



The Church Tower

The First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York

Lent: Should We Fast?

THE SEASON OF LENT IS ABOUT SO MUCH MORE THAN FASTING. IT IS A time for spiritual preparation, for remembering the life and sacrifice of Jesus. But make no mistake, fasting and penitence have been seen as a part of the Christian observance of Lent since the early days of the Church. One can take the concept of fasting far back into the Judeo-Christian tradition. Pastor Mark Buchanan writes in a recent edition of *The Christian Century* that without fasting as a spiritual discipline it is hard, almost impossible, to live by the word of God. Fasting was common practice for the people of God. The Bible tells us that Moses fasted, King David fasted, so did Elijah the prophet, Esther the queen, Daniel the seer, Anna the prophetess, Paul the apostle, and Jesus the Christ.

We read in the gospels that during Jesus' preparation for his ministry he spent 40 days in the wilderness, alone, and he fasted. And then, as in a stage direction, enter the devil to tempt him, starting with what he must have craved the most—food. "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread . . ." How could even Jesus resist? I have never fasted for more than a day. However, I can tell you that in the last six miles of a 26-mile marathon, if I'm having a good run, though all my systems are depleted and I'm in some state of hypoglycemia, my sense of well-being that it is a good run gets me through to the finish line feeling strong. Jesus' own sense of his clear call from God his Father to begin his ministry could well have empowered him to resist this temptation and to rebuke the tempter, quoting from Deuteronomy: "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God."

Fasting as a spiritual discipline is very difficult to practice, es-

pecially here in the United States. Yet, Buchanan argues: "If you never fast, then the whole concept of being wholly nourished and sustained by God's word will be only a nice, sweet, and totally irrelevant idea." He goes on to describe the obsession with food in this country, especially what is seen in the media: fat, rich food, balanced with offerings of diet food to satisfy—but not fatten! "McDonald's golden arches and Coca-Cola's logo are more widely recognized than the cross of Christ. Our world's most prevalent iconography enshrines food."

Fasting has many lessons to teach us, about ourselves, about our need for "every word that comes out of the mouth of God." But perhaps the greatest lesson fasting can teach us is to look at our world in a new way. In Isaiah we read God's rebuke to Israel for the *way* the people were fasting. Fasting had not changed their bullying, exploitative habits, their aloofness, or their preoccupations with themselves.

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice,
To undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go
free and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring
the homeless poor into your house; and when you see
the naked, to cover them, and not hide yourself from
your own kin? (Isaiah 58:6-7 NRSV)

And now the scene is not just local, or national, but with Isaiah the scene is expanded a hundredfold, to include the entire global perspective. "The fast God chooses teaches us to have God's heart for the hungry, the oppressed, the naked, the

homeless." It is God's intent that we feel the pangs of hunger, the gnawing emptiness, the grinding poverty, which is how a third of the world lives. When we fast we get a small taste of what their world is like, and that is "a taste," Buchanan writes, "we will never get if we do not for a time forsake the taste of food."

The article concludes with the accounting of a dinner organized at one church to raise money for famine relief in Sudan. Eighty people came to the dinner. Different-sized tables were set: some to seat as few as six, some as many as fifteen. Those at the tables for six were served first: a sumptuous meal, with polite, attractive servers, ready to serve seconds, dessert, the works! Next, some of the larger tables were served. A few dishes of beans, a little salad, water. Servers were curt. No seconds. At the next-to-largest tables, servers plunked down a bowl of rice in the middle. No plate or bowl

or utensils. The largest table was served last of all. One bucket of water, one wooden ladle. When the people at the larger tables complained, first to the servers, then to the pastor who had organized the event, they were ignored or told not to complain. After a while it became obvious to everyone what was happening. Some actually experienced, and all witnessed, the lopsidedness of hunger in the world, of affluence, and absence. The pastor reported, "The offering for famine relief was good that night."

