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.”

From the Interim Pastor
The Reverend David D. Prince

The “dog days” have come early this summer with our brief but intense heat wave early in June. I hope you are staying cool wherever you are.

On June 19 I fly to San Jose, California, where the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will meet from June 21 to 28. Among the issues the assembly will deal with is yet another attempt to remove from our Book of Order the restrictive paragraph known as G-6.0601b. That paragraph limits eligibility for church office (minister, elder, or deacon) to people living “either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or charity in singleness.” Four years ago the General Assembly again took the first step in eliminating the paragraph from the Book of Order, but a majority of the presbyteries failed to approve the elimination of the paragraph, which is necessary for a change in the Book of Order. As we know, change comes slowly, and many people have left the Presbyterian Church rather than wait until the restriction on ordination has been removed.

Many churches, Rutgers among them, and some presbyteries, New York City among them, have ignored the restriction, finding it contrary to the core message of the Christian Gospel which proclaims God’s welcoming, inclusive love. I invite our members and friends to pray for the General Assembly as it meets and to keep praying for all who continue to experience the negative judgment conveyed in G-6.0601b.

As we at Rutgers continue to live out the inclusiveness clearly articulated in other parts of our Book of Order. G-3.0401 “The Church is called to a new openness to its own membership, by affirming itself as a community of diversity, becoming in fact as well as in faith a community of women and men of all ages, races, and conditions, and by providing for its inclusiveness as a visible sign of the new humanity…” G-4.0403 “The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall give full expression to the rich diversity within its membership and shall provide means which will assure a greater inclusiveness leading to whole-ness in its emerging life. Persons of all racial ethnic groups, different ages, both sexes, vari-ous disabilities, diverse geographical areas, different theological positions consistent with the Reformed tradition, as well as different marital conditions (married, single, widowed, or divorced) shall be guaranteed full participa-tion and access to representation in the deci-sion making of the church.” G-5.0103 “The congregation shall welcome all persons who respond in trust and obedience to God’s grace in Jesus Christ and desire to become part of the membership and ministry of his Church. No persons shall be denied mem-bership because of race, ethnic origin, worldly condition, profession of faith.” There are avenues of resistance. The assembly has approved a number of book of order paragraphs that are contrary to the larger context of the book. The assembly cannot overrule the presbyteries and the assembly is required to listen to the presbyteries’ concerns. It is possible that the assembly will remove G-6.0601b and other book of order paragraphs that are contrary to the larger context of the book.

I will be preaching at Rutgers on June 29, Gay Pride Sunday, and the day after the General Assembly adjourns. Whatever action the assembly takes, we will praise God and give thanks that God’s love is greater and more inclusive than we could possibly imagine. We will continue to be grateful for the privilege of serving as your interim pastor.

Dave Prince

Music From Rutgers
By Roger Franklin, Ph. D.

On Sunday, May 4th, a perfect spring afternoon, Music from Rutgers proudly presented A Musical Anthology, the annual benefit concert for the Christopher Roberts Homeless Shelter here at Rutgers Presbyterian Church, staged by Rev. Rutgers’ own producer/director/pianist R. Wellington Jones.

This concert was dedicated to Ms. Jerona Babb, President of the Local chapter of the N.A.N.M., Inc.

Rutgers’ Interim Pastor, the Reverend David D. Prince, opened this season’s Gala Benefit Concert with a warm welcome to a sold out audience.

The program got under way with two short keyboard selections from Schumann’s Fantasiestücke, Op. 12, played without interruption by Mr. Jones, with depth, sensitivity and understanding narrated by the Reverend Prince.

What Do You Think?
1. Why apologize for obvious things that are out of your control?
2. Do you know when to stop working on a project and just let it go?
3. When you greet someone eye to eye and they just stare at you, what’s your next move?
4. Everyone doesn’t want to hear your continuous detailed commentary on your children.
5. Should there be a time limit on strangers staring at you?
6. Is it luck, if a computer system crashes just when you have to take a test you’re not prepared for?
7. How many times do you have to apologize for a mistake?
8. When is being flexible not an asset?
9. How many times do you endure hearing the same incident repeated?
10. What’s the need for computerized spelling/grammar check when they make a lot of mistakes?

Til next time,
Jacquelyn M. Carpenter

Hour Children
By Elder Charles Platt

This is one of the groups your Benevolence Committee contributes to. We prefer to aid groups that help people directly.

