

Crosscurrents

April 2011



Pebble Hill Presbyterian Church | 5299 Jamesville Road | DeWitt, NY | 13214 | 315.446.0960 | www.phpchurch.org

From Pastor Pete

I usually think of Easter in terms of abundance after a season of scarcity (Lent), the wilderness of the Lenten journey to the cross exploding into the glory of resurrection – from fasting to feasting, from fear and confusion to joy and living faith. It is all of that, but I recently ran across a story that reminds me of the true abundance of Easter.



Some years ago a pastor wrote of his experiences as a political prisoner in a Latin American jail. It was his first Easter in prison.

“There is not a single cup. But a score of Christian prisoners experienced the joy of celebrating communion – without bread or wine. The communion of empty hands. ‘We have no bread, nor water to use instead of wine,’ I told them, ‘but we will act as though we had.’”

““This meal in which we take part,’ I said, ‘reminds us of the prison, the torture, the death and final victory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The bread is the body which He gave for humanity. The fact that we have none represents very well the lack of bread in the hunger of so many millions of human beings. The wine, which we don’t have today, is His blood and represents our dream of a united humanity, of a just society, without difference of race or class.’”

“I held out my empty hand to the first person on my right and placed it over his open hand, and the same with the others: ‘Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ Afterward, all of us raised our hands to our mouths, receiving the body of Christ in silence. ‘Take, drink, this is the blood of Christ which was shed to seal the new covenant of God with humanity. Let us give thanks, sure that Christ is here with us, strengthening us.’”

“We gave thanks to God, and finally stood up and embraced each other. A while later, another non-Christian prisoner said to me: ‘You people have something special, which I would like to have.’” A father whose daughter had been killed “came up to me and said: ‘Pastor, this was a real experience! I believe that today I discovered what faith is.’” (*Thomas G. Pettepiece, Visions of a World Hungry, 1979*)

Through this time of Lent the world has seen political upheaval, natural tragedy and devastation, and continuing ethnic violence. The reality of the cross is as apparent as it has ever been. The human landscape doesn’t change with Easter, but Easter is the awesome reminder that the spiritual landscape has – and with it, the opportunity to discover anew what faith is. The sign has already been given. Jesus said, ***“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”***

Thanks be to God!

Peter

The Church at Worship April 2011

Worship begins Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. All who are interested are invited to gather in the Conference Room at 9:20 a.m. to pray for our church and pastor as we worship together.

April 3

4th Sunday in Lent

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

John 14:25-31

The Wisdom of the Cross: Life in the Balance

"Grace: Free but not Cheap"

Sacrament of Communion

April 10

5th Sunday in Lent

Isaiah 55:6-9

Revelation 21:1-5

The Wisdom of the Cross:
Life in the Balance

"Life and Death"

Receive One Great Hour of
Sharing Offering

April 17

Passion/Palm Sunday

Choir performs portions of
Mozart's *Requiem* with the
Seneca String Quartet

Services of Holy Week

Maundy Thursday-April 21

Worship at 7:00 pm

Service of Tenebrae

A Service of Tenebrae, or "Darkness," is based on a twelfth-century late night/early morning service and is an extended meditation on the passion of Christ. The service includes the Sacrament of Communion, in remembrance of the last supper of Jesus with his disciples.

Good Friday- April 22

The Sanctuary will be open from noon until 3:00 pm for prayer and meditation. Meditative organ music will be offered, alternating with silence. A printed order of prayers and readings will be available.

Easter Sunday-April 24

Easter Sunrise Service will be held in the Atrium at 7:30, followed by breakfast at 8:15, with activities for children and youth.

Service of Resurrection at 9:30 in the Sanctuary will include Beethoven's *Hallelujah* from the *Mount of Olives*; *Cortege el litanie* by Dupre, and Widor's *Toccat*a (Symphony V).

Acts 10:34-43

John 20:1-18

"Weep no More!"

March Session Notes

Received LarScenia Thomas into membership at Pebble Hill, transferred from the Presbytery of Palisades in New Jersey. LarScenia transfers her standing as an Inquirer for the ordained ministry to this presbytery, which requires membership at a church within the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse. LarScenia has been with us for three years, as a Ministry Intern (2008-2009) and since then as a guest Bible study leader. She has become an important part of our congregation, and we look forward to supporting her as she continues moving toward ordination in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Discussed how we might respond as a congregation to the victims of the earthquake and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Japan. A notice from the presbytery has been sent to our membership as to how individuals may respond, and our Mission Committee has designated \$500 from our peacemaking fund to the work of the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance program in Japan.

Rev. Shidemantle will be on vacation the week following Easter Sunday. Rebecca Chaffee, Program Director for Family and Educational Ministries, will be attending the Northeast Association of Christian Educators conference at Stella Maris retreat center in Skaneateles from April 25-27.

Annual reports from all committees and ministry groups are due in the church office by April 25. Our annual congregational meeting to receive these reports will take place as part of worship on May 15.

