



“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.”

Renewal

From the Pastor’s Desk ... A Sermon for Eastertide

The Reverend Dr. Byron E. Shafer



Amidst the nightmare of a dark only thickened by the fog-shrouded moon, Mary Magdalene stumbled her way through a maze of streets and on past the city wall toward the tomb where Jesus’s crucified body lay.

Blanketed against the dankish chill only by tears and torment, Mary nonetheless felt strangely warmed by the prayer she was murmuring, mantra-like—the psalm she’d first learned in Jesus’s company, on a grassy, sheep-cropped slope overlooking their beloved Galilean lake:

“*’Adōnai ro’i, lo’ ’echsar,*”
“The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want,”
“*bin’ōt deshe’ yarbitseni, ’al-mē mōnuchōt yōnahaleni, nafshi yēshōvev.*”
“The Lord makes me lie down in green pastures, leads me beside still waters, and restores my soul.”
“*gam kē-’elek bōgē’ tsalmawet lo’-’ira’ ra’ kē-’attab ’immadi.*”
“Even though I walk through

the darkest valley,
I fear no evil, for you are with me.”

As Mary and others had walked the Galilean countryside with Jesus, the thought had crossed her mind more than once that this man who spoke so often of wandering sheep and caring shepherds was himself what the Lord

God’s shepherding presence was all about. Yes, “the Lord” who had enabled *her* to lie down in green pastures beside still waters with soul restored—that “Lord,” *that* shepherd, who had healed her from her long illness, had been Jesus himself, whom she had come affectionately to call “Rabbouni,” “my honored rabbi.” Yes, it was indeed through Jesus himself that she had most powerfully felt the touch and presence of the living God.

But where had God been when Rabbouni himself had had to walk through *his* dark valley, the valley of the shadow of his own death? And now that he was dead—horribly, torturedly, heart-breakingly dead—who was there left who could tend to her in this new dark night of her soul? For she was all too aware that she was slipping back into the grip of her mental illness.

If God was not there with Jesus on the cross, how could she think that

God was present with her now? Yet why was she feeling so strangely warmed by those words:

“*’Adōnai ro’i, lo’ ’echsar,*”
“The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want!”

Was this feeling of hers but an aberration, just another symptom of her slide back into delusion? Or could this feeling of hers somehow be a sign that, in the silence between the dark and the dawn, God *had* returned to the world to sow new light.

“*gam kē-’elek bōgē’ tsalmawet*”

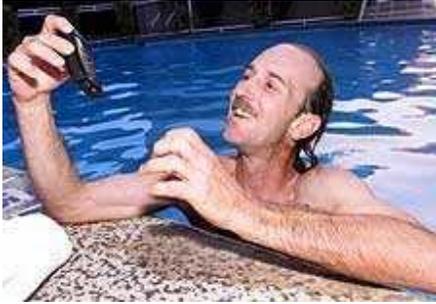
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100th “Actual Innocent” Inmate Freed from Death Row

by David Elliot, National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

Roy Krone walked out of Arizona prison on April 9, 2002, after DNA evidence proved that he was innocent of



the murder and sexual assault for which he was twice convicted and once sentenced to death. Krone is the 100th person freed from death row since 1976 due to actual innocence.

In announcing that Krone is innocent of the crime for which he was convicted, Maricopa County Attorney Rick Romley told reporters that the state owes Krone an apology. “He (Krone) deserves an apology from us, that’s for sure,” Romley said. “A mistake was made here...What do you say to him? An injustice was done and we will try to do better. And we’re sorry.”

“The death penalty in America is not merely flawed; it is broken and beyond repair,” said Steven W. Hawkins, execu-

tive director of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. “For every seven people that have been executed in this country during the past three decades, one person has been found to be actually innocent. The 100 people found to be innocent were not released due to what some might call a legal technicality – improper jury selection or jury instruction, for example – but because they actually did not do the crime.”

Krone was convicted not once but twice of the murder of cocktail waitress Kim Ancona at a Phoenix lounge in 1991. The first time he was convicted, he was sentenced to death and spent two years and eight months on Arizona’s Cellblock 6. The second conviction resulted in a life sentence. Krone spent a total of ten years in prison for a crime he did not commit. In all, the 100 inmates freed from death row due to actual innocence spent a combined total of approximately 800 years on death row.

Krone, 45, has been drinking margaritas with friends, shopping for clothes, and took a dip in a swimming pool before dining on steak (pictured left).

“I don’t think about rebuilding,” Krone said earlier. “I think about starting over. I have a brand-new life, brand-new dreams. . . . I don’t want to be negative, vengeful or angry. I don’t have time for that.”

Meanwhile, Dudley Sharp of Texas-based Justice for All said the list of 100 so-called exonerated inmates from death row is “completely made up.”

“This is a political deal,” Sharp added. “It’s got nothing to do, in my opinion, with concern for innocent people. What they want is for the media to say, ‘Oh, my God, 100 innocent people?’ without asking, ‘Do you have any proof for these claims?’”

The state of Florida leads the nation in wrongful convictions, with 22 innocent people released from death row since 1973. Illinois is second with 13; Oklahoma and Texas tied for third with 7; followed by Arizona and Georgia, with six each.

Founded in 1976, the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty is the only fully-staffed national organization devoted specifically to abolishing the death penalty and is comprised of more than 100 local, state, national and international affiliates.