And what of Lent? Can we learn to care for God's people as Jesus did in this rich land of ours and beyond? Are we able to do it without the discipline of fasting? Whatever it takes, God is calling us to live by God's word: to serve, to help, to work on behalf of the poor, the oppressed, the vulnerable of God's people.

JAMES G. SPEER



Inquiring into pastoral ministry:
Alison Geiger, Barbara Davis, and Lorraine Tollan

Called To Be Pastors

WE PRESBYTERIANS ARE HEIRS OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION OF the 16th century. Its leaders reacted against the institution of the priesthood in the medieval church by affirming the "priesthood of all believers." Furthermore, as Martin Luther (1483-1546) argued, the vocation of any Christian, by contributing to society and thus serving one's neighbor, is as fulfilling before God as any specifically religious vocation.

As a result, Presbyterians—like most Protestants—think of our ordained clergy somewhat differently from our Catholic and Orthodox cousins. Whereas the Roman Catholic priest is seen as a mediator of God's grace through his administration of the sacraments, for example, a minister of Word and Sacrament of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is regarded as one of the laity who has been trained and ordained to fulfill particular functions, e.g., proclaiming the Word and celebrating the Sacraments.

Discerning the call to pastoral ministry is also understood as an outgrowth of each church member's seeking to imitate

Jesus, who came "not to be served but to serve" (Matthew 20:28). By our baptism each of us is called to participate in Christ's ongoing ministry in the world. The forms that ministry can take will vary according to our particular gifts and opportunities for service. Christ's healing ministry, for example, can be manifest through a vocation in medicine or the therapeutic arts, care-giving as an ordained deacon, or personal commitment to visit and pray for those who are ill.

Those called to be pastors carry forth Christ's ministry of teaching and preaching—guiding worship and "equip [ping] the saints for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4:12).

Our Book of Order provides for a formal process for preparation for ministry of Word and Sacrament that normally takes at least three years to complete. Individuals in this process are engaged in a complex task of discernment. Have they "heard" this call correctly? Do they have the necessary qualities of intelligence, temperament, and commitment? Is

the call confirmed by the community through their seminary experiences and the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry?

Three members of First Presbyterian have recently entered into the first phase of the preparation for ministry process: enrolling through our session with the Presbytery of New York City as "Inquirers." Alison Geiger and Lorraine Tollan have left careers as a chef and lawyer, respectively, to enroll this past fall in the Master of Divinity program at Union Theological Seminary. Both remain active in the life of First Church. Barbara Davis, our Director of Christian Education since 1998, was awarded the Master of Divinity from Union in 1996, but has only recently decided to begin the formal Presbyterian process of discerning her call to become a pastor.

The life of our church is surely enriched by the presence of these three potential pastors in our midst. We can all support their discernment by praying for them and for all who are involved in their process of preparation for ministry, including their supervisors in ministry, the presbytery committee, and the seminary faculty and staff. As we do so, we can also ask the Holy Spirit to enable each member of this faith community to follow Christ's leading, wherever it may end up, confident that all forms of ministry are gifts of Christ.

LINDLEY G. DEGARMO

The Color of Lent

LET'S BEGIN WITH A GAME. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS THE COLOR OF Lent? Psychologists like to ask those kinds of questions: "What is your favorite color?" "What color was your first bicycle—the walls in your bedroom?" Psychologists like to make a lot out of color, and so if we transfer that little exercise over into the religious sphere, most of us would color Christmas red, I suppose, or maybe green, though historically the church has chosen violet as the liturgical color for Advent. Easter would be for most of us, what—white?—yellow?—something bright and joyful, I imagine. Good Friday, obviously, would be black.

But what about Lent? Well, I do not know about you, but I would color Lent gray. Not just because of Ash Wednesday, though that is appropriate. I would color Lent gray because, for me, Lent is properly a time for reflection, for contemplation, for asking questions and testing old answers. That is to say, Lent is neither black nor white. Lent is gray, emotionally and intellectually gray. Lent, properly understood, is a time for sorting out, some discarding, and some new acquisition, but overall it is a time for spiritual inventory, before settling in on what we truly believe and trust.

