



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.”

Lent 2004

Volume 21, Issue 1

RUTGERS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Renewal

From the Pastor’s Desk...

In Anticipation of Lent 2004
The Reverend Byron E. Shafer

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly willed,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfilled;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new,
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose tomorrow the ground won to-day—
Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

Matthew Arnold (1822–1888), “The Scholar-Gipsy,” lines 171–180

This is a magnificent piece of poetry. Nowadays, whenever I reflect on this stanza by Matthew Arnold, a stanza about “half-believers” awaiting a “spark from heaven,” I associate it with Nicodemus and his nighttime visit to Jesus, a story narrated for us in John 3:1–10, 16 (which I invite you to read now, before going any farther in this article).

In case you haven’t been noticing over the past eight years, I love the poetry of the 19th-century author Matthew Arnold, and I’ve loved it ever since I first encountered it during my freshman year in college, in a course entitled “Introduction to Liberal Studies.” Actually, when I recall the title of that formative course, in which, by the way, Margaret and I met for the first time, I can’t help but wonder if that course is the reason the two of us have been “liberals” from our college days right up until now. Who knows!

Anyway, when I last reopened the dog-eared

pages of the slim, hundred-page volume of Arnold’s poetry assigned to us some forty-seven years ago (Matthew Arnold, *Selected Poems*, ed. E. K. Brown, New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1951), I discovered by reading the notes I’d written in the margins how much even then I’d valued Arnold’s great elegiac poem “The Scholar-Gipsy,” first published in 1853. I noticed that, in a departure from my usual custom when reading, I’d underlined not just one or, at most, two lines in a stanza but all ten lines of Stanza 18, the one quoted above. I am aware, of course, that I really like those lines today. But I was surprised to discover that I had already really liked those lines so long ago.

Arnold shows himself in his poetry to have been a melancholy, anxious young intellectual, the same kind of person I imagine Nicodemus to have been—melancholy, anxious, young, intellectual. Now, Matthew

Arnold’s father had died when Matthew was just nineteen years old, and for long thereafter Matthew continued to brood about death, writing a whole series of elegies over the next twenty years.

The poem “The Scholar-Gipsy” is part of that series, although, unlike most of Arnold’s other elegies, it offers not a reflection on the death of a specific individual but rather a reflection on a death-dealing element in the spiritual atmosphere of his time. Elsewhere in the poem, Arnold calls this death-dealing element the “strange disease of modern life, With its sick hurry, its divided aims, Its heads o’ertaxed, its palsied hearts.” (lines 203–205)

The atmosphere of Arnold’s time sounds a lot like that of our own, doesn’t

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Orphans and Vulnerable Children in South Africa

A Moment for Mission presented by Nancy Muirhead on Sunday, December 7, 2003



The Zizanni Project assists orphans and vulnerable children in Diepsloot, South Africa (photograph by Marnie Pillsbury, Director of the David Rockefeller Fund).

Good morning. Cheryl asked me to speak about orphans and vulnerable children in South Africa to commemorate World AIDS Day, which was Monday, December 1. I work at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, a private foundation here in New York City, on its South Africa program, which makes grants focused on basic education, orphans and vulnerable children, and the impact of HIV/AIDS on development issues. I joined Rutgers almost two years ago, in part because I was drawn to this church's strong social mission, which has included a focus on HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Facts and Figures.

We have all heard the mind-numbing statistics: over 42 million people currently live with HIV/AIDS around the world, more than the population of New York and Texas combined. Over 28 million people died from AIDS by the end of last year. Globally, more than 14 million children have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS, and this number is projected to increase to 25 million by 2010. While AIDS is a global pandemic, the vast majority of people affected by the virus live in sub-Saharan Africa. Currently, there are eleven million orphans

in Africa. This number is expected to double in seven years.

South Africa has the dubious distinction of being the country with the most HIV-infected people in the world, 5.3 million. Currently there are over 500,000 orphans in South Africa. This number is projected to grow to one million by 2005, and two million by 2010, which would constitute 16% of all children in the country.

Numbers are dehumanizing. It is easy to throw up your hands when you hear such statistics and think that nothing can be done, especially when many of the people who suffer are so far away. It is also tempting to deny the gravity of the crisis, which is exactly what leadership in South Africa has done until recently, as it is so overwhelming, especially to a country which has just thrown off the shackles of apartheid and is striving to build a democracy and improve living conditions for the previously disadvantaged.

The Face of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. I travel to South Africa twice a year and have been privileged to meet people facing HIV/AIDS with courage and compassion. A few stand out:

- A teenage girl who dropped out of school and is struggling to raise her five younger siblings in the house where her parents lived with the family before they died. She showed us her electrical breaker box, which has long been turned off for lack of funds, and her small vegetable garden. The phenomenon of child-headed households is becoming increasingly common in South Africa. Approximately \$200 keeps a child in school for a year, but many children, particularly girl

orphans, cannot afford this amount.

- A grandmother running after our car, begging for packages of dried soup that were being handed out to child-headed households but not to households headed by elderly adults. Grandmothers now frequently watch their children die one by one and end up caring for twenty or more grandchildren on their meager pensions. We stopped the car and gave her soup packages, although she was not on the distribution list.

- An abandoned HIV-positive infant in a children's home, pitifully thin, with oxygen tubes, his chest rising with difficulty on each breath. Many HIV-positive mothers who fear raising their children abandon their babies at birth. Small contributions can facilitate good health care and placements for abandoned infants, the majority of whom are healthy.

- Pre-schoolers at projects assisting orphans and vulnerable children who clutch both my hands during site visits. I have twin five-year-old boys, so this is particularly poignant. Most children are afraid of strangers; these children are starved for affection. Letters and notes of encouragement from friends far away could make a world of difference in an orphan's life.

The human spirit can rise to incredible heights under adversity. Many people of faith in South Africa have changed their lives to help those impacted by HIV/AIDS. A few examples:

Greg—a plastic surgeon who has donated time and money to start NOAH—a network of “arks” attached to

(Continued on page 6)

Get to Know Our New(er) Members!