“The death penalty in America is not merely flawed; it is broken and beyond repair.”

- Since 1990, only six countries have executed people for crimes they committed as children: Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Yemen, and the United States. The U. S. has executed more children than any of the other countries – 160 children have been sentenced to death in the U. S. since 1973.
- Nearly 90% of persons executed were convicted of killing whites, although people of color make up over half of all homicide victims in the United States.
- Various state governments estimate that a single death penalty case, from the point of arrest to execution, ranges from \$1 million to \$3 million per case. Other studies have estimated the cost to be as high as \$7 million. Cases resulting in life imprisonment average around \$500,000 each, including incarceration cost.
- Since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976, 44 people with mental retardation have been executed in 13 different states.

In accordance with an action of the Session of Rutgers Presbyterian Church, the church bells will be tolled on days when an execution takes place in the United States. Rutgers Presbyterian Church, along with our denomination, is opposed to the death sentence in principle and prays for the day when the United States will again join the rest of the Western World in banning capital punishment.

When Bad Things Happen to Your Good Name

by Adam Keeble

"The penny dropped. Someone had my debit-card details and was on a shopping spree."

"I want to ship my radio-controlled car to where?" I asked.

"One to Indonesia, and one to New York City," said the voice on the phone. "Is that right?"

I paused to re-assess the situation. That morning I had noticed a charge on my debit card linked to my bank account of about \$50 for an online service subscription. Trouble was, I hadn't ordered it. Then came the e-mail asking me to call to confirm the order of two radio-

controlled cars from a company in Northern Ireland, who also deal on the Internet.

The penny dropped. Someone had my debit-card details and was on a shopping spree.

Several phone calls later, and all was resolved – plus a full refund obtained. And in the next few days, a whole lot of questions were answered.

It seems it all boils down to a purchase – on the Internet – by me, of a red baseball cap.

My mistake was that the

website I used, and on which I typed in my debit card details, was not "secured" – that is, my specifics were not scrambled to prevent a hacker getting hold of them.

The aforementioned hacker then posted my name, debit card number, expiry date, and billing address on his website – with the justification it was a display of his hacking talent. There was even a disclaimer to say that by publishing these details (and the details of about 25 other people),

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lo'-'ira' ra' kî-'attab 'immadî."

"Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil,
for you are with me."

At last Mary reached the rock quarry that was to be her landmark. Its white limestone cliffs glowed ghost-like through the otherwise embalmed darkness. They pointed Mary's way into the gloom beyond and reminded her of those words of her prayer:

*"yanchenî bōma'gōlê-tsedeq
lōma'an sbōmō,"*

"The Lord leads me
in right paths
for the sake of God's name."

Joseph and Nicodemus had described for Mary where to find the path that took off from the quarry. And soon she reached a tomb. From the instructions she'd been given it had to be the one she was seeking. And then, as if to help her, a thin patch in the fog refracted a touch of moonlight, to softly illumine the rock face of the tomb. But what was revealed to her seemed suddenly sinister. The men had said that they'd rolled a large round stone over

the tomb's entrance, to seal it. But the mouth of *this* tomb was gaping wide. Mary was seized by dread. Enemies must have broken in, to defile Jesus's body. Greatly alarmed, Mary turned and hurriedly re-traced her steps into the city, where, stammeringly, she told the others her stunning news.

By now, dawn had broken, and even amidst the lingering fog Peter and John were able to run sure-footedly to the tomb, leaving Mary far behind, in their wake. Arriving at the mist-shrouded garden, they entered the tomb and quickly saw that it *was* empty, just as Mary had thought. The only things they could find there were a few pieces of abandoned grave clothes, confirming Mary's suspicions. Not knowing what to make of all this, Peter and John headed home, heedless of waiting for Mary.

So when Mary arrived, nothing at the tomb seemed different from before. And still too broken up to enter, she stood outside, weeping—devastated that Jesus was dead and terrified that his body had been stolen.

What were those words again?

"lo'-'ira' ra' kî-'attab immadî."

"I fear no evil,
for you are with me."

So summoning her courage, and trusting in God, she made bold to peer into the chamber.

And there, through a mist created by her own tears, she seemed to see two figures sitting where Jesus's body ought to have been. Then she heard them asking, "Woman, why are you weeping?" And she blurted back, "They've taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they've laid him." As she spoke, she turned away, out of complete despair, only to see a fog-shrouded figure standing in the garden, at some distance. Her only thought was to escape past him, but in her flight she stopped short when he, too, put a question to her, also asking: "Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?"

Supposing this one to be the gardener, Mary pleaded, "Sir, if *you're* the one who's carried him away, tell me where you've laid him, and I'll take him away."

In reply, the figure spoke but one word, yet that word changed the world. He said simply, "Mary!" And at

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Reflections on Black History Month: American Negro Spirituals

by Jacquelyn Carpenter

O Black and Unknown Bards

by James Weldon Johnson

O black and unknown bards of long ago,
How came your lips to touch the sacred fire?
How, in your darkness, did you come to know
The power and beauty of the minstrel's lyre?
Who first from midst his bonds lifted his eyes?
Who first from out the still watch, lone and long,
Feeling the ancient faith of prophets rise
Within his dark-kept soul, burst into song?