It must have been that way for the disciples, following Jesus into those last days of his life when surely their assumptions were challenged daily. We study the scriptural accounts of those final days and find the disciples falling asleep at the most important moments, feuding over who is going to sit

where at the table, puzzled at Jesus' refusal to accept the offer of kingship, and surely wondering whether they had made one huge mistake. Historically, Lent has always been a time to slip away, sort through all that is being said, and finally to return more committed to a faith that one can legitimately claim as one's own.

That is why I would color Lent gray, and why my hope for us all is that we enter into this very sacred season of Lent in a mood of reflection, study, and prayer.

P. C. ENNISS

On Wilderness

DURING LENT, THE METAPHOR OF WILDERNESS IS A DOMINANT biblical theme. "Wilderness" is often defined not by what is in it, but by what is not—people. Whenever I go back to the little town of Conneaut Lake, Pennsylvania, where I grew up, people often ask me if I really like living in New York City. My resounding "Yes, I love it!" often causes them to recoil or shudder in despair. "I could never live there," most of them say, and the reason is almost always the same: "There are too many people there." On the spectrum of places that could be identified as "wilderness," Conneaut Lake is surely closer to it than New York City.

So, while "wilderness" and solitude might be relative terms, they are still the pervading concepts of this season. Lent often leads to a personal commitment to engage in more disciplined spiritual practices. One might choose to engage in daily readings, meditation, prayer, exercise, or some other form of faith-nourishing activity. In the solitude of Lent, the layers of grief, pain, and regret in our lives are offered to God in repentance and the hope of transformation.

Perhaps, though, Lent should be thought of in terms of not only how to nourish our individual spiritual selves, but also our spiritual life as a community. In Korea, there is a concept known as "han" which means pain and suffering, particularly that which stems from the violence and injustice of a people being oppressed over a long period of time. One way that the pain of "han" is transformed in Korean practice is through a process known as "han-pu-ri." In "han-pu-ri" the pain and suffering is transformed through rituals, dance, and songs (*Struggle to be the Sun Again* by Chung Hyun Kyung).

Our community would certainly have a different understanding of suffering and sadness, but during this Lenten season it may be important not to stay too long in the solitude of the wilderness. This time of reflection and turning ourselves back toward God is the perfect time to focus on our individual selves as well as on what areas of our living in community might need attention.

BARBARA E. DAVIS

Music for Lent and Easter

SUNDAY, MARCH 18, 4:00 PM

Worship Service of Music
Mass in B Minor, Johann Sebastian Bach

PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 8, 11:00 AM

Premiere of a new anthem for the Church School Choir and the Adult Choir by Rick Bassett

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 13, 12:00 PM

Seven Last Words of Christ, Dubois

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 15, SERVICES AT 9:30 AM AND 11:30 AM

Easter Music for Choir, Brass, and Organ

ON SUNDAY, MARCH 18, AT 4:00 PM, THE SOLOISTS, CHOIR, AND ORCHESTRA of First Presbyterian Church will present Johann Sebastian Bach's great masterwork *Mass in B Minor*. This Lenten musical offering, which uses the sacred texts of the Latin mass, will be performed in the church's sanctuary in a service of worship with hymns and prayers.

The *Mass in B Minor* will be performed with the full instrumentation as indicated by Bach. The orchestra is comprised of some of New York's major instrumental players, many of whom have performed with Dr. Entriken and the choir in the past. This size of the First Presbyterian Choir is indeed the perfect number of musicians to present Bach's intricate and delicate contrapuntal lines. Former choristers who now live in Florida and California will join the choir as well as additional singers. The Choir's superb four soloists will be joined by internationally renowned countertenor Johnny Maldonado.

First performed in America March 27, 1900, at the Bach Festival in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the B Minor Mass has been widely performed and recorded. All are welcome to this service to experience the beauty of this masterwork in the sacred space of First Presbyterian Church.

