A Homecoming Thank You
from R. Wellington Jones

The annual Homecoming luncheon was held on Sunday, September 16 following morning worship service. Following a grace by the Reverend Prince, we enjoyed Korean noodles and sushi from Silvine & Cham, sweet potato caserole from Ethel Knight, fruit salad from Anne Leader, cornbread muffins from Lili Bohan, collard greens, and Louisiana shrimp from Wellington Jones, bread and butter from Richard Reece and Dr. Vera Roberts, chocolate brownies and cheese noodle caserole from the Reverend Pych, unpooled grapes from Roger Franklin, mixed nuts from Bruce Bengquist, and cookies from the Reverend Prince, and a delicious tiramisu from Megan Krasney.

The videotape of the event will be re-broadcast during November on Norr’istro, MNN Cable Channels 85 and 57, and on the internet, for which the Congregation will receive a notice in the bulletin.

The next event sponsored by the Special Events Committee will be the children’s Christmas party, which will be held on Sunday, December 9, 2007 at 12:45 p.m.

What Do You Think?

1. When you’re engrossed in a TV program or reading, why do non-interested people start a conversation? Should you acknowledge them?
2. Life is a constant adjustment?
3. Music can put rhythm and joy in your life?
4. To ask for help is a character asset?
5. Why let someone dictate who and what you should be?
6. Are you keeping yourself from being happy?
7. Is it easier to except death when a person has a terminal illness or when it’s sudden?
8. Should you comment on weight loss or weight gain if you don’t know the reason for the event?
9. How can you make a career change when you support so many people?
10. What can you do to help someone every day that’s not financial or time consuming?

*til next time*
Jacquelyn M. Carpenter

From the Interim Pastor
The Reverend David D. Prince

Over the summer the Board of Trustees and the Session took a good look at our building and discovered that all of our many windows (not stained glass, the clear glass ones in our offices and classrooms) are in serious need of repair—some needing ordinary maintenance but many needing urgent major work related to structural deterioration. On recommendation from the trustees, the session voted to proceed with correcting the problem, which is estimated to cost $325,000. (We have received one bid in the neighborhood of that estimate, and two other companies will be submitting bids soon.) The work will be done this fall, with full payment due on completion.

When Bruce Bengquist, our executive director of properties, offered a scenario for funding the project, he suggested going into our endowment for the required immediate payment, with a three-year payback based on future projected budget surpluses. Warwick Huldfield, our church treasurer, strongly advised that we do not do that but look at other possibilities. Warwick, Bob Shelton (session member and an architect with long involvement in Rutgers building matters), and I have talked, and we feel it would be prudent to reduce the second-half 2007 benevolence allocation significantly.

At the October 9 session meeting, I will recommend, as one possibility, that the session ask the benevolence committee at its October 16 meeting to approve 20% of the $140,422 previously earmarked for allocation this fall. (Equal allocations are usually made in the spring and fall of each year.) That would mean $10,485 for international projects instead of $32,422, $7,600 for national projects instead of $38,000, and $10,000 for local projects instead of $50,000. The benevolence committee disbursed $140,422 in the spring, $52,422 to international causes, including $14,422 to AIDS projects, $38,000 for national causes, and $50,000 for local causes). That is in addition to our on-going benevolence support of Presbyterian Welcome, Rutgers Senior Services, WSFSSH (West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing, Inc.), denominational assessment, and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) general mission.

If the session approves the proposed reduction in discretionary benevolence spending, it would provide $112,337 in 2007 toward the cost of bringing our windows up to standard. I will further recommend that we consider a figure of either 20% or 15% as the percentage of budget we allocate for benevolences in 2008 instead of the projected 28%, releasing additional money for the windows and other capital needs.

While I strongly support benevolent causes as part of our mission, I believe we need to face the reality that “mission” is what we do right here in NYC at our facility as well as what other organizations do to help people in need. A case can be made that we need to be more responsible for the way we maintain our building as an instrument of mission. Keeping our building in good condition is not doing something “for ourselves,” it is making sure our physical property is attractive and welcoming to people in need of the good news we are called to share. Not much has been budgeted for capital improvements recently, while the benevolence percentage has been going up steadily.

