgers' Contacts with Colombian Presbyterians in Their Time of Crisis

by Elder Anne Barstow



Photo from
www.presbypeace-
fellowship.org

Our Contacts Grow:

Rutgers helped to support a delegation of US Presbyterians to Colombia; we contributed to the Colombia Accompaniment Program; and now we are supporting a church school in Barranquilla, Colombia.

Why Colombia? Why Colombians? Colombia is a rich country where many people die of hunger. It is caught up in a craze for land—on which to grow coca for the cocaine trade, to cut down the mahogany forests, and to develop oil fields. It has laws but no law enforcement, so it lives by the rule of the gun. It has four armies that are fighting over land. Civilians are caught in the middle, and many are being killed. It has over 3 million displaced persons living in wretched camps. And if Colombians try to help, the government may declare that they are the enemy and put them on a death list.

How is a Christian church to respond to this suffering and injustice? The Colombian Presbyterian Church (IPC) decided that it must speak out against the killing and offer help to the homeless. It knew the price it would pay; nonetheless, in cooperation with Catholic groups, it set up a Center for Human Rights in Barranquilla, where its headquarters are, and began working in the displaced persons' camps. It is a courageous church.

It wasn't long before death threats and arbitrary arrests began. Pastors have had to go underground or even leave the country. Armed men stand outside Presbytery headquarters and invade worship services, but the IPC refuses to use weapons to defend themselves.

Finally they asked our PC(USA) for help. Would we send down unarmed volunteers to accompany their threatened members and to encourage their frightened congregations? Our national church, overburdened with global responsibilities, could not respond. But when the Moderator asked the group I work with, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (PPF), to take this on, we could not say no. We believe in the power of non-violent, direct action. Here we were being offered a chance to put this belief into practice. We had to say yes.

My Part of This Work: I coordinate our work and supervise the accompaniment program. I search for Presbyterians who speak some Spanish, who will give one or two months of their time to work that is risky, and who will honor a pledge of nonviolence, no matter what happens.

Teamed with a gifted young woman, I train the volunteers (24 so far); they are ordinary people, like you and me, who never dreamed they would be standing with the Colombian Presbyterian Church in its time of crisis. I stay in close touch with the leaders of the IPC about their work. I raise money for the project—thank you Rutgers, for your contribution. I had thought that this was all I needed to do, but I was in for a surprise. I helped plan a national conference of all the U.S. groups doing accompaniment in Colombia. We invited 19 Colombian peace workers to attend. 18 of them received their US

visas; one, Orlando Valencia, was turned down. Two days later, Orlando was questioned by the police, who turned him over to two killers. A week later they found his body in the river; he had been tortured.

Two men witnessed his abduction. I helped to bring them to the US as soon as possible to give testimony to Congressional committees and to churches. I have now learned what information is needed for a visa application, who are our friends at the US embassy in Bogotá, which Presbyterians set up congressional visits, and who in Washington has a spare room and time to meet the plane when these important witnesses arrive.

The kidnappings and village massacres are increasing. More witnesses will come, and now I need to learn who at the U.N. would receive testimony like theirs. The Presbyterians whom we accompany say that the pressure is less on them: now we are there, fewer armed men are stalking them, etc. I think that our Accompaniment Project will be in business for a long time. They need us, and what we are getting from it is invaluable: we are learning what it is like to be the church in a time of great violence. We return with our faith tested and strengthened. Think about it—about becoming an accompanier.

If you cannot give a month to this service, consider going to Colombia with a short-term delegation. The PPF is sending two delegations this year: in early August and in early October. They last from 8 to 12 days; they visit displaced persons' camps, interview refugees, worship with Presbyterians, and learn about the effects of U.S. policies on the violence that wracks Colombia. Knowledge of Spanish is not required—everything will be translated. For information, contact

annebarstow@peoplepc.com.

Receiving Blessings from the Rutgers Homeless Shelter

by Shelter Coordinator, Dermonte Alleyne

Every weekend, we house 10 homeless guys here at Rutgers in the gym beneath the sanctuary. I was first introduced to the shelter by one of our former members, Mike Vana, as a one-night trial. That one night has turned into fourteen years. I often question myself about why I chose working in the shelter and not some kind of sporting activity. I feel fulfilled working and running the shelter. That is why I continue to do it.

