



# THE PARK CHURCH

## CROSS CURRENTS

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February 2008

When a minister is called to be the pastor of a church, often that person is called to be “Pastor and Teacher”. I am curious what the call of a pastor to be “teacher” says about the educational mission of the church. So, how do we think about education? Modern educational institutions connect particular courses of study with particular career paths. So, one might argue that the educational mission of the church is to equip people to be functional Christians.

Actually, there are two aspects of the educational mission of any church. The first is the mandate to provide education “from cradle to grave” for the people in the congregation. The purpose is to equip people of all ages to respond to the varying and ongoing challenges of life. Too often, adults in particular find themselves trying to deal with events of adult life with a theological perspective gained when they were still children. We often have not done a good enough job of helping theology mature along with the person.

Education in the congregation also broadens our perspectives so that we can connect the deep values of religious faith with issues of human need and injustice. Education in the congregation even helps us to get to know one another better – and besides, education can be intellectually stimulating.

The educational mission of the church, however, is not just for our own consumption or only targeted to our own need. The Park Church has a long tradition of providing educational opportunities for the entire community. I remind you that when Thomas K. Beecher observed a lack of religious education in the church family and in the community, he and the church created one of the first comprehensive Sunday School programs in the country. He would spend Friday evenings educating the many teachers who would then teach the up-to-six hundred children who showed up on Sunday morning.

Our task is to identify today’s needs and respond by creating appropriate educational opportunities. So, with these thoughts in mind, I propose the following:

1. I propose to work with and encourage the Nominating Committee to recruit several new members for the Ministry of Christian Education. This Ministry is charged with developing, articulating, and promoting the broad educational vision for this congregation. The Ministry provides support and resource for the Sunday School, Youth Groups, Christian Education Program Coordinators, Adult Religious Education, intergenerational educational events, and educational offerings to the wider community. Integration of the “Casting Your Nets” team with the Ministry of Christian Education will be paramount
2. I will offer an adult study group after worship for eight Sundays in February, March, and April. (Details found elsewhere in this issue) The class will consider the meaning of the Lord’s Prayer from the perspective of Aramaic, the language that Jesus spoke.
3. I will work with the Christian Education Program Coordinator, Lee Gaylord and the Ministry of Christian Education to assess how to fill the staff position recently vacated by Blair Jennings.
4. I will facilitate conversation among the Ministers and Christian Education leaders of the Downtown Elmira Churches to determine if some educational needs could better be met by ecumenical cooperation than by any congregation alone. This cooperative effort might address more advanced theological education, youth programs, and community education offerings.

Clearly, not all of this can happen at once, but I encourage you to be thinking about how you would be willing to participate in the process. For now, I hope to see you at the Lord’s Prayer class after church, beginning February 10.

Let’s learn together,

Pastor Wayne

# The Park Church Family



## CONCERNS & JOYS

- † Jan Butts is recovering from knee surgery
- † Marge Fahs is recovering from knee surgery
- † Our condolences to Linda Urbanski and family on the death of her mother, Nancy Merrill who passed away on January 12th, 2008.

## Giving Envelopes

Giving envelopes are in Beecher Hall. Please remember to sign your name next to the number of the box you pick up.

## Ash Wednesday Service

The service for Ash Wednesday will be held at Lake Street Presbyterian Church at 7:30 PM.

## GATHINGS WITH THE PASTOR

In the next few months, Care of the Parish is planning gatherings with our interim minister, Rev. Wayne Gustafson. These will be groups of eight – ten folks meeting for fellowship and refreshment in a home. It will be a time to share experiences of and vision for The Park Church. Pastor Wayne will take about his ministry with us and there will be time for questions and discussion. When invited, please come and let your voice be heard and take advantage of this change to know your pastor and fellow congregants better.

Please call Martha Benedict (732-1893) if you would like to host. Open dates now are February 25 and March 3, both at 7PM. We will be continuing these gatherings all spring, so call if you could host at a later time. Mornings, afternoons and evenings will be planned. Thank you.

