

THE SPIRE

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MARCH 2013



LENT AND LAUGHTER

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Lent is a forty day period which marks the most somber of seasons on the church calendar. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, and ends on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday, and Christ's resurrection from the dead. In the early church catechumens were instructed about the Christian faith during this season. On Saturday evening, before the joys of Easter Sunday commenced, those who had successfully completed their course of study, they would be baptized by the believing community—rising from the death of one's old life, into the newness, and rebirth which Easter denotes. Preparation for that special Sunday involved learning the creeds of the church as well as the Lord's Prayer. Most of all, during this forty day period, prospective Christians were 'taught' the importance of penitential prayer, and fasting. Both practices alerted one to his or her sins in the face of Christ's abandonment and crucifixion.

Those mathematicians among us will note that the days beginning with Ash Wednesday, and ending

on Holy Saturday number 46. What gives? The early church understood that each Sunday during the somber Lenten period, should symbolize a little Easter, pointing to the main event on day 47! Thus punctuating the forty days of fasting, prayer and penitential self-examination were the six Sundays in Lent in which feasting replaced fasting, and celebration effaced contrition. The simplest word 'in' replaces the word 'of' in describing these Sundays. 'Of' conveys the idea that the Lenten Lord's Day is no different from other days of the somber week. 'In' implies it stands apart from the Lenten rituals. We stand in the latter word's tradition.

Don't we experience this reality on occasion? Someone cracks a joke in the middle of an unsettling or terrible time in our lives, and we laugh heartily and loudly perhaps, and then experience pangs of guilt because laughter seems inappropriate, and indeed a sin given our circumstances.

I look forward to Lenten Sundays, if only as a reminder that even during bleak periods God's good life for us involves resurrection whose 'symptoms' are celebration, partying, and, indeed, laughter, a radical break from the Monday through Saturday penitential grind. Did I write the word 'laughter'? For me the word conjoins with joy. Perhaps it is the highest expression of joy. Laughter erupts, often suddenly and unexpectedly, pointing to a God who liberates from those brief or extended periods of sadness, fear and cross bearing which mark every Christian's life.

One of my favorite passages in Scripture comes from Ecclesiastes: "Feasts are made for laughter; wine gladdens life" (10:19). Ecclesiastes is a somber book in which the writer states that there is little to secure us, and that God's purposes for our lives are often inscrutable. Nevertheless, in spite of its dour tone, we leave the book knowing that existence can be rich beyond measure, if we enjoy the simple pleasures of eating and drinking with those we love. Laughter, then, is indicative of life's celebrative nature.

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Then there's the Genesis account of God's visitation to Abraham and Sarah. The Almighty notes that the patriarch's wife will deliver a baby in her 90th year. At the news, "Abraham fell on his face and laughed" (17:7). In a second version of the story, Sarah hides behind a door, and overhears God's surprising news to her husband. Sarah, too, splits a gut which she denies doing when God asks her. The Almighty does not hold their outbursts against them. On the contrary God affirms laughter when He tells them to name their son Isaac (18:8ff.) Isaac in Hebrew means 'laughter'. As the Christian writer Frederick Buechner notes, "Faith is laughter at the promise of a child called laughter." You may remember that one of the hardest chapters in Scripture is Genesis 22, when God calls Abraham to sacrifice his son, his only child at a high place where the future city of Jerusalem will be built. God spares Isaac's life at the last moment, as Abraham draws his knife, a harrowing story for the reader, which strains our understanding of what faith means. What we can extract from the scene is that the child 'laughter' is exposed to life's difficult and mysterious realities of God's will and the demands of faith. If we take Genesis 22 symbolically, perhaps laughter – personified by Isaac – is woven into the weft of life's harshest tests and challenges. Don't we experience this reality on occasion? Someone cracks a joke in the middle of an unsettling or terrible time in our lives, and we laugh heartily and loudly perhaps, and then experience pangs of guilt because laughter seems inappropriate, and indeed a sin given our circumstances. Suppose, however, God wants us to laugh during those periods? Suppose the one liner, or risible situation are God given signs of His presence with us during despairing moments? Suppose they are signals which inform that little resurrections, those Sundays in Lent, will overcome whatever life hands us?

Our Mission Project

Our Mission for March is
Ulster County Habitat for
Humanity



U.C. Habitat for Humanity's Mission is to build safe, affordable homes in partnership with those in need. Donations of property, materials and labor have made dreams of being a homeowner come true for families in Ulster County and we can be part of it.

Construction will begin this spring on Henry St. in Kingston, on a lot donated by a woman from Philadelphia, for an Ulster County Sheriffs Dept. correction officer and her three children .

Partner families are selected by Habitat based upon a documented need for adequate shelter, ability to pay and willingness to partner.

By contributing in you Mission Envelope you will make a " dream come true " for this family.