One night we had a young gentleman here who wasn't any older than 20. The first thing he did was to unfold his cot, kneel down beside it, and begin to pray while the other men carried on about their business. He prayed as I stood above him and watched.

He gave thanks for five things:

- A bed to sleep on for the night instead of four folding chairs;
- The three-course meal he was about to receive;
- A nice warm space instead of the blistering cold;
- A place equipped with a shower; and
- Those who were making his comfort possible, if only for one night.

He repeated the same prayer the following morning. I asked him why he said the same prayer. His response was "people take for granted the kindness, support, and hard work that others do to make this possible. So, I have to give thanks so that others may benefit from this as I have."

After everyone left, it suddenly dawned on me that I wasn't much older than this man. I saw myself in his position and was inspired to be totally committed to this program. That's the real truth about why I love and continue to run the Rutgers Homeless Shelter. **I'm asking you, to try it for one night. Please speak to me any Sunday during the Coffee Hour**

following the worship service. I'll be there to answer any questions you may have.

Last June, we/Rutgers received an award from **The Partnership for the Homeless** honoring this program.

The Partnership for the Homeless honors the hard work and dedication of
Rutgers Presbyterian
for their community collaboration with the Emergency Shelter Network and for joining with the Partnership for the Homeless in the fight to end homelessness.

June 21, 2005

I want to thank the congregation for all of your support and contributions over the past 14 years that continue to make this program possible.



Dancing with God

Author anon.; submitted by Elinor Bowles

When I meditated on the word *Guidance*, I kept seeing "dance" at the end of the word. I remember reading that doing God's will is a lot like dancing. When two people try to lead, nothing feels right. The movement doesn't flow with the music, and everything is quite uncomfortable and jerky. When a person realizes that and lets the other lead, both bodies begin to flow with the music. One gives gentle cues, perhaps with a nudge to the back or by pressing lightly in one direction or another. It's as if two become one body, moving beautifully. The dance takes surrender, willingness, and attentiveness from one person and gentle guidance and skill from the other. My eyes drew back to the word *Guidance*. When I saw "G" I thought of God, followed by "u" and "i". "God, "u" and "i" dance." God, you, and I dance. As I lowered my head, I became willing to trust that I would get guidance about my life. Once again, I became willing to let God lead.

My prayer for you today is that God's blessings and mercies be upon you on this day and everyday. May you abide in God as God abides in you. Dance together with God, trusting God to lead and to guide you through each lesson of your life. This prayer is powerful, and there is nothing attached. If God has done anything for you in your life, please share this message with someone else, for prayer is one of the best gifts we can receive. There is no cost but lots of rewards; so let's continue to pray for one another.

AND I HOPE YOU DANCE!



Shrove Tuesday

Tuesday, February 28 at 6:00 pm

Come eat pancakes until you drop, and then join in the annual **Musicales** showcasing our talents—be they musical, literary, comic, physical... Or if you are shy of the stage, consider flipping a few pancakes and then joining our very appreciative audience. Thank you to Jon Smith for graciously agreeing to be our accompanist this year.

Ash Wednesday

services of repentance with imposition of ashes will be held on **March 1 at 12:15 pm and 6:30 pm**. The evening service will include the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Adult Education: February and March

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, Sunday mornings, February 5, 12, 19 and March 5 & 12. Led by the Rev. Dr. Byron Shafer, 9:30 am in the Session Room. Please note no class on February 26 and earlier class time.

The Ten Commandments lie at the heart of both Jewish and Christian religion and ethics. A scholarly study of each commandment as found first in Exodus 20:1-17 and then again in Deuteronomy 5:6-21 will be accompanied by class discussions of how to “live out” each commandment in daily life. Attention will be paid as well to the issue of “the public display of the Ten Commandments.”

FROM MAKING WAR TO MAKING PEACE, Sunday mornings, March 19 & 26 and April 2 & 9, 9:45 am in the Session Room. Led by the Rev. Dr. Tom Driver.

Christianity and other world religions are growing, but so is war. Religion has never been as prominent in American politics as today, but neither has United States militarism. The vast majority of those killed in today's wars are civilians, mostly women and children. Millions of armed combatants are under the age of 18. War is getting more lethal and more barbaric. The United States government engages in torture.

