Adult Forum

What Would Jesus Deconstruct?

“religion in the postmodern condition”

John D. Caputo at Rutgers Church

Saturday & Sunday, September 29–30

check our website for further details

What do you think?

1. Should everyone get out of your way just because you’re in a rush?
2. Focus on your strengths.
3. Are you the tortoise or the hare?
4. Expect the best and see how that works for you.
5. Once you’ve excelled in a career path and moved on, it’s hard to go back for survival reasons.
6. You can be the most abusive person to yourself.
7. Why ruin someone’s day?
8. Who’s in control?
9. Do you have a blind eye to the truth?
10. Are you a birders?

“Till next time,
Jacquelyn M. Carpenter

From the Pastor

I have been always intrigued by magic, the placticity of our perception and how it alters our understanding of the world and informs our decision making. Take for instance the famous upside down perception experiments. Neuroscientists fitted people with semi-permanent goggles which turned their vision upside down. Understandably, the first several days were almost unsurvivable for everyone. On the fourth and later days participants started to cope and soon they lived almost as if they did not wear these perception altering glasses. They were even able to ride a bicycle for instance. When they took the glasses off again, their perception returned instantly or soon.

As I am writing this article, we are returning from summer holidays in Dominica, an island member of the British Commonwealth. It is an almost dizzying experience to drive on the left side of the road. It vividly reminded me of my seminary year in Scotland. Strange-ly, being a pedestrian is not much better. For a day or two I did not know where to look first. Many times over I was surprised by honking and occasional squeaking of the brakes coming at me from strange and “wrong” directions. After about two days it got better. Our view of the world, our inner image of the world and our position in it are all the result of our psychological and cultural influences and viewpoints. For instance, do you know how Australians view the world? It isn’t upside down, but it isn’t so much different. Just look at Australian maps! I had a very early introduction to the Australian world view because my first English teacher had some Australian friends. In her classes she liked to use some nicely printed travel magazines from “down under.” These magazines also included world maps with an “Australasian spin”. These world maps were not drawn around the Atlantic basin – to the contrary - in them the Atlantic laid on the edges of the world and the Pacific basin and Australia were at the center, or very close to it (actually the 150th meridian was the center line). It looked something like this:

Thus in the third or fourth grade I learned to appreciate the fact that the image of the world is a reflection of our cultural and psychological predispositions, and our cultural and educational influences. Australians do what we all do - view ourselves in the center of the world. Unfortunately many people are mentally lazy, and thus are not conscious of this fact. In addition, their world can be quite small, even in one of the largest metropolises on our planet. Mental images of the world for many people are built around their persons and don’t reach beyond their longest shopping trip. Thus, looking at the world from different positions and angles can be a healthy mental, cultural and spiritual exercise. As a permanent visual reminder I have in my church office a map which looks something like this:

This map is arbitrary like any other cultural convention, yet how profoundly it can change our perspective of the world. Momentarily it can put us out of balance. However, it can help us to realize how much our outlook is a self-centered cultural prejudice. Expanding our personal horizons can lead us to become more humble and open minded, especially when we realize it is not just an intellectual prank, it is a lived reality. True Christian faith, faith which is not just another cultural convention or ritual, real faith, deep and unpretentious faith which enjoys and welcomes challenges, is a prime
Welcome Home

Join us for our annual Homecoming Luncheon on September 9th, following the worship service at 12:45 pm. Members and friends, bring your favorite dish to share!

General Assembly in Pittsburgh
by Alice Hudson, Clerk of Session

every two years the Presbyterian Church USA has a national gathering, where its mission and policies are created, discussed, approved or disapproved. Representatives from across the Church meet together. Mieke Vandersall, head of Presbyterian Welcome, was one of our Presbytery of NYC delegates. Pastor Andrew was invited to be an Advocate for the same-gender marriage proposal.

I attended simply as an observer. Why do that? 20 years ago I was a delegate to GA, and it was made so clear that the Presbyterian Church is so much more than 11 o’clock on Sunday morning. Then and now, I met church members gathered to work for the future of the denomination. I met folks from Presbyterian Voices for Justice; Presbyterian’s for Earth Care; The Israel Palestine Mission Network of the PCUSA; the Presbyterian Association on Science, Technology and the Christian Faith; the Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry Programs of the PCUSA, from the More Light Network, [including Marsha and Shirley, former members of Rutgers], and I met various PCUSA publishers at their exhibition booth [Pastor Andrew can tell you I bought too many books.]