Heart of what slave poured out such melody
As "Steal away to Jesus"? On its strains
His spirit must have nightly floated free,
Though still about his hands he felt his chains.
Who heard great "Jordan roll"? Whose starward eye
Saw chariot "swing low"? And who was he
That breathed that comforting, melodic sigh,
"Nobody knows de trouble I see"?

What merely living clod, what captive thing,
Could up toward God through all its darkness grope,
And find within its deadened heart to sing
These songs of sorrow, love and faith, and hope?
How did it catch that subtle undertone,
That note in music heard not with the ears?
How sound the elusive reed so seldom blown,
Which stirs the soul or melts the heart to tears.

Not that great German master in his dream
Of harmonies that thundered amongst the stars
At the creation, ever heard a theme
Nobler than "Go down, Moses." Mark its bars
How like a mighty trumpet-call they stir
The blood. Such are the notes that men have sung
Going to valorous deeds; such tones there were
That helped make history when Time was young.

There is a wide, wide wonder in it all,
That from degraded rest and servile toil
The fiery spirit of the seer should call
These simple children of the sun and soil.
O black slave singers, gone, forgot, unfamed,
You -- you alone, of all the long, long line
Of those who've sung untaught, unknown, unnamed,
Have stretched out upward, seeking the divine.

You sang not deeds of heroes or of kings;
No chant of bloody war, no exulting pean
Of arms-won triumphs; but your humble strings
You touched in chord with music empyrean.
You sting far better than you knew; the songs
That for your listeners' hungry hearts sufficed
Still live, -- but more than this to you belongs:
You sang a race from wood and stone to Christ.



James Weldon Johnson
1871-1938

In 1619 a Dutch vessel landed twenty African natives at Jamestown, Virginia. They were quickly bought up by the colonial settlers. The Negro brought with him from Africa his native musical instinct and talent, and that was no small endowment to begin with. Christianity was thrust upon the slaves.

There was a vast gulf between the Christianity that was preached to him and the Christianity practiced by those who preached it. The story of the trials and tribulations of the Jews as related in the Old Testament were exerted upon the

Negro.

This story at once caught and fired the imaginations of the Negro bards, and they sang, sang their hungry listeners into a firm faith that as God saved Daniel in the lion's den, so would God save them; as God preserved the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, so would God preserve them; as God delivered Israel out of bondage in Egypt, so would God deliver them. How much this firm faith had to do with Negro's physical and spiritual survival of two and a half centuries of slavery cannot be known.

Thus it was by sheer spiritual forces that African chants were metamorphosed into Spirituals; that upon the fundamental throb of African rhythms were reared those reaches of melody that rise above earth and soar into the pure, ethereal blue. And this is the miracle of the creation of the Spirituals.

The dialect was created by a small group of Negro Slaves to have a medium of communication between themselves and their masters. It's not necessary to be an expert in Negro dialect to sing the Spirituals, but most

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Dance and Worship – a Marriage Made in Heaven

by Susan Scherer

Dance and worship have enjoyed a long and varied association. There are many references to their alliance in the Bible, two of my favorites being:

Psalm 30: 11, 12: "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing. Thou has put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent. Oh Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee forever."

II Samuel 6:14: "And David danced before the Lord with all his might."

The dance form has been linked to religious ceremonies of all kinds, from the earliest pre-B. C. dances by priests and priestesses, to the Roman temple dances, to medieval times, with processions and bridal dances in the Orthodox churches and the annual Easter dance performed by boys in the Seville Cathedral in Spain.

Ecclesiastical authorities sometimes clamped down on dance in the church, though certain forms such as the Maypole, Wedding and Death dances, now performed by even the common folk, persisted. Even

during the Middle Ages, while Europe was being ravaged by the plague, the dance could not be contained, with frenzied performances given in churchyards, inspired by literary and artistic creations.

With the Renaissance came further secularization, as dance divided into folk ("Dance haute") and court dancing and the emergence of the ballet form, and ultimately, ballroom and social dancing. Then there are the ages-old dances of the American Indians of the 1800's in the Western United States ("Ghost Dance"), the American Southwest Indians ("Rain Dance") and the Hopi Indians' sacred ceremonial "Snake Dance."

Interpretive dance, such as the liturgical one performed on Sunday, March 3 in honor of Sally Murray, must pay homage to all these previous forms as well as to the founders of early American modern dance with pioneers such as Martha Graham, Doris Humphreys, Charles Weidman and Isadora Duncan. Attention must also be paid to the inspired dancing and choreography of African-American

Katherine Dunham, who studied the musical forms of black people in the West Indies and the U.S. and gave expression to the Negro spirituals.

In that tradition the dance performed on March 3, "Shall We Gather at the River", is performed with joy and appreciation for the life and contributions of Rutgers' beloved Sally Murray, who often expressed her exuberance and love for God with music and dance.

The "River" symbolizes a revitalizing gathering place, for diverse peoples to come and gather not only flowers, but strength, community of spirit, serenity, joy, and grace. We are all grateful to have known and loved Sally and rejoice in this opportunity to celebrate her life and witness her transport from our own wondrous river to our Father's heavenly kingdom.

Jeremiah 31:13: "Then shall the virgin rejoice and dance, both young men and old together; for I will turn their mourning into joy, and comfort them, and make them rejoice in their sorrow."