What should Christians be thinking and doing about war

and peace?

On behalf of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, our associate member Tom Driver has recently edited a special anti-war issue of the journal *Church & Society*. One of its articles is by our member Anne Barstow, who joins Chris Hedges, Glen Stassen, Rick Ufford-Chase, and other well-known authors in these pages. Using the journal's contents as the major resource, Driver will lead a series of discussions about war and peace on the last four Sundays of Lent:

March 19: Re-thinking war

March 26: Re-thinking peace

April 2: Making peace instead of making war

April 9: Can war be abolished?

Although no advance preparation by participants is necessary, copies of the November-December issue of *Church & Society* will be made available through the church for those who wish to read ahead; please call Cheryl Pynch at x205 if you would like to reserve a copy (suggested donation \$4). Please also call Cheryl if you would like childcare during the class.

SPEAKING ABOUT SIN, Wednesday evenings during Lent, March 8, 15, 22, 29 and April 5, 7:15 in the Daniel Russell Room, following the Vesper Service at 6:30. Led by the Rev. Cheryl Pynch

and Deacon Jeremiah Rosario.

We'll read together the book by Barbara Brown Taylor, *Speaking About Sin: The Lost Language of Salvation*. In her clear, engaging style and with her compassionate heart, Taylor invites us to speak about sin, which she calls “a helpful, hopeful, word.” Our study in the fall of Taylor's book *The Preaching Life* led to wonderful discussion, and this collection of essays promises to be another opportunity for sharing and deepening our faith. Please call Cheryl Pynch at x205 to reserve a book (\$10 suggested donation).

ROMANS, Wednesday mornings, March 8, 22, 29 and April 5 & 12 in the Session Room. Led by Margaret Shafer.

Paul's writing in Letter to the Romans is an extraordinary expression of faith in search of understanding. Special attention will be paid to the words Paul uses such as righteousness, grace, salvation, redemption, etc., and how they have become the foundation of the church's theology. The class will be taught seminary style with lively discussion and interaction.

\$15 fee. More information is available at <http://www.christianstudies.org/>.

February 2006

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
5 9:30 am Adult Class: 10 Commandments thru Mar. 12 12:45 pm Session/Deacons Joint Meeting	6 3:00 pm Worship Committee 6:00 pm Scouts Every Monday	7 6:00 pm Men's Support Group (PLWA); Scouts Every Tuesday	8 10:00 am Adult Class: Paul's Letter to the Romans thru Feb. 15	9 12:30 pm Pastoral Staff Meeting 6:00 pm Meal Program & Movie Series Every Thursday	10 Care package will be sent to Alison McNamara; 11:00 am Mothers' Bible Study Every Friday	11 1:00 pm Opera Rehearsal Every Saturday
12 12:45 pm Board of Trustees; Peace & Social Justice Network	13	14	15	16	17 Men's Overnight Shelter We need volunteers for Fridays and Sundays.	18
19 1:30 pm Memorial Service for Elsie G. Clarke (Elinor Bowles' sister)	20 Presidents' Day Church and offices closed	No Body & Spirit classes or Child's Play groups this week.			24 Registration deadline for family retreat; 6:00 pm Youth Group	25
26 No Adult Class	27	28 Host Board of Elections; 6:00 pm Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner & Musicale	March 1 12:15, 6:30 pm Ash Wednesday Services	2	3 6:00 pm Scout Blue & Gold Banquet	4

<i>Sundays</i>	
9:30 am	Sunday School for Adults
10:00	Adult Choir Rehearsal
10:15	Children's Choir Rehearsal, Infant & Child Care
11:00	Worship Service
11:15	Sunday School (ages 3-10)
12:15 pm	Coffee Hour
12:45	Adult Choir Rehearsal

Preaching Schedule

<i>February 5</i>	Black History Month begins; Scout Sunday; Third Commandment; Dr. Shafer preaching
<i>February 12</i>	6th Sunday in Ordinary Time; Holy Communion; Fourth Commandment; Dr. Shafer preaching
<i>February 19</i>	7th Sunday in Ordinary Time; Fifth Commandment; The Rev. Cheryl Pynch preaching
<i>February 26</i>	Transfiguration of the Lord; Sixth Commandment; The Rev. Cheryl Pynch preaching

