

Order of Service for the Public Worship of God

Fifth Sunday in Lent ~ March 29, 2009
Eleven O'clock, A.M.

Pastor: Rev. Dr. James E. Swanson Liturgist: Helen Ferguson
Organist & Choir Director: Miss Beverly Antis

THE SERVICE OF WORSHIP BEGINS WITH THE MUSIC OF THE ORGAN

THE PRELUDE *Beneath the Cross of Jesus* Robert Lau
 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded Johann Pachelbel

THE CHORAL INTROIT *Surely the Lord Is In This Place* Robert Lau

*THE PROCESSIONAL HYMN 98
 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded PASSION CHORALE

*THE PRAYER OF ADORATION

THE CALL TO CONFESSION

THE PUBLIC PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Your name, O God, is to be spoken with reverence and hope; yet we have spoken it irreverently at times and not at all when we might have called upon you with expectation of your comfort and help.

Instead of following your holy laws, we have sinned and have succumbed in our weakness to temptations your Son resisted with the confidence of your Word.

Forgive our lack of faith in your saving power. Forgive our timid witness and our failure to take a stand for those who are beaten down by injustice and greed. Forgive us all our sins, the deliberate ones as well as those unknown or unintentional.

Have mercy upon us for the sake of Jesus Christ, your suffering servant and our Savior and Lord.

A TIME FOR PRIVATE CONFESSION (in silence)

THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Pastor: Though we be lost in sin, God never abandons us to desolation.

People: **God so loved the world that he sent his only Son:
Not to condemn the world,
but so the world through him might be saved!**

Pastor: In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.
We are not alone!
Friends, believe the good news of the gospel:

People: **In Jesus, the Christ, we are forgiven!**

*THE GLORIA PATRI 579

GLORIA PATRI

*THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH from "A Declaration of Faith" (1977)
The Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (PCUS)

We are certain that Jesus lives!
He lives as God with us,
touching all of human life with the presence of God.
He lives as one of us with God.

Because he shares our humanity
and has bound us to himself in love,
We have an advocate in the innermost life of God.

We declare that Jesus is Lord!
His resurrection is a decisive victory
over the powers that deform and destroy human life.

His lordship is hidden.
The world appears to be dominated by people and systems
that do not acknowledge his rule.

But his lordship is real.
It demands our loyalty and sets us free
from the fear of all lesser lords who threaten us.

We maintain that ultimate sovereignty
now belongs to Jesus Christ in every sphere of life.

Jesus is Lord!
He has been Lord from the beginning.
He will be Lord at the end.
Even now he is Lord!

*THE GREETINGS OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP

THE CHILDREN'S SERMON

THE NOISY OFFERING OF LOOSE CHANGE (Last Sunday of the month)

Kindly pass your Prayer Requests to the center aisle so they may be collected and forwarded to the Prayer Cordon for special attention.

THE SHARING OF JOYS, CONCERNS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE CHORAL PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Lord, Have Mercy Upon Us

David N. Johnson

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Jeremiah 31: 31-34 (*Pew Bible p. 696*)

Liturgist: This is the word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God!**

THE ANTHEM

Cast Me Not Away

Robert J. Powell

THE EPISTLE LESSON

Romans 8: 12-27

(*Pew Bible p. 148*)

Liturgist: Here ends the reading of the Epistle.

All: **Praise be to you, O Lord.**

GOSPEL LESSON John 12:20-33 (*Pew Bible p. 101*)

Pastor: The Gospel of our Lord.

All: **Glory to You, O Christ.**

*THE CONGREGATIONAL CANTICLE (Hymn # 396, vs. 1, CAITHNESS)

**O for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame,
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!**

THE SERMON “ SETTING PRIORITIES ” Dr. Swanson

*THE PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD’S PRAYER (using “debts” and “debtors”)

*THE THREE-FOLD AMEN Marty Haugen

THE PRESENTATION OF TITHES, OFFERINGS, & GIFTS

THE OFFERTORY ANTHEM *A Heart to Serve* Valerie Showers Crescenz

*THE DOXOLOGY – Hymn No. 591 OLD HUNDREDTH

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow:
Praise Him all creatures here below:
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

*THE UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**Use us, O God of miracles, and the offerings we have brought, to
bring life and health and hope to your world. Make us generous
and faithful stewards of your mysteries, as we share the bounty
which you have granted unto us. Through Christ we pray. Amen.**

*THE RECESSIONAL HYMN 92 *Beneath the Cross of Jesus* ST. CHRISTOPHER

*THE BENEDICTION

*THE CHORAL RESPONSE

God Be with You Till We Meet Again Ralph Vaughan Williams

*THE TIME OF SILENCE

*THE CHARGE AND DISMISSAL

Pastor: And now, my friends,
 As you make your Lenten journey,
 Be strong in witness to your faith;
 Be diligent in your study of God’s Word;
 Seek the truth; and cultivate a humble heart.
 Go in Peace and serve the Lord!