# Happy Birthday

## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

1	Alan Gaylord
5	Christina Tiffany
6	Brent Stermer
9	Ralph (Baldy) Moore
10	George Barringer Roberta Hoffman Adeline Worner
11	Scott Moore John Sutton
12	Barbara Voorhees Peter Marks
15	Kathy Clayberger
16	Jon Homuth
19	Betsy Morss
21	Bill Hungerford Dorothy Poppleton
25	Jennifer Hillman Sharon Cantliffe Rich Gridley
28	Bill Benedict

**DON'T FORGET – find updated calendar info including meetings and arena events on the web at [WWW.THEPARKCHURCH.ORG](http://WWW.THEPARKCHURCH.ORG)**

# News and Notes

## WELCOME

The Park Church is proud to announce the hiring of Kim Reilly to the position of Administrative Assistant. Her primary responsibility will be clerical duties, preparation and mailing of the Cross Currents, preparation of the weekly bulletin and general office support.

Kim has lived in the Elmira area for 11 years and is currently a part-time student at Corning Community College. She has a strong background in computers and administrative skills.

Please stop in the office and welcome her.

### *A note from Mary Ann Sheets*

To all you great and wonderful Park Church Folks:

*I just want to express my gratitude for your kindness over the last 11 years and for your generous going away gift. It was truly my pleasure and great good fortune to be able to further the mission of the church and its people and to work side-by-side with all of you. You have a great staff, wonderful congregants, and a vision for peace and love in the world. I wish you all the best and thank you so much for all you have done for me. I will never forget you and will take a piece of Park Church with me wherever I go. I would also like to say a special thank you to Jan Butts and COTP.*

*Mary Ann*

### *A note from Blair Jennings*

*Nearly eleven years ago, I needed to find a spiritual home for me and my family. Being Quaker, we had tried the local meeting house and found it to be relatively inactive and not enormously child-friendly. So, another mom suggested I try Park Church. It was theologically-liberal, socially-active, politically-aware, intellectually-challenging, historically-rich, musically-unparalleled and multigenerational! In short, there was no place in Elmira quite like it. There still isn't! However, I find my needs have changed. With children old enough to stand a forty minute drive and ready (overdue, perhaps?) for a deeper dive into their family's religious history and tradition, we have decided to become regular attenders at Ithaca Monthly Meeting.*

*We have not arrived at this decision easily or lightly. It has required a great deal of soul-searching and thought. I am most sad to leave all the dear people who have become mainstays in my world, especially those who have befriended my children – educating, nurturing and sharing themselves so generously. I am grateful to have stayed on to provide consistency to all the church's children during our years of revolving personnel. I am thrilled now to feel a growing momentum toward stability and growth at Park. I can so easily envision our frayed community knitting itself back together to create an ultimately stronger fabric of love, education and outreach. I trust others will readily step up to fulfill my role, as well. It just all feels right.*

*Thank you, again for providing such a wonderful home for me and my family. We are not relinquishing our PARK VOLUNTEERS t-shirts and so anticipate working beside you in different capacities in the future. I also trust that your door remains as open to us as it is to all and know we'll find love and affirmation when we enter your midst.*

*Yours in the light,*

*Blair*

## **Park Church helps celebrate Women in the Arts**

The Cantata Singers have organized a **Festival of Women in the Arts** celebrating Women's History Month, March 2008. The Park Church is one of the sponsoring groups.

The Festival begins on **February 29 with an Opening Reception from 5 to 8 p.m. at Rural Research Laboratories** at the Arnot Art Museum Carriage House. The event, with live music, light refreshments, and several art exhibitions, is free and open to the public.

**On Saturday, March 1, at 4 p.m., "Life! Love! Song! A Visit with Gena Branscombe," will take place at The Park Church.** The one-woman show, featuring Kathleen Shimeta, mezzo-soprano, presents the life and 15 songs by Branscombe, an American composer and "a woman ahead of her time." The church will offer a reception following the performance, and a hand-out with the history of the prominent women associated with Park Church is being prepared. **Tickets are \$10 and will be available at the church office.**

The Festival continues with a concert by the **Cantata Singers on Sunday, March 2, 3 p.m. at Elmira College's Hamilton Hall: "She Writes the Songs: Sacred and Serious Choral Music by Women Composers"** featuring music from medieval composer Hildegard von Bingen through to Libby Larson's contemporary "Missa Gaia: Mass for the Earth." A reception will follow. **Admission is free, but tickets are required.** Please contact Cantata Singers members Cora Range or Martha Horton for tickets.

Watch the *Star-Gazette* for announcements of more Festival of Women in the Arts events throughout March at Elmira College, Arnot Art Museum, Community Arts of Elmira, Chemung County Historical Society, Zonta House, the YWCA, and Steele Memorial Library.

## **IMPORTANT NEWS FROM THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

The Stewardship Committee met recently to review and critique its program and pledge campaign for 2008, and to consider ideas for next year.