Lent 2006

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<i>March 5</i> 9:30 am Adult Class: <i>10 Commandments</i> thru March 12 12:45 pm Board of Deacons	<i>6</i> 3:00 pm Worship Committee 6:00 pm Scouts Every Monday	<i>7</i> 6:00 pm Men's Support Group (PLWA); Scouts Every Tuesday 6:30 pm Session Meeting	<i>8</i> 10:00 am Adult Class: <i>Romans Part 2</i> thru Apr. 12 6:30 pm Lent Vespers & 7:15 pm Study: <i>Speaking About Sin</i> thru Apr. 5	<i>9</i> 6:00 pm Meal Program & 7:00 pm Movie Series Every Thursday	<i>10</i> 11:00 am Mothers' Bible Study Every Friday 6:30 pm Recital by Jean Kim	<i>11</i> 1:00 pm Opera Rehearsal Every Saturday
<i>12</i> 12:45 pm Peace & Social Justice Network	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i> 6:30 pm Lent Vespers & 7:15 pm Study Series	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i> Men's Overnight Shelter We need volunteers for Fridays and Sundays.	<i>18</i>
<i>19</i> 9:45 am Adult Class: <i>From Making War to Making Peace</i> thru Apr. 9	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i> 6:00 pm Sharing Our Ordination Journeys (Cheryl Pyrch & Mieke Vandersall)	<i>22</i> 6:30 pm Lent Vespers & 7:15 pm Study Series	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i> Waldensian Conference	<i>25</i>
<i>26</i>	<i>27</i> 6:30 pm Benevolence Com.	<i>28</i>	<i>29</i> 6:30 pm Vespers 7:15 pm Study	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i> Family Retreat	<i>April 1</i>
<i>2</i> *Time Change* 12:45 pm Board of Deacons 4:00 pm Model Seder, West End Synagogue	<i>3</i> 3:00 pm Worship Committee	<i>4</i> 6:30 pm Session Meeting	<i>5</i> 6:30 pm Lent Vespers & 7:15 pm Study Series	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>

Sundays

9:30 am	Sunday School for Adults
10:00	Adult Choir Rehearsal
10:15	Children's Choir Rehearsal, Infant & Child Care
11:00	Worship Service
11:15	Sunday School (ages 3-10)
12:15 pm	Coffee Hour
12:45	Adult Choir Rehearsal

Preaching Schedule

<i>March 5</i>	First Sunday in Lent; Ordination & Installation of Officers; Seventh Commandment; Women's History Month begins; Dr. Shafer preaching
<i>March 12</i>	Second Sunday in Lent; Holy Communion; Eighth Commandment; Dr. Shafer preaching
<i>March 19</i>	Third Sunday in Lent; Gifts of Women Sunday; Ninth Commandment; The Rev. Cheryl Pyrch preaching
<i>March 26</i>	Fourth Sunday in Lent; Guest Preacher from the Waldensian Church, Italy
<i>April 2</i>	Fifth Sunday in Lent; Tenth Commandment; Dr. Shafer preaching



Lenten Vespers

Wednesdays at 6:30 pm
in the Sanctuary



These candlelit services of prayer and reflection include a meditation by one of the pastoral staff and organ music from George Davey. Our study series on **Speaking About Sin** will follow in the Daniel Russell Room (see page 6).

March 8: Byron Shafer

March 15: Laura Jervis

March 22: Charles Amstein

March 29: Byron Shafer

April 5: Cheryl Pynch

On **Sunday, April 2, from 4-6 in the afternoon**, West End Synagogue has invited us to participate in a **model Seder**, the Passover meal commemorating the liberation of the Hebrews from Egypt. This meal will be a chance to learn about the meaning of Passover, as well as to build relationships and share fellowship. We realize it's the same weekend as the family retreat, but we're hoping families will be able to "reserve" the weekend and attend both! Please RSVP if you would like to come (you do not have to make a definite commitment) so we will be able to plan. Thank you!



RUTGERS FAMILY RETREAT

The Power of God at Home: Nurturing Our Children in Love and Grace

based on a book of the same title by J. Bradley Wigger

Friday evening, March 31, through Saturday afternoon, April 1
at the Presbyterian Center in Stony Point, New York

Our retreat leader is the Reverend Anne Conroy, who has worked with families and children as a social worker, youth minister, and most recently as the Associate Pastor for Christian Education and Discipleship at Brick Presbyterian Church. Anne will bring both expertise and a wonderful spirit to our conversation.