In memory of Sally Murray I would like to thank everyone who made the celebration of Sally's life and the dedication of her plaque on March 3, 2002 a joyful event. Sally was, and still is, truly loved by the Rutgers church family.

Jacquelyn Carpenter

We live in God's love each day, knowing that Sally's spirit is always with us. She possessed a true kindred spirit, having love, having faith and trust in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Thank you Rutgers Family for having loved Sally as a part of this church body for so many years. You warmed the hearts of our family and friends, which helped to ease our pains during our bereavement and gave us strength to move on. We thank you again for your kindness and prayers, and may God continue to bless each and everyone of you.

The Murray Family

May 2002 movies at Rutgers

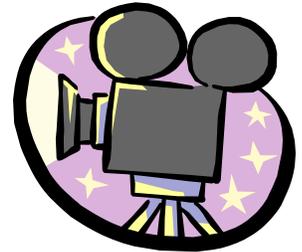


236 West 73rd Street, 5th Floor (212) 877-8227

**Thursday Evenings
at 7:00 pm**

sponsored by the Board of Deacons
Free Admission

Hosted by DR. ROGER FRANKLIN



May 2nd • Moulin Rouge (2001) Color, 120 mins.

A struggling young writer (**Ewan McGregor**) is drawn into the seductive spell of Satine (**Nicole Kidman**), the star of “**Moulin Rouge**,” a popular French nightclub catering to society’s decadent. An expressionistic turn-of-the-century tale, featuring **John Leguizamo**.

May 9th • Three Amigos (1986) Color, 103 mins.

Steve Martin, Chevy Chase and Martin Short, three silent-era Western movie stars, believe they’re making a publicity appearance in a Mexican village... but they get stuck having to face real banditos in this comedy!

May 16th • Roberta (1935) B&W 106 mins.

Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire join **Irene Dunne, Randolph Scott, Helen Westley and Claire Dodd** in this classic film musical. Features the songs “**I Won’t Dance**” and “**Smoke Gets In Your Eyes**”.

May 23rd • Jurassic Park III (2001) Color, 93 mins.

Adventure runs wild when a renowned paleontologist (**Sam Neill**) and a wealthy adventurer (**William H. Macy**) with his wife (**Tea Leoni**) are stranded on an island of DNA cloned dinosaurs. Watch out for the terrifying flying pteranodons!

May 30th • Best Foot Forward (1943) Color, 95 mins.

A high-spirited musical romp with **Lucille Ball** as a movie star who accepts a cadet’s (**Tommy Dix**) invitation to his military academy’s annual dance. The film introduced **June Allyson** and **Nancy Walker** with bandleader **Harry James**. Wholesome family fun, featuring the classic marching tune “**Buckle Down Winsocki!**”

CHURCH CALENDAR FOR LENT AND EASTER

* = Infant and Child Care Available

- Su February 10 Transfiguration Sunday—Holy Communion**
 9:45 a.m. *Sunday School ages 10 through Adult
 11:00 a.m. *Worship, The Reverend Cliff Frasier preaching;
 Sunday School ages 3–9
- Tu February 12 Shrove Tuesday**
 6:30 p.m. Third Annual Pancake Supper and Variety Show
 An Evening of Food and Fun for the Family
- We February 14 Ash Wednesday**
 12:15 noon Service of Penance (distribution of ashes)
 6:30 p.m. Service of Penance (ashes and communion)
- Su February 17 First Sunday in Lent—Presidents’ Day Weekend**
 9:45 a.m. *Sunday School ages 10 through Adult
 11:00 a.m. *Worship, Dr. Shafer preaching;
 11:15 a.m. Sunday School ages 3–9
- We February 21**
 12:15 noon Lenten Bible Study (Dr. Shafer; Ms. Pynch)
 6:30 p.m. Candlelight Vesper Service
 7:15 p.m. Adult Education Seminar
- Su February 24 Second Sunday in Lent— Ordination and Installation of Officers**
 9:45 a.m. *Sunday School ages 10 through Adult
 11:00 a.m. *Worship, Dr. Shafer preaching; Children’s Choir
 11:15 a.m. Sunday School ages 3–9
- We February 28**
 12:15 noon Lenten Bible Study (Dr. Shafer; Ms. Pynch)
 6:30 p.m. Candlelight Vesper Service
 7:15 p.m. Adult Education Seminar
- Su March 3 Third Sunday in Lent—Women’s History Month begins**
 9:45 a.m. *Sunday School ages 10 through Adult
 11:00 a.m. *Worship, Dr. Shafer preaching;
 11:15 a.m. Sunday School ages 3–9
- We March 6**
 12:15 noon Lenten Bible Study (Dr. Shafer; Ms. Pynch)
 6:30 p.m. Candlelight Vesper Service
 7:15 p.m. Adult Education Seminar

“Of Women’s Hopes We Sing”

by Dr. Vera Mowry Roberts

The history of Rutgers Church largely mirrors the history of society as a whole and women's place in it.

In May of this year, Rutgers will be 204 years old so we span quite a length of history. Women in the records of Rutgers are pretty invisible until well into the 20th Century – as women were in society.

During the last stretches of the 19th Century, women could not hold property in their own names, could not sign contracts. Any wages that they earned either belonged to their husbands if they were married or to their father if they were not.

The first women's right convention took place in 1848 in Seneca Falls, not very far north of NYC. But women did not get the vote until 1918. And all that time they were almost erased from the record – as they are erased from the record of Rutgers Church.