A Report from the Membership Committee

Robert and Emily Chang joined Rutgers Church in April last year after Robert was baptized by Dr. Shafer. The Chang family includes daughter Aubrey (age five) and son Bobby (age two). Rounding out the household are two cats, five turtles and a Malaysian tortoise.

The Changs are active members of the church. Robert taught a seven-week video production and editing course through the Body & Spirit Program, which will be repeated in March this year. He also produced a tribute video for the Reverend Dr. W. Scott Morton celebrating the 70th anniversary of his ordination. Aubrey attends Sunday school, art classes and is a member of the children's choir while Bobby has a weekly playgroup and art and exercise classes at Rutgers. Emily has participated in the Thursday meal program and in community clothing drives.

In business, Emily and Robert are partners in television production. Robert has had a production company since 1986, serving major corporations as producers of news and marketing videos for network and local TV broadcasts. Prior to forming his own company, he was a writer and producer of news and magazine shows at NBC for seven years. Emily also worked at NBC, as a member of the NBC Nightly News team, following her work as a field producer and production associate at

local NBC stations in New York, Boston, Chicago, Washington D.C and Charlotte, NC.

Robert and Emily are currently developing a weekly half-hour television show called "First Woman" which profiles the extraordinary women who were the first to break the gender barrier in a male-dominated field — such as Justice Sandra Day O'Connor; Secretary of State Madeleine Albright; Janet Guthrie, first woman to compete in the Indianapolis 500; Barbara Walters, first female network news anchor; Muriel Siebert, first woman to win a seat on the New York Stock Exchange; and many more.

Emily was born and raised in Needham, Massachusetts and graduated from Ohio's Oberlin College. Born in Shanghai, China, Robert has lived in Germany, Mexico and Argentina, where his grandfather served as the Chinese Ambassador for the Nationalist Government. He was educated in several countries and attended the College of Wooster in Ohio.

While Robert often travels to California on production assignments, the family has stayed close to home in the upper West Side where their favorite neighborhood spots are the American Museum of Natural History, the Children's Museum of Manhattan, Barnes & Noble and Zabar's. Family vacations are spent on Cape Cod.

Mrs. Freida Logan joined Rutgers this fall, having recently relocated to New York City from Nashville, Tennessee.

"I'm a native born New Yorker—I was just late getting here," she says.

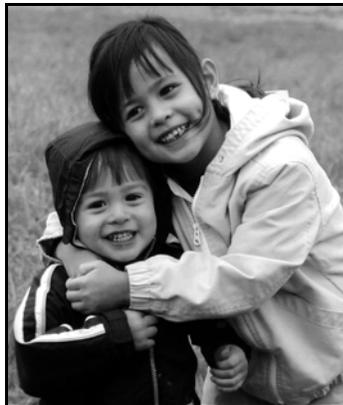
Freida was born in Oklahoma, where her grandmother participated in the Oklahoma Land Rush in 1889. She married, moved to California, and opened a real estate business with her husband. While raising three children, including an autistic son, she pursued a vibrant career selling real estate (consistently outselling the 11 other salespeople in her employ!). Upon retirement, the Logans moved to Nashville, where Freida cared for her husband until his death in 1994. Her son still lives in Nashville.

Although she moved to New York to be close to her two daughters, Freida has found new life here. Literally our church neighbor, she lives across the street in the Ansonia. Her first contact with Rutgers was simply looking out her window and seeing "the beautiful building." As she visited and came to appreciate the community at Rutgers, R. Wellington Jones recruited her to participate in our opera last spring, *Eugene Onegin*. Freida confides that she had never even attended an opera before, but she enjoyed herself so much that she is now taking singing lessons and has joined the chorus at Hamilton House Senior Center.

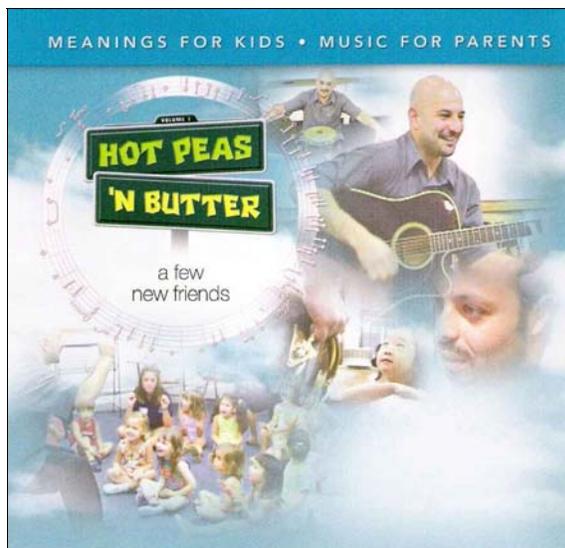
Besides music, she has also taken up creative writing and is working on a memoir, tentatively entitled *My Life as a Comedian*. Freida's other interests include doll collecting and fashion; she recently began volunteering for our Thursday Nighters meal program; and she is a cancer survivor.

When speaking of her move to New York, Freida says, "I feel like I've died and gone to heaven." Welcome, Freida!

Our next Inquirers Class for those interested in joining Rutgers will be held Monday evenings, March 22 and 29. See p. 9 for more information.



Aubrey (r) and Bobby Chang (l) (top); Freida Logan (r) with R. Wellington Jones (l) (above, photographer Susan Scherer)



Danny LaPibus Comes to Rutgers

Diane Nicole, Director of the Body & Spirit Program

In March, the Body & Spirit Program of Rutgers Presbyterian Church will host a **Hot Peas 'n Butter** concert for kids with **Danny LaPibus** and friends.

Featuring new takes on traditional favorites (like "The Little Red Caboose") along with original compositions ("Baila" and "Bobby Bass"), this event promises to be a smash with parents and kids alike. A review of this concert describes

LaPibus's "interactive, invigorating approach to performance with multicultural music for kids and adults."