Children will have their own "retreat" led by Cheryl Pynch, allowing them to explore their relationship with God and with one another. Childcare will be provided for the youngest ones during the program time, and we will eat and worship together. There will also be time for families to hang out and take walks around the Stony Point campus. We hope this will be a time for you to experience spiritual renewal and to connect with other Rutgers families. You do not need to have children of your own to attend!

Each family will have their own room (cots and cribs available), and Friday night dinner, Saturday breakfast, and Saturday lunch are included. The cost for the weekend is \$56 per adult and \$28 per child; if you wish to purchase the book, that is an additional \$18. This represents three-quarters of the cost of food and lodging; the balance of the accommodation fee, the cost for leaders and caregivers, and miscellaneous expenses will come out of the Christian Education budget. (Additional donations are welcome! We also have some partial scholarships.)

Please reserve early, for if we do not have sufficient reservations by February 24 we will need to cancel the retreat.

The Role of Religious Minorities in Pluralistic Societies

A Conference Celebrating the Centennial
of the American Waldensian Society
March 23-26, 2006

Rutgers will host three days of presentations, workshops, and events led by religious scholars and church leaders on the gifts and challenges of religious pluralism in Western societies.

The conference will offer Waldensian perspectives from Latin America and Europe alongside North American voices and experiences. The purpose of such juxtaposition is to foster reciprocal learning on the role of religious minorities in promoting dialogue and practices of justice in increasingly diverse and rapidly changing social settings.

For more information, visit www.waldensian.org.

february * happy birthdays * march

7	Jim Ellis, Jarred Sturman	3	Phylliss Hill
8	Ed Kennelly	6	Doris Bryant
9	Katherine Wyatt	12	Mary Birchard
14	Jeff Glendon	14	Kim Hodges, Ian Smith
15	Sherry Zannoth	16	Ethel Knight
		17	Alice Hudson, De Yan Jervis- McCarthy
		18	Umberto Fadani
		19	Jack Vecsey
		20	Debbie Gryte
		21	Mary Burton
		23	Marlo Knapp-Fadani
		24	Valerie Kay
		25	Carole Banninger, Ulla Farmer
		27	Chris Jones
		28	Jeremiah Rosario

What Happened at Session?

by Elder Christine Gorman, Clerk of Session

Here are some highlights from the past few Session meetings. You can always get the full Session minutes by sending an e-mail to Jennifer (jhanson@rutgerschurch.com).

1. Church Operating Budget. As of December 31, 2005, revenues for the year were \$1,606,508 and expenses were \$1,596,278, leaving a net surplus of \$10,230.

2. Report from the November Meeting of the Presbytery of New York City. We discussed several items:

a. Presbytery has approved the plan of the West-Park Presbyterian Church to redevelop its property to include market-rate condos, affordable housing, and offices for non-profit organizations.

b. The Rev. Alistair Drummond will lead a task force to study the report of the PC

(USA)'s Theological Task Force on the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church. This is the denomination's latest attempt to deal with some of the theological issues that divide us with respect to the ordination of non-heterosexuals.

c. Presbytery approved a motion to overture the 217th General Assembly to encourage PC(USA) congregations to invest in organizations or companies that are working toward peace and reconciliation in the Middle East.

A little explanation is in order. The feeling was that this would be a positive approach towards peace in the Middle East that anyone could be in favor of no matter where they stood on the more controversial move by the 216th GA for the PC(USA) to undertake phased, selective divestment from companies that profit from the state of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

3. A motion passed to relabel the single-stall bathroom facilities of the church house. The sign on these facilities will now read "Restroom." This action was taken in response to a letter requesting gender-neutral facilities.

