From the Pastor - “New Faith Idiom”

Right before I left for a vacation this spring, I had a unique religious experience that was special, peculiar, and at the same time emblematic of our current times.

I was asked to officiate at the wedding of Agus and Jeremy. Jeremy is nominal Episcopalian and Agus is Muslim born in Indonesia. They came to us at Rutgers encouraged by our mutual Jewish friend Wendy who attends meditation classes in our community programs, sings in our Church choir and is familiar with the inclusive and welcoming spirit of our community of faith and our deep respect for diversity and the unique.

Thus, in the service we read from the Hebrew Bible, from the Greek Testament, and also from Al Qur’an in an exquisite celebration of deep genuine love. I have read from Al Qur’an in Church several times before, but it has always been to illustrate a point in a sermon. This time it was different, not intellectual, but worshipful. The reading from Al Qur’an was an integral part of the liturgy. You most likely know the Song of Song and the Song of Divine Love from Corinthians, our Bible readings, but American knowledge of Qur’an is not to be automatically expected, so here is the quotation from Surah 30:

“Among divine signs is that God created you from earth, and you are now human beings dispersed everywhere. Another of divine signs is that God created mutes of your kind of yourselves so that you may get peace of mind from them, and put love and compassion between you. Verily there are signs in this for those who reflect. Among other divine signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variety of your tongues and complexions. Surely there are signs in this for those who understand.” (And I care little that the original Arabic, being a genderized language, has “mates” in female form, it is just a legitimate hermeneutic shift to apply it in our modern times and gender neutral culture to same gender relationships.)

The same spirit of appreciation of love and diversity shaped this unique worship throughout. Jeremy and Agus now live in Bali and thus for the wedding processional and recessional music they chose the Gamelan Semar Pegulingan. It’s special music played in honor of the local Balinese Hindu god Semar, a deity of good fortune and love. I had never really known it and it instantly caught me by my heart, it is so different and ethereal. This music is played on ancient instruments and in very unique archaic seven-tone scale. This particular recording even had Balican crickets chirping along on the background!

Even further in this inclusive spirit, we opened the worship with an old Asian tradition of burning incense to honor ancestors and relatives who could not join this celebration. We used the singing bowl to mark this important transition in their lives and entrusted the couple to each other and to AGAPE - the divine love in all this diversity of religious traditions, readings, accents, sounds and smells.

I find this joyful worship experience symptomatic and hopeful. Nolens volens (like it or not) the world is getting more and more global, interconnected and complex. Jeremy and Agus are almost an impersonation of this reality more evident than in the cosmopolitan metropolis like NYC. Fundamentalists of all different stripes might try, but they cannot stop it. It is a tectonic shift in the cultural global scale.

In our church we are now entering a process of listening and gathering insight from our broader community.
Session News  

A series of Monday evening Writers’ Workshops were approved by the Session, and are led by our local author, MaryBeth Coulal-Jones. Using the Session room as their headquarters, these folks gather together to create texts, share their content, and learn from each other about creative writing. Closing down for the summer, watch for these workshops to reappear in the Fall if schedules permit, and consider joining in with your composition skills.

We continue to strongly support our Rutgers Church Boy Scout program, led by Louisa Anderson-Berry. As a Session we have written the Scout national headquarters and expressed our concern about their anti-gay policy and strongly promoting the Greater New York Councils’ policy of openness and equality for all scouts and leaders.

Members of the Session on June 18th, will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of St. Teresa Roman Catholic Church at Henry and Rutgers Streets downtown, formerly the second church home of Rutgers Church! The 5 p.m. mass will be celebrated by Cardinal Timothy Dolan.

At the May meeting of Session, we voted to support the efforts of folks United to End Homelessness, adding our name, Rutgers Presbyterian Church, to a petition to the mayor and City Council, seeking to make ending homelessness and expanding affordable housing, a top mayoral priority. To learn more, go to www.endhomelessnessnyc.org – Alice Hudson, Clerk of Session

Rutgers on Broadway!

