



**Park Avenue
United Methodist
Church**

NEWS

A WORD IN EDGEWAYS

Website: www.parkavemethodist.org

February 2008

Volume 36, Number 2

GREETINGS



What an exciting month this February is with its Super Bowl and our home team winner, the New York Giants! Then there is Super Tuesday when the presidential primaries are held in the most populous states including our own. Now it will include the ticker tape parade down Broadway for the Super Bowl winners. If you've ever been to one of these you know how exciting they are.

February is also the month that includes Valentine's Day (did you know that elementary school teachers are the ones who get the most valentines?) and President's Day, which is celebrated on a Monday to give everyone a long weekend. In addition, 2008 is a Leap Year so on February 29th all you ladies feel free to propose to the man of your choice. "It's a tradition that is believed to have started in 5th century Ireland when St. Bridget complained to St. Patrick about women having to wait for so long for a man to propose. According to legend, St. Patrick said the yearning females could propose on this one day in February during the leap year."

But there is another day in February that is more significant for Christians than all of the aforementioned days and that is Ash Wednesday, which

falls this year on February 6th. This is the day that is in the church calendar to remind us of our mortality – "ashes to ashes, dust to dust." It also begins the season of Lent when we are meant to consider the state of our souls and our relationship with the Divine. It lasts for forty days, which brings us to Easter Sunday since the Sundays during Lent are not counted as part of the forty days. Why forty days? Because that is the amount of time that Jesus spent in the wilderness fasting and praying after his Baptism in preparation for his ministry.

As you will see in the Church Calendar, PAUMC has scheduled services and classes to help you observe this Lenten Season in preparation for a joyous Easter. All are welcome so bring your friends and may you all draw closer to God during this holy season.

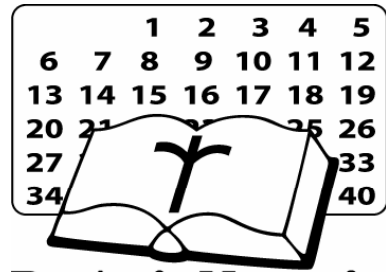
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CHURCH CALENDAR

Feb. 6 Ash Wednesday –
Between 7 A.M. and 9 A.M. Communion and the optional imposition of ashes.
8 A.M. – Ash Wednesday Prayer Service.
12 Noon – Prayer Service with Communion and Ashes
Between 12 Noon and 2 P.M.
Holy Communion and the optional imposition of ashes

At 6:30 P.M., we are invited for a light soup supper and Ash Wednesday service at Park

Avenue Christian Church, 1010 Park Avenue (at E. 85th Street, southwest corner). Pastor Jessica Anschutz will preach. (The service will begin at 7 PM)



Pastor's Message for Lent

We are all used to saying and hearing “Merry Christmas”. But can you imagine anyone saying “Have a Joyful and Merry Lent.” We rightly think of Lent as a time of

repentance. But does repentance involve doom and gloom?

Last year for Lent, The Church of England kicked off a special campaign called, “Love Life, Live Lent.” They started on Ash Wednesday and for the 40 days of Lent, sent a series of text messages to encourage people to have a joyful Lent and make a difference in someone else’s life each day. On Ash Wednesday they suggested, ‘make someone laugh today’. The daily texts suggested an action to help spread generosity and neighborliness. The Church encouraged people to take a fresh look at Lent with a range of other initiatives designed to raise a smile - the launch of a Christian comedy club, a training course for vicars in stand-up-style performance skills, and a website sharing the best clean jokes in the country.

Organizers achieved their goal with huge success by highlighting that doing something positive can be as transforming as giving something up and can help people to reflect on their relationship with each other and with God.

Remembering back to seminary days, I remember the word for repentance in the original Greek of the New Testament: *metanoia*. Literally, *metanoia* means a change of heart, a change of attitude, and it refers to a turning away from selfishness and self-seeking to greater awareness and love of God. This is something positive, and something that should (and does) bring us gladness and joy.