4. Schedules, schedules! The Session approved the following schedules for 2006.

Church office holiday schedule:

- New Year's Monday, 1/2
- Martin Luther King Day, Mon., 1/16
- Presidents Day, Mon., 2/20
- Monday After Easter, 4/17
- Memorial Day, Mon., 5/29
- Independence Day, Tues., 7/4
- Labor Day, Mon., 9/4
- Columbus Day, Mon., 10/9
- Thanksgiving, Thurs., 11/23 and Fri., 11/24

- Christmas, Mon., 12/25
- New Year's Weekend, Fri., 12/29

Communion schedule:

- January 8, 2006
- January 22
- February 12
- March 1 (Ash Wednesday)
- March 12
- April 13 (Maundy Thursday)
- April 16 (Easter, 9 & 11 am)
- May 14
- June 4 (Pentecost)
- July 9
- August 13
- September 10
- October 1
- November 12
- December 10
- January 7, 2007.

Session meeting dates:

- January 10, 2006
- February 5
- March 7
- April 4
- May 9
- June 13
- July 11
- September 12
- October 10
- November 14
- December 12.

5. Finally, and with deep regret, the Session voted to approve the retirement of the Reverend Dr. Byron Shafer, effective July 31, 2006. The Session recommends that the Congregation approve Dr. Shafer's retirement at its annual meeting on January 29, 2006.

What Do You Think?

1. How many secrets are you keeping for your family and friends?
2. You can have a complete conversation with someone with your eyes and expressions.
3. Your neighbor can hear all of your personal business while waiting for the elevator.
4. I was told by my father that enjoying the things that bring you pleasure gives you the strength to endure all the unpleasant things in life.
5. Do you make excuses for things you don't want to do?
6. If you pay postage and handling fees, how is the gift free?
7. How do you keep losing one sock?
8. Being loved is the greatest satisfaction and reward in life.
9. There's a big difference between a hands-on caregiver and a financial one.
10. Freedom comes when you speak up for yourself.

'Til next time, Jacquelyn M. Carpenter

Movie Milestone

by Elder Dr. Roger Franklin

On Thursday evening, January 26, Movies at Rutgers celebrated its 300th film since its inception on July 3, 1997, hosted by Dr. Roger Franklin under the sponsorship of the Rutgers Board of Deacons. Selected for this screening was *Million Dollar Baby* from Warner Brothers, winner of the Oscar for Best Picture of 2004. Academy

award winners Hilary Swank (Best Actress), Clint Eastwood (Best Direction), and Morgan Freeman (Best Supporting Actor) starred in this wonderful drama.

How it all began: At one time, not so long ago, there was a movie theater called The Embassy in the block between 72nd and 73rd Streets which featured old classic and foreign films. The Embassy was razed to make way for the Alexandria apartment complex. With a

dearth of old movies in the Upper West area, Rutgers' then Executive Director talked me into hosting a series of films at the church. So, with a new VHS projector and a big screen, Movies at Rutgers was born!

Thank you to Alexandra Yu, who graciously carried on during the months when I was in the hospital, and again in December 2005, when I was at the South Street Seaport ho-hoing!

FACT SHEET

Summer of 1997 9 films

Thursdays with popcorn & lemonade

1st film: *The Awful Truth* (1937)

Saturday Matinees 1998 6 films

Sponsored by Rutgers Christian Education

100th Film: Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*

200th Film: *The Big Broadcast of 1938*

300th Film: *Million Dollar Baby*

Film Festivals

2001 Rodgers & Hammerstein

2002 Ginger Rogers & Fred Astaire

2003 The Marx Brothers
Hitchcock Classics

2004 The Road Series
MGM's *When the Lion Roars*

Lenten Movies

2000 Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth*

2002 *Ben Hur* (Charlton Heston)

2003 *Jesus* (Jeremy Sisto)

2004 *King of Kings* (Jeffrey Hunter)

Coming Attractions

March 2006: In Memory of Howard Keel

- *Annie Get Your Gun* w/ Betty Hutton
- *Show Boat* w/ Kathryn Grayson/Ava Gardner
- *Calamity Jane* w/ Doris Day
- *Kiss Me Kate* with Kathryn Grayson/Ann Miller
- *7 Brides for 7 Brothers* w/ Jane Powell

May 2006: The Art of Walt Disney

- *Bambi*
- *Snow White & the Seven Dwarves*
- *Pinocchio*
- *The Lion King*

Movies at Rutgers,

7:00 pm every Thursday evening following the supper for seniors. Every is welcome to the movies!