I’m sure the session’s discussion of my recommendations will be revealing. Out of that discussion may come modifications of what I am proposing or other totally different scenarios for balancing the cost of needed capital improvements with generous support of benevolences. I suspect there is strong support for taking care of our building at a base for local mission and as the source of the money that funds most of what we do.

Setting our benevolence allocation at 15 or 20 percent of budget in 2008 while we take care of capital improvements may strengthen Rutgers Church as a vital congregation in mission to the Upper West Side of New York City and beyond. When the General Assembly considers making loans to congregations, its benchmark for what a church ought to be designating for outside benevolence is 10 percent—the Biblical tithe. Rutgers’ benevolence giving is far above that.

We can have a conversation about these matters after our worship service this coming Sunday, October 7, on the fifth floor of our building. I look forward to it.

Dave Prince
OCTOBER 2007

“THURSDAY NIGHTERS” Meal Program

The guests who come to Rutgers Thursday Nighters meal program are hungry, lonely and above all poor. For those few readers who are not familiar with this program, we serve a hot, well balanced, nutritious meal to about 50 people every Thursday evening (except during July and August). After the meal, Dr. Roger Franklin introduces and shows a movie. Thus we try to create an evening of good food, with time for companionship, conversation and entertainment. Volunteers are always needed to help prepare, serve and clean up. It takes a maximum of 2 hours and if you are able to come only occasionally, that is fine too. Please contact Ulla Farmer at (212) 724-3866, e-mail freudhali@verizon.net or Kim Hodges, Board of Deacons, (212) 580-4276 if you are interested in helping.

Getting to Know You: Eric Woodall

by Dr. Vera Roberts and Jeremiah

This past spring we welcomed Eric Woodall as a new member of Rutgers Presbyterian Church. A graduate of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he honed his acting talents, Eric settled down in New York after living for some time in Los Angeles and being on the road with national tours. He has lived in New York since 1991, where he is currently employed as a casting director. About four years ago Eric started searching for a church home where he would feel comfortable. During his search he came across one of our signs for Hymnsing Sunday. He longed to hear the songs he sang as a youth in the Methodist church in his hometown of Benson, North Carolina. The songs brought back many memories. From his first service, Eric Woodall’s voice, challenging at times, and practical. “I love hearing scripture and how it applies in 2007.”

“ODE TO POVERTY”

A poem by the Finnish author, Paavo Haavikko

The Bible should be translated into the language of the poor
Poverty should be preached to the poor
Poverty is like a shadow—you can’t get rid of it
Poverty is its own embracing social identity
The Poor can’t be counted—they are without number
Each person’s poverty is as huge as the universe
The poor turn in vain to darkness—it is deep
The Poor are neither young nor old—they are only poor

Human dignity and respect is the dream of the poor since just being human is of no consequence
The Poor may neither run nor walk—they are poor
Poverty is a temple and a prayer
Poverty is a constant prayer which neither demands nor is grateful
The Poor can’t pay for anything—nothing is free

“IN THE GARDEN”

Rutgers Vacation Bible School August 20-24, 2007

This summer over 20 children from the church and neighborhood joined us to hear the story of Eve and Adam, God and the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Our reading of scripture was interrupted each morning by characters from the distant past flying out of a mysterious time warp. Adam (who bore a marked resemblance to David Prince) came in the first day, joined later by Eve (who reminded us of Holly Neddle). At VB, as in the Garden of Eden, animals could talk, so the sneaky snake came in and told Eve side of the story (sounding somewhat like Nora Lidell). Several animals flew in to give us an important message: Just because you named us doesn’t mean you own us! Start taking care of the earth so we can live here too! Vacation Bible School ran smoother than ever because of the work of four Junior Interns: De’Yan Jervis McCarthy, Jacob MacKay, Khalil Hamer, and Nicholas Diaz. They bought and organized the snack, came out of the time warp (as the Animals) and Baxtered the children in the game of “Sheep-Sheep-Camel” among other responsibilities. Cliff Fisher graced us with piano accompaniment, and veteran teachers Angelika Rodriguez and Jeffrey Clendon led classes with Wanda Diaz, Holly and Nora. Thank you to all and save the date for next year’s VBS: August 18-22. For more information on VBS and to view more pictures, please check out our website at www.rutgerschurch.com/vacationbibleschool.html.

