



GOOD NEWS FROM PASTOR JEFF



Dear friends, I am pleased to share with you that our congregation has received a “Faithful Servant Grant” from the Synod of the Northeast to fund a three-year vision called “Nurturing Good Soil.” In Matthew 13, Jesus tells a parable about a spendthrift sower who hurls the seeds of faith in all directions. Some of these seeds fall on “good soil,” taking root and growing vigorously, thirty, sixty, even a hundred fold. As the White Plains Presbyterian Church begins to celebrate our 300th year of service to God in this community, we have begun to nurture “good soil” literally and figuratively in three, inter-related ways: by deepening our commitment to educational ministry, imagining an environmentally sustainable future, and reaching out to our Latino/a neighbors through new forms of worship and community partnerships.

Practice is at the heart of faith. Cultivating habits of care for the whole of God’s creation helps us remember our right place as co-inhabitants of this intricate, delicate planet and shapes how we hear and interpret God’s word in our midst. As humans (humus), our spirituality is inextricable from our materiality. We believe that our concrete work in the literal soil and for the literal good soil grounds our spiritual understanding of “good soil” that connects us with our neighbors in White Plains and helps existing members, young and old, open ourselves to God’s leading. Surging interest in greening our congregation and in living sustainably as a diverse community has ignited new *foci* for outreach and drawn new and former members into our congregation. Our vision of nurturing good soil has grown organically from a deep appreciation of our congregation’s experience and diversity as well as from a desire to face challenges with hope and trust in God’s resurrection power.

To further this missional vision, the Council has taken three actions. First, we created the position of *Minister of Christian Education and Spiritual Nurture* which will be filled this fall by The Rev. Lynn Dunn; watch your bulletins and email for the date of her ordination service. Second, the Council has commissioned a Green Team to lead our congregation in a two-year certification process as an earth-honoring congregation. The Green Team will help us evaluate and begin implementation of eco-friendly, energy-efficient systems (heat, light, accessible features for maintenance, new windows, insulation, solar panels), an eco-friendly fellowship hour, and introduce sustainable practices in our life together. And third, we plan to build upon our current Spanish language education and ESL/fellowship/worship program toward congregation-wide liturgy, education, and mission that is bilingual. Having just finished our first Vacation Bible School program in years, one area of growth will be the development of a bilingual VBS first for children and, later, for adults.

The wonderful thing about all three good soil initiatives is that members are already involved and committed to growing the ministries upon which these new initiatives are based. This is a vision God has planted and which has been growing for the last two years. The Synod’s “Faithful Servant Grant” of \$50,000 over the *next* two years will strengthen our efforts to make this vision reality. We believe that God is calling us to “turn over” the spiritual and material soil in White Plains Presbyterian Church so that, as Wendell Berry, author and American agrarian reformer has written, “In a world gone mad with mistrust and alienation, the church (like never before) must present faith as a dynamic and relevant force for change.”

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION A Stewardship Story from the Presbyterian Foundation

Imagine for a moment those who came before us left us nothing. No legacy. Nothing.

I remember as a boy, when passing funeral processions, my father often said “Boys, when I die, I know that everyone will be sad – I know that there will be great weeping – and *gnashing of teeth*. I am going to make sure of it; my final will has 4 words: ‘I spent it all.’” I spent it all. We always laughed, because – well – he would tell it again if we didn’t – to make sure we got the punch line. Spent it all - It was all for me – There’s nothing left. This story’s over. Turn around... walk on... go! I won’t be there for you anymore. Imagine...

If those who reared us spent it all. If those who would pass on our foundation of faith just stopped,

Let’s step back to the original Christian bequest - Jesus’ death and testamentary gift of the Resurrection, the original seed for our Christian faith. Jesus’ disciples and followers shared the good news, sowing more seeds that grew and those passed the good news on to others and then to others, who passed it on to others despite persecution, who passed it to others in new lands, who passed it on over vast and sometimes turbulent seas, who passed on the story in when the seed was planted here, to your family who passed is passing it on today - all from that first seed. You – we are today’s link spanning 2000 years. And it is our turn to pass it on to those who come next.

It is our turn. We are a vital link in the chain that connects our Christian family of faith from the past with those who come next. Without all of us it stops here.

The point is this: You are invaluable. The decisions you make and the actions you take are life-giving to those who come next.

So how are we doing? Passing this on to others? Are we building this family for the future? Or are we really just doing maintenance?

By maintenance I mean are we passing this on on a week to week basis sustaining this faith family for our current living members, not generation to generation. If we do not continue the work of provisioning Christians for tomorrow, are we at risk of stalling the Good News? Will maintenance alone leave God’s outpost here fully equipped to do God’s work after we are gone?