On Palm Sunday, April 8, at the 11:00 AM service, the Church School and the Adult choirs will give the premiere of a sacred composition written for them by church member Rick Bassett. Mr. Bassett is the accompanist for the Church School Choir and is a professional musician.

Please mark your calendars for these Lent and Easter Worship services.

WILLIAM ENTRIKEN

FOOTPRINTS

Footprints, footprints,
in front of mine
to make a path for me
in a world now white.
Footprints, footprints,
now mine alone
as I cut across the sleeping lawn.
Footprints, footprints,
after snow.

SUSAN MAKINEN

Facilities Space Use

AS WAS REPORTED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING, THE SPACE USE COMMITTEE has been implementing the recommendations of the National Executive Service Corps in relation to space use costs for each group using our facilities. Following Session approval of these new charges, which more adequately reflect the church's costs, the Rev. DeGarmo and the Chair of the committee have met with representatives of each group to discuss the space use costs and the implementation of the new rates. These increases will occur at various times in 2001, depending on previous agreements and contracts. All of our current tenants are most anxious to remain and are making every effort to meet the new rates.

The Caring Community continues to use the Esther Morrow Room in the South Wing, Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Church events are scheduled in the South Wing on Sunday and on some occasional evenings. The Mellin-Macnab Building is used by the Nursery School, PS 226, AA, Save Her a Seat, Allan's After School, Village Light Opera, Homeless Shelter, Human Services Workshops, and Debtors Anonymous on a regular basis, as well as for committee meetings, staff offices, and church events. When space is available, other community groups are allowed to rent space for a meeting.

The Center for the Arts and the Church, directed by Dr. Frank Dent, will begin to offer programs in the South Wing on Monday and Tuesday evenings from 6:00 to 10:00 PM. This will allow for the use of this valuable space as well as provide exciting programs for our congregation and community members. It is the hope of the committee that we will be able, with additional funding to cover staff costs, to have the South Wing open every day as is the Mellin-Macnab Building.

Our facilities and space are a true benevolence. The Committee is well aware of this and makes every effort to have the space used diligently. The committee members are: Cynthia Perry, Earl Thompson, Jacquelyn Fike, Ellen McElduff, Gary Shoemaker, Jose Mejias, Elizabeth Hubbell Riggs, Betty Jones, the Rev. Lindley DeGarmo.

BETTY JONES, CHAIR

Stewardship Helps Members Integrate Faith With Giving

HOW GENEROUS ARE AMERICANS? ONLY A GOD ABLE TO PLUMB HUMAN hearts could know the answer.

Falling far short of a tithe, churches are collecting more than ever, but members are contributing smaller portions of their incomes. Churchgoers gave just 2.52% of after-tax income in 1998. Measured as a percentage of disposable income, Protestants gave less in 1998 than they did in 1968. The percentage of giving in 1998 was lower than it had been in 1933 during the darkest days of the Depression. Most of the money churches are raising is being spent on salaries, in-house programs, and building maintenance.

The percentage left over for programs for those on the outside—such as soup kitchens, homeless shelters, evangelism, and mission—is shrinking by the year.

U.S. per capita disposable (after tax) income increased 91% in inflation-adjusted dollars, from \$11,864 in 1968 to \$22,637 in 1998. Per member giving as a percentage of income declined from 3.10% in 1968 to 2.52% in 1998, a decline of 19%. Maybe this means we should all be giving 20% more than we are currently giving. Inflation has not been a problem for the last three years.

A new study by Pricewaterhouse Coopers finds that President George W. Bush's proposal to extend the charitable deduction to Americans who do not itemize their taxes would stimulate an increase in charitable giving by \$14.6 billion in the first year, an 11% increase over current levels, and more than \$80 billion over five years, leading to an increase in new charitable giving and 11.7 million new givers. The President's proposal will provide modest tax relief, particularly to low- and middle-income taxpayers (incomes under \$40,000), who constitute the majority of nonitemizers.

