



The Beacon



WEST CHARLTON UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

882-9874

www.westcharltonupc.org

2011

Pastoral Reflection

Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Sharing your faith can be difficult, risky, and scary. Maybe we don't want to be identified as religious weirdos. Maybe some of us think sharing our faith in Jesus Christ will seem arrogant or offensive. We might be thinking, "What if someone asks me a spiritual question and I don't have any answers?" Perhaps you think that you're not gifted to be an "evangelist" or think that word might conjure up negative images of obnoxious, insensitive, and pushy types. Whatever the myriad of reasons, the fact remains that in most of our churches, sharing our faith with others is daunting and often neglected. It has been observed "Many Christians think of evangelism the same way they think of visiting their aunt with Alzheimer's": something they know they are supposed to do, but are always finding ways of putting off. The thing about it is that I think the vast majority of American Christians find the notion of evangelism extremely distasteful and do not practice it in any fashion."

Although sharing your faith can be difficult, it can also be natural, authentic, empowered, compassionate, loving, relevant, renewing, and fulfilling.

Although some have stated that evangelism is listed as a spiritual gift for certain people, Acts 1:8 makes it clear that all Christians are witnesses to the gospel and to what God has and is doing in our lives. Evangelism at its core is about being an authentic witness to Jesus Christ. "Our problem in evangelism is not that we do not have enough information, it's that we do not know how to be ourselves . . . we are called to be witnesses to what we have seen, experienced, and what we know." Rebecca Manley Pippert

We can be effective witnesses to the gospel if we can be focused on being R.E.A.L. (Relational; Embodied; Authentic; Led by the Spirit).

All the recent data show that the most effective way to share one's faith is through meaningful relationships. Upwards of 80 percent of formerly unchurched people who came to faith in Christ said that their decision was the result of the influence of a friend, family member, or acquaintance. That makes sense because God has created us to be relational. What we are coming to realize is that people are growing more immune to many of the less personal methods of communication like tracts, religious radio, billboards, and bumper stickers. But unchurched people are very open to having spiritual conversations with those they know and trust. That is why many have come to see that Jesus' call in Acts 1:8 to be witnesses starts in Jerusalem, then moves to Judea, Samaria, and the world. This isn't just a reflection of how the gospel will spread in the first-century church; it's also a strategy for reaching those who are part of our web of relationships or sphere of influence.

We cannot change hearts, God does. The truth we need to grasp is that God is already at work in a person's life even before we show up. We are a part of God's unfolding plan in a person's life. Being a faithful witness does not mean we force things to happen; it simply means we try and figure out what God is already up to in a person's life and ask God to lead us in how best to be a witness of the gospel. We have to develop a sensitivity to the "nudge of the Holy Spirit."

I like how Bill Hybels has put it: “I try and wake up each morning declaring, ‘My life is in your hands, God. Use me to point someone toward you today—I promise to cooperate in any way I can. If you want me to say a word for you today, I’ll do that. If you want me to keep quiet but demonstrate love and servanthood, by your Spirit’s power I will. I’m fully available to you today, so guide me by your Spirit.’”

The second way we can be effective witnesses is by being an “embodiment” of the gospel that we proclaim both personally and corporately. Acts 1:8 is not a call to “do witnessing” but rather to “be a witness.” People are watching how we as Christ’s followers are living our lives. St. Francis of Assisi said, “Always preach the gospel, and if necessary use words.” Jesus said, “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in Heaven.” Are we loving others, are we serving others, are we making an impact in our community, are we helping the needy, lonely, hungry, and helpless? Do our lives match up with our message? Are we bearing witness to the transformative power of God in our lives and in our community? As a church, what are ways that we are embodying our message for our communities?

Third, we need to be “authentic”. Faith sharing must come from the joy and transformation that we continually receive from a vibrant relationship with God. I love the famous quote attributed to missionary D. T. Niles: “Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.” In sharing our faith, we are sharing what we have experienced, our story as well as God’s story, with others who desperately want to hear good news for their lives and for the world. In thinking through our story it is helpful to ponder such questions as: How has having Christ in my life made a difference? How would you describe your relationship with God? What is God doing in my life right now? Who was/is Jesus? It is also important to be able to articulate what it is that we believe about God’s story.

On October 2nd, World Communion Sunday, I encourage you to invite those with whom you been developing relationships. And may the peace of Christ be with us all.

Special Peacemaking Offering A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace

Peacemaking is the human response to God’s gift of peace. In an increasingly violent and unjust world, we as Christians are called to understand and address the root causes of violence and injustice by building a culture of peace and nonviolence for all.

Since 1988, the Peacemaking Program has brought 261 International Peacemakers from 63 countries who made about 1,700 individual visits to presbyteries, synods, colleges and presbyteries. International Peacemakers are leaders who are engaged in peacemaking in their own areas of the world. The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program invites leaders from our partner churches around the world to share their experiences as peacemakers in their own contexts.

This year the International Peacemaker program, made possible by your generous gifts to the Peacemaking Offering, is hosting 12 International Peacemakers (from Bangladesh, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Jordan, Madagascar, Mexico, Russia, Sudan and Syria) who will make about 60 visits around the U.S. from September 23 through October 17, 2011. According to Research Services’ Presbyterian Panel, 160,000 Presbyterians heard an International Peacemaker speak last year.

