From the Pastor . . .

This will be my 24th Lent and Easter with you! Each of them has been memorable in its own way – though there is a certain amount of blending, one into the other! But that’s OK, because one thing I love about life in the church is how the different seasons of the church year take us through the different seasons of the spirit. We set these holy seasons over against our lives, and there always seems to be a connection. Lent takes us inward – a time of penitence and reflection on God’s movement within us. If we are attentive to it, it’s not difficult to recognize the deficits in our walk with Christ. This isn’t meant to make us feel guilty about the ways we fall short; rather, it brings us to the awareness of our need for God in order to bring us closer to God’s forgiving and merciful love. With Easter comes the glorious news that not even death can separate us from that love. With Christ we are raised, once again, into new life. It truly is an overwhelming message, made much more meaningful if we are intentional about following Jesus to the cross.

The other thing the Lenten journey can do is help us cut through the noise and confusion that so easily fills our days. There seems to be more of it than ever! It is a season of simplicity and peace – again, if we let it be. We all need such times, and I am grateful that we have this season to encourage this kind of devotion. As we worship, study, and pray together we are renewed in our faith and can discern the fuller life to which we are called.

I am glad to be with you in this next season of the Spirit, and I pray our lives will connect, once again, to the God who loves us, to the Christ who calls us, and to the world that needs us.

Yours in Christ,

Peter
Crosscurrents     Lent/Easter 2017

Our Mission:
To love and serve God and neighbor with open hearts, open hands, and open minds.

March 1
Ash Wednesday Worship
@ 7:00 PM
Imposition of ashes for those who choose to receive them.
Rev. Earl Arnold will lead this service.

March 5
1st Sunday in Lent
Matthew 4:1-11
"Wilderness Exam"
Sacrament of Communion

March 12
2nd Sunday in Lent
John 3:1-17
"Born from Above"
(Daylight Savings Time begins)

March 19
3rd Sunday in Lent
John 4:5-42
"Living Water"
5:00 pm Lenten Blues Vespers

March 26
4th Sunday in Lent
John 9:1-41
"Eyes Wide Open"

April 2
5th Sunday in Lent
John 11:1-45
"Life in the Opposite Direction"
Sacrament of Communion

April 9
Passion/Palm Sunday
Holy Week begins
Receive One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

April 13
Maundy Thursday Worship @ 7:00 PM
"The Way of the Cross"

April 15
Easter Vigil, 8:00-10:00 pm

April 22
Resurrection of the Lord/Easter
John 20:1-18
"Weep No More"

Lenten Midweek
Book Study
“Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptic”
by Timothy Keller

Thursday Evenings, 6:00-7:30 PM
March 9, 16, 23, 30, April 6

Witness to your Christian faith by engaging the doubters of our skeptical world in an open, ongoing, rational, non-oppressive conversation about the significance of life. Tim Keller’s book provides the framework for such a conversation in our Lenten series. Founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, Tim Keller, the author several books, has been called "A C.S. Lewis for the 21st Century."

Copies of the book will be available for purchase by those who choose to participate. Please sign up for a book (price $18 - make checks out to "Pebble Hill Church") on the table in the atrium beginning Sunday, February 12. The study will be led by Dr. Ron Cavanagh and Rev. Shidemantle.

Deacon News
Submitted by Katie Canada

So much is happening with the Deacons that we have created the Deacon’s Corner in the Atrium. This will be a dedicated space to learn more about deacon activities and upcoming events. Stop by and visit and learn more about what is happening with our team.

USHERS

One of the things you can do at the Deacon’s Corner is sign up to Usher. If you are interested in greeting people and welcoming them to church, and can arrive just a little bit early to get ready, we’d love to have you sign up.

EASTER LILLIES

It’s Easter Lily season again. Susan Cobb will be taking orders in the Deacon’s Corner of atrium on Sunday March 19 - April 10. The cost will be $12.00. You can take them home after church on Easter Sunday. If you have any questions you can call Susan at 315-446-0625 or email her at sjcstamp@gmail.com.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Deacon will be announcing fundraising activities very soon to support new fencing around the garden to keep the fruits of our gardeners labor in and the wildlife out! We will also be looking at ways to bring more community members to our garden and to Pebble Hill. If you are interested in working on this effort, or learning more about the Community Garden stop by and see us in the Atrium.