Last year, Americans donated approximately \$140 billion to charitable nonprofit organizations. An additional \$15 billion was given through charitable bequests. Seventy percent of contributions to charitable causes made by low- and middle-income nonitemizers goes to religious organizations, which would likely receive the largest portion of the increase in giving. This represents a look at the possible implications of the legislation, not a call to endorse or lobby for it.

First Presbyterian Church encourages ALL members to make a pledge toward our annual budget and mission. Are we giving enough? Should we be giving more?

As the hymn goes:

"May we in service to our God
Act out the living Word
And walk the road the saints have trod
Till all have seen and heard.
As stewards of the earth may we
Give thanks in one accord
To God who calls us all to be
Disciples of the Lord."

"Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples"

ROBERT SELLAR, CHAIR
Stewardship Committee

Pastoral Nominating Committee Update

THE PASTORAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE (PNC), WHICH HAS BEEN charged with the responsibility of finding a senior pastor for the congregation to call to fill the position vacated by the retirement of Dr. J. Barrie Shepherd, has been at work now for nearly a year. The reports we have given you in the past detailed the process that the committee has been following as it developed a description of our position and our church, had it approved by Session

and Presbytery, advertised our opening through denominational headquarters, print ads, and word of mouth, and recruited and received dossiers from interested candidates.

As we indicated at the Annual Meeting, we have been gratified by the response. We have reviewed well over a hundred files to identify candidates who meet our requirements on paper, read and listened to taped sermons, and visited and met with selected candidates and heard them preach. As we develop our list of final candidates, they are being invited to view the church and participate in in-depth interviews with the committee.

Although we do not have a specific end date in sight yet, we believe that our search is going well. As you can understand, confidentiality is critical to the effective work of a PNC. (For example, a candidate's current church usually is not aware that their pastor is talking to a search committee elsewhere.) So, we aren't able to share specific information until we have decided on a candidate and negotiated the final terms of the call. We do appreciate the patience, prayers, and support of the congregation and our interim pastoral team as we carry out this important task.

Committee: Gerri Bunai, Donald Dillport, Donald Kilpatrick, Ben Maddox, Nellie McCaslin, Ellen McElduff, Heather Mee, Diana Pardue, Bill Sadler, Nancy Sellar

NANCY SELLAR, CHAIR

News from the Nursery School

THE NURSERY SCHOOL HAS JUST CONCLUDED AN EXTREMELY BUSY admission season. Applications to schools belonging to the Independent Schools Association of Greater New York, which consists of early childhood and ongoing schools, are accepted a year before admission. Most independent schools in New York begin sending out applications and inviting parents to the school in September. Tours and open houses occur during the fall, children's interviews (we call ours "playgroups") in early winter, and notification takes place in February (kindergarten) and March (ages 2-4).

These days New York feels friendlier to children and families, and they are staying in the city instead of decamping to the suburbs. They may also be having more children. That's good news, but it means that enrolling in a school can't be a spur-of-the-moment decision any more. It takes some advance planning.

Having filled our classes for the 2001-02 school year, we'll prepare for another very active season starting in September. If you have a child who will be at least two years and three months old by September 2002, he or she will be eligible for the Nursery School in 2002-03. We recommend that you call us by the middle of September to find out about the admission process and how to apply. We look forward to the opportunity to meet you and your children and to tell you about the Nursery School next fall. There are brochures describing the Nursery School's program and philosophy in the lobby of the Mellin-Macnab Building. The Nursery School office can be reached at 691-3432.

ELLEN ZIMAN, DIRECTOR



Wanna sing? Wanna dance? Join the Curtain Callers at First Church. The Caring Community Curtain Callers is open to any senior center member who loves music, traveling, good food, meeting people, performing for strangers, and is not afraid of hard work. Christina Conroy, veteran performer and certified music therapist, leads the group. If you would like to join, call Christina at (212) 924-2810. (Caring News, Winter 2000)

The Caring Community at First Presbyterian Church

LAUGHTER 101, ANYONE?

