



Inside this issue:

Calendar	2
Holy Week Schedule	3
Guest Preachers	5
Action Alert Network	5
Joys & Concerns	6

From the Christian Education Minister

Dear Friends,

If you happen to walk into a Protestant church on a Sunday morning, you will more than likely hear a sermon of some sort. Whether boring or interesting, intellectual or emotional, to-the-point or rambling, it seems that Protestants love their sermons. This state of affairs is nothing new – sermons have been the centerpiece of church worship services ever since the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century when reformers like John Calvin believed that it was necessary to educate Christians in scripture and doctrine. While the sermons we hear today differ in many ways from those preached in the 16th century, they are still at the very heart of the worship lives of churchgoing Protestants.

As with any other custom, our familiarity with sermons often means that we don't give a lot of thought to their role and purpose in the life of our community. If really pressed to explain the

what and why of sermons, we might say that the preacher gives a sermon because she has thought and prayed all week on a passage from the Bible and wants to share with her listeners a message she got from God as the result of all her hard work. The listeners show up and pay attention to the preacher in the hopes of hearing this message from God. If such a divinely inspired message fails to be delivered, however, the listeners can simply brush it off as the preacher having a bad day.

If we were to compare this way of thinking about sermons to a Broadway production, we might say that listeners are like the audience who sit in their seats to watch a show that is being performed for them. The preacher in this comparison is like an actor who stands on stage and tries to put on a good performance for her audience.

Continued on page 4

Coming Up

Saturday, April 2

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, April 3

11:00am Rev. Rose

12:30pm Study Group

Wednesday, April 6

11:30am ElderSpirit

Saturday, April 9

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, April 10

Sandwiches for Outdoor Church

11:00am Rev. Rose

12:30pm Study Group

Saturday, April 16

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, April 17

Palm Sunday

11:00am Tom Hathaway

Thursday, April 21

Maundy Thursday

7:00pm Tenebrae

Friday, April 22

Good Friday

12:00 Noon Stations of the Cross through
Cambridge, begins Central Square

12:00 Noon Good Friday Service at church

Saturday, April 23

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, April 24

Easter

11:00am Rev. Rose

Saturday, April 30

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, May 1

11:00am Rev. Rose

Wednesday, May 4

11:30am ElderSpirit

Saturday, May 7

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, May 8

Sandwiches for Outdoor Church

9:00am Communion Service for Women

9:45am Men serve breakfast, 9:45

11:00am Rev. Rose

Saturday, May 14

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, May 15

10:00am Annual Meeting

11:00am Rev. Rose

Saturday, May 21

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, May 22

Laity Sunday

11:00am Shelley Scruggs

Saturday, May 28

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, May 29

11:00am Gerry Rockwood

Wednesday, June 1

11:30am ElderSpirit

Saturday, June 4

10:00am Craft Making

Sunday, June 5

11:00am Rev. Rose

Observing Holy Week

Palm Sunday

Children will process with the palms.



Maundy Thursday

North Prospect Union's Thursday service moves from Communion into the dramatic and moving *Tenebrae*, in which the scriptures of Jesus's last hours are read in the darkened church as candles are gradually extinguished. Music will include Couperin's *Seconde Leçon de Tenébres for Cello, Soprano, Organ*.

Good Friday

This will be a meditative worship at noon, focusing not on the Passion but on Jesus in the tomb, Jesus gone from this world. The half-hour service promises to be a beautiful and sobering way to mark this holy day.

In Cambridge, the Stations of the Cross will be recalled as people move from one site to the next for prayer and reflection. It begins at noon at St. Peter's (838 Mass Ave.) and concludes around 3:00 at the Old Burying Ground (Zero Garden Street). Rev. Rose will be at Holworthy Gate at Harvard University at approximately 2:28pm.

Easter Sunday

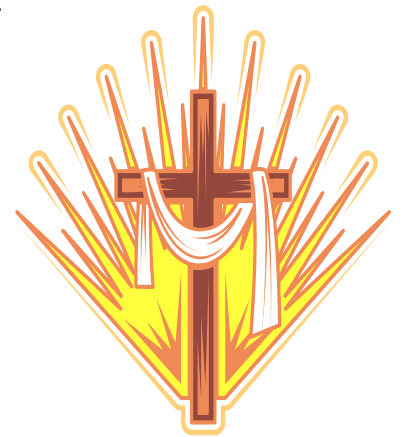
We welcome the resurrection with a traditional worship of celebration. We will have guests joining the choir to sing the following well-known Easter choral works from four centuries:

Charles Wood (1866-1926) *This Joyful Eastertide*

George F. Handel (1685-1759) *Thine Be the Glory*

Giovanni da Palestrina (1526-1594) *Jesu! Rex Admirabilis*

John Ritter (b. 1945) *The Lord Bless You and Keep You*



Continued from page 1

God, then, serves as a prompter, the one who stands just offstage and whispers the preacher's lines to her throughout the performance. At the end of the performance, the audience gets up, walks out, and decides whether or not the show was any good.

In a little book called *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*, the theologian Søren Kierkegaard (pronounced sau-ren keer-ki-gard) wants to shake up the way we think about sermons. "No, no, no!" he would say to our theater analogy, "You've got the roles all wrong!" For Kierkegaard, the preacher is not the one who takes center-stage during a sermon. Rather, it is the *listeners* who are front and center. The preacher is the one who stands offstage behind the curtains whispering to listeners their lines. Who is in the audience in this arrangement? No less than God!