HOUR CHILDREN is a family service provider established in 1995 by a group of Sisters of Saint Joseph to support incarcerated mothers and their children. Both the mother and the child are part of the program and they aim to reunite them. The group runs 4 homes. When these women leave prison, they face a mountain of challenges beyond their prison record. They generally have few job skills, little education and few if, if any, financial resources. In addition, many of these women are still recovering from childhood physical and sexual abuse. HOUR CHILDREN starts by providing housing and child care. During their time there the women complete their education, obtain marketable skills, and learn home and financial management skills. When the women are ready, the organization helps them with finding jobs and affordable housing.

There are more than 6,000 children in NY State whose mothers are in prison. Many are sent to live with relatives or foster families who often live hours from where their mothers are held. The children’s insecurities are made worse by the fact that their mothers often have little or no access to phones. The absence of their mother leaves them vulnerable, particularly the older children who face increased risk of involvement with crime, sub stance abuse, truancy, and other anti-social behaviors. Without proper care and attention, they too become victims of the prison system.

HOUR CHILDREN provides the loving, compassionate care and guidance to help women and their children transition back into society and reunite as a family.

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The program got under way with two short keyboard selections from Schumann’s Fantasiestücke, Op. 12, played without interruption by Mr. Jones, with depth, sensitivity and understanding narrated by the Reverend Prince.
Opening this second selection was Anna Marie Mackey, in informal attire. Using her powerful dramatic soprano voice, Ms. Mackey launched into her aria “Vieni! T’affretta!” from Verdi’s Macbeth with telling effect. Erin Jorgenson as Macbeth, added his well-focused Verdi baritone to the plot. Chillingly, the couple projected their ambition as instruments of evil, in their vengeance dye.

We now turn to Antonín Dvořák’s opera Radaula sung ravishingly by Barbara Bliss in the original Czech. Alone, she confides to the moon the secret of her longing . . . one of the most touching love arias in opera. Ms. Bliss’ vocal work with this love aria in a pale blue gown overlaid with sparkling rhinestones.

Edward Bruce Stevenson was in splendid vocal form, singing with power and dramatic intensity, the recitative and aria “O tu che in Seno Agli Angeli” from Giordano’s Fedora in splendid vocal form, using her lovely soprano voice with intelligence and musicality.

Edward Bruce Stevenson closed the first part of the concert with the aria “Amor ti Vieta” from Giordano’s Fedora singing this short aria with warmth and great tonal beauty. Following the intermission and a brief introduction of guest narrator Mr. Xiomora Nora, Principal, P.S. 132, District 6, were excerpts from Georges Bizet’s Carmen in French. Conceptually, Mr. Jones’ edited version focused on the drama rather than the pomp and circumstance usually seen.

Julie DeVere (Carmen), a graduate of the University of Michigan/Ann Arbor, was in splendid vocal form in the title role, using her rich mezzo-soprano with dramatic intensity. When we think of Carmen, we expect a fiery, passionate gypsy girl, with a dash of fatalism that kills with death. From the rhythms of the Habanera to her final tragic confrontation outside of the bull ring, Ms. DeVere was all that and more! Reading her bio notes in the program, I was amazed that this was her very first entry in the role of Carmen!

Jeanine DeBique (Micaela) presently a graduate student at Manhattan School of Music, scored impressively as the shy country girl Micaela, displaying her lovely lyric tenor voice, particularly in his duet with the naive peasant girl Micaela and later in the famous “Flower Song.”

After a moment of silence, the entire audience jumped to its feet breaking the sound barrier with cheering and hearty applause. Even the balcony was full.

From my seat in the last row on the aisle (right side) in the sanctuary—believe it or not—the sound was perfect—and without microphones!

Nicolas Fox, music director and coach, played with understanding and sensitivity throughout the entire performance. He will be one of our major conductors in the future. Airing of the concert will be seen in the fall on cable channels 57 and 85.

What do YOU like to do in the Gym? We asked that question to a group of children, teens and adults who met after church on Sunday, April 27th, to talk about ways to share the gym (even more) safely and harmoniously. The children had many answers to that question. Some liked playing on the mats or hanging out and watching. Most liked ball games, including basketball, “football,” and handball, both organized and disorganized. The adults had one preferred activity—drinking coffee, talking with other adults, and leaning against the railing watching their kids (while occasionally catching wayward balls).

Diane Nicole, of the Bad Cat Spirit program, talked about the many programs we have during the week—from toddler movement to soccer—and Aileen Finn showed us pictures from the “Jumpin’ and Jivin’” program that she attends (see below). Doremont & Doremont told us about the shelter program. Diermon and Michael Gillilfan also took us on a tour of the newly plastered and painted storage closet on the gym floor.

Together we came up with new ideas and rules for keeping the after-school time safe and taking care of equipment. Here is our list! (We will post an abbreviated version in the gym).

