

Crosscurrents

January 2011



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

From Pastor Pete

What a wonderful Christmas season we had at Pebble Hill! The children's musical, Christmas Eve worship and music, Dan Duggan and Peggy Lynne's participation in our worship on the day after Christmas, and our Jazz Vespers on January 2 – all of it made for true celebration of the gift of Emmanuel. In my sermon last Sunday I



acknowledged how most all of us experience a post-holiday let down when we have to get back to "business as usual." But if it is God's business that we are about as Christian people, we have been reminded once again that our lives, our loves, and our work have been caught up in the divine conspiracy to infuse the world with God's own light – so true and so complete that all the world's darkness cannot overcome it. As I quoted from Tom Long last Sunday, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ means that "there is no corner of experience so hidden that grace cannot find it. There is no soil so sterile that the seed of holy wonder cannot grow in it. There is no moment so dark that it can extinguish the

light of God which even now shines in it."

As we enter a new year together as the people of God at Pebble Hill may we truly be propelled by the gift we've been given to be about the "work of Christmas," as Howard Thurman so beautifully puts it:

"When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and the princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flocks, the work of Christmas begins: to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among the people, to make music in the heart."

I look forward to continuing the work of Christmas with you in this New Year. Christ has already gone before us, calling us to follow. He'll supply the light, even in the darkest days.

Yours in Christ,

Peter

The Church at Worship January 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.

January 9

Baptism of the Lord
Isaiah 42:1-9
Matthew 3:13-17
“The Beloved Son”

January 16

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 49:1-7
John 1:29-42
“Straight Arrows”

January 23

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 9:1-4
Matthew 4:12-23
“Kingdom at Hand”

January 30

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Micah 6:1-8
Matthew 5:1-12
“Clear as Can Be”

Session Notes

There was no Session meeting held in December due to inclement weather. The next meeting of Session is on Tuesday, January 18 at 7:00 p.m. The primary agenda item will be to pass the church budget for 2011.

The annual meeting of the congregation will be held in the sanctuary immediately after worship on Sunday, February 6. The purpose of the meeting is to receive the 2010 year-end financial report the budget for 2011, and to approve the pastor’s financial package for 2011. There will also be a report/presentation by the Mission Task Force that has been working with consultant Mark Betley over the past several months. The election of new officers (elders and deacons), which has been held during this meeting the past two years, will be postponed until a congregational meeting called for that purpose is held at a later date. New officers begin their service at the June meetings of their respective boards.

World Café Conversation

The Transition Team and Council of the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse invite one and all – elders, deacons, choir members, SS teachers, youth, advisors, mission workers, pastors and anyone else interested in a **World Café Conversation to discern God’s future for the presbytery**, to join us on Sunday, January 30, 2010 from 2:30-4:00 p.m. in the

Atrium at Pebble Hill Presbyterian Church.

Beautiful, informal atmosphere – coffee and sweets – small tables and a stimulating question for discussion in a café setting: “What would it take for you to look forward to a presbytery meeting, enjoy your time there, and leave feeling good?”

A total of three Café Conversations will be held:
Sunday, January 30 @ Pebble Hill
Sunday, February 27 @ Port Byron
Sunday, March 27 @ East Syracuse

These are *three distinct events*, each posing a different question. Please join us for all three!

What is World Café? Go to www.theworldcafe.com to find out!



Boy Scouts Eagle Court of Honor Ceremony & Luncheon for Eric Sognefest at Pebble Hill, January 29



The Boy Scouts of America recognize advancements with Courts of Honor.

The Eagle Court of Honor for Eric Sognefest will be held at Pebble Hill Presbyterian Church on Saturday, January 29, 2011, from noon to 2:00 p.m. The Court of Honor is open to all church members. The actual ceremony will last approximately 45 minutes. A catered lunch will be served after the ceremony. Please RSVP via email to Donna Sognefest at donna@sognefest.com or call 632-4979, as a head count is needed for planning purposes.

Mission Corner

The Mission Committee has met twice during December. We would like to keep the church members up to date on what donations we are sending out. The Peacemaking collection was very impressive at \$1,769.00. Twenty-five percent of that stays here at Pebble Hill, and was put in the Rial Peacemaking Fund. From that we sent \$500 to “Imagine Syracuse” to help give opportunities to children of the West Side. In 2011, we will be contributing to Haiti M&M, but are waiting until the group goes there from our area. Also, are hoping to have a Missionary who is home on Leave to speak during a church service.