The concert will take place on Saturday, March 27, at 11:00 am; tickets are **on sale now!** (\$15 per person; under 1 year free)

Contact Diane Nicole at (212) 877-8227 x212 to reserve your places.

Classes Still Open

The winter/spring session of the Body & Spirit Program is now in full swing. There are still openings for some classes; check out our web site for more information or call Diane Nicole at (212) 877-8227 x212.

A new computer session will begin on February 23. Look for brochures in the first week of February.

New Play Group for Mothers of Color

This fall, a new play group for mothers of color began meeting at Rutgers under the auspices of the Child's Play program. Originally part of the Mocha Moms organization, this weekly group is a chance for moms to meet together to network, discuss issues of common interest, trade stories and advice, and, of course, have fun with their kids.

One mom says, "Most stay-at-home moms of color don't really have anything else like this."

The play group meets Thursday afternoons at 3:30 pm. For more information, please contact Holly Nedelka at (212) 877-8227 x204, and she can put you in touch with the group's organizers!

The Rutgers Christmas Social

R. Wellington Jones, Chairperson of the Special Events Committee

The annual Rutgers Church Christmas social was attended by a large and enthusiastic crowd on Sunday afternoon, December 14, 2003, in the fifth floor fellowship hall.

The day started with the first blizzard of the season; Dr. Shafer made an announcement of the event at morning service, and recited a blessing at the start of the festivities.

Tables were set in a festive manner by Doris Bryant and Louisa Berry, delicious Cuban sandwiches were contributed by Wellington Jones and Paul

Callahan, Italian sandwiches were delivered by Manganaro's Delicatessen, punch was prepared by Louisa Berry, and a coconut layer cake was contributed by Doris Bryant and Ethel Knight.

Live entertainment for children and adults was provided by Dum-Dum the Clown and her assistant, Dr. Shafer as Prof. Mooseburger. One of the highlights of the afternoon was the distribution of the gifts by Dermonte Alleyne as Santa Claus, assisted by Joy Rose as Mrs. Claus.



People came from near and far to be present at this festive occasion.

Special thanks go to Doris Bryant, Louisa and Robin Berry, Frank Manzanet and the custodial staff.

Members of the Rutgers Choir celebrate at their own party! (picture by Susan Scherer)

Adult Education Offerings for February and Lent, 2004

Cheryl Pyrch, Associate for Educational Ministries

Two Rural Issues:

Many of us in New York City – preoccupied with the urban problems on our doorstep – are unfamiliar with the struggles of people in rural areas. But their issues are connected to “our” issues, and the well-being of city and country dwellers are intertwined. The Peace and Social Justice Network has invited two activists to speak about issues affecting their community and to suggest actions we can take – in the coffee hour – to be in solidarity with our rural neighbors.



A mountaintop removal operation near Kayford Mountain, WV (picture by Vivian Stockman 10/19/03)

Mountaintop Removal in Appalachia, Sunday February 15, 9:45 am in the Session Room. Larry Gibson’s family has lived in the southern mountains of West Virginia since the eighteenth century. He has seen, firsthand, the changes in the environment and way of life that come with a new type of coal mining called “mountaintop removal,” a powerful form of strip mining where the tops of peaks are (literally) removed to reach the narrow seams of coal underneath. Mr. Gibson will share his story and tell us about the consequences of this controversial practice. To learn more, visit the web site of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (www.ohvec.org) where you will find links to many informa-

tive articles, several of which feature Mr. Gibson. *The New York Times* also addressed this form of mining in a recent editorial (1/13/04, www.nyt.com).

New York State Farm Workers Campaign, Sunday February 22, 9:45 am in the Session Room. Come hear the Rev. Richard Witt, director of the ecumenical organization Rural and Migrant Ministry, based in Poughkeepsie, New York. Mr. Witt will tell us about the struggles of New York State farm workers, struggles for basic protections that other workers take for granted: overtime pay, a day of rest, disability insurance. Legislation is pending in the State Assembly and Senate; a letter or phone call can make a big difference. Come learn more about the issue and how you can help.

Lent—Scripture Study, Meditation and Discussion:

There are several opportunities for study, meditation and fellowship during Lent, as we prepare ourselves for the good news of Easter.

The Gospel of John, Sunday mornings, 9:45 am in the Session Room, February 29 through March 28. The fourth gospel has been (arguably) the most influential gospel in Christian theology, and the most challenging. Many of us are familiar with the more famous passages - the “I am” sayings or the wedding at Cana - but have not read it from start to finish. In this series we’ll look at the whole gospel, but each class will be independent so people may come as they are able. There will also be time for meditation on the many powerful and poetic passages. Led by the Reverend Charles Amstein.

Reflections on Jesus’s Last Hours, Palm Sunday, April 4, 9:45 am in the Session Room. In the events before and during the Crucifixion, was there some special secret to explain Jesus’s calm amid the disappointments, the physical and spiritual suffering and the desolation which he experienced? It is not enough to say he was divine; at this point he was in certain ways most human – witness, “My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” We shall try to discuss this reverently. Led by Dr. Scott Morton.

Listening for God . . . in Contemporary Literature and Images, Wednesday evenings after the Vesper Services, 7:15-8:15 pm in the Daniel Russell Room, March 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31. As Presbyterians we claim that the Scriptures are a unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ, “received and obeyed as the word of God written . . . not a witness among others, but the witness without parallel” (Confession of 1967, 9.27). That said, Presbyterians do not believe that God is revealed to us *only* through the Bible, but that God in Christ continues to speak to us in many and various ways of God’s choosing. What might God be saying to us through contemporary literature and images? How can we prayerfully discern God’s voice in the writing and witness of others? Join us for a Wednesday evening series where we will read (short) works by Flannery O’Connor, Raymond Carver, Alice Walker and Garrison Keillor. We will read from a book edited by Peter Hawkins (of Yale Divinity School) and Paula Carlson. Readers are \$14 each; please let me know if you would like me to order you a copy by **February 18.** Led by Cheryl Pyrch.