People: **Thanks be to God!**

* THOSE WHO ARE ABLE, PLEASE STAND.

YOU WERE GREETED TODAY by Linda Peters.

FELLOWSHIP HOUR - Everyone is cordially invited to attend today's Fellowship Hour downstairs in the Assembly Room, immediately following our worship time. Hosting today's Fellowship Hour are Nancy Jo Moorhead and the 'Merry Maids'.

Welcome! Grace and Peace to All

If you are visiting today, please introduce yourself to others sitting nearby during the Passing of the Peace. Join us for Fellowship Time immediately following worship each Sunday in the Assembly Room downstairs. Exit at the rear of the Sanctuary, go down to the lower level, then past the Library to the entrance near the Sallman painting of "Christ, Knocking at the Door."

MEETING THIS WEEK ...

Worship & Music - Tuesday, March 31st @ 6 pm (Connell Room)

Calvin Study Group – Wednesday, April 1st (*no fooling!*) at 1 pm
in the Assembly Room

SEEKERS CLASS

*Starting Time: 9:30 a.m.
in the Assembly Room*

Next Sunday, April 5th

Video Study & Discussion



Another DVD lesson in the Walk As Jesus Walked video series by Ray Vander Laan will be presented. The title of the study next Sunday is "Don't Forget Us" and it explores the suffering we share when one part of Christ's body experiences persecution. (See 1 Corinthians 12:12, 25-26)

In The Life of Our Church

Prayer Concerns:

- Orville Nicholas Making wonderful progress since open heart surgery; gaining strength every day
- John Towns In rehab at Concordia Home in Cabot
- Ellie Walchesky Awaiting a diagnosis/treatment plan for her pain

For Continued Prayer: Julie & Bud Bruno; Marion Campbell;
Marian Curran; Joan Moore; Eleanor Ritts; Gladys Strobel; Bill Wilson

Birthdays this week:

Benjamin Morrison - March 30

Beverly McClaine - April 3

Robert Heaton - April 1 (80th birthday)

Karen McJunkin - April 3



A MEMORIAL SERVICE

FOR

Mary Elizabeth Goehring

Feb. 27, 1913 ~ Feb. 5, 2009

will be held

Saturday, April 4th @ 11 am
(in the Sanctuary)

Lunch follows in the Assembly Room



PALM SUNDAY (Next Sunday)

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

- Psalm 118:26

April 5th - 11 am Worship Service

*The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.
Procession with palm crowns and distribution of
palm fronds.*

*Special guests: YMCA children under the direction
of Dee Demby will sing and perform two skits
during worship.*

**THE ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING
OFFERING will also be received next Sunday.**

Extra envelopes will be available in the narthex.
Make checks payable to Covenant Presbyterian Church.



"A Palm Sunday High Tea," hosted by Nancy Jo & the "Merry Maids" with the help of the children of the YMCA, will be celebrated in the Assembly Room during Fellowship Hour *next Sunday immediately following worship.*

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

✠ **Palm Sunday, April 5 - 11 am**
Worship Service in the Sanctuary

♪ Wednesday, April 8th - 7 pm
Choir Rehearsal

✠ **Maundy Thursday, April 9 - 8 pm**
Tenebrae Service of Darkness
& Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

✠ **Good Friday, April 10 - 12 Noon**
Joint Worship Service
(at Saint Andrews Presbyterian Church)



Easter Sunday, April 12th

10:30 am Prelude of Easter Music

11:00 am Festival Service of the Resurrection



Once again, 97.7 FM AllHitz and Armstrong are graciously sponsoring the



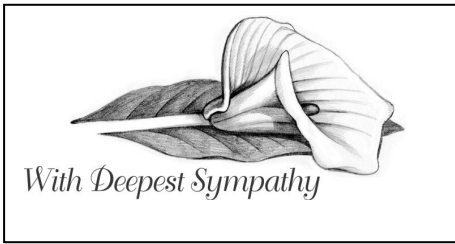
Steeler Footballers vs. Pennsylvania State Police Basketball Game

to benefit the United Way of Butler County
Impact Fund

It will take place at **8:00 pm on Saturday, April 4th, in the Butler Senior High Gym** (110 Campus Lane, Butler 16001). Tickets are \$7 per person and are available at AllHitz 97.7 Studios (112 Hollywood Drive, Suite 203, Butler) and United Way of Butler County (184 Pittsburgh Road, Butler). Also taking place throughout the evening, there will be a Bake Sale, Free Throw Contest, 50/50 Raffle, Steeler Autograph Session and Pittsburgh Sports Prize Wheel.