From Local Mission, we have donated to : Samaritan Center Feeding; Tent for Crop Walk; Refugee Resettlement; Catholic Charities for the Oxford Inn; Literacy Volunteers; Vera House; Winds of Agape; Meals on Wheels’ Food Bank of CNY; The Learning Place; Presbyterian Church USA for Katie Griffin; Ministries in the North Country; and \$500 to Tom Hall for living assistance after he was laid off from Vanderkamp.

Your Mission Committee at Work



Give Blood, Save a Life!

**American
Red Cross**

Madison came into the world early. Weighing in at barely one pound, she had scarcely enough blood in her tiny body to keep it going. But with seven blood transfusions and two platelet transfusions, she has beaten the odds. “Without the generous donations of perfect strangers, our child would not be alive today,” says Julie, Madison’s mom. “How do you say thank you for a gift like that?” The need for blood is constant. The gratification is instant

Your next opportunity to give will be Saturday, January 22nd, in our Fellowship Hall, from 8 am to 1 pm. **Plus, this month you will receive a pound of Dunkin’ Donuts’ coffee for donating a pint.** And, if you are blood types O+, O-, A- or B- and you qualify, you can donate DOUBLE RED CELLS which are especially needed right now thereby doubling the benefit of your gift. Drop in or make an appointment by calling 1-800-733-2767 or visiting www.RedCrossBlood.org Put it on your calendar today.

Family Ministries Movie Night

A few of us had a great time watching “Toy Story 3” together over the Christmas break. The couches in the Youth Room were comfy and the snacks plentiful. We want to do this again! If we get a crowd, we’ll project the film on the wall in the Forum room.



Christmas Eve Family Service

A magical night of songs and carols, readings, and costumed children portraying the Nativity story.



Christmas Festival

Our Advent Festival included the play, “Promises, Promises” presented by the children and youth, our traditional crafting event, and lunch for all. We are proud of the work our young people put into this special service. Thank you to all who helped!



Winter Education for All

We continue to offer Christian education for all ages.

- Nursery (birth-3)** God Loves Me story books combine with simple songs like Jesus Loves Me, God is so Good, and Walk in God's Ways
- PreK/K (3-6)** Walk With Me Preschool lessons combine story, worship, crafts and games to reinforce the Bible stories. Children continue worship in the Kindergarten room following Time with the Children in the Sanctuary.
- Elementary (1st-6th grades)** Children's Worship follows Time with the Children, when our Acolytes carry the light of God from the Sanctuary candles and light worship candles in our own space. We gather on the rug in our worship space to pray, sing, and read the Bible. We enjoy acting out the stories.
- Children's Workshop meets at 11:00, when children explore the lesson through crafts, games, and activities.
- Pre-Confirmation (5th-8th grades)** Middle schoolers are offered I Know My Bible, a survey class to prepare them for Confirmation class next year. Outings and events are also planned, as well as joint activities with the Youth Group.
- Youth Group (7th-12th grades)** This winter join Bill & Gwen Bradshaw on a road trip through the Bible with "Route 66." Following this 8-week session we will explore worship with "Sunday Morning Live!" Retreats, mission activities, parties, and worship-leading opportunities are also planned. Look for some Road-themed outings in the Winter, and some worship field trips to other churches during the Spring.
- Adult Forum** Adult Forum continues with a varied program including outside speakers and our own members covering topics from current events to personal spirituality.
- Adult Bible Study** Dan Radcliffe continues his introductory Bible studies, *Being Reformed: Faith Seeking Understanding*.
- Adult Bible Study** LarScenia Thomas continues to offer in-depth study of the Gospel of John.



Vanderkamp News

Vanderkamp is waiting for you!

What is new at Vanderkamp?

Over the past few years painting and roof replacement has begun. Several bathrooms have received “make-overs.” The bats have been relocated to their bat houses! We still need them for natural mosquito control! Most recently, handmade nightstands and benches have been added to Oscar and Robert Lodges. When you book your retreat you have the option of including meal service in the Commons.