I was disappointed, to the point of tears, at the loss on the vote for marriage equality in the PCUSA, thinking of our very two years the Presbyterian Church USA has a national gathering, where its mission and policies, are made so clear that the denomination. I met various PCUSA publishers at their exhibition booth [Pastor Andrew can tell you I bought too many books.]

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Preaching Schedule
Rev. Andrew Stehlik

Homecoming Sunday, September 9th
September 23rd, World Communion Sunday, October 7th
Dr. John D. Caputo

Sunday, September 30th

New to Our Family

T he Session welcomed three new members on June 10, 2012. Jang Sook Min, is from Korea, grew up in a Buddhist household, and was baptized in Bayside Presbyterian Church 15 years ago. She works nearby and came in to the church to pray, came to the Candlelight Carol Service, and felt called to come to Rutgers.

Pamela Cooper mentioned her friendship with Lisa Pinto and Christine Gorman, who invited her join us at Rutgers.

Alanna Oconnell, from Maryland, spoke of her Touro College medical studies, and discovered Rutgers Church one day when walking with her mother in the neighborhood, and seeing the beautiful rainbow flag on the Rutgers Church roof.

Review of April 29 Operatic Recital
by Andrew Byrne, Facebook Opera-Local

L a Gioconda at Verdi Square in New York. The church across the road (‘Rutgers Presbyterian’) was advertising La Gioconda for Sunday afternoon. My partner thought it must be a joke and went shopping ... but I moseyed along and was amazed and delighted at a slightly cut-down operatic performance of the Puccini opera, one of my all-time favorites.

There was the opening chorus at the Venetian regatta, ‘Cela et mar’, ‘Suicidio’ even a short pas-de-deux to a contracted version of the dance music! The letter writing scene with Barnaba was complete, along with ‘Oh Monumento!’ and finale also excellent. No orchestra in a church, but a full sized Steinway piano and excellent pianist who put in almost as many notes as you could imagine!

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Scouts’ Update

While the City sweated this summer, Scouts from Troop 664 spent several weeks at Ten Mile River Scout Camp, sleeping in tents with mosquitoes and chipmunks. But it was all worth it, these ten Scouts earned over 40 merit badges, learning things that are hard to accomplish in the City. At the same time the younger Scouts spent three to six days at Alpine Cub Scout Camp, also earning awards and having fun. Now we’re ready to start a new year. Meetings begin on September 11th, and we have many exciting activities planned. Boy Scouts will hike, camp, canoe, and once again try to do some ice fishing. Cubs have several camping trips planned with the highlight being a sleepover on a battleship in Fall River, MA. Joint activities will include the food drive in November and the special Christmas dinner for the men in the shelter. There will be an Eagle award presentation in the fall, along with the possibility of several Eagle projects throughout the year.

We look forward to a year of continued growth, celebrating the diversity and energy of both Scouts and leaders. Our Recruitment Rally is scheduled for Friday, September 28th, from 6:00 to 8:00 pm on the 5th Floor. If you know a young person between the ages of 6 and 21 interested in Scouting, or an adult who would like to work with them, please come to meet our fantastic Scout members and learn more about our programs.

Louisa

Why Does The Landmarks Commission Want To Divide Rutgers Presbyterian Church?

The Commission’s decision to landmark half of our floors is absurd. It would create a boundary line running directly down the middle of our fifth floor auditorium where we feed about 70 hungry neighbors every Thursday evening in our free meal program, where dozens of people meet each week in AA support groups, and where scouts hold their meetings. On the fourth floor, our classrooms where hundreds of children take art and other classes would be similarly divided by the boundary line of the expanded historic district. On the third floor our administrative offices would also be divided by the boundary line. Even our basement boiler room, serving the entire complex, would be half in the historic district and half out. The illustration on the center pages of this newsletter shows how our property would be cut in half by this proposal.