In the Gospel reading for Ash Wednesday, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21, Jesus refers to the three classical practices of the Lenten season: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. He warns us not to “show off ” our piety by performing good deeds, ostentatiously. “When you pray, go to your inner room, close the

Feb. 5, 7, 8 – Interviews of the candidates for Day School director. (All day)

Feb. 10 Sunday – Children’s Sabbath –
The Sunday School will participate in the service at 11 A.M.
Special guest speaker: Rebecca Merbert of The Children’s Home of Binghamton, NY.

The Second Sunday Concert will be at 2 P.M. in Clarke Hall.

Feb. 11 Monday – Board of Trustees Meeting at 6:30 P.M. in the 4th floor Library

Feb. 13 Wednesday – Lenten Study begins at 6:30 P.M. in Clarke Hall, Dinner and discussion of the scriptures Genesis 12: 1-4a, Romans 4: 1-5, 13-17, John 3: 1-17

Feb. 17 – Second Sunday in Lent

Feb. 20 – Wednesday Lenten Dinner and Discussion: Scriptures: Exodus 17: 1-7; Romans 5: 1-11 & John 4:5-42

Feb. 24 Sunday – Third Sunday in Lent

Memorial Service for Leonard Williams at 12:30 P.M. following the worship service.

Feb. 25 Monday – Worship Committee Meeting at 6:30 P.M. in Clarke Hall

Feb. 26 Tuesday – Church Council Meeting at 6:30 P.M. in Clarke Hall

Feb. 27 -- Wednesday Lenten Dinner and Discussion: Scriptures I Samuel 16: 1-13, Ephesians 5: 8-14 & John 9: 1-41

door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.” “When you fast, do not look gloomy . . . anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.” “When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you . . . do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.”

In our society, there may not be much of a temptation to show off our piety; in fact, our tendency is probably to hide it (if not be embarrassed by it). But the advice of Jesus directs us to consider the inner attitude with which we do our deeds of *metanoia*. In Lent our practice of prayer is much the same as throughout the year, though perhaps more intensive and frequent. But in our fasting and almsgiving we tend to think of ourselves as engaging in grueling sacrifice which could lead to a negative attitude, even feeling somewhat sorry for ourselves.

However, this Lent remember that *metanoia* is something very positive—not just self-sacrifice but growth in nearness to God and love of God. And this, surely, ought to bring us joy and good cheer (even if “merriment” is not quite the right word!). “God loves a cheerful giver.”

The other piece of the Gospel text reminds us about “giving alms”. For one thing, “alms” is not a word we use very often. For another, and even more significantly, “almsgiving” is too narrow a notion. The original text means “doing mercy” or doing works of compassion. It is therefore by no means limited to contributing money to persons in need or to good causes. Any deed of kindness that we do in response to someone in need is a work of compassion, and it is especially valuable if it calls upon us to sacrifice our time, our plans, our convenience, or our comfort. And such deeds, Jesus teaches us, are best done in secret, away from public notice. A fine piece of advice is, “Do something good for someone, and don’t get caught at it.”

The Church of England “Love Life, Live Lent” campaign reminded its participants that there is no

denying that prayer, self-denial, and deeds of compassion do have a personal cost. But in trying to be more neighborly and more loving, these practices can bring others and us happiness and joy. So have a joy filled, loving Lent as you seek to reestablish your relationship with God and with neighbors..

Happy Lent!

Pastor Bill

Lenten Study

During Lent, Pastor Bill Shillady, Pastor Jessica Anschutz and Student Intern Ray Altman will lead a study as part of the Wednesday Night Dinner Conversations Program at 6:30 in Clarke Hall. The study will be based on the lectionary scriptures and a book, “Behold the Lamb of God.”

Simon Peter Iredale, a priest in the Church of England, writes it and reminds us “that the season of Lent is more like ascending the Himalayas than going for a pleasant walk in the park. We are invited to explore together the foundations of our faith and through reflection and prayer see how strong these foundations are in our hearts. As Iredale guides us through the Lenten texts, we pass through three gardens. First, we will pass through the garden of paradise in Genesis as we seek to understand how the events that Genesis describes affected every succeeding human generation. We will pass through Gethsemane, the garden of decision, and as we strive to understand what Christ has achieved for us through his suffering. When we reach Easter Day and the garden of Christ’s resurrection, we will discover that God gives us something – a new resolve, a sense of sins forgiven, and a deeper insight into God’s compassion for us. You are welcome to join the study even if you haven’t been a part of the Wednesday group before. Preparatory reading of the book is optional. Copies of the book are free and may be obtained from Chris, the Sunday Custodian.

