The conversation about the mission of Rutgers Presbyterian Church continues. On October 7 more than twenty people gathered around a table in Fellowship Hall to talk about my proposals for funding some needed capital repairs to our building. On October 9 the Session learned that the repair/replacement of windows will not begin until early in 2008, which meant 2007 benevolence allocations could remain unchanged. That development delayed the question of how to pay for capital improvement. It doesn't eliminate it.

The content of the above-mentioned conversation needs to focus on funding the total mission of Rutgers Presbyterian Church. Our total mission is multi-faceted: getting the good news of God's inclusive love out to our neighborhood and the world beyond; nurturing the spiritual life of our church family and neighbors; providing a wide range of high quality worship experiences; looking ourselves and the institutions that shape our lives (including government) to a high standard of honesty and openness; working for the well-being of all people everywhere; and being a living, vital church in our time and place requires a facility, a facility that is not an end in itself but a means of attaining our mission.

The windows project I cited in the September newsletter needs to focus on funding the building as a base for what we do. Yes, the church is the people. But the church in our time and place requires a facility, a facility that is not an end in itself but a means of attaining our goals. Rutgers Church’s building is relatively old, and old buildings need constant attention. The windows project I cited in the October Renewal is not the only aspect of our building needing major work. Looking out the window of my office almost every day, I see a badly deteriorating sanctuary brick wall that will require expensive repair—and soon. Air-conditioning the sanctuary was mentioned as a priority in many of the small group conversations we held over the summer. Equipping ourselves for streaming our video capacity are essential if we want to communicate with a new generation of spiritual seekers. The 73rd Street facade can use some major improvement.

Addressing these needs, as well as others, has to be part of the budget-making process at Rutgers. We will not always agree on how to allocate the resources we are fortunate (including government) to have as a congregation. But the way we carry on the conversation will be an important part of our witness to what we believe about God’s love. I look forward to being part of the conversation as your interim pastor. I am grateful for the opportunity.

Dave Prince

Getting to Know You: Carol & George Williamson

By Elder Jeremiah

Two of our newest members, Carol and George Williamson, celebrated their membership with us during the worship services on April 29 and July 1, as member and affiliate member.

Carol grew up in middle Tennessee and was raised in a Southern Baptist church. Her mother was the church organist and her father a deacon. George describes his father-in-law as being a lay theologian, and extremely well read. Carol’s family, including two older brothers and a older sister, was socially conscious and might even be considered liberal in some circles.

George grew up in Atlanta, Georgia. He was also raised Southern Baptist. His family was more typical of a Southern Baptist family. An only child, George threw himself into church life, and was very active in youth activities. At 3 years old, he knew he wanted to be a Baptist Pastor.

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I stand before you today both as a member of the Congregational Nominating Committee and as a Deacon. Last year the Congregational Nominating Committee decided it would be a good idea for representatives from each Board of Officers, that is, a deacon, an elder, and a trustee, to explain to the congregation what it is that we do. In this way, we hope that more of you will be interested in and willing to serve on one of our three boards.

I joined Rutgers as a member two years ago in the fall of 2005. Soon thereafter, I received a phone call from a member of the Congregational Nominating Committee asking me to serve as a deacon. Serve as a deacon? I thought, Why me? What do I know about being a deacon? What, exactly, does a deacon do? Rather than excuse myself for reasons of such ignorance and, like all busy New Yorkers, lack of time, I decided that there must have been a reason I was being called to serve, and so I said yes. Since then, I have learned a lot about being a deacon, which I would like to share with you today.

According to the Book of Order, which is the “rule book” for all Presbyterians, “The office of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of sympathy, witness, and service to the destitute, suffers, and members of the household of Jesus Christ.” G-404.01. It goes on to say that “the duty of deacons, first of all, [is] to minister to those who are sick, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress both within and beyond the community of faith. They shall assist and aid those in need as may be delegated to them...by assisting with the Lord’s Supper...” G-404.02a.

How does this play out at Rutgers? The deacons meet on the first Sunday of every month, where we review prayer concerns, send cards and letters to those who are sick, grieving the loss of a loved one, or marking a life change like taking a new job, moving, or joining the church. Deacons organize coffee hour, give out flowers for birthday days, host our Strove Tuesday Pancake Supper, and set up and serve communion. We also play a big part in the Helping Hands ministry, ready to send a get-well-soon card, pick up a bag of groceries, make phone calls and home visits, and add names to our prayers. We also take communion to those in the hospital or otherwise unable to come to church on Communion Sundays. We also try to have at least one member on our other church committees—hence my role on the nominating committee. And, you will often see us serving as ushers.

But, being a deacon is much more than a list of things to do. Every opportunity to connect as an opportunity to connect with someone else, to learn a new name, to learn more about one of my fellow members. In my experience, I have found that being a deacon has enriched my Rutgers experience greatly as I have come to know my fellow deacons and enjoy working with them in these and other capacities. Though I wish that we need not do all the work, I believe it is very special saying about a prayer for or sending a card to someone who is sick or grieving. In our modern world, we are always rushing, always busy, and thus often do not know how our neighbors are doing. Being a deacon has allowed me to stay connected and be an active part of this wonderful community.

Would all those who are currently serving, or who have served, as a deacon please stand up? If you would like to know more about being a deacon, speak to one of us at the coffee hour. If you are interested in becoming a deacon (or an elder or a trustee), let me or a member of the Congregational Nominating Committee or pastoral staff know. It is my hope that when you receive a call to serve one of our three wonderful boards that you will, despite your uncertainties, say yes.