The April meeting of Session will be on Thursday, April 14, at 6:30 pm. (Note change of date and time!)

Leadership Day Gathering–Saturday, May 7

For the past year a group of Pebble Hill members, at the direction of Session, has been meeting to consider the changes before us as a church community, and how to address them in an authentic way as we move into the future. This group came to be called the “Living the Mission” task force. Tim Frazee presented a power point report on this work at our annual meeting on February 6. Other members of the task force are Bill Byrne, Kathy Herron, Kathy Fanella, Amy VanKirk, Mary Elizabeth Haas, and Pastor Pete. Darlene Vinyard, Nick Abu-Absi and Janet Rider were also part of the group in its first few months.

We’ve been working with consultant Mark Betley, who has encouraged us to focus on our current statement of mission as a congregation, *“To love and serve God and neighbor with open hearts, open hands, and open minds,”* and how we do, don’t, and might live it out more explicitly in our ministry together and our individual lives. The group has been working closely with Mark in going through a process that has been revealing, challenging, and exciting. Now we are ready to “take it out” to the congregation – and we want to start with the leadership of the church – everyone who is involved in actually doing the ministry – teachers, caregivers, musicians, nursery care providers, Bible study leaders, those who offer hospitality, welcome visitors, recruit ushers or lay readers, serve as elders and deacons, take care of the facilities, etc. You are those who provide the ministry of our church.

A letter of invitation is going out to all ministry providers to gather on Saturday, May 7 from 8:30 (gathering and refreshments) until 12:00 noon in Fellowship Hall. Mark Betley will be with us, and he, along with the Living the Mission task force, will facilitate our time together. We hope as many as possible will be able to gather for this wonderful continuing education opportunity, and help set the course for a future that is faithful to our mission as a congregation and as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Is Syracuse Perfect?

A few of us believe that Syracuse is the perfect city. The weather, the cultural, educational, and economic opportunities, the shopping, the social life – all make it the perfect place to live. That’s why we’ve moved here from the Adirondacks, from Texas, from California, from New York City.

Many more of us see Syracuse as a city with great promise, but with substantial problems that make it difficult to live in the city and even to work or shop in the city. But whether we live in Syracuse or in the suburbs, our lives and our future are entwined with the city, which is the vital, if troubled, center of this area.

Several years ago, our congregation joined with other city and suburban religious bodies to form the Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse (ACTS), working together to address some of the problems that beset the city and endanger the future of us all. A few of our members have taken part in the efforts of ACTS task forces to address the social, economic, educational and political concerns of our communities. But PHPC members can support this work of transforming Syracuse in ways other than direct personal involvement.

On April 28, ACTS is having a fund-raising banquet at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Liverpool. The banquet theme, “Planting Seeds of Hope,” will be expounded by the Rev. David Bigsby, pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in suburban Chicago. PHPC hopes to fill a table of ten with our members and friends. The cost is \$50 each. You can make your reservation by speaking with Pastor Pete or Gloria Hooper-Rasberry.

Hope you can join us, to support and learn more about this organization working for a brighter future for our city.

Submitted by Earl Arnold

The Mission Corner

During March, a Contribution of \$500 (from the Rial Peace Fund) was sent to Park Central Presbyterian Church to be used for Haiti by the group that is leaving in April. Marilyn Cornell (pictured right), from our church, is part of that Ministry & Mission that will be helping in many ways upon arrival there.



Marilyn Cornell

One Great Hour of Sharing will be taking place on April 10. This year *sharing* is more important than ever. The Japanese earthquake, tsunami & devastation is the latest country to need our help. Our generous contributions on April 10 along with our prayers will be of great assistance. One third of One Great Hour of Sharing goes for disaster relief. The Mission Committee will also send an additional contribution from our Peace Fund. The congregation also received, online, a letter from Presbytery, so perhaps that is where you would like to send a check.

Faithfully,
The Mission Committee

“A Sheep’s Confession of Faith” by Zetta Fayos

The Lord is my Shepherd. Only by grace, He calls me by name.
I listen for now and obey His voice.

He sets me down in the greenest of pastures and lavishes His grace upon me;
there I feel His deep and abiding Love.

He leads me out of the Valley of Dry Bones, ever upwards and away from that old
spiritual emptiness.

As we near the way out, I follow close and cling with both hands; then I rest again,
refreshed and peaceful in the fold of His everlasting arms.

If ever again my feet stray off the path of peace He has established for me, He guides me
back so that I will never be outside of His Love.

Because we are one in this unity of Love, He walks with me through the valley of
the shadow of death; but He shines His Light ahead of me and on me in that
darkness, and I cannot fear the darkness because of His Light.

If anyone means harm to me, my Lord shows the enemy the banquet of grace He has
lavished on me; so that they too might come to eat at this overflowing and
bountiful table, and be anointed by His grace as well.

Every day of my life my Shepherd shows me His tender mercy and feeds me so that I
have the assurance of His strength and forgiveness and remain abiding in His
unfailing and everlasting Love forever.