BIRTHDAY PARTY

Thank you to everyone who came out to our first Birthday Party! It was fun to mingle with people who share the same birthday month and have some cake to celebrate!
The Syracuse Memory Café had another great turnout at our second gathering on Wednesday, February 8th. All eight of our original guests returned and were joined by eight new guests including one Pebble Hill member, and three guests and two caregivers from Iroquois Nursing Home. Add to that the 11 volunteers from Pebble Hill and the adult forum room - decorated beautifully for Valentine’s Day - was filled with singing, laughter, and conversation.

As guests arrive, they are helped out of their car and greeted at the front door. Name tags are made and people sign in. They then make their way into the café, help themselves to coffee, and find a seat. Charlotte Haas made a beautiful Valentine music book and Bette Kahler led the group in songs. This months ice breaker question was “What is your favorite food?” We heard everything from chocolate to lobster and even a Slavic crockpot dish.

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Lenten Sunday Morning Bible Study
“Coming to the Light”

At Christmas we read from the prologue to John’s gospel — “… in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” (John 1:4-5)

On Sunday mornings during Lent, in worship and at the morning forum, we will explore the theme “Coming to the Light” through the conversations Jesus has in John’s gospel with people who find themselves drawn into deeper transforming relationship with God by the encounter. We will be invited to see where we find ourselves in these stories as we move through the “dark” weeks of Lent toward the light of Easter.

All are invited to join in this Lenten journey — in worship and in study together. Rev. Shidemantle will lead these sessions.

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering received on Palm Sunday

Started in 1949, One Great Hour of Sharing is a long-standing ecumenical effort aimed at raising the funds necessary to provide relief and reconstruction for communities in the aftermath of disaster. What started as an hour-long radio appeal has evolved over the years, varying from eight to 29 participating denominations, and has become the most participated-in Offering in the PC(USA).

One Great Hour of Sharing makes a difference in the world through three impactful programs: Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, which works alongside communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human-caused disasters (32%); Presbyterian Hunger Program, which takes action to alleviate hunger and the systemic causes of poverty so all may be fed (36%); and Self- Development of People, which invests in communities responding to their experiences of racism, oppression, poverty and injustice and educates Presbyterians about the impact of these social ills (32%).

Special envelopes will be available to receive this Offering on Palm/Passion Sunday.

The Syracuse Memory Café is filled with singing, laughter, and conversation.

Sycracuse Memory Café
Submitted with Tim Frazee

Pebble Hill-growing in mission advisory board meets quarterly to discuss the mission initiatives at Pebble Hill and decide how to spend our mission budget. Over the past few years Pebble Hill has used some of our gifts to support the Cayuga Syracuse Presbytery Haiti Ministry and Mission initiative in Paoulette, Haiti. Our donations have helped repair a water well, sponsor an ongoing literacy program, fund a moto-ambulance to transport sick people to the hospital in the next village, and provide lunches and uniforms for children to attend primary school. Late last year Pebble Hill committed to sponsoring 7th graders continuing education through 12th grade.

I am pleased to introduce to you Felix Rose Yolande.

-Tim Frazee on behalf of the GIM Advisory Board.

As guests arrive, they are helped out of their car and greeted at the front door. Name tags are made and people sign in. They then make their way into the café, help themselves to coffee, and find a seat. Charlotte Haas made a beautiful Valentine music book and Bette Kahler led the group in songs. This months ice breaker question was “What is your favorite food?” We heard everything from chocolate to lobster and even a Slavic crockpot dish. We played “who is that” where pictures of well known people are shown on a monitor and guests call out the answer. This month featured famous couples.

Storytellers ask key wondering questions following each story presentation:

· I wonder which part of the story you like best?
· I wonder which part of the story is the most important?
· I wonder which part of the story you like the least?
· I wonder if there is a part of the story we could leave out and still have all of the story?
· I wonder which part of the story is most about you?

I wonder which part of the Bible you like best?

I wonder which part of our shared Christian faith is most about you?

Contact Rebecca Chaffee to be included in Godly Play training.

