

The Good News Gazette

The First Presbyterian Church
94-96 Main Street Chester, NY 10918

March 2016

Journeying towards our Greatest Good

This year for Lent we have been walking the journey from sin to reconciliation. We started with our first Sunday looking at what is sin – which we defined as a broken, wrecked relationship with God and/or our neighbor. We then looked at what is grace. John Calvin argues that we can only come before God when we are assured of God's grace. He states, "we need the promise of grace which can testify to us that the Father is merciful; since we can approach him in no other way and upon grace alone the heart of man can rest." So in order to continue on our journey first we need to know we are covered with God's grace. This assurance gives us the strength to come before God and confess our sins. God's grace is freely given – there is nothing we can do to receive it. We can't work for it, earn it in anyway. It isn't given to some and not to others. It is freely given to all who turn to recognize it is there and allow it to let it change their hearts. With this assurance we are able to move on to confess our sins and repent from them.

This is the turning point in our journey. Literally. For in repenting we are literally turning around from the direction we were going in and turn back to God. Of course, this isn't always easy; we have to admit we've done something wrong which makes us vulnerable. Plus, we can get lost on the path again and again. This is also why we are called to make this journey together, helping each other along the way down the path of repentance back to God. We do this together not to mock, judge, or shame anyone but for the restoration of life. Whether that life be one person, many people, or the entire congregation. Once repentance and confession are sought, forgiveness is offered and then a work towards reconciliation is made. But it's important to note that forgiveness is a starting place not a stopping place. As one scholar states, "It is God's gift to those who wish to begin again, but where we go with it is up to us." To live into forgiveness changes have to be made, changes that lead towards, that work towards reconciliation. Reconciliation is the bringing together of two bodies who were once divided, separated, split apart. It makes way for the restoration of the community, either with each other or with God.

While it is good to focus on this journey through Lent as it is the time in the church calendar for self-reflection, it is also good to remember we are always on this journey throughout our whole lives. For we continually sin and are called back to God who seeks to reconcile us and the whole world back to God's self. So as we continue this Lenten journey towards Easter consider how you can make a rhythm out of this journey and rhythm that will always bring you back to God rather than pull you away. An example from one of our early church fathers is that St. Augustine developed a rhythm with God being at the center. God being what he called, the Summum bonum, that is the greatest good. He had God at the center of a wagon wheel with various spokes going out. God was the center, the greatest good. Everything else, the spokes going out, could either bring someone closer or further away from God. Each day he analyzed whether each thing in the wagon wheel – his readings, his interactions with others, his prayer life, etc... brought him closer to God or pulled him further away. If they brought him closer, great. If they brought him further away he would reflect on why – if because of sin he would repent, seek forgiveness, and change his behavior to be reconciled to the center, the greatest good, God. As we journey throughout our lives, may we all learn to develop rhythms like St. Augustine that continually bring us closer to God, who is by far our Greatest Good.

Pastor Erin

March Second Offering

Our second offering for Sunday, March 20th will be for One Great Hour of Sharing.

Roast Beef Dinner Information

Cole Slaw Prep:

Potato Prep:

Day of information:

Challenge to Change - Update

Session is moving along on applying for a Challenge to Change grant through our Presbytery. These grants range in gifts of \$200-\$7000 to churches that are willing to engage in new ideas, new forms of ministry, or new uses of their space. We are applying in hopes to get some funding to help fix up the old chapel/gym space behind the sanctuary. We need new windows to replace both broken and very old windows. We need to figure out how to add heat to the area (hopefully it will be an easy fix using our newly installed heating system). Also, the room needs a coat of fresh paint, along with some cracks spackled and the floor could use some loving care. We are also hoping to get the pocket doors fixed and build some protection around our new furnaces. Before we can start on any of this we need to get a move on with cleaning out the area.

We are really excited to start this project and to turn this space into something useful. There has been a lot of talk about how and what it can be used for – both for our congregation and for the community. We have hope of engaging the community through the arts. Hold coffee house open mic nights, poetry slams, art gallery nights and other displays. Maybe even provide some sort of art education. Along with this we have hope of hosting family game nights, trivia nights, movie nights, etc... If you have any interest in helping with this project, come out to one of the clean-up days or contact Pastor Erin.

Another project we are considering is a community vegetable garden. We need some more help on this project with getting quotes of materials needed to build the garden beds, soil, fencing, etc... We are looking into getting a lot of the materials donated and hoping to get other community groups involvement for this project for it to be truly a community garden. If you are interested in helping in any way – donating materials, building raised beds, clearing out the space for use, etc... Please speak with Pastor Erin or Gene Winters.

We are very excited about the possibility of these projects and the hope of receiving some money from Presbytery to help us try something new. We do not want to waste this opportunity but session cannot do this all ourselves. Any help you can offer along the way would be greatly appreciated! We look forward to starting something new! Our applications have to be in by the end of March and we hope to hear by May if we will be receiving any funding.

Training Opportunity

Sunday April 10th Presbytery is holding a training for Ruling Elders, Deacons, and Financial Teams at Goshen Presbyterian Church from 1-5pm. This event is open to anyone currently serving, anyone who has served in the past, and anyone who is interested in serving in the future. The training is free but they are asking that you register ahead of time. More information can be found on the bulletin board or you can ask Pastor Erin.

Looking Ahead

March 8 – Confirmation Class 7pm

March 9 – Lunch Bag Devotionals 12pm

March 13 – Session Meeting follow worship

March 16 - Lunch Bag Devotionals 12pm

March 17 – Food Pantry Distribution

March 19 – Roast Beef Dinner 4-7pm

March 20 – Palm Sunday

March 22 – Confirmation Class 7pm

March 24 – Maundy Thursday 7 pm

March 27 – Easter 7am “Son” rise service, 10am traditional service

Pastor Erin will be away on Study Leave March 29th-April 4th. Please contact the church office or a session member if there is an emergency.

If you have an article or announcement you would like to have in the next newsletter, please have it into the church office by March 24th.

Pastor: Erin Moore

Moderator of Deacons: Okey Barrett (845) 651-4707

Treasurer Alan Eckard

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If you are in need of pastoral care, please contact our pastor at the church office number (845-469-4877).