

**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."



Elder Richard Reece

RUTGERS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# Renewal

## From the Interim Pastor

The Reverend David D. Prince

**T**he season of Lent, which consists of 40 weekdays before Easter and begins February 21 this year, affords an unusual opportunity to experiment with spiritual disciplines during a fixed period of time. For example, people who have difficulty thinking about setting aside fifteen minutes every morning for devotional reading and prayer sometimes find it manageable to do that for a six-and-a-half-week block of time like Lent. Other aspects of spiritual practice can be the focus of a Lenten experiment as well.

If your church attendance has been irregular for much of the year, why not resolve to participate in a Sunday worship service on seven consecutive Sundays, beginning with February 25, the first Sunday in Lent? Or, if you have been putting off reading one of the

four Gospels in an unbroken period of time (usually about two hours), why not find an evening or a weekend afternoon during Lent when you can do that? Your reading will help you know who Jesus is and what his ministry was like two thousand years ago.

The old patterns of Lent observance were related to "giving up" certain foods or practices. I invite you to observe Lent this year in a way that will enhance your spiritual growth through disciplines that deepen your overall sense of well-being. At the end of this forty weekday season we celebrate Good Friday, April 6, and Easter, April 8, and we give thanks for God's amazing love, which is the foundation of our faith journey as Christians.

I am happy to be sharing that journey with you.  
Dave Prince

## Spirited Moms Flock to Good Book Club

by Charles W. Bell, originally printed in the *NY Daily News* on January 27, 2007

**F**or some, like Hollis Kegg, it is a weekly stop on her spiritual journey. For some, like Christina Richards, it is a chance to maintain a regular connection with other women like her. And for others, the reasons are much less complicated.

"I'm here for adult conversation," said Megan Krasney, "and to hear some complete sentences."

Welcome to the ultimate book club, the Mothers' Bible Study, which meets for 90 minutes every Friday at the Rutgers Presbyterian Church on the upper West Side.

It has been meeting weekly for the past 10 years, and according to Angela Willey, a participant since day one who treks to meetings from Harlem, there's nothing else like it in the city.

"It has really evolved over time," Willey said before last week's meeting. "But we have always been able to embrace a lot of traditions."

For sure. Among the 10 women at last week's meeting were not only Presbyterians but Quakers, Episcopalians and one "not sure." Jewish mothers attend meetings, as do Methodists, Baptists and mothers of other faiths.

What they all share is motherhood.

Nonmoms are welcome, but Willey said that she could not remember the last time one attended.

Otherwise, it works like most book clubs. There is a theme—in this case, a biblical verse or reading—followed, in theory, by discussion of the theme. As with most other book clubs, the talk sometimes drifts far afield.

The scriptural reading last week was Psalm 121 ("I lift my eyes to the mountains"), but after Willey, who led the meeting, read it, the talk quickly turned to other topics. Perhaps surprisingly, little of it was about motherhood. One subject was the music at other churches. Another was making spiritual connections in a city as fast-paced and intense and New York.

"There's a level of honesty here that I need," said Kegg, who began attending seven years ago. "It's my weekly spiritual pick-me-up."

"For me, this is a break for quiet meditation and sharing," said Robin Tempelman, a psychologist and mother of two preschoolers who joined the group about two years ago after moving from Jacksonville, FA.

Sitting next to her on a sofa in the

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# February 2007

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
10:00 & 12:30 Choir Rehearsal 10:45 a.m. Child Care 11:00 a.m. Worship Service 11:15 a.m. Sunday School (ages 3-12) 12:15 pm. Coffee Hour 6:00 p.m. Men's Overnight Shelter 4 9:45 a.m. What I Learned from China 12:45 p.m. Joint Meeting of Session/Deacons 11 9:45 a.m. What I Learned from China 12:45 p.m. Peace & Social Justice Network; Worship Comm. 18 After church Women's Retreat departs	12:15 p.m. Alanon 6:00 p.m. Cub Scouts 19 Presidents' Day Church and office buildings closed	12:15 p.m. Alanon 6:00 p.m. Boy Scouts; Men's Support Group (HIV+/ PLWA) 8:00 p.m. Men's Alanon 20 6:00 p.m. Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner & Musicale	5:30 p.m. A.A. Meeting 21 March Renewal Deadline; 12:15 & 6:30 p.m. Ash Wednesday Services 28 6:30 p.m. Lenten Vespers 7:00 p.m. Sharing Our Faith Stories	6:00 p.m. Meal Program 7:00 p.m. Movie: Hitchcock Encores 8 9:45 a.m. Practical Parenting Workshop begins 15 6:30 p.m. International Benevolence Subcommittee	10:30 a.m. Mothers' Bible Study 6:00 p.m. Men's Overnight Shelter 2 evening SKATE Ice Skating Outing	1:00 p.m. Opera Rehearsal 5:30 p.m. A.A. Meeting 6:00 p.m. Men's Overnight Shelter