Stewardship Pledge 2008

On Sunday, November 18, the Stewardship Committee will be asking members and friends of Rutgers to make a pledge of time and talents for 2008. To help you think and pray about your pledge, look for the following:

The week of October 28, a letter from the Stewardship Committee with their thoughts on pledging in 2008 (and a pledge card)!

Moments for Mission on the following Sundays:

November 5: Membership – New members of Rutgers.

November 11: Mission, our buildings and property.

November 18: Mission beyond our doors: benevolences.

The week of November 11, a letter from the Reverend Dave Prince on stewardship.

On Stewardship Sunday, November 18, Cheryl Pyrch will preach and we will ask all members and friends to return in their pledge cards (although pledges will be gratefully accepted before or after that date). If you have any questions, or if you would like to talk about your stewardship commitment in any way, please don’t hesitate to talk to Bill Bailey or Bill Donnell of the Stewardship Committee, or pastors Dave Prince or Cheryl Pyrch.

Thank you for your prayerful consideration of your commitment to Rutgers in 2008.
November 2007

November 2007 at Rutgers Church, and Beyond

All Saints’ Day Gathering.
Sunday, November 1 at 6:30 p.m.

Come for a time of quiet Worship and prayer in memory of loved ones who have died on Thursday evening, November 1, at 6:30 p.m. in the Narthex. We’ll read scripture, share memories and set a “Memorial Table.” If you would like, please bring a photograph or other moments of someone you would like to remember. Led by Reverend Cheryl Pyrch.

Auditions for Opera Gala Benefit
Saturday, November 10 starting at 1 p.m.

Auditions for the upcoming-opera benefiting the Christopher Roberts Homeless Shelter will be held on Saturday, November 10 beginning at 1 p.m. in the Daniel Russell room. This operatic gala event will include scenes from MacBeth and Britten’s Credo. Please contact R. Wellington Jones, chair of the Special Events Committee at ius90drn@verizon.net to reserve an audition time slot. Photo resume appreciated.

Organ Recital by George Davey
Sunday, November 18 at 4 p.m., Sanctuary

George is still finalizing selections for his upcoming recital on our Southfield Organ and plans to include a wide range of music and performances by Bach, Boellman, Faulet, Guilmain, Ley, Messiah and Wever. Won’t you come and support us? George is still finalizing selections for his upcoming recital on our Southfield Organ and plans to include a wide range of music and performances by Bach, Boellman, Faulet, Guilmain, Ley, Messiah and Wever. Won’t you come and support us?

Interfaith Thanksgiving Service
Wednesday, November 21 at 7 p.m., St. Paul & St. Andrew

Thanksgiving at Euclid Hall
Thursday, November 22 from 12:00 - 3:00 p.m.

For the seventeenth year in a row, friends and members of Rutgers Church will provide Thanksgiving dinner for residents of Euclid Hall, an affordable, supportive housing residence for senior citizens and for individuals coming out of the New York City shelter system. Located at 2345 Broadway and 86th Street, it is operated by the West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing.

Please contact Sue Spears at x9@panix.com or Jeremiah at the church office at (212) 877-8227 or jeremiah@rutgerschurch.com to volunteer your time or food offerings, which can be delivered in advance.

Presbyterian Welcome “Faithful Servant Award”
Tuesday, November 27 at 6:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Please come to support the work of Presbyterian Welcome and honor the 2007 Faithful Servant Award recipients — Ms. Takako Suzuki Terino and The Honorable Christine Quinn. These Faithful Servants are being recognized for their dedication and work on behalf of LGBT communities in the Church and in the wider world. Takako Terino is a member of the New York Presbyterian Church who was baptized in Japan at age 15 and is continuing her Christian journey at Union Theological Seminary. She’s been a long-serving and creative leader of Presbyterian Welcome. Couchowan and Speaker Christine Quinn, our Faithful Public Servant, has been a strong leader and advocate in the GLBT community, and has also been a pioneer for equal rights, comprehensive health care, improved schools, tenant’s rights and affordable housing in the City of New York. This annual fundraiser is always a festive and moving experience, and we are glad to host it this year at Rutgers (Ru... talent is decorating the Hall!) Wine and hors d’oeuvres will be served. RSVP at info@presbyterianwelcome.org or call (917) 441-8638.

Contribute to the “Advent Meditation Booklet”

Contribute to the Rutgers’ own Advent Meditation Booklet. Choose an anecdote, your favorite poem, verse or hymn. Explain the significance and meaning of your entry choice in your life. Explain how your choice shows God’s presence. Tell us why this is important to you!

All entries are gathered into a meditation booklet to be sent to the congregation for use during this Advent season. Entries by families, individuals and youth are all welcome. Please limit your entry to 250 words (maximum length). Entries longer than that will be edited for space. Reflections may be sent to the church office via e-mail at jeremiah@rutgerschurch.com, U.S. Post Office or dropped off in the Coffee hour in the basket marked 2007 Advent Meditations starting next Sunday. All entries must be received by Monday, November 19. Please contact Jacquie Van Vliet, seminary intern, at the church office with any questions.

November 2007: A Month of Festival and Celebration

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Thursday, November 22 from 12:00 - 3:00 p.m.

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