CHURCH CONFERENCE

– January 17, 2008

The conference was well attended considering that it was a cold Thursday night. I counted about 25 members not including Pastors Bill and Jessica. It was difficult to keep an accurate count because people kept straggling in from their jobs. There were sandwich wraps, shrimp, salads, fruit, cookies and soft drinks to welcome the hungry folks arriving straight from work. District Superintendent Noel Chin began the meeting with a prayer. He then complimented our church on being one of the few churches that is always receiving new members into the congregation. Pastor Chin then presented a certificate to PAUMC for always paying their apportionments completely and on time making us all very proud.

Larry Morales, co-lay leader, reviewed the year 2007 noting that all three of the Sunday services are doing well in attendance. The replacement for Assistant Sara Lamar-Sterling with Jessica Anschutz has gone smoothly as has the hiring of Gloria Clowes as our new church secretary.

Liz Clark in place of Wendy Cooper who was unable to attend reported on the Staff Parish Committee's recommendation for the pastoral compensations and the status of the search for a new Day School Director. The choice has been narrowed down to three and the decision will be made very soon. Pastor Bill expressed his thanks for his salary increase and the hard work done by this essential committee.

Kerry Baker-Relf then reported on the finances of the church, which are sound with all of our bills getting paid on time. The new budget was looked at and approved unanimously.

Michele Barton gave the trustees report and the motion to place the 2007 Anniversary Endowment Campaign funds of \$8,509 into the permanent Endowment was passed.

The next order of business was to approve the new committee members and chair people that had been suggested by the Committee on Lay Leadership formerly known as the Nominating Committee.

Our blessings and gratitude are extended to all who are willing to serve.

There is an urgent need for a Coffee Hour Coordinator as Annie Leist is unable to continue in this position due to the lens in her left eye being dislodged. See one of the pastors if you are willing to volunteer.

LETTER FROM KENYA

Pastor Bill has received a letter from Pastor John Calhoun whom you may recall was the minister in a church in Moscow, Russia that we were in covenant with and now he has moved to Kenya as his wife has a position there with the United Nations.

Dear friends in Christ,

Greetings and peace to you from Kenya.

Unfortunately, there is little peace in Kenya these days. After a week of relative calm and rising hope, violence and bloodshed has erupted again in the Rift Valley northwest of Nairobi .

Last week began promisingly, as Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, arrived in Nairobi to broker talks between President Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga, the head of the opposition party that has accused the government of manipulating the December 27 presidential election. Mr. Annan was even able to bring President Kibaki and Mr. Odinga together for a highly acclaimed public handshake. Speculation mounted that a political deal to end the crisis was imminent.

However, the political leaders began to again trade accusations of wrongdoing and to harden their own positions, and hopes for a quick solution to the crisis were dashed. And with no political solution at hand, over this past weekend violence flared anew in the Rift Valley. According to press reports, many Kikuyus in the Rift Valley have organized into small militias, with the aim of avenging recent attacks by Luos and other tribes that have protested the election of President Kibaki, a Kikuyu. On Saturday and Sunday, Kikuyu gangs went on the rampage in Nakuru and Naivasha, setting up

roadblocks to identify and attack Luos, stoning buses ferrying persons to safety in Nairobi , and burning hundreds of houses and farms. More than 100 people have been killed in tribal violence in the past four days, and the death toll since last month's elections has risen to nearly 800.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian crisis worsens. Thousands more innocent men, women, and children of all tribal backgrounds have been driven from their homes and are seeking shelter in police stations, churches, and schools. Many people who fled their homes weeks ago for the safety of government camps are now on the run again, wondering when their flight from attack will ever end.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK) continue to work with our partners on the ground, including the Red Cross and various United Nations agencies, to provide relief to those in immediate need. Unfortunately, the needs continue to grow, but donations large and small are making a difference. For example, just last week a friend of the MCK in the US sent a wire transfer of \$3,000 to be used by the MCK to assist the needy. The very next day, these funds were used to purchase 500 blankets for displaced persons living in camps with no bedding, as well as 300 shawls for displaced mothers to clean, wrap, and carry their children while in the camp. Within 36 hours of receiving this donation, the MCK was able to provide this basic living assistance to hundreds of displaced persons.