The Caring Community opened its program at First Presbyterian Church in the spring of 2000, offering fellowship and a hot, nutritious meal for senior citizens Mondays through Fridays in the Esther Morrow Room in the South Wing. Later in the year Christina Conway joined the program as Coordinator of Activities, and members can now choose from a wide variety of programs and activities from Laughter 101 (Mondays at 11:00 AM) to crafts, exercise, dancing (line and hula), Spanish, piano and guitar classes, sing-alongs (three times a week), chorus, music theory and practice, poetry reading, board games, many special events, and much more.

The Caring Community was founded in 1973 by concerned citizens from the Greenwich Village and Lower Manhattan area's medical, religious, and academic communities to respond to the need for health and social services for seniors. It is now an independent agency with support coming from the New York City Department of the Aging, private foundations, special funds from elected officials, corporations, and individ-

ual gifts from the community. It continues to rely on its founding institutions for space and other essential services.

Caring Community centers currently operate at Our Lady of Pompeii Church, Caring Community headquarters at 20 Washington Square North, First Church, and Independence Plaza on Greenwich.

Want to join or know someone who would like to join? Membership is free and open to anyone in the community 60 years of age or older. Call Sarah Bernard, Site Manager, at (212) 924-2810, or just show up for lunch (served at 12:30 weekdays) and join then.

Want to serve as a volunteer at the center? Many opportunities are available for you to use your skills and talents and to make interesting new friends. Some of our best volunteers are seniors themselves.

To find out what's coming up, check the weekly schedule posted outside the main gates on Fifth Avenue. Or see the monthly schedule on the bulletin board outside the parlor on the second floor of the Mellin-Macnab Building.

JEANETTE JOHNSON

Parish Registry

DECEASED

Charles Clement

Ruth S. McLaren

Jay N. Pike

MARRIAGES

Diana Louise Van Lancker and John Joseph Sidtis

Kristen Davis Demir and Mark George Wilson

Lloyd Grant Gordon and Rola Batniji

BAPTISMS

ADULT

Lindsay Borden

Robert James Breese

Yee Oi Ki

Kenneth Lee

CHILD

Charlotte Jane Elliott

Elizabeth Elliott

daughters of Daniela Klare and Stephen Andrew Elliott

Margaret Stuart Hall

daughter of Amber Marie Vallone and Glenn Dameron Hall

Serena Elaine Miller Korchak

daughter of Susan Denise Miller and Richard Alan Korchak

Claire Sage Lezhen

daughter of Candace Sage-Lezhen and Alexander David Lezhen

Max Cooper O'Brien

son of Erika Higdon and James Francis O'Brien

Katherine Beck Parker

daughter of Karen Geddings and Stephen Keith Parker

Caitlin Hai Fung Shoemaker

daughter of Kathleen Sui Yin Chan and Gary Lee Shoemaker

Evan Sidney Thaxter

son of Sue Chung and Jason McPhee Thaxter

Natalie Chang Gray White

daughter of Anne Louise Gray and Steven Leinbach White

Elisabeth Marjorie Cohen

daughter of Lisa Marie Macek and Gregory David Cohen

SPRING PREACHING SCHEDULE

MARCH	18	Dr. P. C. Enniss – Lent III
	25	Dr. James G. Speer – Lent IV
APRIL	1	Rev. Lindley G. DeGarmo – Lent V
	8	Dr. P. C. Enniss – Palm Sunday Communion
	15	Easter Sunday Communion Service - 8:00 AM Dr. P. C. Enniss – 9:30 AM Worship Dr. P. C. Enniss – 11:30 AM Worship
	22	Rev. Lindley G. DeGarmo
	29	Dr. Mark Hostetter – Reception of New Members
MAY	6	Dr. James G. Speer – Communion
	13	Dr. P. C. Enniss – Sacrament of Baptism
	20	Dr. P. C. Enniss
	27	Rev. Lindley G. DeGarmo
JUNE	3	Dr. P. C. Enniss – Pentecost Communion
	10	Dr. P. C. Enniss
	17	Dr. James G. Speer
	24	Rev. Lindley G. DeGarmo – Sacrament of Baptism



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