Their action is also unprecedented. Our land use lawyers cannot find a single example of half of a building being landmarked. The proposal is also harmful. Our real estate property is the church’s endowment. We are the stewards of this gift that has been handed down to us from generations past. It is this real estate endowment that allows us to provide low- and no-cost space and support for community activities. According to a zoning study undertaken for us, in stark dollar terms about $10 million of the value of our endowment would be lost just from the landmarking of the Church House. The congregation is not planning any new development of the church property at the moment. But we don’t want to tie the hands of future leaders of the church. After all, we remember that the congregation decided in the 1920s to create a larger facility with space for commercial rentals, church programs and worship services—the building that we know and worship in today. And if those church leaders had not done so, we would not be financially viable today.

We are not against the landmarks process, but we ask that the absurd, unprecedented and harmful proposal to divide our complex be corrected, and that our Sanctuary and Church House be left out so that our complex remains integrated and able to serve the community as well as our congregation.

This would not compromise the historic district—focused on West End Avenue’s apartment houses—in any way.
**Rutgers Has Called the Upper West Side Home Since the 1880s**

Rutgers Presbyterian Church moved to the Upper West Side in 1888 and built a chapel facing 73rd Street and a large church facing Broadway. By the early 1920s, the church plant had become outmoded and a source of income was desperately needed for church operations. Rutgers arranged with the U.S. Mortgage and Trust Company to demolish the old buildings and erect a new integrated complex with sanctuary, community house, and commercial space, shown here. The bank would hold a lease on the commercial space for 63 years and pay Rutgers rent. When the bank closed during the depression, Rutgers took possession of the land and commercial space. The church also owns the small building next door at 2091 Broadway.

Today, tenants in our commercial space who are paying market rent provide 85% of the income for our annual operating budget. In short, the complex constitutes our property provides the facilities where we worship and support every activity of the church.

In addition to providing 85% of our income, our property provides the facilities where we worship and where we serve the community. We worship in the Sanctuary and, during the hot summer months, in Fellowship Hall on the 5th Floor of Church House. The Daniel Russell Room on the first floor of Church House is where we gather after worship service for coffee and conversation. The third floor provides offices for our Pastor and administrative staff, as well as the Session room where meetings of our boards and committees are held. The mezzanine houses the office of our Music Director.

**Update from the Organ & Music Director and Choral Director**, by Mary Nelson and James Balmer

We are eagerly awaiting the return of the choir on Homecoming Sunday and we would also welcome new members. If you would like additional information about joining our wonderful choral musicians, please speak with myself or James Balmer.

We’d like to thank all of you who supported our Opera Concert in June. We are planning many wonderful musical events this year, the first of which will be a vocal recital by our own bass soloist Harry Thompson, on Sunday, September 30th at 3:30 p.m. Additional information will be upcoming in the bulletin and on the website.

It has been wonderful to worship with many of you through the summer months, and I would like to thank Faith, Sherry, Janara, David, Danny, Harry and Calvin for sharing such beautiful music with us! Jim and I feel very blessed to work with all of you and we look forward to seeing everyone on Homecoming Sunday!!!

**Children and Youth Programs** by the Director for Educational Ministries

*S.K.A.T.E.* **News**

Our S.K.A.T.E.*’s were busy during the last months of the school year. We walked in the CROP walk on May 6 with Team Rutgers and helped raise over $400 to help fight hunger in both New York City and the world. At the beginning of June we held our annual “Cook Out on the Roof.” Many thanks, again, to Glenn Gale for grilling up our hot dogs and hamburgers. After our meal we made flower centerpieces for Charles Amstein’s ordination anniversary celebration. Also, we celebrated Izzy Gale’s graduation from high school. Rutgers also honored Izzy with the first Vera Mowry Roberts education grant as she heads off to college in the fall. And this spring we’ve also said goodbye to Christine Davies as our Youth Ministry Associate.

*S.K.A.T.E.* is looking forward to our annual overnight at the church in September and we’re planning a trip to Six Flags in New Jersey in October. This past year several of our S.K.A.T.E.*’s have been in school plays, musical activities, and on sports teams. They are a talented bunch and we want to give them all a tip of the hat for these great extra-curricular activities and support them in these endeavors.

**Children and Family Ministry Update**

Easter Sunday brought us the annual Easter egg hunt in the sanctuary. We were pleased to have several neighborhood families participate with us this year. Mid-June brought us into Summer Sunday School where we’ve been engaged with and responding to Bible stories through art and dramatic play. We’ve also been putting a special emphasis on learning some new songs and music this summer. Earlier in the summer everyone in our Children’s Ministry was saddened by the loss of Miss Joyce, our long time preschool teacher. We miss her a great deal. In July, we held our second year of Summer Wednesday Nights @ Rutgers. Each week both church and neighborhood families came for open gym time and art activities in the Blue Room. We ended each evening with a sweet summer treat.