Recognizing that the church was entering a period of transition, Stewardship selected the theme "**KEEPING THE FAITH**". We appealed to the membership to stay involved, or become involved, in the life of the church, giving time and talent, in addition to financial support. We also thought that this was a time when we needed to connect with each other as a church family, to renew ties, and get to know each other better. To that end, we organized 19 groups, with each member of the group offering to visit the next member. This provided the opportunity to connect and to talk about our experiences as Park Church members and to offer ideas for the good of the church.

The feedback we have received indicates that these visits have been good experiences and closer ties have been developed. Consequently, Stewardship plans to build on the foundation we have established for one-on-one visitations next fall. We will get an earlier start so as not to conflict with the busy holiday season. Having had one good year "under our belt", we hope to develop more groups next year, keeping the size of each group small so the visitations can be completed quickly. Although some people declined a visit this year, we expect that many of them will want to participate next year.

Finally, we are pleased to report that as of January 19<sup>th</sup> we have received 84 pledges totaling \$169,250. This is encouraging news and we appreciate the support of the congregation to fund our church budget for 2008. There are several members who pledged last year but have not yet responded this year; with their help we will move closer to our goal of \$189,000.

**Chancel Flowers for February are given in loving memory of:**

February 3 – Mim Baxter from Peggy & Charlie Streeter and Paul & Marilyn Baxter

February 10 – G. Wells and Marion Crandall from their children, Jack & Betsy

February 17- Jervis Langdon, Jr. from Irene Langdon

February 24 – Dr. Augustus and Mary Tong Hillman by their family

*Unless otherwise requested, the flowers from the arrangements are delivered to area shut-ins by volunteers from Care of the Parish after worship.*

**Park Church Miniature** - Consider purchasing a ceramic miniature of the Park Church and supporting the Near Westside Neighborhood too! Not only do you get a great gift, you are supporting a local cause. Each miniature is \$26. Contact Near West Side at 733-4924.



**Cross Currents Deadline**

**The next deadline for Cross Currents will be February 19th by Noon.** Email is preferred, but I'll take any format! A note - if you are submitting a larger piece, please give a call several days ahead of time to make sure there is room. Copy may be given by mail, hand delivery, offering plate or e-mail.

**Casting Your Nets**

Baked goods are being served during coffee hour. We need your help for February and March. Please sign up on the sheet in Beecher Hall. You may put your baked goods in the freezer marked "coffee hour".

**BLOOD DRIVE**

Park Church will be hosting a Blood Drive on Monday, April 21<sup>st</sup>.

**RUMMAGE SALE**

Don't forget items for Spring Rummage Sale which will be held on May 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>. The final drop off date is April 18<sup>th</sup>. Please remember we do not accept books or computers.

# Thanks

*Second Place East sent a thank you to the members of Park Church for our recent contribution.*

*In October, Carl Wedekind from Louisville, KY, visited Park Church in regards to his interest in the Eastman family while at Park Church. Roberta Hoffman, Irene Langdon and Janice Butts spent a morning with him. Irene has continued to be in contact with him. In appreciation for the time and knowledge shared with him, Carl made a donation to the church. It is nice to be able to share the history of Park Church with others.*

*Dear Park Church Friends:*

*We want to express our thanks for the cards, visits, food and many other expressions of your concern (snow removal) while our household has been dealing with Bob's enforced idleness following surgery. We hear encouraging things about the church and look forward to being back among you very soon.*

*Cordially, Bob & Aimee Lester*

**The Park Church**  
208 West Gray Street  
Elmira NY 14901

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Permit No. 380

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

*"No matter who you are  
or where you are on  
life's journey, you're  
welcome here."*

If you no longer wish to receive Cross Currents please contact the Church office.  
Thank you.

*Special Events*

**COMING ATTRACTIONS**

- ❖ February 29<sup>th</sup> – 8:00PM Acapella Concert 8:00 PM
- ❖ March 1st – "Life! Love! Song! 4:00 PM

*Reminder –Office Hours are 9:00-2:00, Tuesday-Friday*

The Park Church, 208 West Gray Street, Elmira NY 14901  
733-9104 (phone) † 733-5077 (fax) † e-mail [office@theparkchurch.org](mailto:office@theparkchurch.org)  
Website [www.theparkchurch.org](http://www.theparkchurch.org)

**Worship with us each Sunday morning beginning at 10:00 a.m.  
Children & Youth groups meet during services, child and nursery care available**