Yes, we are! Our church is one of the strongest supporters and creative hearths for local actors and musicians. Annually we hold our opera, organized by Wellington Jones, and in which we hire actors and welcome volunteers. We are blessed with Wellington’s love of music, and our ability to support our local music world. We do much the same with our own choir, made up of volunteers and professional musicians who bring us joy each Sunday. We celebrate Ruben Santiago-Hudson for his award winning directing of The Piano Lesson this year, and Chris Jones for his role in Shakespeare’s Much Ado About Nothing at The Duke on 42nd Street. We applied for Duncan Hartman’s role in Faust with the Amore Opera, and Calvin Thompson’s performance in For the Love of Jazz at the Duplex Cabaret Theatre in the Village. We cheer Concerts in Motion which has won grants and awards, and hires many local musicians to sing to those in hospitals and isolated in their homes, and presents an annual spring gala concert right here at Rutgers! And we celebrate Mary Beth Coulal for her performance on Broadway at Symphony Space on Mothers’ Day. Choreographer Pedro Ruiz, Jr. choreographed a graduate dance education program at Hunter College Black Box Theater, fabulous! And don’t forget Steve Greer, Company Manager for Phantom of the Opera and John Smith, Associate Musical Supervisor for Jersey Boys, and conductor for the forthcoming Broadway version of the movie Super Fly. RUTGERS IS ON BROADWAY!

When we attend, buy tickets, make donations to these programs, we support the creative life of The City. And we support the creative and spiritual lives of the performers. – Alice

Monday Night Writing Work

Thanks to the Rutgers community for letting a handful of writers meet on Monday nights from 6:30 to 8 throughout the Spring.

As we plan to begin again in September, please consider joining our free writing and creative community.

The class is free and open to the public. Experienced, occasional, or reluctant writers are welcome. And all kinds of writing is encouraged – poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. (Common sense prevails on subject matter: no erotica, misogyny, or hate speech allowed!)

The group was made up of a handful of writers, friends from writing classes, or friends of Rutgers. Among the writers, one Upper Westsider is working on a novel from a neglected child’s perspective; another Harlem grandma is writing inspirational poetry about and for her family; one young Queens writer is workingshopping a young adult novel about imaginary friends; another woman is writing a performance piece on New York City’s storms, literal and figurative.

We were a diverse group. Some who have attended the group include two young Latina women from the Bronx; an English woman overcoming a stroke; a young East Indian man blogging about his job search, a new mother trying to find her way, and an artist writing about her ancestors at the time of Hitler.

So, the creativity was flowing. Let’s continue to build the writing community at Rutgers. Again, the group is free and open to all. Please join us. Thank you Rutgers for the space and vision. – Mary Beth Coulal

(Continue on next page)

Children’s Ministry

We made a fleece blanket as we learned about Tabitha which we gave to the deacons to be given as a gift to one of our members or friends. We tied up funds from around the world as we learned about Peter’s vision from God about no food being off limits for those who follow Jesus. And we made dream catchers as we learned how the apostle Paul listened when God spoke to him in a dream. We sponsored an Easter Egg Hunt in the Sanctuary after the Easter Sunday worship service and much fun was had by all.

S.K.A.T.E, Jr. for our 5th and 6th grade children continued to meet in the new year. In January we visited the Harry Potter exhibit at the Discovery Museum in Times Square. In March we ate a meal together at the church building and made ice cream together. And in April our trip to the New York Historical Society was cut short so we feasted on frozen yogurt at 16 Candles and came back to the Church House and played board games.

Ivy Beckwith,  
Director of Educational Ministries

SKATE Retreat, March 1-2, 2013

This was SKATE’s 3rd annual retreat at Stony Point Center. Our purpose was to have fun, share faith stories, conduct planning activities for 2013-2014 SKATE and continue to spiritually nurture this amazing group of teenagers.

