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 2009
Volume 26, Issue 2

From the Interim Pastor
The Reverend David D. Prince

We are in the season of Lent, the six-and-a-half week period between Ash Wednesday and Easter. In our fast-moving culture, we easily fall into the mode of asking, “Are we there yet?” Are we at the point of celebrating the Easter Good News that God’s love has the last word on everything, even death? Not yet. Week after week in our worship services we affirm our trust in the God of love, and we seek to live as people shaped and nourished by the power of that love made real for us by God’s Holy Spirit. But what we celebrate weekly finds a crucial focus in the Good Friday-Easter Sunday events.

There is value in going through the Lenten process of honest self-examination. For me that process means asking myself, “Am I listening to inner or outer voices that contradict or weaken the message that I am loved by God just as I am?” Do I take positive action to strengthen my confidence in God’s love and to let that love flow through me so that I make conscious decisions to love other people as well as myself?”

There are spiritual benefits in making the weeks-long Lenten journey, so that we arrive at Easter “by way of the Cross.” I invite you to read and re-read chapters 11 through 16 of Mark’s Gospel as we move toward Holy Week and Easter (April 5-12). It’s about an hour’s worth of reading, and it will add meaning and depth to our celebration of Love’s great Easter victory.

I continue to be grateful for the privilege of serving as your Interim Pastor.

Dave Prince

Pastoral Nominating Committee Update
By Elder Nora Lidell, chair

Greetings from your PNC! We hear you asking over and over again, “When will you be done?” I am here to assure you that we are hard at work on your behalf. We meet weekly and when we are not meeting, we are reading or listening to sermons. But I know you are getting anxious and wish we were just about done.

Why, you ask, does it take so long? It’s a good and fair question. The answer is because we are Presbyterians. Presbyterians like process and we do not believe in shortcuts. Everything we do gets documented and categorized. Not only do we need to find candidates, read reviews, and listen to sermons, we also need to keep statistics on the process. How many men, how many women, what racial/ethnic backgrounds, age of candidates, and so on, have we interviewed? All of this is time-consuming. We are at the point where we are getting ready to hit the road and make “church visits” to the candidates on our ever-shortening list. And please remember that one year or so of this process was spent on doing our Mission Review for Presbyterian Renewal.

I continue to be mindful that you are wishing it would go faster. The truth is that we can’t do any faster than the process allows. I can assure you that each member of the PNC is dedicated to getting Rutgers the very best pastor we can. Oh, there is one other factor that can’t be forgotten – the Holy Spirit. I can tell you for a fact that there is no hurrying it. It works in its own way and time and we can do nothing but follow, which we do quite willingly. Together, we will get the job done. Amen to that.

Dave Prince

One Stop Senior Services
By Elder Charles Platt

One Stop Senior Services is one of the recent additions to the list of organizations your Benevolence Committee contributes to. Their idea, as the name says, it to provide help with many problems seniors may have so they do not have to run all over the city.

Among their programs are:
- Case Assistance: providing supportive counseling, education, guidance, applications for Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps or rent increase exemptions, the filing of personal tax returns and access to other social services.
- Care Management: providing in-home care management including case assessment, care plan development, referrals for appropriate services, and ongoing monitoring.
- One Stop Support Program: which deals with elder abuse prevention and intervention.
- AARP Volunteer bill-paying assistance program to help with money management.
- One Stop Volunteer Drivers Program to help get seniors where they need to go.
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The group was founded in 1981 as a unique on-the-ground agency for New Yorkers over 60 where compassionate professionals go the extra mile to help older persons solve their problems. Their central goal is to enable seniors to continue living safely, independently and with dignity in their own homes as long as possible.

For more information go to www.onestopseniorservices.org or call (212) 864-7900.
by Elder Joy Wyatt, and Elder Jeremiah

The above words from Micah 6:8 were the theme of the 218th General Assembly (GA) last summer held in San Jose, California. The theme of the 218th Ga- den of Benevolence, with this year’s theme being a call for the Church to fund benevolence initiatives including human sexuality, and call for tolerance and peaceful relations between Christians and Muslims, just to name a few.

My overall impression of the 218th General Assembly was that of being overwhelmed by the large attendance of over 8,000 delegates, the formal letter, in which some of the issues were addressed; that he was for full ordination of same-sex couples had made a major statement to presbyteries, the hounds named restlessness, irrelevance and dis- content circled the conference rooms and howled in loud voices. I had the privilege of observing a newly formed community of faith, the Church of San Jose, who had joined forces.

The result was a political science project gone amiss. The committee descended into that of social services that aid the poor. Daily we read and hear reports of people who are relying upon these services for the first time in their working lives, and this trend is expected to continue as unem- ployment increases. If at all possible, Rutgers would like to continue to send the message to these non-profits and others that we can be relied upon to help in difficult times as well as good times.

We hope these questions and answers help to increase your under- standing of the situation our congrega- tion faces today. These words are writ- ten in full understanding that just as circumstances have become difficult for people throughout our city and nation, we are called to respond, to look to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and be hopeful for the future of the Presbyterian Church and its gov- ernment, as Presbyterians, are unique in our form of government in Christendom, where the laity is recog- nized as having a role in the church, and there is a separation of the ordained offices of Deacons and Elders. Ministers, along with elders, share responsibility for the life and work of the church, and their ministry is centered on the leading of the Holy Spirit, and be humble and malleable enough to follow when what we think is best is what God says is best. Why do we need to raise additional pledges beyond what is already pledged for this year? The increase in pledges is required, due to the shortfall that has resulted from the non-renewal of lease by a major street- level tenant. Because we rely on rental income to support the building, this shortfall requires that we either raise additional funds outside of rental in- come, or we reduce expenditures (and may require us to do both).