Remember Your Spirit: A Retreat for Women

This overnight retreat for women at the Stony Point Presbyterian Retreat Center in Stony Point, NY will include labyrinth walks, meditation, yoga, sharing of stories, snow angels, and prayer. We'll let the Spirit guide us! We will leave on **Sunday, February 15**, around 2:00 pm and **return on Monday, February 16**, around 4:00 pm. The cost (\$95) includes room, meals and transportation. Sponsored by the Mothers' Bible Study at Rutgers Presbyterian Church and the Women's Spirit group at West Park Presbyterian Church. Contact Holly Nedelka for more information at (212) 877-8227 x204.

Organ Fundraising Recital

Carlos Baptiste, violinist, will present a recital at Rutgers Presbyterian Church on **Sunday afternoon, February 22, at 2:30 pm**. Scott Rednour will accompany on the piano. The pair will perform works by Schubert, Beethoven, Sarasate, Novacek, Ernst, Strauss and Tchaikovsky. The suggested donation is \$20; all proceeds will benefit the matching fund for the Marshall Williamson Antiphonal Organ.

Mr. Baptiste studied at London's Royal Academy of Music and at Mannes College of Music in New York. He makes regular appearances as a soloist and in chamber music, and is the founder of the critically acclaimed African-American group, the Diaspora Chamber Players. Mr. Rednour has had a multifaceted career as a pianist, conductor and teacher. He currently teaches at the Manhattan School of Music, the Julliard School, and the Music Festival at Chataqua Institute.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and Musicale

Our annual Shrove Tuesday meal and performance will take place this year on **Tuesday, February 24, at 6:00 pm**. George Davey is on the look-out for musicians interested in performing; please contact him at gdavey@rutgerschurch.com, or on a coming Sunday morning.

Orphans and Vulnerable Children in South Africa

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schools that provide one-stop services for orphans and vulnerable children, including food, help with homework, counseling, and vocational training.

Heather—a successful businesswoman who gave up her job to start God's Golden Acre—a project serving over 4,000 children affected by HIV/AIDS.

Liesl—a psychologist who started a bereavement service using play therapy for children who have lost parents to HIV/AIDS.

There are many others.

Rutgers's Involvement with HIV/AIDS in Africa. Rutgers has committed \$25,000 this year to assist orphans and vulnerable children in Africa through the Presbyterian Church (USA), which has a fund that supports various church-based projects in Africa that provide food, housing, education, medical expenses and other needs to orphans and vulnerable children. Earlier this year, Rutgers also gave \$3,500 for a pilot project for mother-to-child AIDS transmission prevention.

**Children's Music
at Rutgers**

The Rutgers Children's Choir will sing next on Sunday, February 8. We are always looking for new members (age 5 years and up). We practice most Sunday mornings at 10:15 am in the Fellowship Hall. Here is our spring rehearsal schedule:

February 1, 8, 22, 29
March 7, 14, 28
April 4, 11, 18, 25
May 2, 9, 16

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

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

These are significant commitments for Rutgers, but more needs to be done. Thank you for listening.

[In January, Cheryl led an adult education class series on HIV/AIDS in Africa. This was an extraordinary opportunity for us to learn more about the pandemic and how we can all strive to make a difference on AIDS in Africa, which is one of the most critical issues of our time. Look for an article in the next *Renewal* with more about this class.]

February 2004

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:45 am Adult Class: The AIDS Pandemic 12:45 pm Joint Meeting of the Session and Deacons	2 2:30 pm Worship Committee 6:00 pm Scout Meeting Every Mon/Tues	3 7:00 pm From Bangalore to Batala: Byron and Margaret Shafer present India and Egypt	4	5 6:00 pm Senior Meal Program 7:00 Movie Series Every Thursday	6 10:30 am Mothers' Bible Study Every Friday	7 1:30 pm Opera Rehearsal Every Saturday
8 9:00 am Trustees Meeting 9:45 am Adult Class: The AIDS Pandemic 12:45 pm Peace & Social Justice Network	9	10 6:00 pm Men's Support Group (PLWA/HIV) Every Tuesday	11	12	13 6:30 pm Rutgers volunteers staff the shelter Every Friday	14
15 9:45 am Adult Class: Mountaintop Removal <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">WOMEN'S RETREAT</div>	16 Presidents' Day Office closed	17 6:30 pm Personnel Committee	18	19	20	21
22 9:45 am Adult Class: New York State Farm Workers Campaign 2:30 pm Organ Benefit Recital	23	24 Shrove Tuesday; 6:00 pm Pancake Dinner and Musicale	25 Ash Wednesday; 12:15 pm Service of Penance 6:30 pm Service of Penance and Communion	26	27 6:00 pm Cub Scout Gold and Blue Dinner	28
29 9:45 am Adult Class: The Gospel of John	Men's Overnight Shelter Program: 6:30 pm, seven days a week					

Sunday Worship Schedule

Worship Service at 11:00 am — Coffee Hour at 12:15 pm

Sunday School for Adults at 9:45 am — Infant and Child Care from 9:30 am — Sunday School (ages 3-10) at 11:15 am

Adult Choir Rehearsals at 10:00 am and 12:30 pm—Children's Choir Rehearsal at 10:15 am

- February 1—Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time; Scout Sunday; Black History Month begins; The Reverend Dr. Byron E. Shafer preaching
- February 8—Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time; Holy Communion; special Black History Month presentation by Ruben Santiago-Hudson
- February 15—Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time; The Reverend Charles Amstein preaching
- February 22—Transfiguration of the Lord Sunday; Ordination and Installation of Officers; The Reverend Dr. Byron E. Shafer preaching
- February 29—First Sunday in Lent; The Reverend Dr. Byron E. Shafer preaching