It is evident this group of kids really enjoys being in each other’s company and that they draw a lot of love and support from one another. We are so thankful to the generous funding provided by our C.E. Committee, the envelope fundraiser and the choir’s concert. We are especially thankful to our Rutgers’ Family for continuous love, prayers and support and to Ivy for her leadership.

Kim Hodges

SKATE News

S.K.A.T.E. ushered in March with our annual retreat at the Stony Point Conference Center. On Friday night we played some crazy games, interviewed our adult leaders about their faith stories, and viewed a movie about survivors of Hurricane Katrina. Saturday was a day of planning and practicing spiritual disciplines. In April we feasted on Italian food and participated in a presentation by some Union Seminary students about the Student Christian Movement. At our May event we traveled around the church building sampling food from different cultures and doing some planning for the June 15th event which is looking forward to a trip to Six Flags Great Adventure in June as we finish up the school year.

We hope to confirm the seven members of our Confirmation class on June 16. The class began in January and we have been exploring various ideas about what it means to be a Christian in today’s world and what it means to be a member of a church. Through the late winter and early spring we traveled through Lent engaging in Bible stories from the life of Jesus and the days of the early church.

Vacation Bible School 2013

T his summer Rutgers Presbyterian Church will be hosting 2 weeks of Vacation Bible School. VBS will be held the weeks of August 12-18 and August 19-23 from 9 AM to 1 PM each day. The cost is $55.00 per child per week and children may sign up for one or both weeks. Each day will be filled with stories, games, crafts, projects, and snacks all led by a caring and dedicated staff of adults and teens. Vacation Bible School is for children age 4 – entering 6th grade and registration is already opening. To register your child for VBS please contact Ivy Beckwith, Director of Educational Ministries, at beckwith@rutgerschurch.com or at 212-877-8227, ext. 205 or go online at www.rutgerschurch.com, to download the registration form.

JUNE-JULY 2013
### June 2013

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**Confirmation Sunday, Holy Communion**
- 9:45 a.m. Adult Forum (through the Summer)
- 2:00 p.m. Welsh Church Service

**Pentecost**
- 5th Sunday after Pentecost: Every Monday, Welsh Church Service
- 5th Sunday after Pentecost: 11:00 a.m.

**Welsh Church**
- 9:45 a.m. Communion Sunday, Holy
- 10:45 a.m. Worship Service
- 10:00 a.m. Communion Service
- 11:00 a.m. Welcome
- 12:15 p.m. Men’s Sheriff
- 6:00 p.m. Peace & Social Justice Meeting
- 6:00 p.m. Scouts Award Ceremony
- 6:00 p.m. Staff Meeting

**Summer Community Programs through August 1**

**Church House and office building closed**

**Monday Night Writing Work**

**Vacation Bible School**
- August 12 - 18 & August 19 - 23
- 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

**Birthdays in July**
- William Donnell
- Bill Falk
- Kate Dunn
- Richard Reece
- Nancy Muthhead

**Birthdays in June**
- Susan Polaski
- Anna and Sally Suchanek
- Anne Barstow
- Julia Spencer
- Cullen Dunn- Ellis
- Jack Bassonnet
- Allison Olimic
- Benjamin Shute Greer

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### Warnings from Modern Prophets (SciFi Writers)

In 1920 the Czech writer and playwright Karol Čapek first coined the word ROBOT in a very early science fiction play called R.U.R. (Rozum’s Universals Robots). In this play, human engineers created artificial biological beings; today we would call them “androids”. Čapek called them Robots, deriving their name from an old Slavic word for servitude. In his dystopian vision Robots were ever more severely exploited and finally used to fight human wars until they rebelled, and turned against their creators and eliminated the human race. Only in the very last sentences of the play, in the epilogue, is there a glimmer of hope, when a couple of the most human-like robots with procreation ability are sent out to start a new human-like race.

A great number of science fiction writers were always weary of the human propensity for doing evil and the ability of their technological creations to reflect and even amplify this destructive ability. That was the reason why famous American Science Fiction writer Isaac Asimov formulated, as early as in 1942, three basic laws of robotics:

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.