Opera Benefit

Sunday, May 7 at 2:30 pm

On the first Sunday in May, the Special Events Committee will present its annual benefit fundraising event for the Christopher Roberts Memorial Homeless Shelter. This year's benefit will feature scenes from *The Flying Dutchman* by Wagner and *The Masked Ball* by Verdi, with Dr. Shafer performing for the last time in this annual display! Tax-deductible tickets are \$25 and include a post-recital reception given by the Board of Deacons.

Dr. King's Forgotten Legacy

(Continued from page 3)

Third, Dr. King spoke eloquently that our nation had fallen victim to a deadly Western arrogance. He said: a "Western arrogance that it has everything to teach and nothing to learn from others is not just." To his congregation in Atlanta one Sunday in 1967, Dr. King said the United States had become too arrogant with its power, and

he reminded us that God did not appoint us policeman of the whole world.

Dr. King reminded us that the very assumptions underlying war are irrational: "The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral. Returning violence with violence only multiplies violence, adding to a deeper darkness already devoid of stars."

...If you want to really honor Dr. King, now more than ever, remember that those who forget history are condemned to repeat it. Teach your children about more than dreams. Teach your children about Dr. King's calls to action....

Copies of Dr. Johnson's full remarks are available from

jhanson@rutgerschurch.com.

From the Pastor's Desk

(Continued from page 2)

revealed it to me. No matter how many people disagreed with me, I decided that I was going to tell the truth." (Quoted in Cone, p. 240)

And the truth that Dr. King felt called to proclaim was that "a nation that spends \$500,000 to kill one enemy soldier in Vietnam and only \$50 to get one of its own citizens out of poverty is a nation that will be destroyed by its own moral contradictions." (Cone, p. 240) Said Dr. King, "There is something strangely inconsistent about a nation and a press that [will] praise you when you say, 'Be non-violent toward [a brutal white southern sheriff like] Jim Clark,' but will curse you when you say, 'Be nonviolent toward little brown Vietnamese children!'" (Quoted in Cone, p. 238) "...cowardice asks the question, 'is it safe?' Expediency asks the question, 'is it politic?' Vanity asks the question, 'is it popular?' But conscience asks the question, 'is it right?' And there comes a time when a true follower of Jesus Christ must take a stand that's neither safe nor politic nor popular but ... must take that stand because it is right." (Quoted in Cone, pp. 242-243)

You don't have to have a high IQ to discern the applicability of Dr. King's sharp-edged

words of 1967 to the America of today.

Dr. King's declaration that America is the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world today" finds an amazing resonance in the outcome of a website poll conducted by the European edition of *Time* magazine, a poll cited by Nicholas Kristof in his Op-Ed column for the January 31 [2003] *New York Times*. The question *Time* asked was this: "Which country poses the greatest danger to world peace in 2003?" And the resultant percentages for the first 318,000 responses were as follows: North Korea, 7%; Iraq, 8%; and the United States, 84%!

Aren't containment and the deterrence offered by weapons inspection a far more Christ-like response to the evil of Saddam Hussein than a war that would kill thousands of innocent Iraqi children and adults, as well as hundreds of U.S. soldiers? [*Again, recall that this sermon was preached some six weeks before our war against Iraq was launched.*]

Maybe you read the exchange in the *Times* occasioned by Joseph Loconte's Op-Ed piece on January 28 [2003]. It bore the title "The Prince of Peace Was a Warrior, Too" and suggested that Jesus *would* be willing to condone violence

against Iraq. But let me quote from two answering letters to the editor printed in the January 31 *Times*. First, from the Reverend Bob Edgar, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ: "Jesus would be tough.... [But] he sought to forgive and redeem his enemies, even in a time of brutal oppression, steadfastly refusing to lead an insurrection despite pressure from some of his followers.... Jesus, by his example, would call us to find a better way than war." And then, from the Reverend Tom Reiber-Martinez of Summit, N.J.: "Much like the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mohandas K. Gandhi, and Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador, Jesus went to his death believing that the nonviolent power of love was the only way out of the cycle of violence."

The Church of the Prophetic Edge is, I believe, one that speaks today as a peacemaker, not as a warmonger. It is one that is willing actively to challenge, in the name of Christ, the authority of all those, including the government, who misrepresent God. May we, the members of Rutgers Church, lift our voices and deploy our bodies in ways that call America to return to the column of "peacemaking nations"!

