



The Carriage Stone

September 2016

New Hempstead Presbyterian Church, New City, NY.

The English Church



Welcome Home!



"The Carriage Stone" is the Newsletter of

The New Hempstead Presbyterian Church

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FROM THE PASTOR

The Hinge

Text: Luke 9: 51-62

This is a sermon that I preached earlier this summer

Imagine an old door, the wooden kind with 3 hinges. Now, look closely at the hinges, how the door swings open and closed because of them. That is the function of Luke 9, verse 51. It is the hinge on which the Gospel turns. “When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

The door to Jesus’ time on earth is closing. He is walking through it to go to Jerusalem, with the mindset of the “Suffering Servant” In Isaiah: “I have set my face like flint.” There is deep resolution and commitment in Jesus’ movement towards Jerusalem. Toward death. Resurrection. Being “taken up,” or ascension.

Few folks want to know about this resolution and commitment. The Samaritans have refused him outright. They do not want any part of the mission of this Jew—a representative of their traditional enemies—on his way to the seat of Jewish power. They have no clue that a cross waits for him there.

On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus, the rabbi *par excellence*, never stops teaching. Three people say they want to follow him. He uses their stated desires to teach about commitment. We need to listen to what Jesus says to these people.

We have so domesticated the Gospel of our Lord. So many of the TV preachers today think that following Jesus means having pretty things, being wealthy. Jesus himself says following him means being homeless: Foxes have holes, birds

have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head. This is hard for us to hear—that commitment means following Jesus before we do anything else.

Jesus never played the ole “bait and Switch” game. He never promised anyone an easy time. What we ARE promised, in the Gospels and throughout the Bible, is that

- we are God’s beloved
- we are special
- we are precious
- we are forgiven
- we are protected—throughout this life, and into the next
- we are family
- we are empowered
- we belong to God.

We are part of Christ’s body.

This is the God who, in Jesus, calls us to commitment.

This particular part of God’s family, New Hempstead Presbyterian Church, is at a crossroads—in more ways than one. We are literally at the crossroads of Route 45 and New Hempstead Road.

We are at a figurative crossroads, as well. You may remember that United Church of Spring Valley was investigating the possibility of merging with us. They have decided that we are not the church for them, NOT because of WHO we are, but because of WHERE we are.

Let me repeat that: They love us, but not our location. They feel that in 5 years’ time, we will be where they are now, surrounded by the Hassidic community.

This is not our fault. It is simply a demographic reality.

It is also a serious wake-up call. Jesus told his followers to keep their hands on the plow and their eyes on the horizon. We MUST look at the horizon, no matter how scary.

We, as a congregation, are at a turning point, a hinge. Do we keep on doing what we have been doing? Or do we, as a congregation, enter into a time of prayerful discernment about our future?

I hope we choose to listen for God's voice—there are opportunities for us to minister to our neighbors if we are willing to partner in creative ways with our sisters and brothers along the “highway 45” corridor. This includes the congregations at Stony Point and Haverstraw Central, as well as other non-religious organizations.

I know looking at the future is scary—I'm frightened myself! But I am convinced that if we as a congregation, turn to God and recommit ourselves to God's will and plans, we will see the opportunities available for mission and ministry in Rockland County.

I believe that this Church has a future here.

I also believe that it will look very different than it does now. Exactly what that will look like, I don't know.

We face a tough decision: discern God's will and get on with it, or ignore this “fullness of time,” this “Crossroads” moment of commitment and miss out on a grand adventure following our Lord Jesus Christ and proclaiming the Kingdom of God. I hope that each of you will commit with me to daily, intentional prayer about God's will for our future. And I hope that, come autumn, when we are back to our routines, we will come together in small groups to pray and discern together.

Pray with me:

Lord God, you have been our dwelling place and refuge for 287 years. You have brought us through war, through fire, and through births, marriages, baptisms, and deaths.

We are yours, O Lord.

Open our hearts, our minds, our eyes, to your will for us at this crossroads. Give us an understanding of your desire for us, and the wisdom and grace to follow you.

Take our life. Use us, Lord.

In Jesus name, Amen.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lori". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

The Discussion Group on White Privilege

The Discussion Group on White Privilege will resume Wednesday, September 7 at 7:30 in the Colonial Room. As we decided back in the spring, we will be reading and discussing *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* By Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum.

Join us!!!!



Locked in a Box

For the past year, members of the NHPC Mission Committee have been participating in “Rockland Stronger Together”—a network of Rockland County faith communities seeking ways to support our growing immigrant communities.

Later this fall, this group will be inviting local congregations to view a short documentary film titled “Locked in a Box.” This award-winning documentary follows the stories of individuals held in the U.S. Immigration detention system and those who visit them. The film traces the lives of individuals who fled their homelands in search of safety and freedom only to end up in U.S. prisons under a mandatory bed quota system run by Immigration Customs & Enforcement (ICE).

Since the 1990’s, there has been a massive expansion of the immigration detention system. Up to 34,000 immigrants are in detention on any given day in approximately 200 different facilities, many of which are for-profit prisons. “Locked in a Box” helps strip away the political rhetoric to see the human cost of detention.