We’re looking forward to kicking of our children’s Sunday School with special activities on September 9.
Remembering Margaret Shafer by Laura Jervis

Margaret had the inestimable gift and the uncanny ability to work for justice for the many while meeting the needs of the one. She demonstrated this in befriending, engaging and housing the many homeless people who came for refuge to the steps of the FAPC one person at a time. She faced down the principalities and powers (i.e., the Guillauni Administration) and stood against the criminalization of those who are homeless leading FAPC to a successful Court decision, that indeed the steps of religious institutions are sanctuary. I think of her as the Joan of Arc for those who are homeless. Through it all she was a model of integrity and dignity.

When faced with difficult challenges in my life and work, I think of Margaret. WWMID? What would Margaret do? The answer is always the same: Act with kindness, be a blessing to others and speak the truth in love. I trust that as many of the Rutgers community as possible will join Byron to celebrate Margaret’s life at the Fifth Avenue Church on September 16th at 3pm.

Call My Name by Valerie Knight (Ethel Knight’s daughter)

Valerie Knight, Ph.D., a NYS licensed psychologist who uses the arts integrated into therapy, facilitated the Call My Name Tent at the Smithsonian Institution’s 2012 Festival that took place from June 27–July 8. This year’s festival included reflections on the epidemic, a history of the AIDS quilt and sections shown, and international artistic and scientific input, all under the umbrella entities of Creativity and Crisis: Unfolding The AIDS Memorial Quilt.

A Full Quilt viewing, of nearly 47,000 panels, coincided with the International Conference on AIDS which was held in Washington, D.C. late July, 2012. Visitors entered the Call My Name Tent and experienced an oasis for thought, contemplation, meditation and listening to one’s heart. They honored those that we have lost and those who have led the way to prolonging life and its richness.

Visitors gave tribute to all those who have enriched our lives by leaving messages or listing names. They left with red ribbons, symbols of the AIDS crisis, and words of encouragement.

Dr. Knight assisted those of all ages with their individual written prayers, and provided guidance in giving tribute to both those who have died from AIDS and the heroes and heroines who have led the fight for a cure. Dr. Knight has been offering therapy to people with AIDS and those who have survived them for nearly 20 years. She has also provided supportive services to doctors, nurses, social workers and case managers who work with people with AIDS.

An interview with Dr. Knight on the Festival can be found at http://www.festival.si.edu/2012/czy-rock-body-electric/. The Call My Name tent urged a call to action, a deeply held prayer, and inscriptions to remind the world that a cure must be found.

Update from Rutgers Presbyterian Church Community Programs by Jennifer Moore

Our Fall semester will begin the week of September 10. In addition to our classes, we will be sponsoring guest speakers on topics of interest to families enrolled in our programs. On Monday, October 1 at 6 p.m Sharon Youngman, M.Ed., will lead a workshop on the topic of inspiring children to be more independent and responsible around tasks such as getting ready for school on time, completing homework, putting away toys, and preparing for bed … all without frustration or arguments.

On Monday, November 5 at 9:30 am, psychologist and parenting expert Dr. Michelle Canarcik will lead a workshop to help parents and children successfully navigate both large and small transitions such as leaving the playground, becoming a big sibling, and starting preschool. Other workshops are planned. These are offered free to the community, and details can be found on the church website.

Beyond serving our congregation, our property provides much-needed community care to a large number of community activities, 7 days a week. Interestingly and fittingly, when our property was dedicated in 1926, Church House was named Community House; the name was changed later.

Each year hundreds of families benefit from Rutgers Community Programs, the classes we offer to children and adults. They are possible because of our classrooms, art studio, gym and auditorium with stage. These classes are available to all those who are interested. Most participants come from the Upper West Side, but we also have participants from other neighborhoods in Manhattan and other boroughs. Because of the financial resources of the church’s real estate endowment, we are able to organize the classes on a nonprofit basis and provide them at affordable prices. We can also offer financial aid for those who require assistance.

Rutgers Community Programs has begun sponsoring guest speakers on topics of interest to families participating in our classes. These events, along with our classes, have earned praise from families in the community; one mother wrote “You’re doing such a great job building a community for families in the neighborhood.”