Again, I ask you to continue praying for peace and reconciliation in Kenya. May God bless you for your prayerful support of those who are suffering.

Yours in Christ,
John

The church is planning to receive donations that we can forward to UMCOR. Please make a note on the pew envelope or in the corner of you check for "Kenya Relief"



Births in the New Year

January was a productive month for PAUMC. We are happy and blessed to be able to welcome four new babies into the world.

Erin Marielle Feeney, who was born on January 14, 2008. She weighed 9 lbs. 5 ounces and was 20 ½ inches long. Congratulations to the parents, Stacy Staaterman and Brian.

Mickey Leopold was born on January 23, 2008. She weighed 8 pounds 4 ounces. Congratulations to the parents Sunoko and George.

Elias Dacio Mesena was born on January 24, 2008. He weighed 8 pounds 3 ounces and was 21 ½ inches long. Congratulations to the parents Zenia and Simon.

Maxwell Hill Sanders was born on January 21st, 2008. Peter and Daisy Sanders live in the building next door and have attended our church. Congratulations to them.

REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CELEBRATION

Thank you to our Outreach Committee led by Dr. J. Elizabeth Clark and Steve Konyha, coordinator for doing an outstanding job.

Our guest speaker was Dr. Annette Gordon-Reed, a noted historian and lecturer on Thomas Jefferson. She gave an absorbing talk on the difference between Jefferson's faith in reason and King's faith in God.

A potluck luncheon followed the 11 A.M. worship service in Clarke Hall that was sumptuous and delicious. The Outreach Committee set and decorated the tables. Gary Klein played the piano while we ate. Then there was a question and answer time with Dr. Gordon-Reed followed by a hymn sing. The affair was well attended and ended on the high note of holding hands and singing “We Shall Overcome.”

GREAT FICTION SERIES

The horror novel, “It,” by Stephen King is the next book to be discussed by our book club. Janet Ernst will be the discussion leader. The book was chosen to broaden our scope and also because the New York Times now reviews King’s books. He has become an important writer in this genre and it was thought that it was time to read one of his books.

“It” is basically about the struggle between good and evil in a small town in Maine and the seven people who grew up there, left, but were drawn back by some mysterious force.

The book is available at church for \$6.50. See Chris, the custodian.

The next meeting is on Tuesday, March 4th at 6:30 P.M. in Clarke Hall. We will adjourn at 8 to a nearby restaurant for dinner and conversation.

Anyone who has read the book is welcome to join.

JOIN PAUMC’S CHOIR

The invitation is always open for any member of our congregation or regular visitor to our worship who enjoys singing to consider joining forces with our wonderful PAUMC singers on either a regular or seasonal basis. The ensemble rehearses each Sunday from mid-September through mid-June at 9:30 A.M. and then, after a time of fellowship sings at the 11:00 A.M. service. If you’d like to consider taking part in the fun, “lifting your voice to the Lord,” or just “making a joyful noise” with us, speak with George Boyer at the organ following the service or e-mail him at georgeboyer@gmail.com or call him at 610-392-5242...OR simply stop in and visit our rehearsal ANY Sunday downstairs at 9:30

to 10:30 A.M. in the Lyndon Woodside Music Room.

