



Do you ever find yourself thinking about traditions, how we got to do the things we've always done? Thinking about those ones that we love and value and those ones that perhaps we'd like to move on from and find new ones. Or just in general, wondering why we do things one way when other churches, even Presbyterian ones, do things another way – like communion. Some celebrate communion every week, others once a month, & some even less.

Our tradition is to celebrate communion once a month, but in particular to not celebrate communion on Easter. While I stayed out of the overall decision making, as Easter falls on our regular communion day, I did begin a conversation with Session. Why do we do what we do in regards to communion? Why do we say it's always been this way? Where did this tradition come from and is it Biblical?

The reality is ancient church tradition always celebrated communion on Easter. This was because it would also be the day new converts were welcomed into the church. Baptized just the night before at the Easter vigil service after completing their catechism through Lent, they would fully celebrate Easter morning with communion.

Now sure, we don't follow that practice exactly anymore. We don't wait to welcome new converts or new members until Easter. We don't have them go through a catechism throughout Lent. However, it is worth considering why we say we always do it this way, that it's our tradition. Why?

Presbyterians 50 years ago and more followed the tradition of only holding communion 4 times a year. Quarterly. But if you ask those who remember that today, chances are many wouldn't be able to tell you why... though some will argue to try to go back to that period of only quarterly communion.

When followers first gathered together, they would celebrate communion every time. This holy remembrance of Christ. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches continued this tradition and are back to it today after at least the Roman Catholics slipping a bit. By the time of the start of the Protestant Reformation there were so many rules and regulations about who could take communion and needing to do penance (pay for forgiveness) first, most people were only allowed communion once a year. So while Holy Communion was still celebrated every week, only the clergy could partake every time, with those higher up in the "system" – nobles, those who could pay penance, could partake a few times a year.

John Calvin, a protestant reformer, had a huge issue with this practice. Reading through the scriptures and the writings of the Church Fathers, he believed it should be weekly (any time the church is gathered) and that all should be allowed to partake, not just the clergy. You can see how strongly he felt about this in his own writings, "*Plainly this custom which enjoins us to take communion once a year is a veritable invention of the devil, whoever was instrumental in introducing it... For there is not the least doubt that the Sacred Supper was in that era [the early church] set before the believers every time they met together; and there is no doubt that a majority of them took communion... It should have been done far differently: the Lord's Table should have been spread at least once a week for the assembly of Christians, and the promises declared in it should feed us spiritually.*" [Inst. IV. XVII. 46]



Good News Gazette

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



BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study will start up again April 9th at 19 Main Street where we will be studying the book of Genesis. All are welcome to join us at 10am.

Continued from pg 1

Calvin argued for this change, unfortunately, the city government in Geneva was not willing to change in this way. Many of the city fathers still wanted to control who could take communion – wanted to make sure they were “fit” for communion. This would have been a daunting task for them to try to do weekly or even monthly. So they tried to compromise with Calvin and much to his disagreement allowed communion to be celebrated quarterly.

That is how quarterly communion came to be. Something Calvin himself didn't agree with but begrudgingly went along with it.

Today we celebrate communion once a month, again, not necessarily after any tradition but because some wanted it more regularly, a push back to the original tradition of weekly, while others didn't want to budge from quarterly. A compromise that probably made no one happy.

Traditions change over the years. Sometimes we can all come to agree, or at least a majority agrees, and sometimes we make compromises. Sometimes we've

lost the whole reason and understanding of why we do the things we do and we need to revisit why we have such a tradition, even if we decide to stay with it in the end.

This Easter Season, as we celebrate the resurrection of our Savior, the victory over the grave and new life for the world, let us consider how we might breath some new life into our old traditions. As Jesus came and challenged the system in place, the traditions, pointing out why they were put in place and how they'd changed so drastically by the time he walked the earth, let us take another look. Let us understand why our traditions and systems were first put in place and perhaps how they've changed since then, and ask if they help us or hinder us from following after God, do they help or hinder the grace of God upon us. Let us ask if they help proclaim a victory over the grave and new life or do they keep us held down in our old way of life, hindering the movement of the Spirit and the grace of God.

Pastor Erin

TOUR DE GOSHEN

August 19th we will be participating in the Tour de Goshen as a kick off to our capital campaign. Right now we are looking for volunteers to help plan this exciting event! If you are interested please see Pastor Erin, a member of Session, or sign up on the sheet in the library.

SOLARIZE INFO SESSION

We will be holding an information session about solarizing your home, property, or business on April 9th at 7pm. Everyone in the community is invited to attend and learn about this wonderful offer. Aside from this being a wonderful way to promote clean energy, for every referral from our congregation we will receive a \$240 donation. Please help spread the word

NEW T-SHIRTS

There has been some chatter about the hopes of new church t-shirts. Some of you still have the ones from many years ago but we hope to get new shirts for everyone. These will be great to wear not just for our various church events (Roast Beef Dinners, Chicken BBQ, Kiwanis Road Race, etc...) but also just around town for everyone to see. We are currently in the process of coming up with a few designs and we will share them with you shortly. It would be great to know how many are interested and if you are interested in just a t-shirt or possibly a long sleeve shirt or sweatshirt as well. There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board for anyone who is interested. An estimated number count will help us better determine what the price might be for the various options.

LOOKING AHEAD

April 1 – SonRise Easter Service 7am; Traditional Easter Service 10am

April 7 – Eagle Scout Ceremony at 1pm

April 8 – Communion Service; Deacons meeting following worship

April 9 – Bible Study at 10 Main St. 10 am, Music and Worship meeting 1pm, Solarize Info Session 7pm

April 10 – Presbytery Meeting at Stony Point, registration begins 9:30am

April 12 – Coleslaw prep begins at 9am

April 13 – Potato prep, dining room prep begins at 9am

April 14 – Roast Beef Dinner – all volunteers please try to be at the church by 3:30pm

April 17 – Women’s Council Meeting 1pm

April 22 – Second Offering collected

April 23 – Food Pantry Truck Pick-up unloading at 3pm

April 26 – Food Pantry Distribution 4-7pm

Reminder that our Roast Beef Dinner is April 14th . Please mark this on your calendars now. We hope you can join us in helping with the dinner or joining in the meal!

If you have an article or announcement you would like to have in the next newsletter, please have it into the church office by April 20th.

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

April Second Offering

Our second offering for April 22nd, will help to offset the high insurance costs for our church buildings.

Church Office:

(845) 469-4877

E-mail:

info@chespresny.com

Website:

www.chespresny.com

Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/chespresny