



The Carriage Stone

March 2014

New Hempstead Presbyterian Church, New City, N.Y. *The English Church*

Lent



“The Carriage Stone” is the Newsletter of
The New Hempstead Presbyterian Church

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What is God 'Up To' in Your Life?

“Lent is a time to take the time
To let the power of our faith story take hold of us.”

—Ann Weems, *Lent*, in *Kneeling in Jerusalem*

I must say this is the longest, coldest, darkest, snowiest winter I can remember. And I've lived in both England and Canada. I'm so tired of grey, ratty, nasty snow piles I could scream. Here, at the tail end of winter, I am reminded that the walk through Lent is not an easy one. It is fraught with the grey, ratty, nasty reality of life.

The Presbyterian ruling elder and poet Ann Weems reminds us that this time of Lent is a time to nurture the roots of our Christian faith by immersing ourselves in the power of its story. We worship a God who loves us so much that God was willing to become one of us, suffering with and for us, and experience the horrors of death. Lent is a time to turn again to the Story of Jesus and live into that story—live more fully into the life God calls us to.

One good discipline for living more fully into our faith story is the practice of listening to our own lives. At the end of each day, it is worth our asking ourselves two questions:

- Where did I feel most alive today?
- Where did I feel least alive today?

Thinking prayerfully about these questions is a way to get in touch with what God may be up to in our lives. This is not to say that feeling “lively” is a sure sign of God's presence any more than feeling exhausted and out of all strength means that God has abandoned us. Rather, prayerfully reflecting on these questions is a way of “praying without ceasing” (I Thess. 5:17). It is part of what the 17th Century lay Carmelite Brother Lawrence called “Practicing the presence of God.” Where, over the course of the day have we been most aware God in our lives?

A further step in this reflective discipline is to ask ourselves how the story of our day has echoes in the Story of Scripture—in the stories of God's work with God's people. As Christians, we are molded and shaped by the “power of our faith story.” How has God been present in the life of Israel, the life of the Church? How has God been present in your life? What is God “up to” in your life?



Helping Hands/Safe Haven at NHPC on March 7 and 8

From Laura Metallo-Bidon

New Hempstead Presbyterian Church is proud to partner with Helping Hands of Rockland County to provide Safe Haven for homeless men and women of Rockland County. On Friday, March 7 and Saturday, March 8, we'll again be providing hot meals, overnight shelter and breakfast in Murchison Hall for our Safe Haven guests.

It has been a long, difficult winter for our homeless neighbors, and these will likely be our last Safe Haven nights for this season.

Volunteers are needed to help prepare and serve meals to our guests. Overnight chaperones are also needed. A sign-up sheet is in the Colonial Room, or contact Mission Chair Laura Metallo-Bidon if you can lend a helping hand.

Congratulations!

Karen Martin Receives Award

South Orangetown Council PTA regularly honors those who work tirelessly to bridge the gap between home and school. At the Founders Day celebration on Tuesday, February 25, the PTA presented Karen Martin with the PTA Lifetime Membership Award to recognize her outstanding contributions benefitting the youth of the South Orangetown Central School District.



Thank You from “Homes for Heroes”

On behalf of the Homes for Heroes Board of Directors, I would like to thank the New Hempstead Presbyterian Church, for your most generous donation. This donation demonstrates a deep dedication to our Veterans, and our community. We are honored that you have chosen us as the recipients of your “Peacemaking Offering.”

Homes for Heroes has affordable, supportive garden units that are for displaced Veterans who are suffering from wounds that were acquired in the military service of the United States of America. These men and women have served our country with honor, and it is only fitting that we do everything possible to help them in their time of need. We believe that these Veterans should be able to live in a safe, secure environment that will provide them with the services and support that they need. We held our ribbon cutting ceremony in November, and the Veterans who now call these apartments home are happy and grateful.

Once again, I would like to thank the New Hempstead Presbyterian Church for your generosity and your dedication to our Veterans. Your contribution has helped us to provide support for our warriors in need. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Thomas Zimmerman – Treasurer
Homes for Heroes, Inc.

One Great Hour of Sharing

“Hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts.”
—Romans 5:5

Feeding the hungry, helping people build up their own livelihoods, responding to disasters—these are all ways that your gift to One Great Hour of Sharing will change lives, change communities—and change the world.

In March and April, our weekly “Minutes for Mission” during worship will focus on specific ways that your gifts to the One Great Hour of Sharing help provide help and hope around the world. A Presbyterian tradition since 1949, we hope that you will prayerfully consider your gift this year.



Our Talented Congregation

Jane Craig Sebok



There are no listings for April. But I know we have talented people out there. If you or any member of your family (be it son, daughter, grandson, grandson, granddaughter, niece, nephew or third cousin once removed), has a performance coming up for May, please send me the information at janesebok20@gmail.com, by March 21. Thank you.

March 16, 3:00 PM – Jane Craig Sebok,
Rockland County Concert Band, Green Meadow Waldorf School, Arts Building Auditorium, 307 Hungry Hollow Road, Chestnut Ridge, NY. Tickets can be obtained through a band member or at the door. Senior discounts available.

March 23, 4:00 PM – Barbara Zacheis,
Adelphi Chamber Orchestra, River Dell Regional High School, 55 Pyle Street, Oradell, NY. “[Mozartean Echoes: An Orchestral Showcase.](#)”

Do you need to be uplifted? Are you frazzled? Overextended?