CARING FOR CREATION

– Pastor Jessica Anschutz

At the recent Outreach Committee Retreat, the committee members spent some time developing “Big Hairy Audacious Goals” for 2008. One theme that emerged during our brainstorming, was “greening our church.” Such concern for the Natural World is also expressed in the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church:

All creation is the Lord's, and we are responsible for the ways we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect. Economic, political, social, and technological developments have increased our human numbers, and lengthened and enriched our lives. However, these developments have led to regional defoliation, dramatic extinction of species, massive human suffering, overpopulation, and misuse and over-consumption of natural and nonrenewable resources, particularly by industrialized societies. This continued course of action jeopardizes the natural heritage that God has entrusted to all generations. Therefore, let us recognize the responsibility of the church and its members to place a high priority on changes in economic, political, social, and technological lifestyles to support a more ecologically equitable and sustainable world leading to a higher quality of life for all of God's creation.¹

In the coming weeks and months, we will evaluate our impact on the environment and learn more about the ways in which we can be better stewards of God’s creation. Did you know...we send at least 6,000 newsletters a year, which amounts to at least 60,000 pieces of paper. One tree makes 8,333.3 sheets of paper, so we consume at least 7.2 trees a year for our newsletter!²

Want to make a difference now? Save a tree by receiving the monthly newsletter via e-mail! To do so, send an e-mail to office@parkavemethodist.org and the March newsletter will be sent directly to your Inbox.

¹ “The Social Principles.” *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶160, pg. 96.

² Figures based on information from Conservatree, a nonprofit catalyst and advocate for ecologically sustainable paper markets, combining environmental commitment with paper industry and technical savvy. For more information see <http://www.conservatree.org/index.shtml>

**MISSION FAIR: “HERE AM I, SEND ME”
Saturday, March 8, 2008
Program 9 AM to 12:30 PM**

Pleasant Valley UMC
92 Martin Road, Pleasant Valley, NY

*Balancing Work and Spirituality On Mission Trips
Workshop by Pastors Tom and Wendy Vencuss*

Learn about Adult & Youth Volunteer in Mission Opportunities in the NYAC Conference!

Open to all youth and adults interested in more information about serving the Lord through mission outreach!!! Mary Ellen Kris is thinking of attending this event if there is interest from others at Park Avenue United Methodist Church. Please speak to Mary Ellen if you are thinking of attending.

THE PAUMC REFUGEE COMMITTEE

In 1975, Saigon, the then capital city of South Vietnam fell to the forces of Ho Chi Minh’s North Vietnamese Army and there was a mad scramble to get out. Helicopters were sent in to remove people from the roof of the American Embassy. The Vietnamese who had worked for the U.S. government knew that they were doomed if they didn’t leave. Those who made it out were taken to refugee camps in the Philippine Islands to await American sponsors. It was during this time of national humiliation and pain that one of our members, Pam Proctor, asked our then pastor, Phil

Clarke, if we could sponsor refugees and he gave his permission to present the idea to the congregation. A group of people responded, money was raised and the Refugee Committee was born. One of our first refugee families was Hoang Dinh Doung and his brother Quoc.

They were bright, funny, optimistic and without bitterness. They touched our hearts. They were Roman Catholic but Hoang once expressed a desire to live as a Buddhist monk when he was old. He had the gentle quality one would expect to see in a monk.

The year after he arrived in New York Hoang enrolled at St. John’s University where he studied hard and became a pharmacist. He married Hue and some of us attended his wedding and saw the happy couple dressed in traditional Vietnamese wedding clothes. They lived in Astoria, had a daughter and then Hoang’s career took them to Houston. He stayed in touch with Pam, Richmond Bates and Bud Brown, some of the original members of the committee. He had three more children and sent all of them to college. His eldest daughter is now enrolled at St. John’s University as a medical student.

On Sunday night, February 3rd, Hoang passed away. He was 59 years old and he had liver cancer. He may never have realized his dream of becoming a Buddhist monk but he led an extraordinary life that inspired all of us who knew him. As we grieve Hoang’s passing those of us who knew him have all shared the same thought. That he gave us more than we gave him.

The committee continued to sponsor refugees first from Vietnam and later from Cambodia and most of them turned out well. It takes a dedicated group who are willing to devote time and their talents to sponsor refugees. I wonder if our Outreach Committee would be ready for such a challenge today.

We extend our condolences and prayers to the family of our beloved Hoang Dinh Duong.