1. NO food or drink on the gym floor.
2. NO shoes on the mats.
3. Keep all mats and balls on the gym floor, and put equipment back in closet neatly. Don’t leave everything for the last person to put away.
4. Keep off railings.
5. Big children need to be careful when playing with little children, and should include them in games. But sometimes little kids need to let big kids play by themselves.
6. When some kids want to play with mats and some with balls, we’ll divide the gym into a “ball section” and a “mat section.”
7. Remember common sense and courtesy.
8. Children should listen to all adults—not just their parents. Adults should watch out for all kids—not just their children.
9. We are a church!
June 2008 at Rutgers Church, and Beyond

“No More Torture: Defending Against Global Risk”
Sunday, June 22, 2 p.m., Fellowship Hall
Come to a lecture featuring Brigadier General Stephen Xenakis. General Xenakis recently retired from a 28 year career in the Army, and is one of many high ranking military officers opposed to the use of torture. It promises to be a stimulating and enlightening discussion. The program is being co-sponsored by Second Presbyterian.

Gay Pride Parade
Sunday, June 29, 1 p.m., assembling at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church (Fifth Avenue & 55th Street)
We will be celebrating and marching in the annual Heritage of Pride March down Fifth Avenue in New York. This year we have a Float! Co-sponsored by Presbyterian Welcome and the United Methodist Church, this year’s float has been christened “Fanning for Christ”. Please plan to arrive by 1 p.m. at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. Volunteers are also needed at the Welcome table at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church and along the parade route at the Evelyn Davidson Water Table at First Presbyterian Church (Fifth Avenue & 12th Street). Please contact Cheryl at the church office or Meg Harper at the Presbyterian Welcome office (917) 441-8638 if you intend to participate.

People on the Move — Vacation Bible School 2008
August 18-22, 9 a.m. to noon
Children ages 4-11 are invited to our Vacation Bible School this year where we will be putting on a dramatic production of the Exodus story. We have an experienced staff of teachers and interns of all ages. Please spread the word among family and friends. Suggested donation is $25 for the week to cover materials. If you would like to help by either working directly with kids or helping to organize, please talk to Cheryl at the church office at x265.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR NEW ORLEANS PROJECT
Involvement in post-Katrina New Orleans through Churches Supporting Churches has attracted considerable interest at Rutgers. The Peace and Social Justice Network and the Session recommend our joining. But we need a dozen of our members to make the least level of commitment.

In New Orleans, eighty percent of the businesses and fifty percent of the schools in the mostly black Lower Ninth and Gentilly wards remained closed; two thirds of their people live as refugees out of state, nearly a third of them unemployed. Only twenty percent of the federal money earmarked for New Orleans recovery and for levee repair has been spent. Nearly all the money will assist homeowners, very little for renters—rental costs being fifty percent higher than before the storm. Tens of thousands still live in trailers, now judged to have unsafe levels of formaldehyde toxicity. Levee repairs are projected to be finished only by 2011, and will be only one tenth of the level of storm protection as Amsterdam, Holland. For half the cost of the war in Iraq, a Gulf Coast Civic Works program could put 100,000 people to work earning $15 per hour.

Churches Supporting Churches was formed in the aftermath of Katrina by leaders of the old Civil Rights Movement. They recognized that possibly the most devastating losses to these wards was the loss of churches. Much more than the rest of the city, these were church people. Churches were the primary elements of civil society in these wards. Churches are the primary home contacts for the people living in the New Orleans diaspora, are the only institutions capable of keeping people together, ministering to their trauma, burying their dead, and particularly, organizing them for political impact on a recovery that is lopsided in favor of the affluent.

Churches Supporting Churches asks churches like ours from around the country to involve themselves with one of the thirty six Lower Ninth and Gentilly black churches. Most lost their buildings. Two thirds of their members now live away—as do some of their pastors. Their pastors have lost their livelihoods, their homes, and their children’s schools.

Churches Supporting Churches brings the pastors home once a month to hold services. While there, they’re gathered for training in trauma work, community organizing, and political impact on the recovery. It employs churches ours to get involved, make a difference, be, from afar, a continuing and much-needed support.

Things you could do:
— help organize, recruit and seek support among our members;
— collect items requested by our partner church;
— collect books for the pastor, who’s lost an entire library;
— be a support person for someone in the church;
— go to New Orleans, send our youth there, visit the church, work on a house build with other Presbyterians, or support someone else’s visit;
— bring the pastor, possibly lay people from the church to New York;
— help raise money for all of the above.

In order to join CSC, we need a task force with work our Peace and Social Justice Network. We currently have four members. If you could join us, or assist our work, please speak to one of the pastors, or contact me at crego1@yahoo.com.

George Williamson