In the book of Acts, Luke's sequel to his Gospel, the Evangelist records two incidents in which, I believe, he solicits our laughter. The first concerns Peter's miraculous release from a Jerusalem prison. He escapes and it appears he is running for his life from the authorities. He finds a house church, and knocks on the door. A maid named Rhoda recognizes Peter's voice. He's probably yelling, 'help' at the top of his lungs. Luke notes that, "Rhoda was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate" (12:14ff). The disciples take their time discussing with the maid and among themselves

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whether Peter is really at their door. "Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking" Luke writes. Sweating bullets, no doubt! The second joke occurs later on in Acts, as Paul preaches an interminably long sermon to his fellow apostles right up until midnight. Luke writes: "A young man named Eutychus who was sitting in the window began to sink off into a deep sleep while Paul talked still longer. Overcome by sleep he fell to the ground three floors below and was picked up dead" (20:9). Paul races down, restores his life, and then, horror upon horror, he resumes this ungodly sermonic marathon. Won't ministers ever learn? Nevertheless what Luke does intentionally is to mix fear of capture in the first instance, and a possible loss of life in the second -- with humor. Cross and resurrection cannot be separated.

Recently I met with my little literary group in New Jersey. We dine, then discuss a short story chosen by the host and hostess for that evening. This past outing we examined James Joyce's brilliant but pessimistic short story, "Little Cloud.". Our reading led to a discussion of what we could leave of importance to our children and grandchildren. What life lesson or word of wisdom could we impart? I was the last one to be asked. I said that I'd leave my kin CD's of all David Letterman monologues. No one laughed. But I perceived a few smiles along the way.

In Christ's service,
Doc Bob



STICKLEY GARDENS

We wait in anticipation for the first signs of Spring. A warm breeze, sunlight that warms our soul, a shoot breaking through the soil, a bird in song, a bud on the trees, longer days ... a time when God gives us new birth. The season of Lent is our season of anticipation. A time of waiting and self-examination. A time that builds in our hearts and souls until the magic of the open tomb once again fills us with warmth, song, happiness and new birth. Take your time during Lent to reflect, introspect, and build your anticipation for our dear Jesus' resurrection. The meaning of the Resurrection only comes to those who take time to take it in.

Visit Stickley Gardens and meditate, anticipate, appreciate and celebrate.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE COLUMBARIUM, PLEASE CONTACT ANY OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS.

LISA LONGTO (331-1438) CHAIRPERSON

JIM PIRRO (383-0079) TREASURER

ESTHER STICKLEY (331-2919)

SANDIE GREGORY (338-7626)

DIANA CLINE (338-7276) CONSISTORY LIAISON

REV STICKLEY, SECRETARY

A SACRED PLACE OF BEAUTY AND CONTEMPLATION.
(LOCATED ON THE SOUTH LAWN OF THE CHURCH)

Group Spiritual Direction will be offered from 9:50 a.m. on Sundays, March 3, March 17, and March 24. Men and women are welcome. No previous experience with spiritual direction is necessary. Come listen to the voice of God in your everyday life during Lent. For more information please contact Linda Miles at 845-430-3348 or lindajmiles@yahoo.com.


 **Hurley Reformed Church** 

Lenten Fish Fry

prepared by Sea-Deli

 **March 16, 2013**

Hurley Reformed Church – Schadewald Hall

 **\$10.00** adults / **\$5.00** child under 12

Take-Outs Available

Reservations Required (open seating dinner)

Doors open at 4 pm and close at 6:15 pm

 **Tickets/Reservations – Call the Church 331-4121**

fresh fried fish

buttered parsley potatoes

cole slaw

roll

beverage

dessert



The Consistory gave final approvals for several motions dealing with the ADA compliance project for the lift and the ADA bathroom.

We have over \$10,000 in donations for the project. The Con-

sistory will continue to go forward with our fund raising efforts. The Congregation and Community response has been very gratifying and the amount to be funded from outside institutions will be reduced by our generous gift giving.

The Architect will deliver the final drawings to the Town's Code Enforcement Office before February 23rd. We will await approval of a building permit so that the commencement of the project can begin.

The estimated costs breakdowns are:

- Architectural services \$4,500
- Lift purchase and installation \$42,000
- ADA compliant restroom \$19,500
- Contingency for unanticipated costs related to the project \$4,000
- Estimated ADA project cost \$70,000

The final placement of the ADA bathroom was chosen. The area to be renovated is the old boy's room shower area with a doorway access into the hallway. It was determined, due to heavy usage, that no floor space in Schadewald should be lost.

The Consistory chose a fiscally conservative target cost well below the originally announced cost estimate of \$80 to \$100,000.

