



Good News

North Prospect Union UCC

Volume 28, Issue: September 2010

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From the Senior Minister

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter, James Carroll, the author of *Constantine's Sword*, among others books, is halfway through a series in the *Boston Globe*, "Turning History into Hope," a look at the Middle East peace process. With Christian denominations variously blaming the Israelis or the Palestinians, Carroll lays bare the superficiality of most of the arguments. His knowledge about the factors underlying the Middle East conflicts is profound. His insights, far from rehashing the standard positions, persuasively clarify matters in the light of a straightforward historical assessment. And Christianity's part in the trouble is not insignificant, leaving most of the denominations living in proverbial glass houses. To my mind, the series is as important and illuminating analysis of the Middle East situation as is possible, and its insights could pave the way for addressing many of the longstanding impasses.

Carroll's August 9, 2010 installment of the series made a point that has implications beyond the Middle East, implications for anyone who calls himself or herself a Christian. Modern Christianity is heir to a long history, and part of the history goes this way. In the beginning Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity were competitor religions in the Roman Empire. But, significantly, they were equally despised minorities. Their contests were something like family squabbles, and neither of them expected any kind of real dominance.

All of that began to change on Emperor Constantine's conversion in 310. The empire became Christian. As Carroll says it, "[T]he church began to reinforce its claims with the power of the state." This led to a certain inexorable logic.

Heresy became a capital crime, and those who rejected, say, the doctrine of Christ's divinity were put

(Continued on page 6)



Flower Sunday ~ September 19

This is our traditional re-gathering Sunday when we each bring a blossom. The resulting arrangement symbolizes our coming together, bringing our gifts to share with our church family—a beautiful bouquet indeed.

Upcoming Events

September 10

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
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September

5 Sunday

10:00 Worship Rev. O'Brien/Tom
Hathaway
Carvelli Coffee Group

6 Monday

Labor Day

11 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making

12 Sunday

Sandwiches for Outdoor Church
11:00 Worship - Rev. Rose
Beyerman/Bodwell/McKeown Coffee
Group
Sunday School Info & Registration,
after worship

15 Wednesday

10:00 AM Knitwits (Knit and Crochet
for the Homeless)
7:00 PM Worship with a Twist

16 Thursday

7:00 PM Trustees
7:30 PM Executive Council

18 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making
*Pizza and Movie Night. Pizza at 6:00;
Movie at 6:30*

19 Sunday

Flower Sunday
Start Sunday School
9:30 Choir Rehearsal
11:00 Worship - Rev. Rose
Ramsay/Parsons/Weinstein/Kelley
Coffee Group

20 Monday

Newsletter Deadline

22 Wednesday

10:00 AM Knitwits (Knit and Crochet
for the Homeless)

25 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making

26 Sunday

9:30 Choir Rehearsal
11:00 Worship - Rev. Rose
Addison Coffee Group

29 Wednesday

10:00 AM Knitwits (Knit and Crochet
for the Homeless)

October

2 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making

October

3 Sunday

9:30 Choir Rehearsal
Carvelli Coffee Group

6 Wednesday

10:00 AM Knitwits (Knit and Crochet
for the Homeless)

9 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making

10 Sunday

9:30 Choir Rehearsal
Sandwiches for Outdoor Church
Beyerman/Bodwell/McKeown Coffee
Group

11 Monday

Columbus Day (Observed)

13 Wednesday

10:00 AM Knitwits (Knit and Crochet
for the Homeless)
7:00 PM Worship with a Twist

16 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making
*Pizza and Movie Night. Pizza at 6:00;
Movie at 6:30*

17 Sunday

9:30 Choir Rehearsal
Ramsay/Parsons/Weinstein/Kelley
Coffee Group

18 Monday

Newsletter Deadline

20 Wednesday

10:00 AM Knitwits (Knit and Crochet
for the Homeless)

21 Thursday

7:00 PM Trustees
7:30 PM Executive Council

23 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making

24 Sunday

9:30 Choir Rehearsal
Addison Coffee Group

27 Wednesday

10:00 AM Knitwits (Knit and Crochet
for the Homeless)

30 Saturday

10:00 AM Craft Making

31 Sunday

9:30 Choir Rehearsal
Halloween

March 11

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December 10

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May 11

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June 11

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July 11

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August 11

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Worship with a Twist ~ Wednesday, September 15

Set your spirit free with this special mid-week worship! The feedback from our spring services was so positive we are continuing *Worship with a Twist* as a monthly series through December. Thoughtful, original programs of prayer, scripture and music, these services are designed by the ministers, with musical direction by John Read.