Lent—March 2004

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<i>1</i> 2:30 pm Worship Committee 6:00 pm Scout Meeting Every Mon/Tues	<i>2</i> 6:00 pm Men's Support Group (PLWA/ HIV) Every Tuesday	<i>3</i> 6:30 pm Lenten Vesper Service 7:15 pm Study Series: Listening for God	<i>4</i> 6:00 pm Senior Meal Pro- gram 7:00 Movie Series Every Thursday	<i>5</i> 10:30 am Mothers' Bible Study Every Friday	<i>6</i> 1:30 pm Opera Rehearsal Every Saturday
					FAMILY RETREAT	
<i>7</i> 9:45 am Adult Class: The Gospel of John Every Sunday 12:45 pm Board of Deacons Meeting	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i> 6:30 pm Session Meeting	<i>10</i> 6:30 pm Lenten Vesper Service 7:15 pm Study Series: Listening for God	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i> 6:30 pm Rutgers volunteers staff the shelter Every Friday	<i>13</i>
<i>14</i> 12:45 pm Peace & Social Justice Network	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i> 6:30 pm Lenten Vespers and Study Series	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>21</i>	<i>22</i> 6:30 pm Inquirers Class	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i> 6:30 pm Lenten Vespers and Study Series	<i>25</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i> 11:00 am Danny LaPibus "Hot Peas 'n Butter" Concert
<i>28</i>	<i>29</i> 6:30 pm Inquirers Class	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i>	Men's Overnight Shelter Program: 6:30 pm, seven days a week		

Sunday Worship Schedule

Worship Service at 11:00 am — Coffee Hour at 12:15 pm

Sunday School for Adults at 9:45 am — Infant and Child Care from 9:30 am — Sunday School (ages 3-10) at 11:15 am

Adult Choir Rehearsals at 10:00 am and 12:30 pm—Children's Choir Rehearsal at 10:15 am

- March 7—Second Sunday in Lent; Women's History Month begins; The Reverend Dr. Byron E. Shafer preaching
- March 14—Gifts of Women Sunday; Third Sunday in Lent; Holy Communion; Elder Cheryl Pyrch preaching
 - March 21—Fourth Sunday in Lent; The Reverend Dr. Byron E. Shafer preaching
 - March 28—Fifth Sunday in Lent; The Reverend Dr. Byron E. Shafer preaching

Considering Church Membership?

March 22 and 29, 2004

An **Inquirers Class** for people who wish to discuss issues of faith and religion or to learn more about Rutgers Church will be held from 6:30 to 8:00 pm on Monday evenings, March 22 and 29. New members will be received at the Easter Vigil service on Saturday, April 10.

If you are looking for a spiritual home in New York City, we invite you to join us for

these sessions, and to share your own insights.

For more information, you may contact Jennifer Hanson, the Pastor's Executive Assistant (jhanson@rutgerschurch.com), or Susan Scherer, chairperson of the Membership Committee. Or, simply come to the third floor of the Church House on these Monday evenings in March!

Our Lenten Vesper services will take place at 6:30 pm on Wednesday evenings in March. Please join us for quiet worship with a meditation from our pastoral staff.

Regularly Scheduled Events

An **HIV+/PLWA spiritual support group for men** meets every **Tuesday evening** from **6:00—7:30 pm**. The group is led by **Douglas Rowan**, a professional counselor and facilitator. Please mention this support group to anyone in need that you know.

Rutgers Church provides a **senior citizens meal program** every **Thursday evening** at **6:00 pm** from September through June. A movie is shown after the meal most Thursdays except those between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. Contact the church office if you are interested in helping to prepare or serve!

Rutgers Church provides a **shelter for homeless men** in our gymnasium **seven nights a week** throughout the year, in cooperation Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church and Christ & St. Stephen Episcopal Church. **Volunteers from our own church staff the shelter on Fridays.** The program needs **YOUR** help to make a difference.

A **Mothers' Bible Study** meets every **Friday morning** at **10:30 am** in the Daniel Russell Room. Everyone is welcome! The group is organized by Holly Nedelka, and leadership is shared. Child care is provided on the fourth floor.

Preview: An Anthology of Opera from 1826-1956 May 2, 2004

This year's spring concert to benefit the Rutgers homeless shelter will feature a selection of exciting scenes from operas spanning more than a century.

The centerpiece will be scenes from the rarely performed *Oberon* by Karl Maria von Weber, written in 1826 for Covent Garden. Based on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, this work is noted

for several lovely clarinet concertinas.

We are also looking forward to scenes in Italian from Verdi's *Rigoletto*; scenes in French from Gounod's *Faust*; and scenes from one of the last operas written by Kurt Weill, which was performed on NBC.

This fully staged production will take place on Sunday afternoon, May 2. Look for more information soon!

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Phylliss Hill**
- 6 Doris Bryant**
- 12 Mary Birchard**
- 14 Kim Hodges, Paul Reggio**
- 16 Ethel Knight**
- 17 Alice Hudson, De Yan Jervis-McCarthy**
- 18 Umberto Fadani**
- 19 Jack Vecsey**
- 21 Mary Burton**
- 23 Marlo Knapp-Fadani**
- 24 Valerie Kay**
- 25 Carole Banninger, Ulla Farmer**
- 27 Chris Jones**
- 28 Jeremiah Rosario**

Rutgers by E-mail

The pastor distributes a weekly e-mail message to Rutgers members and friends with highlights of what's coming on Sunday and other news of interest. If you would like to join this list, please send a request to:

jhanson@rutgerschurch.com.

What Happened at Session? and at the Annual Meeting?

Elder Christine Gorman, Clerk of Session

Here are some highlights from the regularly scheduled Session meeting of **December 9, 2003**. You can always get the full Session minutes by sending an email to Jennifer Hanson (jhanson@rutgerschurch.com).