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Tableaux for Worship: Lenten Gospel Presentations

What’s a tableaux? It’s a dramatic representation of a specific scene from scripture. No one moves or speaks. The words are scripture, and the participants freeze in place, showing emotion with their facial expressions and bodies. Each tableaux is made up of 3 to 5 scenes that build within a standard lectionary Gospel reading—Temptation in the Desert, Nicodemus, Woman at the Well, and more!

All ages welcome. Can you take part? Come rehearse with us at 11:00 on Sundays, following worship.

We will present the Gospel in this format throughout Lent, from March 5th through April 9th.

Contact Rebecca Chaffee.

Educator: PIFing and Other Clergy Adventures

By: Rebecca Chaffee

When I was in Iowa for doctoral work I met a colleague who asked me, “Are you PIFing?” It took just a quick double-take before I responded “Yes!” Apparently, that is the term among PCUSA seminarians to describe the period of candidating for ministry using the Church Leadership Connection web site.

The PCUSA online pastoral call system has been equated to internet dating, and for good reason. Each church prayerfully creates a Ministry Information Form (or MIF), and each clergy member or candidate creates a Personal Information Form (or PIF). These are entered into the online system, which electronically matches profiles for churches and candidates to consider. Job seekers can also search the database by state, job title, or any number of other fields.

Next, Pastor Nominating Committees from churches seeking a pastor review all of the automatic matches as well as any self-referrals by candidates who like the church’s MIF. From there, candidates like me face a steady stream of emails and phone calls from PNCs who are interested in learning more about us. The PNC chair shares the results of that initial contact with the rest of the committee, and if the committee agrees, they will either send an email requesting a written response to their questions or arrange a Skype interview to speak directly with the candidate.

So far, my PIF (profile) has been matched with 43 different PCUSA churches. (I’ve also applied at two other churches that are outside the PCUSA.) Of those matches, I’ve had a number of emails, phone calls, Skype interviews, sermon requests, conference calls, and a Neutral Pulpit and face-to-face meeting. (A Neutral Pulpit is a way for PNCs to review a candidate’s preaching style while maintaining confidentiality—the candidate preaches as a guest in a nearby church and members of the PNC attend that service.)

PIFing is an adventure! It’s unlike any other job search I’ve done, but it’s a great way to meet people in different churches across the country and learn what makes them excited about the Gospel. Where will God send me next? Pray with me, and stay tuned!

Crosscurrents Lent/Easter 2016

Easter Activities

Maundy Thursday
April 13, 7:00 PM

We return to our traditional Sanctuary worship.

Easter Egg Hunt
Saturday, April 15, 10:00 AM
Our community Easter Egg Hunt will be held on Saturday, April 15, at 10:00 AM. Volunteers, plan to arrive by 8:30 AM.

Easter Vigil
Saturday, April 15, 8:00 PM
Do Presbyterians celebrate the Easter Vigil, a Holy Saturday deep dive exploration of the history of salvation through scripture? The answer is, Yes! Some do! There’s information and worship ideas in our Book of Common Worship as well as on PCUSA.org. The standard celebration begins with a service of light and includes a service of readings, a service of Baptism, and a service of Eucharist, or Communion.

This year, Pebble Hill is going to offer an Easter Vigil service on Saturday, April 15, at 8:30 AM. Volunteers, plan to arrive by 8:30 AM. The Easter Vigil will begin with a service of Eucharist, or Communion.

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This will be the second year that we are adding a jazz vespers service during Lent, featuring the music of the blues. The service last year was a big hit! The Lenten season lends itself naturally to this music — as the blues is a way that folks have traveled through wilderness times in their lives — times of struggle and hardship. If you haven’t yet been to a jazz vespers service at Pebble Hill, this would be a great one to experience.

In August Wilson’s play “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom,” Ma Rainey speaks of the blues’ prophetic power to release the individual from spiritual isolation. She says:

“The blues help you get out of bed in the morning. You get up knowing you ain’t alone. There’s something else in the world. Something’s been added by that song. This be an empty world without the blues. I take that emptiness and try to fill it up with something.”

Lent is a time of reflection and repentance. Blues music emerges from the human experience of struggle and heartache, yet there is a hopefulness about it that comes from telling it and singing it like it is.