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World Communion/Peacemaking Offering
Sunday, October 7 at 11 a.m.

On World Communion Sunday, October 7, we remember and celebrate our connection to Christians around the world, and we collect the special Peacemaking Offering. Seventy-five percent of the offering goes to peacemaking projects of the PC(USA) throughout the nation and around the world. Twenty-five percent is earmarked for a local project of the congregation’s choosing, and this year the Session has recommended the organization Justice for Our Neighbors as the recipient. Justice for Our Neighbors (http://gbgm-umc.org/Umcor/refugees/justiceforourneighbors.cfm) is a network of nation-wide, volunteer based clinics that offer free legal services and hospitality to immigrants in our congregations and communities.

JFON is a project of the United Methodist Church in collaboration with ecumenical partners, including La Promessa Presbyterian Mission in Flushing, Queens. Rutgers Benevolence Committee has long supported the La Promessa project, and the Session wishes to lift up this important ministry on World Communion Sunday. When wars around the globe displace millions of people, hospitality and justice for immigrants is an important aspect of peacemaking. The Moment for Mission that day will be given by T.J. Mills, Esq., staff attorney for the La Promessa Clinic. Please mark the date and give generously!

How to Talk with Your Children About Sex
Tuesday, October 16 at 7 p.m., 5th Floor Fellowship Hall

Are you tongue-tied when your children ask questions? Do you have values and concerns you’d like to share but don’t know where to begin? Would you like more information about child sexual development and the issues that concern kids at different ages? Do you have questions about Christian teachings regarding sexuality, and wonder how to bring God into the discussion? Come to a forum sponsored by Planned Parenthood of New York City, Presbyterian Welcome and Rutgers Church on October 16, 7:00 p.m. in the 5th Floor Fellowship Hall. Educators from Planned Parenthood will be joined by the Reverend Cheryl Pyrch. We’ll explore ways to talk with young people of all ages, from toddlers to young adults, and suggest resources for parents and children. All are welcome, so please invite friends and neighbors!

October 2007 at Rutgers Church, and Beyond

Invite-a-Friend Sunday
Sunday, October 21 at 11 a.m.

Although every Sunday is invite-a-friend Sunday, every October we mark a special day to offer lunch and hospitality to invited friends as well as visitors and members. This is a good day to invite the friend, neighbor or relative who has expressed curiosity about church but has needed an excuse to come! Please contact Susan Scherer of the membership committee at scherzeii@outlook.com to see how you can help.

Celebrating Family Worship
Tuesday, October 23 at 6:30 p.m.

Second Presbyterian Church, 3 West 95th Street & CPW

You are invited to celebrate worship service and Holy Communion at Second Presbyterian Church, lead by Derrick McQueen, Master of Divinity student at Union Theological Seminary and talented musicians, sponsored by Presbyterian Welcome. Old-fashioned coffee house and fellowship to follow service. All are welcome! For more information, please go to www.presbyterianwelcome.org

Honorng Scott Morton
Friday, October 26

The Reverend Dr. W. Scott Morton will be honored with the first annual K.Y. Chynn Book Award by the City University of New York’s Asian-American/Asian Research Institute for his book “China, Its History and Culture.”

We are glad to hear that the City University of New York is affirming what we here at Rutgers have known for so many years. We have benefited greatly from Reverend Dr. Morton’s sermons, seminars and discussions and gained insight from his extensive mission trips to China. Congratulations!

“Ghosts of Abu Ghraib”
Wednesday, October 24, 6:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall

This Emmy-award-winning film as been called by the Los Angeles Times: “a controlled, candid, and remarkably thorough look at all sides of what happened in that infamous Iraqi prison and why.” We will watch this powerful and disturbing film together, have a facilitated discussion and learn about some constructive steps we may take in response.

Co-sponsored with First Presbyterian Church of New York, representatives from the National Religious Campaign Against Torture will also be present to share information. This film is for mature audiences only! For more information contact Cheryl Pyrch at (212) 877-8227, x205!