An Invitation to Women of Pebble Hill

You are invited to attend an exciting workshop entitled “Women's Work: Reclaiming Wholeness for Self, Community and World” to be held at the Genesee Grande Hotel, 1060 East Genesee Street, Syracuse on Saturday, April 16, 2011 between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m.

The invitational brochure states that, “Women’s work promises to be an adventure of discovery and connection.” Highlights of the sessions include exploring mindfulness, developing wholeness, building resources and understanding our relationship with others—including husbands, fathers, brothers, sons, and friends.

Presenters are Susan White and Roslyn Rasberry of [Vital Change](#). Roslyn is the daughter of Gloria Hooper-Rasberry.

The conference brochure is posted on the kiosk in the PHPC atrium. Early Registration is \$40 (includes lunch). Deadline is April 1, 2011. Registration is \$45 (includes lunch). Deadline is April 8, 2011. Please make checks payable to Vital Change, PO Box 6047 Syracuse, NY 13217.

For more information about Vital Change and the workshop: roslyn@vitalchange.com. www.vitalchange.com

Save the Date

The Pebble Hill Presbyterian Women Coordinating Team is going to hold a **spring luncheon at 12 noon on May 18th, 2011 (Wednesday)** for all the women in our church. Their friends are also welcome. Each participant is encouraged to bring a dish to share, e.g. salad or dessert or to contribute \$5.00 if she does not plan to bring a dish. In addition to yummy food, there will be an interesting talk/presentation after the lunch. The details of the talk will be announced soon.

The Pebble Hill Presbyterian Women Coordinating Team



Helping Kids Remember Faith at Easter

By Kathryn Slattery, New Canaan, Connecticut

Jelly beans, cellophane-covered baskets, giant candy bunnies. As I spotted all the trappings of Easter in the supermarket, I thought to myself, *No wonder kids get confused about Easter.*

Explaining Christmas was a cinch—the birth of Christ is simpler to grasp. Creches, carols and pageants all reinforce the message, making it easier to keep Santa Claus in perspective. But how could I explain to my two school-age children something as profound and mysterious as the Resurrection?

I knew that other parents were struggling with this, too. In fact, I took the greatest comfort in the advice of one friend who said, “Start with the traditions you already have.”

On Good Friday in our home we always color Easter eggs—three dozen. What could be a more obvious symbol of new life than eggs? Last year I told the children about a chick I once saw hatching in an incubator. I described how he poked his way out with his beak. “A new life. That’s what we celebrate at Easter,” I explained, “the new life we have in Christ.”

The next bit of inspiration came while I was shopping. I found a set of Bible storybooks for my son, Brinck, and came across a tiny gold cross necklace for Katy. I included these presents in the children’s Easter baskets, and since then I’ve added prayer journals, tapes, Scripture stickers and bookmarks. I like the tradition of Easter baskets, especially when I can include gifts that will nurture the children’s faith.



The third idea came from [GUIDEPOSTS](#) contributor Posy Baker Lough. “Try something,” she suggested, “to give children a good visual image of the Resurrection.” She described a project at her church: The children were given caterpillars, and in the weeks prior to Easter the kids watched them spin cocoons, metamorphosing into butterflies.

“The butterflies were released just before Easter Sunday service,” Posy said. “Afterward, when we explained to the kids that the cocoon was like Christ’s death and entombment, and that his resurrection was like the butterfly, they understood.”

At Easter time, images of new life are usually easy to find: crocuses and daffodils blooming, lambs gamboling in fields, birds returning to their nests, green returning to the landscape. But sometimes spring comes late (or Easter comes early) and the holiday meets a gray, cold day. Then I think of something that happened to my friend Alison.

On an unseasonably cold Easter morning when Alison was 10 years old, her mother urged her to go outside to see what was in the yard. There in the snow her mother had made a rainbow of hundreds of brightly colored lollipops, sparkling like bits of stained glass. “It seemed like a miracle,” Alison says. “Magical, beautiful, full of mystery and wonder.”

And that, I realize, is what I want more than anything else to give my children: the miracle of Easter. It was God’s most astonishing miracle, the resurrection of Christ and the promise it held for us: eternal life.

So, finally, go to church on Easter. Put on your best clothes, take flowers from your garden, sing all the hymns with alleluias. Celebrate. Last Easter Sunday I was delighted when I overheard one youngster say, “Christmas is Jesus’ birthday, but Easter is everybody’s birthday.”

Yes, it is. Easter is the time for you and your children—for all of us—to joyfully celebrate our new birth.



Laughing Matters

Just for Laughs

After the church service a young couple talked to the pastor about joining the church. He hadn't met the husband before, and he asked what church he was transferring from. After a short hesitation, the man replied, "I'm transferring from the Municipal Golf Course."

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In one church, where the collection plate is rarely full, a pastor was taking the offering. When the plate came back to the pastor to pray over the offering, he saw that the few pennies in it were even less than usual.

He held the plate up in front of him and said, "Well Lord, we thank you for the safe return of the plate."

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