With this switch-up of roles, Kierkegaard wants us to think about the very important role that listeners play in the sermon. As the one standing off stage, the preacher does not speak for his own sake. The preacher speaks for the sake of the listeners, that they may be able to stand on stage and speak loudly and clearly for themselves. While it is true that at some points the preacher's whispering may be hard to hear, if not completely garbled, it is ultimately the actors on stage, the listeners, who must decide what to do and say with what they have heard.

In sharing with you these thoughts of Kierkegaard, I do not have any ulterior motives (although I will be preaching in a few weeks). Rather, I share them with you because I believe that most of us at NPU intuitively know what Kierkegaard is saying to be true. Since coming here as an intern in my first year of divinity school I have been deeply impressed at the level of care, effort, and downright hard work that the congregation puts into engaging the sermons preached here every Sunday. I have been so impressed and inspired, in fact, that I have spent the last six months writing my senior thesis on strategies preachers can use to better fulfill their own role in this process. While the actual writing of this thesis was at times excruciating, it was made easier with the knowledge that there are congregations out there like NPU that are working just as hard as the preacher to get something out the sermon.

In closing, I would like to thank this congregation on behalf of every preacher that has stepped into NPU's pulpit for your efforts in making the most out of even the most stumbling of sermons. I would also like to offer a word of encouragement that we all may remember the sacred role we play as listeners and pray that in our listening we may be empowered to stand and speak and act before God.

Grace and peace,

Tom Hathaway

Guest Preachers Visit NPU

We were privileged to welcome the Rev. Jed Mannis, pastor of the Outdoor Church, as a guest preacher last month. Our church supported its founding and continues to contribute a goodly portion of your benevolences to this ministry, and it was great to have an in-person update. He shared the pulpit with a member of his flock, Ed, who described some of his life as a homeless person, and what the Outdoor Church means to people who live on the street, many of whom feel unwelcome in church buildings, or anxious about being indoors.

A second guest preacher was the Rev. Dr. Fran Bogle, coordinator of the MBA Just Peace Ministry, whose passion for ethical stewardship of the planet was served up with humor and warmth. Her blessing at the close of worship reminded us that we are both “held and propelled” by God’s arms, and called us to action. “The service is done,” she said. “The service has begun.”

Justice and Peace Action Network

The following paragraph is lifted from UCC.org.

Justice and Witness Ministries responds to the call of Christ through public witness, policy advocacy, issue education, and grassroots empowerment to build a more just, compassionate and inclusive world. The UCC Justice and Peace Action Network (JPANet) is our denomination’s grassroots advocacy network composed of individual members and local UCC congregations across the country. Our work is grounded in General Synod resolutions, and formed by a biblical understanding of prophetic ministry. Join the network and you will start receiving weekly action alerts. These consist of a current legislative issue, a bit of background, and a suggested letter if you want to take action by email. If you use the accompanying response, you are able to personalize it with your own particular views on the issue. Congressional staffers keep tallies on the mail received, and the opinions of constituents matter!

Some issues may not move you to action at all, and some may incense you enough to encourage all your friends to respond. Either way, you will learn a lot about what’s being discussed in Congress, or what is headed to the President’s desk. (If Obama is the appropriate recipient of your concerns, the mail goes to him.). To join the network, go to <http://www.ucc.org/justice>.

Letter from Haiti

...I am writing on behalf of the children at Peniel School in Petite Rivière de l'Artibonite-Haiti to thank the members of North Prospect Union UCC for your support in making the local of Peniel a better place to be, to study, to grow up. Indeed, the wooden door of the fence and of the building are in need of replacement and we will be doing just that. The kids of Peniel, the staff and I are confident that God has placed you on our journey, and we thank him as well for that.

*Sincerely in Christ,
Kathleen Dorsainvil*

Recommended Reading

Tracy Kidder's *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, is the story of Paul Farmer, MD, and his efforts to provide health services for destitute, rural Haitians against all odds, and of where the road takes him in his attempts to eradicate TB around the globe. The account is an adventure story, inspiring, heart-breaking and up-lifting. A story of phenomenal focus and determination, failure and success. I loved it.

— Barbara McLean

If you're excited about a non-fiction book you've read, please share!



APRIL

5- Ben Lavallee

11-Barbara McLean

15-Tracy Harmon

24-Jerry Rockwood

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

Joys & Concerns

John Micco is recovering from his second surgery in two months. We'll see him back in church when his doctor tells him he can drive again.

David Galante is facing knee replacement surgery and welcomes your prayers.

Naturally we're all remembering all those in Japan suffering losses and deprivation, but it's such a *huge* number and there are so many needs, it may help to have a focus. The Eshelman-Lavallee family have kin in Tokyo serving as music ministers in new church plants. They are very involved in relief work, which can be followed on their blog at rogerlowther.blogspot.com. This week Roger wrote about a neighbor who owns a restaurant. He'd lost family in the tsunami, and wanted to do what he could, so he transported food and equipment, enlisted volunteers, and cooked the first hot meal some of the survivors had had in three weeks. Roger's labors included recruiting musicians who, he said, turned a refugee-camp feeling into a party atmosphere, celebrating lives saved and giving a much-needed emotional break.