September's worship music will be provided by John, on the piano, and Greg Greenway (www.greggreenway.com), an accomplished acoustic folk musician and song-writer. 7:00pm.



Christian Ed Minister Appointed

Thomas Hathaway, well-known to church-goers as a student minister two years ago, and for his involvement in church life since then, has been appointed North Prospect Union's Minister of Christian Education and Outreach for the upcoming year. Tom, who joined the church last year, will plan, organize, and facilitate the Sunday school curriculum and work to integrate the life of the Sunday school into the greater life of the church. He will also create a strategic plan of outreach to the local community and, along with Dudley and Corey, provide regular opportunities for adult education.

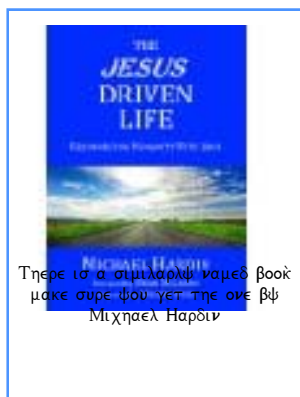
Tom is currently in his last year at Harvard Divinity School. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from St. Lawrence University in 2006 having studied in Japan in 2004. Tom brings us his experience of teaching high school students in Oita City, Japan from 2006-2008 during which time he developed and taught curriculums for over 2000 students and presented and moderated English education seminars and workshops. While attending HDS, he has been very involved in the church's major mission project, the Outdoor Church.



Recommended Reading

Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation, by J. Nelson Kraybill

In this lively introduction, J. Nelson Kraybill shows how the book of Revelation was understood by its original readers and what it means for Christians today. Kraybill places Revelation in its first-century context, opening a window into the political, economic, and social realities of the early church. His fresh interpretation highlights Revelation's liturgical structure and directs readers' attentions to twenty-first-century issues of empire, worship, and allegiance, showing how John's apocalypse is relevant to the spiritual life of believers today. The book includes maps, timelines, photos, a glossary, discussion questions, and stories of modern Christians who live out John's vision of a New Jerusalem.



The Jesus Driven Life: Reconnecting Humanity With Jesus, by Michael Hardin

Will the real Jesus please stand up? Who is Jesus Christ for us today? What has happened as Jesus, the rabbi from Galilee, has been displaced as the center of the Christian faith and replaced with false portraits? How can we understand the relation between this nonviolent Jesus and the violent God of most Christian traditions? What might Christianity look like if it truly followed this Jesus? These ideas and many others are demystified in this book. Utilizing the work of Rene Girard, *The Jesus Driven Life* takes us beyond the dead ends and false trails of much Christian interpretation of the Bible. Come discover a new and exciting Way of living in the world as true humans who imitate the crucified and risen Lord! Walter Wink: *The Jesus Driven Life* is nothing less than a magisterial synthesis of much that can be known about Jesus and the early centuries of Christianity and their continuing relevance for today. Shane Claiborne: This book is an invitation to take a closer look at the Pearl that is so precious it is worth leaving everything in the world to pursue. Ted Grimsrud: A simple question in this passionate, pastoral, and peaceable book; what would it mean for our life in the world were we truly to place the Jesus of the Gospels at the center? It would mean a revolution of reconciliation and healing. Jon Pahl: Here is extraordinary value for any reader who is hungry for a realistic, intelligent, and peaceful version of the Christian faith. Tony Bartlett: *The Jesus Driven Life* will overturn conventional hermeneutics to date. James Alison: Here is a great new resource in the Christian Adventure. *The JDL* is thoroughly ecumenical in its scope, richly biblical in its sourcing and gloriously Christ-centered in its excitement about God. Gregory Boyd: For all who sense that there is something profoundly off with the westernized Gospel they have been given, even more for all who do not yet sense what is wrong, *The Jesus Driven Life* is a must read!