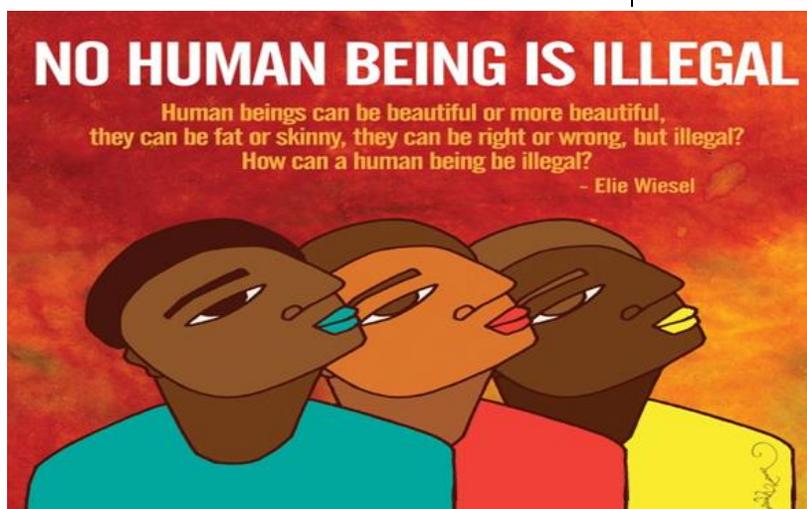
This film is the result of a collaboration between Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Services with local partners in the hope of inspiring its viewers toward action.

We hope you will join together with “Rockland Stronger Together” to view this documentary and learn what our congregation can do to support visitation ministries, advocacy, and compassionate care for individuals who are “locked in a box.”

Watch this space for more details....

Did you know that the Orange County Correctional Facility, located in Goshen, New York, is one of 1,528 facilities used to “house” immigration detainees during the last decade?

--- **Source:** TRAC Reports, Inc.; Copyright 2009





Peacemaking Offering 2016

Creating a More Peaceful & Just Community

Our **Peacemaking Offering** in October will be dedicated to a local organization that is working to make a more peaceful and just community here in Rockland County. In September, our **Peacemaking Survey** will give you an opportunity to select the organization that will receive our gifts.

This summer, as we've worshiped with friends from around the county, we've learned about several organizations working for peace and justice:

- Toney Earl, Jr. visited us to tell us his personal story and about the work of his organization, **MADE (Making a Difference Everyday)**, which brings hope and change to formerly incarcerated individuals to help them reach their God-given potential and avoid returning to the criminal justice system.
- At Haverstraw, we met Eileen Burge, a volunteer facilitator for **The VCS Mothers' Group: Mothering in a New Country**—also lovingly known as **El Grupo de Madres**—a weekly parenting class for immigrant mothers to facilitate understanding and transitioning to a new community, and for sharing resources to strengthen immigrant families.

What other organization or group do you know of that is working for peace and justice in Rockland County?

In September, you'll have the opportunity to select the recipient of our gifts through our **Peacemaking Survey**. 100% of your Peacemaking Offering will go to a local organization chosen by the congregation.

Watch for the **Peacemaking Survey** – coming soon!



If you would like to be included on the prayer list on the back of the bulletin or you would like to be taken off the list please call or email Kristen Rabeler at office@nhpchurch.org or (845) 354-2372.

YAV Blogspots

For those of you who want to follow the Young Adult Volunteers (YAVs) we commissioned on August 28, here are their blogspots:

Meredith Check

checkingoutyavchicago.wordpress.com

John Black

johnblackyav.wordpress.com

Rebekah Witt

lilwitto2.wixsite.com/missionarylife/blog



Fabulous Conference Center Seeks Steady Vehicle for Long-Term Relationship!

Stony Point was already looking for its next “donor vehicle” when our last remaining car was totaled earlier this month. The good news is that no other vehicles were involved in the accident and no one was injured, but our beloved Toyota Avalon is no longer! The bad news is that it is a long walk to the train station and even longer walk to the airport.

Please spread the word in your churches, mosques, and synagogues and tell all your friends that we are seeking one or more vehicles to support our guests and the important networking and outreach work of the Community of Living Traditions.

Older models and high mileage are acceptable as long as the vehicle is in good mechanical condition. We are happy to travel significant distances to pick it up. This would be an allowable deduction for charitable giving for tax purposes.

Contact Rick at (845) 608-4056 by text or phone or by email at rickuffordchase@gmail.com.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Helps after Church Fire

August 31, 2016: For more than a century, the Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church stood tall in Philadelphia’s Overbrook neighborhood. Now only the charred outer walls of the building remain after fire raged through the church early Monday morning.

At least one person was in the church when the fire broke out, but firefighters were able to bring that person to safety.

An investigation into a cause continues. Authorities believe it may have begun in the church’s basement.

The building was home to six churches as well as a preschool, after school programs and a daycare center. Staff at the Presbytery of Philadelphia is working with the church on locations for upcoming worship, insurance and other issues as well as determining how to move forward in rebuilding.

“There are things about a 1912 structure that are not the best conduit for ministry in 2016. We need to pause, hear God’s voice, see the gifts God has given to those who are here today and determine what the needs are and what is appropriate moving forward,” said the Rev. Kevin Porter, stated clerk with the Presbytery of Philadelphia. “This will take time but I am hopeful the different faith communities that called the church their home will share in the same spirit and communicate that to their neighbors.”

Jim Kirk, national associate for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, reached out to the presbytery following the fire.

“This is a historic church with a small congregation and they’ve been working to help the other congregations find alternative spaces. I spoke with presbytery officials and offered PDA support,” said Kirk. “We are prepared to assist the church in any way we can.”