In theoretical and fictional ways writers and thinkers explored the consequences of the Law of Artificial Intelligence and their conjoined warnings seriously and insist on having the three basic laws of robotics independently called shots unburdened with such “useless” complications as conscience and moral feelings. And of course they will be unheeded by any such thing as the Basic Laws of Robotics in any of their forms. You do not need to be a fan of Science Fiction to see where it can take us!

I am getting increasingly worried. It is time to start listening to biblical as well as modern prophets. Biblical prophets warn us against human evil, greed, aggression, militarism and imperialism. Modern prophets explicate how human sin laws can be expanded and multiplied by technology. We should take their conjured warnings seriously and insist on having the three basic laws of robotics integrated into every artificially intelligent machine.

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**Pastor Andrew**

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**Birthdays in June**

**Birthdays in July**

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**From Silence to Poetry**

By DeBora"Momma D" Gray

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**Vacation Bible School**
- August 12 - 18 & August 19 - 23
- 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Pride Sunday

Join us for the second annual Pride Sunday collaboration between First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York and Presbyterian Welcome.

We are joining together at the Evelyn Davidson Memorial Water Table to quench the thirst of the marchers during the Heritage of Pride March. In addition to handing out water to the marchers we will hand out home-baked cookies (made by you!) and use this opportunity to pass out old-fashioned church fans that invite marchers to worship at our 20 welcoming member congregations and Not So Churchy, a new worshiping community supported by Presbyterian Welcome.

We seek volunteers to:
- Pass out water, cookies, church fans, and hugs to marchers. And when you take a break, grab one of the many signs made by youth from our member churches to cheer along the marchers.
- Bake and deliver cookies to First Church. This is a great opportunity for families and youth groups to be involved. (You can drop them off anytime during the week before Pride at First Church at the front desk at 12 W. 12th Street.)
- The water table is stationed right outside of First Church, on 5th Avenue between 12th and 11th Streets. There will be optional seating inside for workers that get tired. Also, please wear red!

Please note that if you plan on working any shift after 12:30 you will need to leave extra time to get through the police and crowd presence. The police on 11th and 12th Streets will know that we have volunteers coming to join and a volunteer will be at the gate directly behind the water table with your name, allowing you to enter and leave First Church freely to store your things and to take a rest. For complete information and to sign up visit http://bit.ly/Pride2013. We look forward to working together to make God’s Love and Welcome known!

Our Mission Statement
Presbyterian Welcome works for the full participation of individuals in contexts of faith, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. As followers of Christ, convinced by Scripture, we labor for a world where all persons might live into the calling that God has placed in their hearts. We are a resource, training current and future leaders of church and society. Presbyterian Welcome is based in New York City and supported by member congregations and individuals.

Community Programs

2013 has been a great year for Community Programs so far. Registration in our classes, particularly for children, has been very strong in the winter/spring semester, and summer is shaping up to be quite busy as well.

We continue to be a valuable resource to the community, hosting four free workshops on parenting and education. “When It’s Time To Change,” led by psychologist and mother Michelle Canarick, focused on helping young children manage transitions (anything from leaving the playground to welcoming a new sibling). Michelle’s second workshop, “Fixing the Sleep Nightmare,” offered parents practical solutions to the ever-present problem of helping little ones sleep. Clara Hemphill and Robin Aronow, two of the leading experts on New York City schools, gave a thorough and timely presentation on “The Sleep Nightmare,” offered parents practical solutions to the present problem of helping little ones sleep. Clara Hemphill and Robin Aronow, two of the leading experts on New York City schools, gave a thorough and timely presentation on "The Sleep Nightmare," offered parents practical solutions to the present problem of helping little ones sleep.

--- Jennifer Moore, Programs Coordinator

From Our Local Scout/Cub Scout Program

Christopher Pritner-Gonzalez and Alice Hudson, Session liaison to Scouts, at a recent awards ceremony. They represent our continuing support of our local Boy Scout/Cub Scout program here at Rutgers.

Photo by Juliet Pritner

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