Our property also enables the church to undertake other activities that serve the community. Every Thursday evening from September through June, Rutgers opens its doors to people in the neighborhood for a free hot, home-cooked meal, fellowship, and—on most nights—a movie, utilizing our kitchen and auditorium on the 5th floor. Three nights each weekend, Rutgers hosts ten men in need of shelter who have been screened by The Partnership for the Homeless. The men have a nourishing meal and a comfortable place to sleep while working toward permanent housing. These much-needed community services are possible because of our facilities, and also because of the real estate endowment which covers the expense (supplemented by fundraising).

In addition to Church-sponsored activities, we make our facilities available— at low or no cost—to a large number of community organizations for their regular use. A full listing is on the center pages of this newsletter. Special events also take place in our facilities. A recent example is the Blocks for Blocks Symposium, convened by the NYC Coalition for Block and Community Leaders in April 2012. The Symposium used our 5th floor auditorium, as well as classrooms and meeting rooms for break-out sessions. This event was attended by nearly 100 community leaders representing organizations from Chelsea to 168th Street. Rutgers was able to provide all the facilities and services such as security and custodial staff for this meeting at no cost.

We know it is very hard to find space for community activities on the Upper West Side, and we take pride in being able to serve the community by providing facilities, services and support.

Any discussion of our properties must acknowledge the great work done every day by our custodial, maintenance and security staff under the direction of Dermonne Allemye, our long-time Facilities Manager, and by Patricia Pastas, Executive Assistant to the Pastor, who handles the complicated scheduling. We thank them for their efforts.

Your Trustees are charged with managing the real estate endowment of the church. We have formulated, and Session has approved, a comprehensive program to repair, preserve and protect our facilities based on a thorough study of the physical condition of our property. This work will commence in September, and will be funded through our annual operating budget. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience that may be caused to those who use our facilities as this much-needed work is undertaken.

Proud stewardship of Rutgers Church property – our endowment and a legacy of wise decisions made by church leaders 86 years ago – has made Rutgers a beacon of stability among religious institutions on the Upper West Side. We will continue our efforts to preserve and protect this endowment for future generations of church members and community residents.
Our Rutgers Church Cut in Half by Landmark Commission

Community organizations that use Rutgers Presbyterian Church facilities

Monthly
Welsh Congregational Church (Sunday afternoons, DRR and Sanctuary)

Women's Welsh Club of NY (Saturday afternoons, Fellowship Hall)

La Leche League International (promoting and supporting breastfeeding)

SAGE (Senior Action in a Gay Environment)

Occasional
NYC Coalition for Block and Community Leaders – April 21, 2012

Concerts in Motion - yearly benefit concert and several affiliated concerts

Orsid Realty Annual Meeting (neighborhood co-op) – June 2012

Division spaces and rooms marked in red

Community organizations that use Rutgers Presbyterian Church facilities

Weekly
Front Runners (Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings, gym)

Men's AA (Saturday night, Fellowship Hall)

Support group for unemployed persons (Tuesday, late morning, DRR)

Tuesday Alanon Central Park West (Fellowship Hall)

Scout families, leaders (Fellowship Hall)

Monday Alanon (Monday lunchtime, Fellowship Hall)

Men's Alanon (Tuesday nights, Narthex)

PLWA/HIV Support Group (Tuesday nights, Session)

Lambda West AA (Wednesday evening, Fellowship Hall)

Meal Program and Movie Night (Thursday nights, Fellowship Hall)

Shelter Program (Weekend nights, gym and blue room)

Subsidized rent provided by church below market value
Presbyterian Welcome, Suite 308; space is provided free, and has a market value of about $20,000 per year.

Presbyterian Senior Services, Suite 408 – 410; space is provided free, and has a market value of about $48,000 per year.

Psychotherapy & Spirituality Institute, Suite 406; space is provided at a discount; it has a market value of about $10,500 per year, and tenant is paying 17% of market rent.

Broadway Mall, Suite 403; space is provided at a discount; it has a market value of about $22,000 per year, and tenant is paying 82% of market rent.

Rutgers Community Programs per term:
Pre-k alternative (called Ready Set Go): 12 children

Art classes: 115 children

Dance/movement classes: 35 children

Playgroups: 58 children

Adult exercise: 35 persons