When the church was incorporated the articles in the corporation state very clearly that the male members of the congregation constituted the community, and we wait for a long time for the names of any women to appear in the official record.

Women were members of course, but what did they do? Well, they taught Sunday School - but they taught only the girls. Men taught the boys. Women made clothes for indigent persons in the church and community.

They formed an auxiliary missionary society to the men's official missionary society, and they sang in a volunteer choir. It is not until 1881 that the name of a woman appears in the official records of Rutgers Church – and she was there because the

Board of Trustees decided to allow the music director to hire professional singers for the choir and that year a Mrs. Elliot was paid as the soprano and Miss Hogan was paid as the contralto. No women's name appears again in the record until 1891, when again the soprano and contralto are named: Olive Reign and E.J. Powell.

Then in 1911, the name of a Miss Viola Dolson appears as being hired to be a stenographer for the church - interesting as she is evidently a member of a family who built the Wood-Dolson Building next door - we call it the Workbench Building.

It was 1918 that women got the vote in civil society, and one assumes although there is no official record, that women were then allowed to vote in the congregational meetings of the church, because on November 16, 1921, there is the first mention of a woman voting in this church - a Miss Cole seconded a motion made by one of the Trustees and her name is in the record.

The General Assembly of the church anticipated the enfranchisement of women in 1915 by authorizing women to become Deacons - they called them Deaconesses - but the first deaconess was not elected at Rutgers Church until 1927 and she was Ella Turk. Surprisingly, the General Assembly in 1930 proposed that there would be women elders and women clergy. When that came down to the presbyteries, the New York City Presbytery voted yes, but the Rutgers Church Session voted no.

Nevertheless at that time only the portion respecting elders passed, and from 1930 on there could be woman elders. But Rutgers, ever delinquent, did not elect a women elder until 1951. Her name was Dorothy Groesbeck.

The portion of that 1930 issue relating to women clergy did

not pass and women clergy were not authorized until 1956. The record shows the first woman elected as a Trustee did not happen until 1962 - Margaret Walters. Yours truly, Vera Roberts, was elected the next year, 1963.

Then it took until 1975 for a woman to be elected moderator of the presbytery - you can guess who it was!

The meeting took place in this sanctuary, and three people were nominated as prospective moderators, and as happens at General Assembly, the candidates stand up before the body and are asked questions. My fellow nominees were two male clergy, and a voice from the back of the room during the questions said: "Now Vera, do you really think you can do this job?" Now, by this time I was the national president of my professional organization - the first woman to be elected so - and I said: "If I did not think I could do it, I would not have allowed myself to be nominated." And I was of course elected, and that opened the door for subsequent women moderators to be nominated.

I was also in the first class of women to be elected as officers in the navy in WW2 and my commission is all in the masculine gender, and enlisted personnel addressed me as "sir." The struggle has been a long one and the progress for women in civil society and in the church has been slow, but I hope you women and girls in the congregation realize how lucky you are to be the inheritors of this long struggle.

Let us pray: Gracious God, we thank You for the gifts of women and we praise You for making it possible that they should be put to work for the betterment of your world. In Jesus's name, Amen.

“Rutgers, ever delinquent, did not elect a woman elder until 1951.”

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“While it was still dark, Mary had gone to the tomb, and there, at the foggy bottom of her life, she had encountered the Risen Christ.”

that very moment, when she heard him speak her name, her heartbreak was dispelled by hope, her darkness was dispersed by light, her dread of death was displaced by a promise of new life. And she cried out in joy and in faith, “Rabbouni!” For, though she knew not how, her Lord was once again alive, and she could once more offer her prayer with a full and certain heart:

*“gam kâ-'elek bôgê' tsalmavet
lo-'îra' ra' kî-'attab 'immadî.”*

“Even though I walk through



Entombment (detail)
Raphael

the darkest valley,
I fear no evil, for you[, my
Lord,] are [still] with me.”

And in her joy she soon found herself running back to Jerusalem to proclaim to the other disciples: “I have seen the Lord!” And as she ran, she recited with such fuller meaning those concluding words of her psalm:

*“'ak tôb wachessed yirdôfîni
kol-yômê chayyay
wôshavî bôvêt-'Adônai
lê'orek yamîni”*

“Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of
the Lord forever.”

While it was still dark, Mary had gone to the tomb, and there, at the foggy bottom of her life, she had encountered the Risen Christ. And right then and there, hope had dispelled her heartbreak, light had dispersed her darkness, and the promise of eternal life had displaced her dread of death.

I suspect that none of

us is ever *really* ready to experience the height of Easter joy until we have spent time in those dark places where hope cannot be seen, where Easter is the last thing we are expecting. And what a year of such dark places we have had—9/11, murder throughout the world in the name of religion, a plunging spiral of violence and vengeance in the Middle East, Enron and Arthur Andersen, layoffs and postponed retirements, clergy violating their sacred trust, the growing pessimism that this new millennium of ours is turning out to be even worse than the old one, far, far too many persons in our community of faith being stricken by cancer—and on, and on, and on.

I suspect there's not one person in New York who can say that during these past twelve months they've escaped having their hope crucified. I suspect all of us can identify only too well with Mary's nightmare of darkness, tears, and torment, with her slide into a dark night of her soul, with her walk through the valley of the shadow of death, with her floundering

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“Negro Spirituals...” continued from page 4 >>

of them lose in charm when they are sung in straight English or rendered as though it were a Brahms song or to assume a “Negro unctuousness”.