Or are we investing, tell, build, share – just like those generations before us. They’ve bequested us the stories, the beautiful buildings, ... While we are so fortunate, our generation has one of the greatest challenges in history – not fighting persecution for our beliefs – we are embattled by apathy and doubt. Will you build for those who follow? Will you raise those next on your shoulders? Are you introducing them to God?

Americans are generous. Christians are extravagantly generous. Charitable Bequests are at \$23 billion, yet Presbyterian churches have received a shrinking piece. \$163 million 5 years ago and \$98 million last year. Bequests to most Presbyterian Churches is \$0. Why? Presbyterians say they are not opposed to giving – they are in fact inclined. People say I don’t give to church, because they don’t ask. Well, here it is. **We are hereby formally asking you please consider a bequest** – what that means is that when you are done with all that you have been given by God... please share some of it back. Why?

I hope it’s NOT because we asked;

Not for guilt, not to pay bills.

I hope you do this because this is your church home, and you want it to be for others.

Because you celebrate God’s love here every week with your church family, and you want this for others.

Do it because you know the Good News and you want to pass it on.

To learn more about the many ways of making a bequest to this church, contact the good folks at www.presbyterianfoundation.org. Your gift will be listed in the narthex as part of our “Spirit and the Flame.”



Your Property Commission And Facilities Manager Have Been Busy This Spring



The New, Environmentally Friendly Roof on the CE Building
May 2013



The Bell Tower Repairs and New Roof after Super-Storm Sandy
June 2013



Removal of the Abandoned Oil Tank at 46 Rockledge
June 2013



Removal of Dead or Overgrown Trees in the Parking Lot
June 2013



Cracked Windows replaced throughout the building



Contract signed to replace the broken burners

In the coming months, watch for the new sanctuary carpet and a much needed new roof at 46 Rockledge Ave.

Your Property Commission is chaired by Elders Vinodh Vivekananda and Chris Hughes.
They are Olga Daniels, Bruce Hutchison, Troy Millard, Frank Re, Agnes Scheu, Henry Williamson and Pastor Jeff.

Summer is a great time to be in love.

“Sing God a simple song.
Make it up as you go along.
Sing like you like to sing.
God loves a simple thing,
For God is the simplest of all.”

These are the opening words to Leonard Bernstein’s “Simple Song,” from his arguably greatest work, *Mass*. Beyond expressing much of my personal theology, these words, which go on to reference Psalm 1, “Blessed is the man who loves the Lord, and walks in his ways,” tie in to the sermon we heard now a few weeks ago, and to our ongoing discussion of prophecy.

Because simple is not necessarily quiet, and in God’s geometry, rarely straight. The church is an esthetic bastion, meaning at once to preserve what is inside, but also to protrude and pour out into the world. This was never clearer to me than when visiting the Indianapolis Museum of Art after two years of studying sacred music at Notre Dame. In front of the museum is a fountain in the form of a great city, with water gushing upward from the center, only to fall back watering and vitalizing very street. (See it here.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Omi4LxYPkiY>). For me this image (and it is loud!) shows the continuity of creation, violent and elegant, and the need that it never stop (As it was in the beginning, is now.... You sing this so well now!).

Listen for Bernstein’s “Simple Song” later this summer.

Peace in all your messy, gushing, simple living,

Ty



WHO'S HAVING A BIRTHDAY?

JULY

- 1 Marie Mariani
- 2 David Greffenius
- 3 Mary Degener
- 3 Karen Armstrong
- 5 Emily Oladipo
- 6 Misa Lanier
- 7 Frank Re
- 8 Sarah Adams
- 15 Sydney Ellen Fuerst
- 15 Hana Elkhoury
- 17 Adam Moyer
- 18 Marilyn Moore
- 19 Jared Charles
- 20 Kateri MacDonald
- 21 Jay Atkinson
- 22 Donna Robeson
- 25 Edmund Lyman
- 29 Hudson Oladipo
- 30 Katherine O'Toole

AUGUST

- 2 Manley Burton
- 3 Dexter Barran
- 4 Melanie Millard
- 6 Carol Larsen
- 7 Cherlyne Branche
- 8 Jane Elkhoury
- 9 Julie Hatcher-Bhatt
- 10 Ruth Dreisacker
- 10 Teresa Orlando
- 11 Winston Burton
- 12 Yasmin Barnes
- 12 Julian Tabb
- 13 Myra Atkinson
- 14 Essie Walton
- 14 Beth Falzone
- 16 Ruth Doehring
- 18 Ivette Morello
- 19 Alvin Goode
- 20 Steven Mills
- 20 Akwi Nyambi