Join **Union Presbyterian Church** on Saturday, March 15 from 9 AM to 1 PM for a special Women’s Retreat. Our keynote speaker, **Reverend Dorinda Violante** will lead us in nurturing our spirits and minds while **Jane Savage**, personal health coach from Savage Health, will lead us in ways to nurture our bodies.

\$25 per person includes a healthy breakfast and lunch!

For more information, send e-mail to unionchurch2@verizon.net

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4-Church Youth Group “Unplugged” Retreat in Vermont

February 14–17
from Margery Rossi

First and foremost – thank you, Rick Ufford-Chase, and the entire Chase family for hosting us again this year in your lovely, warm homes in



WINTER RETREAT

northern Vermont. This annual weekend is a highlight each year – and this year was no exception!

We began the weekend a little early on Friday, thanks to the snow and ice that cancelled school. Before we got on the road, however, we made good on our promise to collect devices so that we

would truly be “unplugged” for the weekend. A few of the participants seemed somewhat uncertain about what to do for entertainment without their phones or other devices, but after a little while, everyone figured it out.

On Saturday, we began with discussion of the theme: “Unplugged” and what it means to us: slang for being out of touch; not connected to what is happening in the world. There were a variety of opinions on whether this is a good thing or not.

We read Matthew 3:13-17, 4:1-11, the story of Jesus’ baptism and subsequent temptation in the wilderness, which is the first time in the gospels that we find him “unplugged.” After reading and reflecting on this scripture passage individually, we got together in small groups and shared our reflections. One group discussed the temptations that Jesus faced and wondered what they might look/sound like if Jesus were tempted by what is available on the internet. So, throughout the weekend, in between sledding, cross-country skiing, watching movies, worshipping, talking,

playing together and reading other stories of Jesus “unplugged,” we worked on writing a modern version of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, based on the conversations that took place during the retreat and the temptations the youth knew to be available online.

Here it is. Read the scripture first, to compare.

May it be as instructive for you in your Lenten journey as it has been for me already.

-Margery

Jesus’ Temptation in the Wilderness – A 21st Century Interpretation

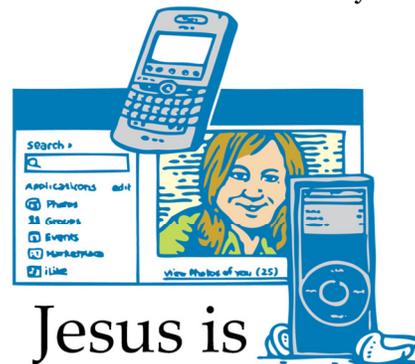
Immediately, Jesus was handed an iPod to test his conviction. For forty days, he refused to turn it on.

To prepare himself for the coming trial, he mastered the spiritual disciplines...

He fasted,
he spent time alone in prayer,
he labored in the garden to remind
himself what was real.

And on the 40th day, when he was sure of his ability to focus on what he knew to be good and true, he took a deep breath and turned on the iPod. Temptation beckoned immediately.

First, Jesus was captivated by websites driven by those who had experienced great hurt, and whose entire worlds were filled with cynicism and despair. He read on page after page: “There is no hope. No one can be trusted. The only feelings that are real and true are those that say I have no worth, that no one cares about me; that my life has no purpose or meaning and that I would be better off dead.”



Jesus is Tempted

Though the Darkness was seductive, Jesus said, “No.” “No. Remember the word of God spoken to the prophet Jeremiah and echoed in Psalm 139:

Before I formed you in the womb, I chose you.
Before you were born, I dedicated you.
I appointed you a prophet to the nation.”

And he affirmed, “I choose life. I choose hope. I choose to be a light to the world.”

Shortly thereafter, Jesus found himself caught up with those on the other end of the spectrum who want desperately to believe that faith need not cost much of anything: “Click here within 90 seconds,” he read, “and God will do something wonderful for you.” “If you want security, wealth, or a new car, all you need to do is give your life to God. Click here to contribute to our ministry and we will pray for you! Nothing more is required of you!”

But Jesus countered this deceit with the words of the prophet Micah:

“O Mortal,

God has already made clear what ‘good’ is and what God requires from you:

to do justice
to love kindness
and to walk humbly with your God.”

Jesus dismissed those with too-easy answers as charlatans and false prophets, and insisted that he would follow the way of the cross.

By now, Jesus was beginning to attract more and more attention. First hundreds, then thousands, and quickly, hundreds of thousands “friended” Jesus on Facebook and began to follow him on Twitter, Tumblr and Instagram. Publicists begged him for exclusive rights to his brand and promised him book contracts, movie deals, his own YouTube channel, copyrights and a marketing empire that would make him – and them – rich and famous beyond his imagining; able to influence millions around the globe and receive their adoration with a fingertip on a touch screen. But Jesus knew that notoriety does not equal community, idolatry does not equal discipleship and real leadership bears no resemblance to the antics that invite fame in the world of social networking.

So he resisted with the foundational words from the Ten Commandments spoken by God to Moses on the mountaintop so long ago:

“I AM the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me.”

And so Jesus chose the hard work of creating genuine communities with people that would change the world because of who God called them to be.