Prime the Pump

Preaching Series

Do you have a scripture passage that just bugs you? How about a theological question that you'd like to know more about? We are announcing a series of sermons this fall to be preached on topics, themes or scripture passages of your choosing. We'll accept suggestions through email, notes in the offering plates, notes mailed to the church, notes handed to ministers in the hall, or just about any way at all. Just let us know what you would like to hear.

Sunday School

As of this September, NPU will have a newly renovated Sunday School program. For the past three years the church has been blessed with two phenomenal Sunday School teachers. We hope to carry on their efforts and continue to provide our church's youth with the same high level of theological education. This year, the Sunday School program will have two major focuses. First, we plan to use an arts-based curriculum geared toward giving students creative outlets that allow them respond to God in their own way. Though one in the Spirit, we all have different gifts and talents – we hope to help our youth develop theirs as much as possible. Second, we plan to integrate our youth more into the regular worship life of the church. We hope to see their faces in the sanctuary more and more as they participate in the various parts of our services.



An information and registration session will be held in the sanctuary on Sunday, September 12th at 12:30 for all parents who wish to enroll their children in the program. At this meeting the ministers will field any questions parents might have, we will look at a sample class plan together, and we will sign covenants spelling out our expectations for children, parents, and ministry staff. Class will begin the following week on Sunday, September 19th. We're looking forward to the fun and wonderful year ahead!

Tom Hathaway

Adult Education News

A few ideas for the fall from Senior Minister Dudley Rose:



- We'll restart the Matthew on-line study group on the forum after Labor Day. If you're interested to join, just begin reading Matthew. We'll resume at chapter 8.
- Book group, *Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics and Devotion in the Book of Revelation*. This book, described a little in the pastoral letter, provides an engaging encounter with one of the most misunderstood books in the Bible. See the recommended reading article elsewhere in the newsletter for more information.
- Book group, *The Jesus Driven Life: Reconnecting Humanity With Jesus*. A book for our time, and, as Gregory Boyd says, "For all who sense that there is something profoundly off with the westernized Gospel they have been given." See the Recommended Reading article elsewhere in the newsletter for more information.
- Reading together James Carroll's Boston Globe series, "Turning History into Hope." Carroll's perspective gives new insights into the history of the current Middle East conflicts as well as the ways that Europe, the U.S. and Christianity are involved.
- Reading together a Christian Century article "Oversized Expectations," about the strengths of smaller churches over mega-churches. It hit home for me, and I bet it will for many of you, too.

(Continued from page 1)

to death. Jews came under harsher scrutiny, too. How ludicrous, the thought went, that Christians were killed for dissenting from theological technicalities, while Jews, who disdained the whole of Christian belief, were allowed to live.

Christian anti-Semitism, then, was born decidedly virulent. Its history is long and sordid. Even the holocaust may not be as exceptional as we would wish to make it.

The same logic operates today when Christianity makes many of its exclusive claims. Those outside the fold, often even outside just the fold of a denomination, may be condemned to hell. Certain forms of sexuality, condemned. Islam=Islamofacism, condemned. The list goes on.

The devastation caused to the human family has been staggering. And so has the destruction of the spiritual center of Christianity. Jesus walked throughout the Galilee, and time and again he preached: love your enemy; forgive as you have been forgiven; treat others as you would wish them to treat you; love God, your neighbor and yourself. It wasn't an entirely new message. Rather, it was a call to his hearers to recover the parts of their religious heritage from which they had strayed. In return he promised they would grow a kingdom as from a mustard seed, a kingdom of flourishing wholeness, a kingdom unlike Caesar's in almost every way.

Often, and I'm sure to the great dismay of Jesus, the religion that bears his name has very often become the very thing against which he preached and taught. There is something seductive about Caesar's "golden stores," as the old hymn says it.