**Birthdays!**

7 Jim Ellis  
8 Ed Kennelly  
9 Katherine Wyatt  
14 Jeffrey Glendon  
26 Cheryl Beck

**Preaching Schedule**

*February 4* Black History Month; 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time; Scout Sunday; The Rev. David Prince preaching

*February 11* 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time; Holy Communion; The Rev. David Prince preaching

*February 18* Transfiguration of the Lord Sunday; The Rev. Cheryl Pyrch preaching

*February 25* First Sunday in Lent; Ordination & Installation of Officers; The Rev. David Prince preaching

(Continued from page 1)

church's social hall was Kia Heath, a Quaker and mother of 18-month-old twins, who was knitting and nodding in agreement. Like most of the women in the room, she heard about the Bible study group from a friend.

Krasney, an Episcopalian and mother of two preschoolers, was attending her first meeting. "I don't know what I expected," she said, "but I like the idea."

Attendance is not mandatory, of course. "We come and go as the spirit moves us," said Piper Madland, who has attended meetings for six years—"with a break"—after Willey invited her to join the group. Both are members of the West-Park Presbyterian Church a few blocks away.

The godmother of the group is Holly Nedelka, who pioneered the city's playgroup movement 20 years ago when she invited parents of toddlers to join her in forming Child's Play, which has now expanded to 23 playgroups a week. The groups meet at Rutgers, West-Park, and Jan Hus Presbyterian, on the upper East Side.

"Our study group grew out of the playgroup," she said. "I started it a dozen years ago at Central [another Presbyterian church on the upper East Side], and when I moved here, I moved it, too."

No one keeps count of programs like women's weekday Bible study groups, but the one at Rutgers is not the only one. "I know of several," said Nedelka, who usually leads the group but was called away last week by the absence of a Child's Play teacher. "Ours, I think, is one of the longest-running."

The group also goes on an annual winter retreat for women, held at the Stony Point Presbyterian Retreat Center in Rockland County. This year, it's scheduled for Feb. 18-19.

For some, the Rutgers experience is part of a larger search. Tempelman talked about it last week.

"I want to give something back," she told the group, "but I don't know what the heck it is."

"Don't worry," said Madland, "it'll come to you."

## February 2007 at Rutgers Church, and Beyond

### What I Learned from China

Sundays, February 4 & 11 at 9:45 a.m. in the Session Room

The Reverend Dr. Scott Morton of Rutgers began his ordained ministry as a Scottish missionary in China in the years before World War II. Profoundly influenced by this experience, with a love for Chinese people and culture, he later became a Professor of Chinese and Japanese history at Seton Hall University. In this two-part series, we'll have a chance to listen to personal stories of his time in China, with plenty of time for questions and conversation. Vignettes will include:

- Life in a Chinese town where few ever met a foreigner.
- "Now we must feed the silk-worms."
- A Christian wedding in China.
- Confucian classics and the Gospels.
- The difference made in the position of women.
- A close Chinese friend whom I have never seen.

### Mothers' Bible Study Overnight Retreat

at the Stony Point Retreat Center, leaving Sunday, Feb. 18 after church, returning Monday, Feb. 19 after lunch

We'll stay overnight in the beautiful Gilmore Sloan House, and everyone (whether or not you are a parent) is welcome to attend. There's no agenda as we'll let the Spirit guide us. Contact Holly Nedelka (x204 or [holly@rutgerschurch.com](mailto:holly@rutgerschurch.com)) for more information.

### Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner & Musicale

Tuesday, February 20 at 6:00 p.m.

Come eat pancakes until you drop, and then join in the annual Musicale 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. Please contact George Davey if you'd like to participate or to speak about accompaniment (x215).

### Ash Wednesday Services of Repentance

Wednesday, February 21 at 12:15 and 6:30 p.m.

These services with imposition of ashes include a healing ritual of confession as we write about our brokenness from the

past year on slips of paper and place them in a basin for dispersal. At the evening service, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper will be observed.