The plantation songs known as “spirituals” are the spontaneous outbursts of intense religious fervor, and had their origin chiefly in camp meetings, revivals and other religious exercises.

They were never “composed,” and are practically the only music in America which meets the scientific definition of

Folk Song. Success in singing these Folk Songs is primarily dependent upon deep spiritual feeling. The voice is not nearly so important as the spirit; and then rhythm, for the Negro's soul is linked with rhythm, and it is an essential characteristic of most all the Folk Songs. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to sing these songs sitting or standing coldly still, and at the same time capture the spontaneous “swing” which is of their very essence. They have been modified and varied by as they have been sung by different

groups in different localities.

It was the famous Fisk University Jubilee Singers from 1871 – 1875 that first made this country and Europe conscious of the beauty of these songs.

Their worth is weakened unless they are done impressively, for through all these songs there breathed a hope, a faith in the ultimate justice and brotherhood of man. The cadences of sorrow invariably turn to joy, and the message is ever manifest that eventually deliverance from all that hinders and oppresses the soul will come, and man-every

“West Wing” Lands Religious TV Award For Controversial Episode compiled by Adam Keeble



For the second year in a row, NBC's "The West Wing" has landed a Wilbur Award as Best TV Drama by the Religious Communicators Council (RCC) - but not without causing a storm.

The episode titled "Two Cathedrals" was slammed by TV Watchdogs when it aired on September 19, 2001.

In the show, Martin Sheen as fictional U.S. President Bartlett stands in the National Cathedral in Washington D.C. and curses at God following the funeral for his long-time secretary, who has been killed in a traffic

accident.

Bartlett (a Roman Catholic in the show), yells: "You're a son of a *****, you know that? What did I ever do to You and [Your son] but praise his glory and praise his name?" He then stamps out his lit cigarette on the cathedral floor.

The RCC is an international interfaith association of religious communicators and gives the Wilbur awards annually recognizing "excellence in the communication of religious issues, values, and themes in the secular media."

RCC Vice President the Reverend Eric Shafer (no relation to our own Dr. Byron!) defended the choice of the West Wing episode in the wake of the controversy it caused at the time - airing just days after the September 11 tragedies.

"To say that Bartlett was swearing at God is a gross oversimplification of the plot," said Shafer.

"He is yelling at God in language very similar to Old Testament prophets. He's coming to grips with this important death and his very strong Roman Catholic Christian faith.

"Part of it is being angry

with God and then realizing God didn't cause this accident. Bartlett knows that, but it's just like everyone with a death close to them who has to get through their anger."

But the Parents Television Council were far from impressed. Melissa Caldwell, its Director of Research and Publications slammed the show.

"Certainly there are a lot of shows that always deal in a positive way with religious issues, like Seventh Heaven and Touched By An Angel," she said.

"It seems strange to me that they would select the West Wing." Caldwell points at a 1999 episode of the series where a fictional group of conservative Christians were portrayed in her eyes as "zealous, self-righteous, anti-Semitic and confused about basic religious facts." In the same episode, Bartlett yells at the group to get out of his White House.

"That was not a very positive portrayal of conservative Christians at all," Caldwell adds.

The award ceremony took place in New York City on April 20.

“Credit fraud...” continued from page 3 >>

he was merely “showing off” his skills, and was not encouraging any illegal behavior.

My details were then taken by a kindly soul and copied on to an Internet chat-room, where several other nice people (here's where the illegal behavior takes over) decided to order themselves some radio-controlled cars.

But to be fair, as well as ordering their own toy car and shipping it to Indonesia, they thought they would be extra gen-

erous and send one to me too.

I was lucky - as the representative of the toy car company explained: "When we hear someone in New York wants to ship something to Indonesia, it's usually worth checking up with a phone call."

I was even luckier that it was only my debit card number that had been stolen.

Identity theft is big business. While stories of the waiter in restaurants making copies of your credit card when he van-

ishes from site are 99.9% hoax, the theft of social security numbers is not.

Some techniques lack the subtleties of others. At least three times a week I will get an e-mail, allegedly from a baby supply company, telling me I have won a prize and that all I have to do is send in my child's social security number (to verify my identification, of course) and then sit back and wait for my prize. Trying to reply to these scam e-mails is as bad an

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From the Pastor's Desk... continued from page 9 >>

toward the tomb without a shred of Easter hope.

Yet it was to just such a person as Mary, to one stumbling about in the dark—clueless, hopeless, disoriented—it was to just such a person as Mary that the Risen Christ first appeared, and it is to just such persons as Mary that the Risen Christ *continues* to appear. For our Risen Savior is still alive, still calling us by name, still coming to us in the dark night of our soul, still blanketing us with the hope by which to cope, still assuring us of his presence amidst all our experiences of limits and loss. For Easter, you see, is the rediscovery of life in the very midst of death's darkest hour.

And I suspect that our time spent this year in all those dark places where hope could not be seen, can make our experience of the Risen Christ today all the more profound for

joy, just like Mary's experience on that first Easter.

So let's affirm it together, our Easter faith! Even though our world is still dark, let's affirm it together!

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

Alleluia!