We have an endowment – can we use it now? These invested funds are used to support the per- sonal side of those who have lived and served as self-funded periodi- cal capital improvements, such as the renovation of the streets, sidewalks, and the refurbishing of our Southfield Oak in 2004, major roof repairs, and recently, the replacement of the windows, with funds paid back to the endowment from the real estate income. We don’t rely on rental income to help us to shore up the annual budget and we plan to avoid doing so in the future.

In the absence of additional funding and revenue, what areas in our annual budget provide opportuni- ties for cost-cutting? In order to manage the budget responsibly, costs may be cut in any area in which we have discretion. These areas include staff salaries, property maintenance and cap- ital improvement, programs and benevo- lence. We have reviewed staffing levels and have concluded that these are at a level that will not allow for further reduc- tions. Non-essential capital improve- ments, such as planning and executing a project to install air conditioning, have been put on hold indefinitely. Program budgets are typically no more than a few hundred to a thousand dollars, with very few exceptions, and these have all been managed to the lowest possible levels. Committee chairs are aware of the need to avoid spending their entire budget, if possible, in order to help manage costs. However, some program expenditures are necessary in order to continue our outreach to the commu- nity. Benevolence is an area in which we have discretion but we are loathe to decrease our commitment outside organizations whose programs are consistent with our own mission focus.

How much of our budget would normally go to benevolence? In this year’s budget, we currently funded benevolence at 20% of the an- nual budget, and we have committed to increasing this percentage over time.

This year, due to the shortfall, how much of this benevolence spend- ing is at risk? If we do not increase available revenues, based on current projections, it is likely that our benefi- cian- ing will need to be reduced to 18% of the annual budget for 2009 to cover the deficit. Funds from rental income, with funds paid back to the endowment from the real estate income. We don’t rely on rental income to help us to shore up the annual budget and we plan to avoid doing so in the future.

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Do Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly with your God
By Elder Jesus Jasso

The above words from Micah 6:8 were the theme of the 218th General Assembly (GA) last summer held in San Jose, California. The theme of the 218th Ga-
April 2009

HOLY WEEK offers multiple opportunities for meaningful worship:

Maunder Thursday, April 9 at 7:00 p.m. is a service of the Last Supper, with foot-washing and readings that trace Jesus’ journey to the cross;

Good Friday, April 10, at 12 noon - 2:30 p.m. is a series of meditations on the Seven Last Sayings of Jesus by various ministers, interspersed with music from the Rutgers Church Choir;

The Vigil of Easter, Saturday, April 11, at 7 p.m. is a service of spiritual preparation for celebrating Jesus’ resurrection on Easter Sunday. Renewal of baptismal vows is part of the service; and

Easter Sunday, April 12, there will be an early communion service on the church steps (9:00 a.m.) followed by breakfast on the fifth floor. The festival service of worship at 11:00 a.m. includes brass, the sacrament of Holy Communion, and an atmosphere of grateful praise. Integrated service time is approximately 1 hr. 15 min. Children proceed at all services.

Get Out The Vote
Saturday, March 28, the Presbytery of New York City will hold its stated meeting at Calvary Presbyterian Church on Staten Island. Among the business of the day will be the vote on uprisings from the 218th General Assembly. This is an important time in our denomination, (U.S.A.), and our Presbytery. If you are able to provide a ride, in the morning to, or in the evening from, Staten Island to a voting member of the Presbytery, or if you would like to walk your support, please contact the Rev. Mieke Vandersall of Presbyterian Welcome at (917) 441-8638.

Adult Education for the Spring
Sundays in March and April, 9:45 a.m., Session room

Mandarin and non-Mandarin speaking families. Please contact Linda Kao at info@rutgerschurch.com for further information.

Chinese Cultural Event: Child’s Play Mandarin Program

4th Friday of the Month; 3:30 p.m.
Join us as we explore the rich Mandarin culture through themes, every fourth Friday of the month at 3:30 p.m. Last month we learned how to say “rice” and other yummy foods in Chinese, made our own “sticky” rice, and a squashy sticky rice art project. Our next theme will be paper. Try your hands at calligraphy writing and other craft projects that are designed especially for toddlers, pre-school and school-age students. We welcome Mandarin and non-Mandarin speaking families. Please contact Linda Kao at info@rutgerschurch.com for further information.

Board of Elder Harris Shultz

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4th Friday of the Month; 3:30 p.m.
Join us as we explore the rich Mandarin culture through themes, every fourth Friday of the month at 3:30 p.m. Last month we learned how to say “rice” and other yummy foods in Chinese, made our own “sticky” rice, and a squashy sticky rice art project. Our next theme will be paper. Try your hands at calligraphy writing and other craft projects that are designed especially for toddlers, pre-school and school-age students. We welcome Mandarin and non-Mandarin speaking families. Please contact Linda Kao at info@rutgerschurch.com for further information.

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Join us as we explore the rich Mandarin culture through themes, every fourth Friday of the month at 3:30 p.m. Last month we learned how to say “rice” and other yummy foods in Chinese, made our own “sticky” rice, and a squashy sticky rice art project. Our next theme will be paper. Try your hands at calligraphy writing and other craft projects that are designed especially for toddlers, pre-school and school-age students. We welcome Mandarin and non-Mandarin speaking families. Please contact Linda Kao at info@rutgerschurch.com for further information.