### Lenten Vesper Services

Wednesdays, February 28, March 7, 14, 21 & 28 at 6:30 pm in the Sanctuary

On the five Wednesday evenings that fall within Lent, Rutgers will hold 30-minute vesper services in the chancel area of the sanctuary. These candlelit services of prayer and reflection include a meditation by one of the pastoral staff and quiet organ music from George Davey.

### Sharing Our Faith Stories

Wednesdays, February 28, March 7, 14, 21 & 28

7—8 p.m. (following vespers) in the Daniel Russell Room

In recent adult classes and community discussions, we at Rutgers have begun noticing something about ourselves: we are not a people that talks easily about God—or Jesus Christ. We talk readily about community, social justice, programs and worship, and ask questions of the Bible, but seldom do we share personal faith stories. We've also noticed that even though we're a small church, we don't know each other as well as we'd like.

This Lent, the Christian Education Committee invites you to listen to stories of faith (and doubt) of Rutgers members and friends—and you may be offered an opportunity to tell a story yourself! The format is simple: two people (with advance preparation) will tell about an aspect of their faith journey. After each presentation, we'll have a time of silent meditation and prayer, and at the end we'll open up the conversation for more general sharing—including the sharing of cookies, hot drinks, and other yummys.

Holly Nedelka and Jeremiah Rosario have volunteered to share on February 28, the first evening of our series. Please let Cheryl Pynch know if you would like to share on another evening. We'll suggest questions to focus your story and resources to help. The stories need not be formal, dramatic, or long (10 minutes is the suggested limit). Please join us for this special Lenten series as we share in fellowship and talk about God in our lives.

**At the 210th Rutgers annual meeting on January 28, 2007, the congregation voted to confer pastor emeritus status on The Reverend Dr. Byron E. Shafer.**

Byron and Margaret send word from Bangalore, India, that they are settling into their faculty quarters at United Theological College, enjoying teaching and advising students, and learning from the rich multicultural, multilingual, multi-religious community they are visiting.

"A young friend came over last night all excited to show us the purchase of his first motor bike. He explained that a Hindu would take his new bike to a temple, put a garland on it and anoint it with three stripes of sandalwood paste. But since

we are only Christian, would Byron please pray over the bike and bless it. Surprises never cease."

They'd like to reassure anyone who heard recent news of rioting in Bangalore that the campus where they live is in a very safe and tranquil part of the city.

They return to the U.S. in May and will be spending the fall semester as "resident gurus" helping with a variety of projects at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, their seminary *alma mater*.



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## Let's Go to Washington!

Two Invitations from the Peace & Social Justice Network

**I**n March, there are two large, exciting, ecumenical events for peace and justice in D.C. Members from the Rutgers P&SJN are going to both and encourage you to join us:

### Ecumenical Advocacy Days

**Fri.-Mon., March 9-12** (Attendance all 4 days not necessary).

Ecumenical Advocacy Days is a time to hear fabulous preaching, meet other people involved in peace & justice work, and to attend informative and interesting workshops. This year's theme is "*...and How are the Children?*" Each participant chooses a particular "track"—Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Eco-Justice, or Global Security, among others—in which to explore this topic. Folks who can stay through Monday work together to lobby their representatives, with training and support. Cheryl Pynch, Anne Barstow, Tom Driver, and Suzanne Spears have attended previous Advocacy Days and can tell you more about this excellent conference. Sue has registered for this year and would like to have other folks from Rutgers join her! The P&SJN will offer (partial) financial support. To learn more, go to <http://www.advocacydays.org/>.

### Christian Peace Witness for Iraq

**Friday & Saturday, March 16-17**

Twenty-three Christian groups, including the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, are gathering to engage in a Christian Peace Witness on Friday evening, March 16. It will begin with 7 p.m. worship at the National Cathedral, a 9 p.m. candlelight procession to the White House, and a 10 p.m. and onwards (for those who are able) late night vigil. This will be a non-violent, Christian witness upholding the following affirmations:

- End the occupation of Iraq.
- Support the troops – bring them home.
- Commit to rebuilding Iraq.
- Say "No" to torture.
- Say "Yes" to peace.

At least three people from Rutgers will be going as well as others from the Presbytery; if you would like to know more, please contact Cheryl Pynch (x205). We will be leaving early Friday afternoon and the logistics need careful planning, so please call or write soon if you are interested! You may also learn more at

[www.presbypeacefellowship.org](http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org)