Alleluia!

"'Adónai ro'z, lo' 'echsar,"

*"The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want."*

*"'ak tób wachesed yirdofúni
kol-yomé chayyay wəshavti bəvət 'Adónai
lə'orek yamim"*

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life, and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

Alleluia!

Al-

leluia!

Let us pray: Gracious Lord of Life, we thank You that the story of Jesus did not end on the cross. We thank You that the story of Jesus has not yet ended and will, in truth, *never* end. We thank you that Christ is eternally alive, coming to us while it is still dark to offer us abid-



Crucifixion (detail)

Jan van Eyck 1420-1425

"Credit fraud..." continued from page 10 >>

idea as sending the information they are asking for.

I made the mistake of replying to one such offer, telling them to take me off of their e-mailing list. The result? Over 1,000 junk e-mails the next day. I made the mistake of confirming a working e-mail address...

So, with the help of the Federal Trade Commission's helpful handbook (sent to victims of fraud), here are some guidelines to prevent what happened to me from happening to you:

Firstly, **don't assume it can't happen to you.** Every time you pay for anything with a credit card, you are providing a lot of intimate details about yourself. Be careful where you put those receipts. A trash-can on the street probably isn't the best place.

Next, **never buy any-**

thing, or give any money to charity on an unsecured site on the Internet. The webpage may say it is secure, but unless there is a little graphic of a padlock (and make sure it's a closed padlock), anything you type in is potentially hack-able. And not just to experts either – I am no PC wizard, but I have worked out how to hack sites to some degree myself.

Should the worst happen, **panic – but bear in mind most damage is fixable.** Again, I was lucky, but ID theft is rampant enough that most companies are clued-up to it. It may even be that your credit card company guarantees against your being liable for fraudulent purchases. If not, it may be something you want to consider if you make even one purchase from a website store.

Help is available, and in

some cases, you can even be issued a new social security number (although this new number will come with no link to your prior credit rating – which will be a bad thing in most cases). A good website to start with is **www.consumer.gov/idtheft.** But the very first thing to do is to call your credit card company or bank and tell them to cancel the cards.

If you are not getting the help you want, **contact the credit bureaus and tell them you want a fraud alert linked to your name and cards.** This will secure your credit history, as the bureaus are obliged to delete fraudulent erroneous information from your record.

Finally, **don't ever, ever buy a red cap from an unsecured, online college sporting store.** No matter how it fits, it will never feel comfortable.

Every time you pay for anything with a credit card, you are providing a lot of intimate details about yourself.

Christian Education News

Mini-Retreat for Families, Saturday, April 27th, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

What are the challenges and joys of raising children in faith? How can the church help?

Parents will meet in the Daniel Russell Room, where we will share experiences, questions and resources regarding the religious life of our children.

Children will enjoy arts & crafts and stories on the 4th floor. Nursery care will also be provided.

Everyone is welcome – neighbors, friends, members. Please RSVP to Cheryl Pynch at (212) 877 8227 x295 as soon as possible.

Workshop on Advanced Directives, Saturday, May 11,

10:00 a.m -12:00 p.m., 5th floor.

In an adult forum in February we began thinking together about ways to take care of each other and prepare for the end of life. In that forum, people suggested that we have a nuts-and-bolts workshop about preparing advanced directives (i.e., living wills and health care proxies) and making other arrangements.

The Christian Education Committee has invited the Rev. Martha Jacobs to guide us through this process. Ms. Jacobs is the Director of Pastoral Care at NY United Hospital in Port Chester, NY, and also co-chairs their Bioethics Committee. She speaks frequently with community groups about completing advanced directives. We will also be inviting a lawyer to speak about the

importance of preparing wills and other legal issues.

This is a hard subject to talk about – so come do it with friends. We are never too young or too healthy to begin planning for the end-of-life, and such planning can be a great help and comfort to loved ones. You may decide to complete documents at the workshop, or you may prefer to just listen and take home information. All are welcome – don't hesitate to bring friends and family.

There will be coffee and bagels, etc. at 9:30 on the 5th floor, and the program will begin at 10:00. If you would like childcare, please let me know as soon as possible so we can make arrangements.

“What Now?”: Life in the Wake of Amendment A's Defeat reproduced from the PC (USA) Newswire

In the wake of the resounding defeat of Amendment A, gay-affirming congregations are asking themselves, and the rest of the church as well, "What now?"

To throw down the gantlet and defy the rules? Or to step back for the sake of peace, relying on time and education to thin the ranks of Presbyterians who oppose the ordination of gays and lesbians? It's a dilemma.

The stakes were raised this week when Paul Jensen, a Virginia lawyer, filed 11 new disciplinary cases against church officials who are openly defying the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s constitution, bringing the overall number of such cases he is pressing to 14.

The Rev. Rebecca Strader, who co-pastors Christ Presbyterian Church in Burlington, VT, with her husband, the Rev. Michael Brown, said deciding what one's conscience demands is tough in a denomination so deeply divided.

It is also getting more litigious - fast.

Strader has some experi-

ence with the church's disciplinary process.

Two years ago, the Presbytery of Northern New England was hauled before the denomination's highest court over its failure to force Christ Church to comply with a constitutional provision forbidding the ordination of gays and lesbians and prohibiting church blessings of same-sex unions.