Dave Giles



March BIRTHDAYS

Julia Wolf	10, '99	Elizabeth Askue	8	Deidre Sills	25
Danielle Wolf	10, '99	Barbara Sartorius	10	Cathy McGraw	27
Justin Nekos	21, '00	Barry Rell	10	Jennifer Hinsdale	28
William Gaffken	23, '98	Kim Burgess	13	Ellen Morone	31
Logan Brennan	31, '98	Deborah Zuill	14	Bernadette Baker	31
Lily Gram Collins	1	Allan Masters	14	April	
Craig Jansen	2	Ellen Stephano	14		
Terry Read	2	Frank Warren	17	Travis Horvers	2, '98
Linda Bogнар	3	Frank Presti	17	Wayne Waligurski	1
Jack Gill	5	Joyce Pinckney	18	Mildred Mattison	4
Dennis Horvers	5	Dino Sumerano	18	Trevor Davenport	4
Dr. Bob Gram	6	Angie Rockwell	19	Kathy Hauck	5
Marianne Mizel	7	Janet Croswell	19	ANNIVERSARIES	
		Katrina Rubino	19		
		Jean Marrus	24		
		Christine Henning	24		
		Gretchen Giles	24	Jean & Jay Marrus	March 9
		Phyllis Bliss	24	Emily & Art Harder	16
				Charles & Sheila Jansen	25

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR MY CHURCH BUILDING TO BE ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?



When I first came to Canajoharie I learned a story from the not-so-distant past when the last row of sanctuary pews was removed to accommodate worshipers in wheelchairs. The significance of this story is the tension it caused for some members because of our strong attachments to place and space in our historic building. There is pride regarding the beauty of our worship space—from the restored organ and stained glass windows to the well-kept limestone edifice—but there is also the growing reality of the limits and challenges our older building presents.

While our sanctuary is easily accessible for those with physical challenges, our fellowship hall and restrooms are not. Descending a steep stairwell or making a trip outside and around our buildings is the only way to access these spaces. Although elevators and lifts were discussed in the past, plans were not put in place. In the last couple of years these conversations have resurfaced as members have shared that they are unable to worship with us because access to restrooms is so challenging. The willingness of these members to speak up regarding this challenge meant that the conversation could no longer be placed on the back burner.

Plans are now under way to add a lift in the rear of our sanctuary. It will mean more changes to our historic space, but this time we hope the story that's told is not about tension but about our church saying, "All are welcome in this place."

Miriam Barnes is pastor of [Reformed Church of Canajoharie](#), New York. Reprinted from *RCA Today* with permission.

EASTER PLANTS

_____ Lilies	\$8.00
_____ Mini Roses	\$6.00
_____ Tulips	\$6.00
_____ Daffodils	\$6.00
_____ Hyacinths	\$6.00
_____ Pansies	\$3.00
_____ Primroses	\$3.00



Total Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Please print clearly:

Placed by: _____

In memory of: _____

In honor of: _____

_____ I will be taking my flowers home.

_____ Please plant my flowers on the church berm of the Rail Trail.

We encourage you to take your flowers home. The church garden and the rail trail berm are getting full.

Please make checks payable to: HRC Women's Guild.

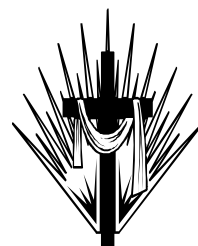
Mail or give your order by March 17, 2013 to:

Doris Alden
236 East Drive
Hurley NY 12443

HOLY WEEK BEGINS . . .

**PALM SUNDAY,
MARCH 24**

10:00am Worship



**MAUNDY THURSDAY,
MARCH 28**

Communion and Tenebrae
7:30 pm Service

RESURRECTION IS A REALITY!

EASTER SUNDAY, MARCH 31

6:30am Dawn Service

Sunrise service in the sanctuary led
by the Youth Group

EASTER BREAKFAST 7:30
am in Schadewald Hall

EASTER WORSHIP

9:00 am and 11:00 am

as we meet Him at the open tomb
**BRING YOUR FAMILY AND
CELEBRATE LIFE,
HIS AND YOURS!**