The Session took the following actions:

1. Approved the church operating budget for 2004.
2. Approved the church holidays for 2004. The church house and office building will be closed on 1/1, 1/19, 2/16, 4/12, 5/31, 7/5, 9/6, 10/11, 11/25, 11/26, 12/27 and 12/31.
3. On the recommendation of the Personnel Committee, approved a 2.5% increase in compensation for church staff, including the Pastor. [The whole congregation approved the Pastor's compensation package at the January congregational meeting.]
4. Moved to have its joint meeting with the Board of Deacons on February 1, 2004 and moved its regularly scheduled April meeting to April 20, 2004.

Here are some highlights from the regularly scheduled Session meeting of **January 13, 2004**.

The Session took the following actions:

1. Approved a revised church operating budget for 2004. The only difference from the budget we approved at the December 2003 meeting is that the "Contributions and Bequests" line would be decreased from \$116,600 to \$108,500. This change would increase the projected deficit on the real estate budget to \$89,584 from \$81,484. This is a one-time deficit, related to the unexpected loss of rental income from the

Workbench bankruptcy.

2. On the recommendation of the Worship Committee, approved a motion to celebrate Holy Communion on the following days: 2/8, 2/25 (Ash Wednesday), 3/5 or 3/6 (Family Retreat), 3/14, 4/8 (Maundy Thursday), 4/11 (Easter Sunday, both 9 am and 11 am services), 5/9, 5/30 (Pentecost), 6/13, 7/11, 8/8, 9/12 (Homecoming), 10/3 (World Communion Sunday), 11/14, 12/12, and 1/9/05.

3. On the recommendation of the Worship Committee, approved the following special offerings in 2004 and to add the loose offering to the special offerings on those days: One Great Hour of Sharing (4/11); Pentecost Offering (5/30 and 6/6); Peacemaking Offering (10/3, World Communion Sunday); and the Christmas Joy Offering (12/19 and 12/24).

4. Authorized the use of the sanctuary to host a reading, free of charge to the audience, of "Love According to Luc" on January 30 at 7:00 pm. This is a musical, composed by Alicia Mathewson and endorsed by Presbyterian Welcome, about a lesbian who discovers her voice while at divinity school. A motion passed to authorize the Daniel Russell room for a wine reception after the presentation of the musical.

5. On the recommendation of the Benevolence and Christian Education Committees and the Peace and Social Justice Network, approved the commitment of \$10,000 for 2005 and \$10,000 in 2006 for Presbyterian Senior Services GrandParent Family Apartments in the Bronx. We have already approved a \$10,000 grant for 2004. The money is to be used to provide social services for the families living in the apartment com-

plex. (Government aid is already being provided for the financing of the construction of the apartment complex.)

Several other churches, including Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church and the House of Hope, have also committed money to provide social services. A little bit of history: Rutgers was the conduit for applying for the original planning grant that PSS used to determine the feasibility of this project

The next Session meeting, which will be a joint meeting with the Deacons, will be at 12:45 pm on February 1, 2004. There will be a regularly scheduled Session meeting at 6:30 pm on Tuesday evening, March 9, 2004.

Here are some highlights from the **207th Annual Congregational Meeting** of the Rutgers Presbyterian Church in New York City, which was held on **January 25, 2004**, and attended by 42 members. You can get the full minutes, as well as the Annual Report, by sending an email to Jennifer Hanson (jhanson@rutgerschurch.com).

After a great lunch provided by the Board of Deacons, the congregation took the following actions:

1. Read the church's 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."
2. Approved the ministerial compensation package (details in the Annual Report).
3. Received the reports of the Pastor, Treasurer, and the

(Continued on page 13)

To request your copy of the Rutgers Annual Report for 2003, send an e-mail to Jennifer Hanson: jhanson@rutgerschurch.com.

A Letter from Our Organ Builders

January 18, 2004

During the last week of January, four employees of Southfield Organ Builders will begin bringing the organ home. This is an exciting time for us, and we hope that it will be for all of you. Much has happened in our shop over the last five months, but a lot has also been going on in the church since August. If you have not had a chance to look in the door of the organ case, we would invite you to do so. What you will see is a totally renovated space where the right side of the organ will be (re-)installed. We are very pleased with the result: all of the people who have been involved with the work on the chamber are to be commended.

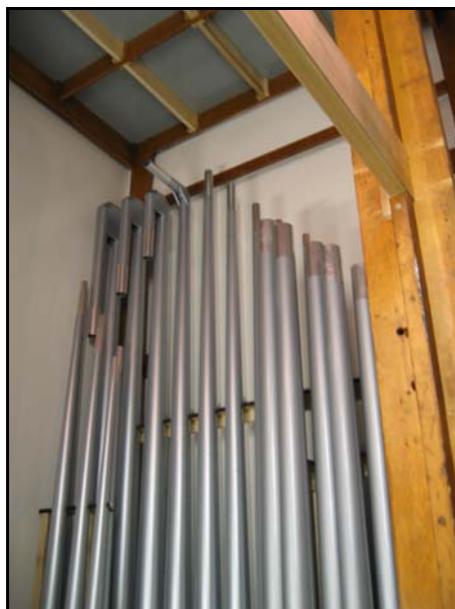
Now that the re-plastering, painting and electrical work is complete, we will begin by installing the new Choir chamber floor. If you think of the chamber as a three story house, this floor would be the top floor. We also will be modifying some of the building framework that will support the main windchests. One of the most visual aspects of this first trip will be the installation of the larger bass pipes in the Great and Choir Divisions. When these pipes are in, we will be ready to proceed with the installation of the main chests during our next trip in February.

We at Southfield look forward to the work that lies ahead over the next three months. Each phase of the installation brings us closer to that day when we will hear the first notes come to life. Please come visit us when we are in the church, and we will try to answer all of your questions about the organ.

David C. Melrose, President, Southfield Organ Builders, Inc.