The PC(USA)'s Permanent Judicial Commission ordered the presbytery to work pastorally with Christ Church to "assist it in fulfilling its obligation to comply with the constitution" and to point out the possible consequences of non-compliance.

Since then, Strader's congregation has finished a lengthy pastoral process with the presbytery and launched an internal exercise in "discernment."

Christ Church hasn't taken any more public stands, but it hasn't rescinded the last one: its controversial "statement of inclusivity" still appears on its Web site.

"The question is, how do you remain faithful and pastoral?"

Strader said. "And that might not mean taking another public step. On the other hand, we do want the church to change. We're struggling with how to be prophetic without sounding like we're looking for more confrontation."

Strader said her 75-member congregation is not of one mind about what it should do next.

"We're a peacemaking church. We're committed to that, too. And we don't want to have to choose between being peacemakers and being prophetic," she said.

The irony is that two conscience-driven movements within the denomination seem to be on a crash course. One group says homosexual behavior is sinful; the other says discrimination against gays and lesbians is sinful.

Most evangelicals in the church believe that the still-disputed amendment, G6.0106.b, only codifies what Scripture and tradition have long held - and that defending that understanding is a matter of conscience. They say

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those who disagree should submit to the rules or leave the church peaceably.

Evangelicals are astounded that, after four decisive "no" votes on efforts to change or remove the amendment, some congregations are still ordaining gays and lesbians - and some are doing so in a very public way.

Conservatives in the PC (USA) are growing more insistent that it is high time to rein in blatant offenders.

The Rev. Jerry Andrews, of Chicago, said judicial responses are appropriate in the cases of "openly defiant" congregations and pastors, who he says "are begging for somebody to do something."

"That is not the same thing as chasing down every church," said Andrews, a spokesman for the Presbyterian Coalition, the largest organization of evangelicals and conservatives in the denomination. During the Coalition's annual meeting in October, Elder Bob Howard of the Presbyterian Lay Committee drew applause by arguing that non-compliant leaders and churches ought to submit, peaceably withdraw, or face prosecution.

Officials and members of non-compliant churches have noticed more than a subtle change in the tenor of the debate.

Michael Adee, an advocate of full participation in the church and its ministry for gays and lesbians, said the gay-affirming groups have developed no common strategy of dissent, and churches and pastors act independently.

"The national board of More Light Presbyterians doesn't issue directives," he said. "This decision is a matter of conscience, and people do what they feel God is calling them to do."

For some, that means stepping out on what Adee calls a "shaky branch."

While some congregations quietly continue to ordain gay and lesbian members, others opt for a

more public stand, although they know they could be embroiled in judicial hearings and appeals for years. What's more, the four back-to-back votes to alter the amendment is understood in these circles as a lack of a clear mandate.

Adee, an openly gay man ordained as an elder at Cincinnati's Mount Auburn Presbyterian Church a decade ago, said there is a new level of tension in the church.

"What appears to be heightening the opposition to ordination is the opposition to homosexuality," he said. "There are people who oppose having homosexuals as members of churches, who do not just oppose their ordination but oppose lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people ... in their churches and in their families."

On the other hand, Adee said, churches that have been open to gay members and gay leaders are growing less willing to be quiet about discrimination in the church.

The Rev. Jane Spahr, an open lesbian and ordained Presbyterian minister, calls herself an evangelist and travels around the country teaching, preaching and lecturing about how "the rule" in the PC(USA) is "wrong" and needs to be changed.

Her reaction to the latest spate of charges against gays and lesbians and their supporters was visceral.

"People keep telling us, 'Just wait - it isn't time,'" she said. "Well, you know what? It is past time. I've been in dialogue. I've been spit upon. I've been told I'm a demon ... And what do we want? We want our baptismal rights to be honored."

Spahr said she is appalled that some members of her organization, That All May Freely Serve, are being targeted for judicial action after disclosing their sexual identities as part of a denominational dialogue.

She said individuals and churches that are supportive of gays and lesbians won't be "rolling

over."

"This has got to stop," she said. "Jesus says, 'When the rules are wrong, change them.'"

The cost of litigation is high, emotionally and financially. Individuals may be suspended from ministry or even defrocked. Administrative commissions may be installed to run churches deemed wayward.

"We're trying to ask people to stay calm," said the Rev. Gene Bay, a co-moderator of the liberal Covenant Network, which usually prefers moderate resistance to outright defiance. "We're asking folks who are supporters of (Amendment) A to be wise and not to react in a way that is likely to be self-defeating."

"We lost on A, but the issue is not going to go away."

Amendment A was an attempt to replace the constitution's blanket prohibition of ordinations of gays and lesbians with a measure leaving ordination decisions to sessions and presbyteries.

For his part, Adee said he intends to keep visiting churches to talk about his life and his faith. "The assumed immorality of gay people, the categorical prejudice, that reveals to me that there is lots of education to be done," he said, adding that his network will repeatedly file legislative challenges to G6.0106.b, as well.

"We're not doing this to be annoying or to be reactionary. We are clearly and thoughtfully doing this because it is our mission, our vision. We know it may not be the most politically savvy thing to do."

Mitzi Henderson, a More Light moderator, is a voice of calm.

She said it "remains to be seen" how the litigation will be resolved, and in the meantime, her network will continue working with congregations that want to be open.

Strader said of her congregation: "We want to stay Presbyterian ... and we want the church to

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