**CHRIST THE LORD
IS RISEN TODAY!**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
24	25	26	27	28	1	2
<i>March 2013</i>						
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10am - Worship ☼ 11am - Confirmation 11am - Prayer Chain 11am - Stone House 1:30pm - Private ☼ 6pm - AA ☼ Dutch 7pm - ACA ☼ Room 7pm - Youth Group	10am - Badminton ☼ 10am - Tax Aide ☼ 1pm - Baskets ☼ 6pm - Dog Training 7pm - Little League 7pm - SCLS ☼ Room 7:30pm - 1st Capital 7:30pm - Al-Anon ☼	1:30pm - Brooks 4:30pm - PC 101 ☼ 7pm - Bible Study ☼ 7pm - Boy Scouts	8am - Bible Study ☼ 10am - Badminton ☼ 6:30pm - Dog 6pm - Wolf Den ☼ 6:30pm - Girl Scout 7pm - ACA ☼ Room 7pm - Boy Scouts 7pm - Men's Group	1:30pm - Hurley 3pm - Quilting ☼ 4:45pm - Dog 6:30pm - Girl Scouts 7:30pm - Choir ☼	10am - Badminton ☼ 10am - Genealogy ☼	8:30am - Penny 5pm - Penny Social
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Daylight Saving 10am - Worship ☼ 11am - Confirmation 11am - Women's 11:30am - Parent 6pm - AA ☼ Dutch 7pm - ACA ☼ Room	10am - Badminton ☼ 10am - Tax Aide ☼ 11am - VFW ☼ 6pm - Dog Training 7pm - Consistory ☼ 7pm - Hudson Valley 7pm - SCLS Snow	8:30am - Hillside 7pm - Bible Study ☼ 7pm - Boy Scouts 7pm - SCLS ☼ Room	8am - Bible Study ☼ 10am - Badminton ☼ 6:30pm - Dog 6pm - Wolf Den ☼ 7pm - ACA ☼ Room 7pm - Men's Group 7:45pm - Bagpiper	3pm - Quilting ☼ 4:45pm - Dog 6:30pm - Order of 7pm - Order of the 7:30pm - Choir ☼	10am - Badminton ☼	8am - Set Up ☼ Hall 4pm - Fish Fry ☼
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
St. Patrick's Day 10am - Worship ☼ 11am - Confirmation 6pm - AA ☼ Dutch 7pm - ACA ☼ Room	10am - Badminton ☼ 10am - Genealogy ☼ 10am - Tax Aide ☼ 6pm - Dog Training 7:30pm - Al-Anon ☼	7pm - Bible Study ☼ 7pm - Boy Scouts	8am - Bible Study ☼ 10am - Badminton ☼ 6:30pm - Dog 6pm - Wolf Den ☼ 7pm - ACA ☼ Room	3pm - Quilting ☼ 4:45pm - Dog 7pm - NE 7:30pm - Choir ☼	10am - Badminton ☼	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
10am - Worship ☼ 11am - Confirmation 6pm - AA ☼ Dutch 7pm - ACA ☼ Room	10am - Badminton ☼ 10am - Tax Aide ☼ 10:30am - Genealog 6pm - Dog Training 7:30pm - Al-Anon ☼	7pm - Bible Study ☼ 7pm - Boy Scouts 7pm - SCLS ☼ Room	8am - Bible Study ☼ 10am - Badminton ☼ 6pm - Wolf Den ☼ 7pm - ACA ☼ Room 7pm - Men's Group	3pm - Quilting ☼ 7:30pm - Choir ☼	10am - Badminton ☼	9am - Easter
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
Easter Easter						

HURLEY REFORMED
CHURCH

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The Rev. Dr. Robert L. Gram, LCSW
Pastor

WE'RE ON THE WEB:

WWW.HURLEYREFORMEDCHURCH.ORG

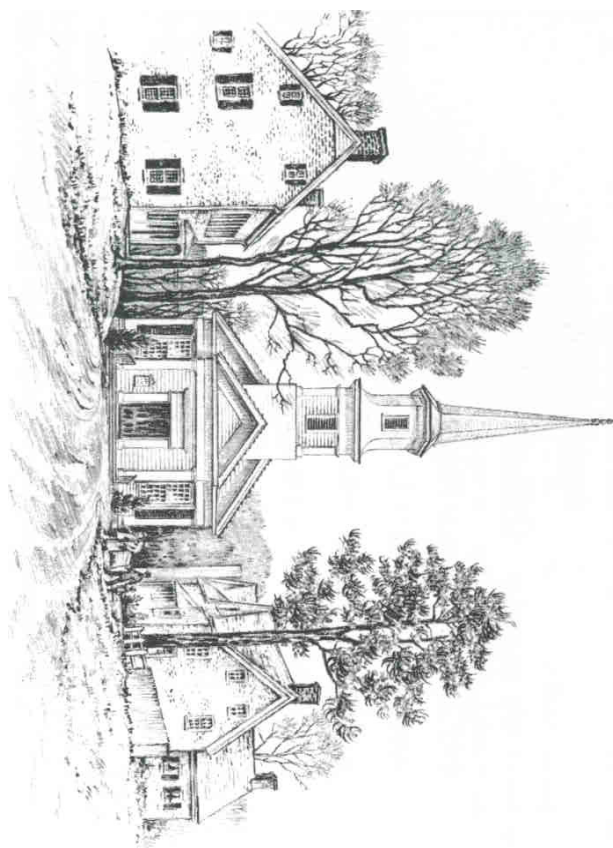
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