Delicious pies and pastries will also be available from The Pie Shoppe, proceeds from which will benefit the United Way Impact Fund.

You can order Cream Pies, Fresh Fruit Pies, Pumpkin Roll, Nut Log or Easter Bread and pick them up at the event on April 4th. Please make payment to: "United Way of Butler County" and mail to the address on the Order Form. (See Elsie in the church office to pick up an order form.)



Phyllis Keirstead
(sister of Jennie Jamieson)
March 1, 1932 ~ March 20, 2009

Betty E. Fend
(sister of Norma Brennen)
July 6, 1922 ~ March 24, 2009

Phyllis Keirstead

The sympathy of the Covenant Church Family is extended to Jennie and Bill “Rev. J.” Jamieson upon the death of Jennie’s sister, Phyllis Keirstead, age 77, who died peacefully in the arms of her four daughters on March 20, 2009 in Brunswick, Maine. Phyllis was born in Presque Isle, PA, graduated from Mapleton High School and received her nursing degree from New England Baptist Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. Although a registered nurse by profession, she was a caregiver by nature, tirelessly and devotedly nursing her husband back to health; and earlier, throughout her sister Jennie’s lifetime, serving as a caring and influential “mother-figure.” Phyllis was preceded in death by a son and a grandson. She is survived by her husband Leighton, four daughters, a brother, two sisters, six grandsons, and eight great-grandchildren. A Funeral Service was held March 28th at 11 a.m. at First Parish Church in Brunswick, Maine officiated by her brother-in-law the Rev. Dr. William A. Jamieson (Jennie’s husband and our own “Rev. J.”).

Betty E. Fend

The sympathy of the Covenant Church Family is extended to Norma Brennen upon the death of her sister, Betty E. Fend, age 86, on March 24, 2009 at Sunnyview. Mrs. Fend was a homemaker and a member of Hill United Presbyterian Church. She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Beverly D. and Roy Oesterling; a granddaughter and her husband Pamela and Dirk Eckert of West Sunbury; a grandson David K. Peters Jr. of Butler; two great-granddaughters Makenzie Peters and Nash Peters; one sister Norma Brennen; and a number of nieces and nephews. Mrs. Fend was preceded in death by her husband John and two sisters, Beulah Dimun and Donna Birckbichler. A Funeral Service was held on Friday, March 27, 2009 at 10 a.m. at the Thompson-Miller Funeral Home, officiated by the Rev. Clark Sawyer of The Hill Presbyterian Church.

Thanks
for your
participation

Many thanks to everyone who attended the Friday Luncheon for Becca Lawson (one of our Presbyterian mission workers in the Philippines). Your support is very much appreciated! ... And a special “thank you” to those who prepared and served the meal!

Commentary on the Texts for The Lord's Day ~ March 29, 2009

The Center for Excellence in Preaching
Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI

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Neal Plantinga once pointed out that in the New Testament when Jesus quotes the first and great commandment about loving the Lord our God, he changes it just a bit. Every pious Jew raised on the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6 knew full well that proper wording: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” That’s the kind of sacred formula you just don’t mess with. And if you do, everyone would notice in a heartbeat.

But that’s exactly what Jesus does. When queried, he said the first and great commandment is to love the Lord your God “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” Surely his listeners gasped. As Plantinga pointed out, it would be as arresting as tucking your child into bed one night only to hear him say in his bedtime prayer, “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my brain to keep.” You’d notice.

But maybe Jesus was thinking of Jeremiah 31 when he introduced his subtle riff on the great commandment. After all, plunked down near the center of Jeremiah’s often dark and difficult prophetic book come these lyric covenantal words that pointed forward to a new day for the people of God. And a key part of that new day would be the implanting of God’s ways smack within not only people’s hearts but within their minds.