On October 2, 2011, churches across the nation will celebrate **World Communion Sunday**. On this first Sunday of October, congregations across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) including WCUPC will receive the **2011 Peacemaking Offering**. This offering, one of four special offerings of the denomination, supports peacemaking ministries across the church and is crucial to the ongoing work of the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program. Today our nation is embroiled in two lengthy wars, our economy is faltering in part to support our military “might,” and our society is increasingly – and too often violently - divided by a growing economic divide. However, as Christians, we are reminded that “a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for* those who make peace” (James 3:18).

Through your gifts to the Peacemaking Offering, congregations receive training and resources to address conflict, International Peacemakers bear witness to how they live out their faith in the midst of challenge and violence, children and young people learn how they can make a difference in building peace, and people across the church benefit from resources that teach peacemaking as part of our Christian discipleship. The world is in need of people who will live out the call of Christ to be peacemakers. Join other Presbyterians in making a difference. Please do your part to support the Peacemaking Offering.

Flowers for the Chancel

If you are interested in giving flowers to be placed on the Chancel on a Sunday during the year— please contact Sonja Greenhill at 882-9462. Please fill out the form and give it to Sonja or mail it to her. Please check with her to make sure no one else has chosen the Sunday you would like to give. The flowers can be taken by the person giving them, or they can be given to a person who is a shut-in or someone not feeling well.

The following florists will deliver on Saturdays. You do not need to be here when they are delivered. The flowers will be placed in front of the cross in the Sanctuary.

Sweetbriar Florist located on the corner of Lake Road and Hermance by Galway Lake : 882-5132 or 882-3676.

Country Florist is located at 225 Kingsley Road in Burnt Hills: 399-2650

Bloomfields Florist is located on Rte 30 in Amsterdam, just past Pizza hut going north: 843-2000

OCTOBER

Flowers for the Chancel given by the following:

- 2 Barbara Cervenka: In memory of loved ones
- 9 Janie Byrd: In loving memory of her brother Cris
- 16 Judy and Bill Knowlton: In memory of their parents
- 23 Chris Nelson
- 30 Ray and Sonja Greenhill: In memory of loved ones

Flowers for the Chancel

I, _____

Would like to have flowers placed on the Chancel on

_____ (Date).

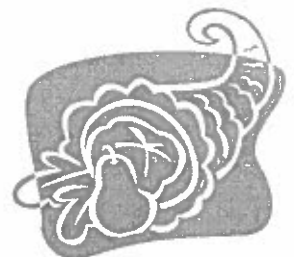
Any special celebration or memorial for which you are providing these flowers:

Please give to Sonja Greenhill. Sonja can be reached at 882-9462.

**HARVEST DINNER AND AUCTION
OCTOBER 29
6 PM**

Bring a dish to pass & place settings. Beverage and dessert will be provided. Any non-perishable items for the auction will be displayed in church on October 22. Following in the tradition of our forefathers, bring part of your harvest or baked goods, crafts, quilts, etc. In thankfulness for all we have.

Don't miss the evening of fun, food & fellowship!!!!



Happy Birthday to all those who have a birthday in October including the following:

Ray Prentice, 1st
Harlene Szczerba, 4th
Susan Thomas, 8th
Sebastian Phemister, 12th
David Lachtrupp, 16th
Ray Arnold, 19
Lester Denison, 23rd
Christine Nelson, 25
Vivienne Phemister, 27th



Treasurer's Report

Local Fund:

Balance 8-1-11		-8,388.52
Receipts:	8,097.00	
Expenses:	9958.43	
Balance 9-1-11		-10,249.95

Cut out and use a bookmark

*For if you forgive
others their trespasses,
your heavenly Father will
also forgive you...*

Matthew 6:14

Saratoga Friendly's Gives Back!

If you're in Downtown Saratoga and looking for a bite to eat, consider Friendly's Restaurant at 68 Congress Street. Bring your receipt back to church, drop it in the marked box in the Chapel, and Friendly's will contribute 10% of receipt totals to our church through the end of the year. Please note— program is specific to THIS Friendly's franchise only— manager Bonnie Horrocks will continue the program through December— ALL purchases eligible.

(Not valid at Wilton, Clifton Park, Glens Falls or Glenville franchises)

Questions? See Ann Lachtrupp-Weaver



WCUPC

~ October 2011 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 COMMUNION World Communion Sunday 9AM Choir Practice 9:30-10:15 Christian Ed all ages 10:00 Fellowship Hour 10:30 Worship Service Flowers: Barbara Cervenka	3 Session Meets 7PM	4	5 Deacons Meet 7PM	6	7	8
9 9AM Choir Practice 9:30-10:15 Christian Ed all ages 10:00 Fellowship Hour 10:30 Worship Service Flowers: Jamie Byrd	10	11	12	13	14	15
16 FOOD PANTRY SUNDAY 9AM Choir Practice 9:30-10:15 Christian Ed all ages 10:00 Fellowship Hour 10:30 Worship Service Flowers: Judy & Bill Knowlton	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 PRAISE WORSHIP SUNDAY 9AM Choir Practice 9:30-10:15 Christian Ed all ages 10:00 Fellowship Hour 10:30 Worship Service Flowers: Chris Nelson	24 Women's Association Dinner 6:30 PM	25	26	27	28	29 Harvest Auction/Dinner 6:00 PM Maplewood Manor Service 2PM
30 REFORMATION SUNDAY 9AM Choir Practice 9:30-10:15 Christian Ed all ages 10:00 Fellowship Hour 10:30 Worship Service Flowers: Ray & Sonja Greenhill	31	Notes:				