...Jesus went to his death believing that the nonviolent power of love was the only way out of the cycle of violence.

Stories of the People We Help

by the Reverend Mieke Vandersall, Presbyterian Welcome

**We are 17
congregations
strong, gaining
voice with
numbers...**

Good morning Rutgers Church. It is always such a wonderful thing to be here with all of you: I visit a different church every Sunday almost, and for many churches, to be allowed to do a Minute for Mission is a major act of faith on the part of the Pastor or Session, let alone preaching or anything like that. Sexuality, and particularly the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, well, we are still tremendously controversial, making our lives into issues. In the church we are a long way from understanding that we are not issues, but people, and that restrictive policies affect lives, and so, coming here, practically all I feel I need to do is give thanks for your witness and support and care for us as an organization and as people, called by God, to be loving of ourselves and honest about our lives.

Many of you already know that our office is housed here at Rutgers Church, right between Cheryl's and Tina's offices. We are so grateful for the gracious gift of office space, of financial help, and of people power. Dave Taylor is our Treasurer, and Massimo Maglione is our other Steering Committee representative. And your staff in the office is really fantastic and welcoming and loving; it is a pleasure to come to work every morning.

I do want to tell you a little bit of our recent work and what is to come. What the Presbyterian Church does for the most part, with a few exceptions, is to say to its lesbian, gay, and bisexual members: "Please come on in and help us feed the homeless, and volunteer with the sick and sing in the choir and organize the coffee hour, and maybe not teach Sunday School, but certainly tithe and

give us your money. But if you feel called and if the community feels you are called to ordained office, well, sorry, that isn't for you, you must ignore your calling, 'cause we have all these laws on the books to keep us from doing that and besides, we are too afraid anyway." What the Presbyterian Church says to its transgender members is much less than that; there is actually no official policy on the books about their ordination, and trans folks are generally met with confusion and suspicion and disgust. Their road is different and far more confusing.

And so our work is to give a supportive arm to those people who are affected most by our denominational policies and procedures, and with trans folks who are stuck somewhere in the middle, we work together to provide alternatives for how we may be church with each other, and how we may be faithful to the gospel.

We are 17 congregations strong, gaining voice with numbers, and with several more to come. The congregations who joined us this year are St. James Presbyterian Church, Astoria Presbyterian Church, and Dobbs Ferry Presbyterian Church. We are working right now on passing an overture that removes all of our restrictive denominational policies, for approval by our presbytery in January and for consideration by our General Assembly in June of 2006. Rutgers will consider this overture, in addition to 15 or 16 other congregations.

This past year, we gathered together 17 Inquirers and Candidates who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender, queer, or questioning. They came from all across the country, and we met in New Jersey for a weekend to gather strength

from each other, to care for each other, to learn from each other, and to gain the tools for pursuing ordination in the Presbyterian Church (USA) with integrity and wholeness. It was a tremendous experience for all of us. Since then, two candidates found the strength to come out to their congregations, knowing that they couldn't continue living a double life any longer. Both of them (one is in Southern California and one in the South) have been told that they can no longer pursue the ordination process. They are hoping to join another presbytery, crushed that they didn't find the support they wanted from the congregations that raised them. Another, Karen is her name, in Texas, was moved forward in the ordination process. She is married, in all the senses of the word, and she and her partner have three children. Regardless of the tough circumstances, we celebrate with Karen and her entire family for the partial "yes" she received and for her tremendous witness and truth-telling.

In the spring we will continue to sponsor workshops by Jenna Tiitsman entitled "SONG: Sexuality, Our Needed Gift" throughout the presbytery. We will have a lasagna dinner with recently ordained Ray Bagnuolo from Hudson River Presbytery. A few churches in Harlem are considering a public conversation on Presbyterianism, the Black Church, and Homosexuality. And we will also be organizing another retreat for Inquirers and Candidates. It is an exciting time for us, and we still seriously need the oasis of hospitality and welcome you provide, your financial support, and your kindness and belief in the importance of our shared ministry together.

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Luke Chang
(So Young Lee's son)
Thanksgiving week



Sunday, December 11, 2005
Rutgers Annual
All-Church Christmas Social.
Rev. Cheryl Pynch, Elder Chris Jones