Jeremiah says that a key benefit of God’s new way of relating to humanity will be that no longer will anyone need to teach his neighbor about God—everyone will already know. That is not the kind of emotional talk one would associate with the human heart. We’re not told that neighbors would no longer need to try to get each other to love God or to feel a certain way about God. No, we’re told that the issue would center on what people *know*, on what they *understand*.

There is no denying that when Jeremiah pointed forward to this new covenant and this new way of God’s interacting with us, knowledge loomed pretty large in it all. But since we’re not Gnostics (that’s been declared a bad idea for quite some while now . . .), we may wonder what to make of this, especially this late in the Season of Lent. If nothing else, Lent is surely a time to realize that salvation is not about what we do or what we accomplish and it most certainly is not about what we know or what we understand. In fact, Lent reminds us that salvation came through one of the most counterintuitive events ever: the *death of God’s beloved Son*.

The Gospel Lectionary reading for this Sunday in Lent shows Jesus declaring all kinds of things that no one could grasp at the time (and

even all these centuries later, we have to admit that being “exalted on a cross” is a strikingly odd thing to ponder.) To quote Plantinga again, it’s like being “enthroned on an electric chair” or being “honored by a firing squad.”

Salvation came through something we frankly could not understand. It certainly is *not* about knowledge. It is about the lovingkindness of God, the *chesed* of Yahweh that the Psalms and other parts of the Old Testament make clear was God’s #1 attribute. To begin to grasp the beauty of the cross, we must start by contemplating the idea that God is love, that God is grace, that God has great enthusiasm for human life and is powerfully intent on seeing that life flourish.

Generally speaking, of course, we’d rather “make a life for ourselves,” as we say, than engage in some challenging project of self-denial and living death. If you want to make the most out of life, society has plenty of advice. Popular parlance is peppered with the slogans of success: “The early bird catches the worm; a rolling stone gathers no moss; when the going gets tough, the tough get going; nothing ventured, nothing gained; the race is to the swift; remember, there is no prize for second place.”

We know all about “rising to challenges, grabbing the gusto, and feathering our own nests.” But now hear the word of the gospel: unless you die to all that, you have no life worth bragging about. “Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a single seed.” Actually, literally translated, this says, “Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone.” It remains *monos, solo*, alone. “But if it dies, it produces much fruit.”

“When I am lifted up,” Jesus goes on to say, “I will draw all people to myself.” And just in case you are tempted to interpret this up-lifted status to mean something glitzy and romantic, John sticks in his little commentary in verse 33 to make clear that the “lifting up” Jesus had in mind was the unpleasant business of being lifted up onto a cross. Ultimately Jesus would get lifted up in the ascension into heaven, but the first ten feet of the ascension came by way of a cross.

So if you want to fly off into glory with Jesus, you’ve got to be part of the first ten feet of the trip as well. You can’t prop up a stepladder on the side of the cross, climb to the top, and then join Jesus for the balance of his journey to glory. You’ve got to be crucified with him! You have to be the kernel that gets buried into death with him. “Where I am, my servant will also be,” Jesus said. But as a servant, it is not up to us to pick and choose the times and places we want to be with Jesus. We are with him always and everywhere... or we are with him never and nowhere.

Practically speaking, we Christian people demonstrate this dying and rising in how we interact with others. We keep repenting and being forgiven. If and when we catch ourselves getting snared by the world’s way of defining success, we re-adjust our perspective so we can again see life in the gospel’s light. We die to society and cultural norms...so we can rise to the kingdom.

Unless a kernel of wheat falls, falls down, gets buried into the earth and dies, it's lonely and alone. But if it dies, it may well produce a great cloud of witnesses, a host of life, a cornucopia of good kingdom fruit. Whether or not the world cares for the kind of fruit that emerges from the servant pattern of dying and rising with Christ, Jesus assures us that this, and this alone, is the fruit that lasts forever. Thanks be to God!



March 29, 2009
Fifth Sunday in Lent

“In contrast to ‘thou shalt not,’ and ‘thou shalt’ are God’s words to all hearts: ‘I will put,’ ‘I will write,’ and ‘I will forgive.’”

-- Lindy Black

“All ground is ground zero. All ground is a place of death, where life is longing to be found.”

--Rev. Debra Metzgar Shew

“An attitude of many congregations is that they want everything to get better, but nothing to change. In order for a seed to produce fruit, it has to change.”

--Brian P. Stoffregen

The Reverend Dr. James E. Swanson, Pastor

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