Organize a group from your church for a time at Vanderkamp. Dates are still available whether midweek or weekend anytime 2011. Call Vanderkamp today for more information. Complimentary continental breakfast is available, if you book time before April 30.

Mission Trip on Your Radar?

We have received several calls in the past month regarding mission opportunities at Vanderkamp. As Christians, we are called to give back, as we have been given much. Vanderkamp does have opportunities for you to give back close to home this spring. As a large center, we have many projects, whether your group is adult and/or youth, from unskilled to skilled and many in-between. We can support your efforts to choose projects. Helping hands and willing spirits make a world of difference! If you want to explore opportunities, please call us at 315-675-3651.

4th Annual Food Festival and Silent Auction

Our event was a success! Special thanks goes to Pebble Hill Presbyterian Church and Bob Wolff for their hospitality. Many people came from all over CNY for an evening of great food while bidding on gift baskets to artwork. We raised \$2718 for Vanderkamp’s summer program! Thank you to all who participated!

Summer Camp 2011...Only 27 weeks away! The first week of summer camp begins July 3rd, the start of the summer season at Vanderkamp! Brochures will be available after the first of the year. If you would like to receive a brochure, call or e-mail us and we will add your name to the mailing list.



Joint Thanksgiving Celebration with Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas

—Photos submitted by Bob Batley



The following piece was distributed to members of the Interfaith Religious Leaders Round Table of InterFaith Works of CNY on which I sit. For the full document with explanations of each of the points, see me.

—Pastor Pete

Combating Hatred and Intolerance with Wisdom: A 12-Step Vision for Religious Communities and their Leaders Offered by Scholars and Religious Leaders of the Elijah Interfaith Institute, Jerusalem

The daily news makes us increasingly aware of growing hatred and intolerance in our global society. Much of this hatred is aimed at other religions. Too many people have been led to believe that in order to be faithful to their religion and defend its truth, they must denigrate and reject people of other faiths and adopt attitudes and actions of disrespect and intolerance. While Islam has been at the forefront of recent expressions of religious hate, the problem is global and affects all our religious communities. All our religious traditions are both vulnerable to hateful attacks from others and susceptible to exploitation as a basis for hostility and intolerance toward others.

The quest for happiness and well-being is common to all of humanity, and yet we are all capable of practices that get in the way of such happiness. Therefore, dealing with religiously-based hatred is a major challenge for religious leaders worldwide, in the service of their communities.

We, scholars and religious leaders, affiliated with the Elijah Interfaith Institute, would like to share our experience and vision with religious communities, in the hope of stemming the tide of religiously based hate. We offer the following twelve points, as a common ground for all religions, based on our common quest for wisdom, with the hope of inspiring reflection and action that will bring us closer to peace and harmonious living. These 12 points are broken down in light of three main wisdom teachings, recognized by all world religions.

Know Yourself

Stop and think. The wise stop and think before they speak and act.

Be aware. The wise are alert and constantly monitor their own attitudes.

Recognize fear. The wise recognize fear, and combat it with knowledge.

Practice the Golden Rule

Find the good in the other. The wise find what is good in the other. This is their truth.

Get to know the other. The wise get to know the other personally.

Understand the viewpoint of the other. The wise consider the viewpoint of the other.

Do not generalize or stereotype. The wise do not generalize.

Speak out against hate. The wise speak out against wrongdoing.

Seek Wisdom

Get correct knowledge. The wise seek reliable information about other faiths.

Learn the lessons of history. The wise learn the lessons of history: Violence and destruction are always regretted.

Practice humility. The wise are humble.

Share wisdom. The wise recognize wisdom wherever it is found and share it.



Laughing Matters

The Sunday School Teacher Said...

The Sunday School teacher was describing how Lot’s wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt, when little Jason interrupted.

“My mommy looked back once when she was driving,” he announced triumphantly, “and she turned into a telephone pole.”

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A Sunday School teacher asked, “Johnny, do you think Noah did a lot of fishing when he was on the ark?”

“No,” replied Johnny. “How could he, with just two worms?”

.....

A Sunday School teacher said to her children, “We have been learning how powerful kings and queens were in Bible times. But there is a higher power. Can anybody tell me what it is?”

One child blurted out, “Aces!”

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