January 26: returned pipes waiting to be installed

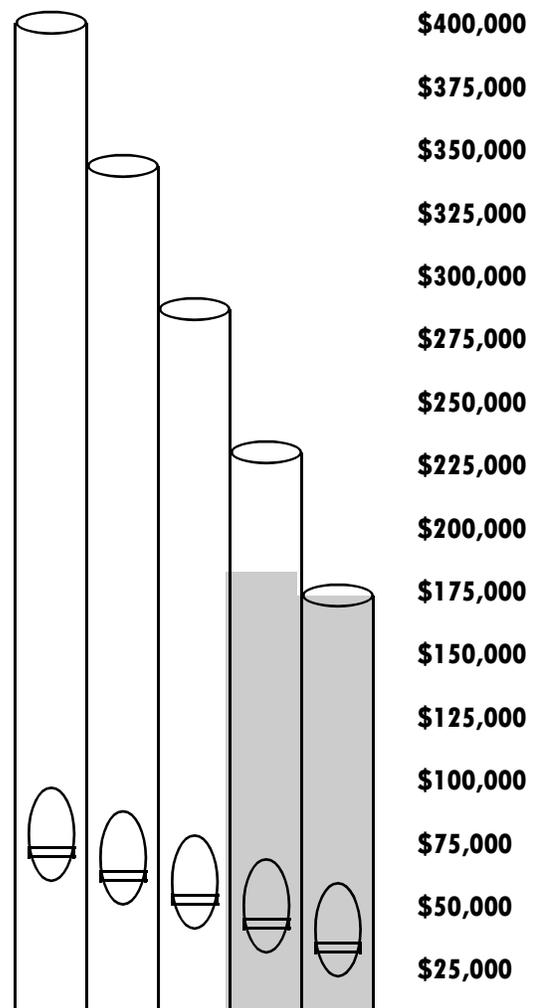


January 29: the installed bass pipes of the Great Division, with the newly built floor for the Choir Division above

Organ Capital Campaign Update

As of the end of January 2004, we have raised \$179,250 in pledges toward our \$400,000 goal for the capital campaign for the restoration of the Rutgers organ. We have received approximately \$68,000 in actual donations to date.

Thank you to everyone who has so generously contributed!



From the Pastor's Desk

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it—with a pace of life so quick that it's sick; with purposes in life so diverse that they stand at odds with one another; with such an exaggerated emphasis on brainpower and such a diminished emphasis on heart-power.

Now, it is “this strange disease of modern life” that the protagonist of Arnold's poem, the Scholar-Gipsy, has succeeded in fleeing. This Oxford don of an era earlier than Arnold's was a scholar who had left behind him the city and the university and had instead spent his years wandering o'er hill and field in a lifestyle that was quite unlike Arnold's or ours, but, at least in *my* opinion, amazingly like Jesus's—well, with these three intriguing and all-important differences.

First, Arnold's Scholar-Gipsy went forth into the countryside as a student, whereas Jesus went forth as a teacher.

Second, Arnold's Scholar-Gipsy heeded the poet's plea to stay distant from the likes of Arnold and his contemporaries, lest he, like them, become distracted and timid, lest he, like them, become a person of unclear aims and faded youth. (cf. lines 225, 226–230) But, in contrast, the wandering rabbi Jesus heeded no such pleading and maintained no such distance between himself and those of differing mind. On the contrary, Jesus sought out the lost and alienated, and was willing to risk close contact with anybody.

And third, Arnold's Scholar-Gipsy was wandering in quest of “the spark from heaven,” whereas Jesus was not. For in truth Jesus was already full of “the spark from heaven”—by which I mean he was already full of God's Holy Spirit.

So it came about, in the days of the wandering rabbi Jesus, that a “half-believer” named Nicodemus came to speak with him—to speak with the scholar-gipsy of *that* day. And Nicodemus came to this wandering rabbi, Jesus, dissatisfied with what he already knew (like Arnold) and searching for some “spark from heaven.”

Now, I call Nicodemus a “half-believer” because, according to John 3, he came to seek out Jesus only under cover of night, not amidst the full light of day. No, Nicodemus, it seems, was as yet unwilling to have others see him talking with Jesus.

The Gospel of John paints no initial character portrait of Nicodemus, beyond what we can glean from this conversation of his in chapter 3. But I've long imagined Nicodemus to have been much like the man that, in this poem, Arnold describes himself to have been. I've long imagined Nicodemus to have been not only, as I said, a melancholy, anxious young intellectual, but also a man “Who never deeply felt [because of a paralysis of heart], nor clearly willed [because of divided aims], Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds, Whose vague resolves never have been fulfilled; For whom each year we see Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new, Who hesitate (s) and falter(s) life away, And lose(s) tomorrow the ground won to-day.”

Well, whatever his character, this man Nicodemus has already heard a lot about Jesus, and he's already prepared to profess that this gipsy is a rabbi—or as he puts it, “a teacher who has come from God.” Yes, Nicodemus *is* a half-believer, or as John might put it, “a believer by night.” But

when Nicodemus comes and speaks directly with Jesus, he winds up understanding practically nothing he hears.

Jesus talks mysteriously about “being born *again*.” Or is it about “being born *from above*”? You see, Jesus's words can mean either or both of those things. But Nicodemus presumes him to have meant the former, “being born *again*.” Yet how can a person be born twice? Nicodemus, listening with the ears of a literalist, can make no sense of this concept, so he asks, “Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?” And he's thinking, “Of course not. How ludicrous!”

But the gipsy-rabbi goes on to say that he was intending to mean *both* that a person needs to be born “from above” *and* that a person needs to be born “again”—by which, ever since then, Christians have understood Jesus to have been saying that a person, having been born physically, must then be reborn spiritually, by receiving from above what Arnold has called “the spark from heaven.”

For God has loved the world to such an extent as to give God's only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life, a life begun through a rebirth from above—a rebirth sparked by the same Spirit that filled Jesus himself.

Well, from this initial encounter with Jesus, Nicodemus goes away confused and befuddled. Yet, here's the good news. By the end of John's gospel, in chapter 19 (vss. 38–42), this confused half-believer, this befuddled believer by night becomes a steadfast full-believer, a believer both by night *and* by day. You see, through the mysterious blowing of the same

(Continued on page 13)

**I am praying that
come the
culmination of our
Lent we, like
Nicodemus, will be
feeling our faith
deeply and willing
our deeds clearly.**

What Do You Think?