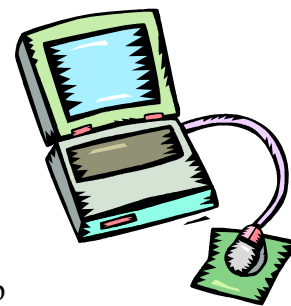
If the Sermon on the Mount is largely ignored by Christians who wish to use their Christianity to condemn and exclude others, the book of Revelation has been a veritable treasure store for such thinking, as readers have used it as tea leaves to read who will be carried to the kingdom and who will be left behind at the rapture. But like Jesus' message, the message of Revelation is actually a much more life-giving book for the church than that interpretation suggests. J. Nelson Kraybill has written a book entitled, *Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics and Devotion in the Book of Revelation*. It is a perfect book to study together, with discussion questions to boot, wonderfully written and readable, and authored by a well-respected expert and teacher on Revelation. The book is highlighted in our Amazon bookstore: <http://astore.amazon.com/northprospecunit>. :-)

These are important topics in our times, and the church has a great responsibility to engage these issues thoughtfully and honestly. Take a look at the article elsewhere in this newsletter about possible study groups or discussions on Carroll's series, this book and more.

Peace,

Dudley

Spotlight on the Website www.northprospectchurch.org



Prayers, blog and registration

The website has been revamped this summer. Anyone who had registered on the old site has been moved to the new one, but you will need to get a new password. Just go to the login screen, put in the email address you registered under, and indicate lost password. A password will be sent to you. If you have any trouble, just email me or I can help you on a Sunday. If you have not previously registered, it would be great if you did. You will need to register to use the forum.

Each month I plan to highlight an area or two on the site, and this month I'll be talking about the blog. The blog is now incorporated into the main website under the 'Events + Communication' tab.

EVENTS + COMMUNICATION You may also sign up for email notices whenever a new blog article is posted by filling in the 'subscribe to blog posts' button. The blog will allow everyone to easily read and post prayer requests. Simply go to the blog page and click on '*prayer requests' and then click on comments. All this sounds a lot more complicated in words than it actually is. Just go to the website and poke around. I think you'll find it fun and easy.

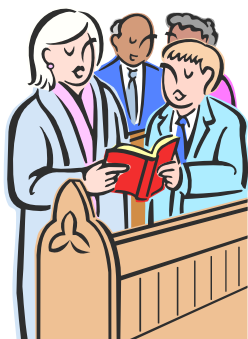
Dudley Rose

Equal Exchange

Just a reminder that the church has Equal Exchange coffee for sale. This coffee is produced by small farmers, who benefit by the program. But it's also a good deal. For example, we have 6 12 oz. bags of Organic Breakfast Blend for \$38.00, which works out to \$6.33 a bag, \$8.45 a pound. This coffee ordinarily sells for \$9.00 a bag or \$12.00 a pound. And not only do you do some good and save some money, but also the coffee is superior. I recently ran out of mine, and the expensive bag I bought at a local coffee shop was just nowhere as good!



Hymn Sing ~ October 17. 10:45



We all know the feeling: our favorite hymn resonates within, stirring a stronger sentiment than we usually get when we open a hymnal. The feeling may be nostalgia or sadness or exhilaration, or often several emotions at once. What is prompting that? Why is that hymn your favorite? How did you learn it? And, importantly, what do you know about God when you sing it? Send your responses, including the verse or two you most want to sing, to the office (email, a note dropped in the collection plate, a phone call). On Sunday, October 17, before worship, we'll sing them!

Joys & Concerns

There will be at least three more people in church this fall with much improved vision! Don Polley, Nancy MacKinnon and Bill Bartsch all had cataract surgery this summer. We were sorry to learn that Bill suffered some ill effects following his procedure, but glad to report he is on the mend. Kathleen Beyerman is recuperating from major back surgery. Recovery involves much therapy and sounds exhausting, but we all know Katherine has the drive it requires. Christine Parsons has returned from Florida following her mother's death and funeral in August. Chris, her dad and her siblings had the rare and wonderful experience of being together with her mom for her final several days, and were with her when she died.



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

9/5-David Krebs

9/8-Wende Weinstein

9/11-Dudley Rose

9/15-David McGill

9/18-Dylan Galante

9/20-Dick Lavalley

Melissa Mitchell

Corey O'Brien

Jerry Rockwood

9/27- John Micco



Wedding bells rang this summer for Tracy Harmon and Stephen Cayon, who were married in Maine in June. The wedding trip was a cruise to Ber-

Is your birthday here? If not,
please contact the office.