1. Why can you give profound advice to others that you never follow?
2. When you sit down for some quiet reflective time to yourself, why does someone come, and sit next to you and start talking to you, and it makes their day?
3. Have you ever made someone happy by listening to their life story for the 10th time, word for word?
4. How much do you really weigh? Whose scales do you believe: yours, the doctor's or a friend's?
5. Who are people trying to impress when they live above and beyond their means?
6. How many one-day, two-week, etc. diets do you start and stop every year?
7. Why do you and your boss disagree on what your knowledge, experience and skills are worth?
8. How many times have you offered to help someone, and when they accept your offer, you realize you really didn't mean it?
9. Why do the people for whom you do the most, abuse you the most?
10. When someone asks to borrow money and you know they won't pay you back, why do you give them a list of all your financial responsibilities instead of just saying no?

*Til next time, JMC

Annual Meeting

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Boards and Committees of the congregation.

There are now 128 active members of the congregation. 20% of our church operating budget is allocated to mission, and a further 1% of the budget is dedicated to fighting the world AIDS pandemic. Dr. Shafer will give a full report (complete with PowerPoint slides) of his sabbatical trip to Egypt and India on February 3, 2004 at 7 pm.

4. Elected the following officers and committee members:

For the Session:

Class of 2007: Charles Platt, Robert Shelton, Christine Gorman (re-election) and Suzanne Spears (re-election)

Class of 2006: Chris Jones and Harold Manners

Class of 2005: Richard Reece

For the Board of Deacons:

Class of 2007: Mary Birchard (re-election), Ruth Munson, Emilio Padilla, Alan Robinson and Edward Kennelly

For the Board of Trustees:

Class of 2007: David Taylor and W. Clifton Fisher (re-election)

Class of 2005: Valerie Kay

At-large Members of the Nominating Committee:

For 2005: Jeannie Santiago, Lisa Pinto, Lili Bohan and Mark Young

Alternates: Nora Lidell and Lynne Morris

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Pastor's Desk...

Spirit that was in Jesus—whence and whither it blows no person can anticipate—Nicodemus's confusion is overcome. This man who first came to Jesus under cover of night now at the end comes with Joseph of Arimathea in the full light of day, as a public disciple. He comes to claim bravely the crucified body of Jesus. He comes to prepare it graciously for burial, and to place it reverently in the tomb.

That, you see, was Nicodemus's journey toward discipleship—between chapters 3 and 19 of the Gospel of John. But what about our journey toward discipleship? Well, I am praying that our journey toward discipleship during this upcom-

ing season of Lent will very much resemble Nicodemus's.

Perhaps Ash Wednesday, February 25, will find us, like Nicodemus, as at best half-believers, believers by night, not knowing for certain whether we are truly disciples of Jesus or not.

But I am praying that come the end of Lent, come Good Friday, April 9, the same Spirit that was in Jesus and that in time came to Nicodemus will have healed us, too, of what Arnold calls the "strange disease of modern life, With its sick hurry, its divided aims, Its heads o'er-taxed, its palsied hearts." I am praying that come the culmination of our Lent we, like Nicodemus, will be feeling our faith deeply and willing our deeds

clearly, fulfilling our lives through a firm allegiance to Christ rather than faltering our lives away.

I am praying that come this Good Friday afternoon we will be found at the foot of the cross, at Jesus's side "by day" as well as "by night." I am praying that in the days of Lent ahead we will be opening ourselves to receiving God's gift of the spark from heaven, the gift of the transforming power of the same mysteriously blowing Spirit that was in Jesus and that in time came to Nicodemus. And I am praying that through the gift of that spark we, too, may become persons whose gracious deeds of love mark us for all to see as followers of Jesus.

Rutgers Presbyterian Church

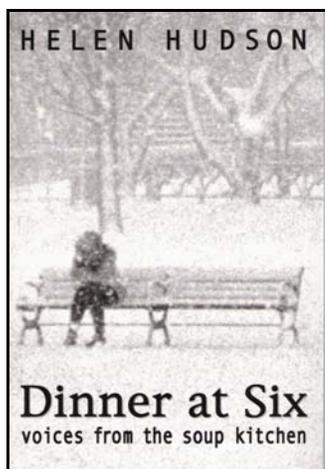
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Dinner at Six: Voices from the Soup Kitchen

A Book Review by Susan Poliacik



Dinner at Six: Voices from the Soup Kitchen by Helen Hudson (Wildfire Press, 2002); 224 pp.

My friend Connie, who donated the design work for this book, lent me her copy last fall. The book came into being when writer Helen Hudson, a volunteer in an evening soup kitchen, decided to tape the life stories of some of the guests, which is how hungry and homeless people are referred to here. She provides background information about this particular soup kitchen and an epilogue; the bulk of the book is the life stories of fifteen homeless people in their own words. The writing is clear and readable, the tone gentle and matter-of-fact.

The guests are a variety of ages, races, and education levels. They suffer

terribly from the lack of human dignity and respect along with being hungry and/or homeless. "Let them know we want to work," says Ray. "Tell them we're not bad people," Josie requests. One moving story is that of a young man who desires to become a judge in order to effect changes in our society.

It is clear throughout this book that none of the guests hate those who are comfortable or even very rich; yet prosperous people typically fear them.

Dinner at Six was written and is published entirely through donations, both for use as a fundraising tool and to increase awareness and understanding. It is

made available at no cost to churches and organizations with all the proceeds going to the shelter or kitchen run by each group.

This book is now available to our church community *gratis* or for further donation to our own programs. Our copies have already been "sponsored" at \$10.00 per book by members of our congregation.

Dinner at Six would make a good gift for an aware person and an even better gift for someone who has never thought much about homeless people. Please ask Patricia Pastás for a copy.