



Try It, You'll Like It

The Internal Communications Task Force comprised of Lisa Blake, Eloise Mial, Tom Roberts and Charlie Schaffer has completed its work and will issue their final report to the Council on March 19th and to the congregation April 2nd.

As was stated at the congregation annual meeting, their goal was to develop a model to restructure the organization of the church such that it was in line with the size of our current congregation.

That has now been accomplished and they are eager to share the results with you.

Support Our Community

The Community Relations Task Force has been busy with Focus Group Interviews...listening to members talk about what they like about our current church programs and activities. They have also heard concerns about programs and activities we don't offer.

Task Force members will analyze the information and provide recommendations to the Council at the March meeting and to the congregation on April 2nd.

The Task Force, in keeping with providing support to our families, has invited the Buck Hill Service
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Community Relations Task Force

By: John Jurena

A Community Relations Task Force was created to determine how to serve the community better. Members include Cate Roberts, Evelyn Self, Betty Shuletheis, Ron Reece and myself.

In order for our church to grow we must increase the membership of persons in the 25-44 year old age range, the age range of people with families. The Community Relations Task Force has decided to conduct focus group interviews with congregation members who fall into this approximate age range. Our goal is to discover what you like about worshipping in our church, what you consider to be our strengths. We are just as interested in finding out what you think are our deficiencies, weaknesses, or opportunities to improve. We would also like you to think about what programs/activities you would like to see added to make your sense of worship/fellowship more complete.

We ask everyone who received an invitation to come on the 26th and to let Amy know they're coming, since we're providing lunch, and how many of them there will be and if they need child care.

Joel Osteen

Senior pastor Lakewood Church, Houston TX
30,000 members attend weekly
#1 New York Times bestseller
"Your Best Life Now"

Centuries ago, wine was stored in leather wineskins rather than bottles. Animal skins were dried and cured until the leather could be shaped into containers to hold the wine. When the wineskins were new, they were soft and pliable, but as they aged, they often lost their elasticity; they wouldn't give anymore. They would become hardened and set, and they couldn't expand. If a person poured new wine in an old wineskin, the container would burst and the wine would be lost.

Interestingly, when Jesus wanted to encourage His followers to enlarge their visions, He reminded them,
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An Angelic Evening



Congregation members will be provided with tickets to sell for the May 20, 2006 Church Auction. Advance tickets will sell for \$3.00. Tickets at the door will be \$5.00. You may pick up your numbered tickets in Fellowship Hall, Sunday, March 5, 2006.

Our Goal is to raise \$20,000. The money is to be used for:

- Adult Education
- Carmen Ministries
- Church Advertising
- New Church Sign
- The Lord's Pantry
- The Mike Billington Fund
- Vacation Bible School

The programs being funded by the Auction are those which you, the congregation members, stated in the survey we took last year were most important to you.

Two of the items support Christian Education, two reflect your concern regarding communication, and the other three the commitment we have to our members and our community.

Visit our display in Fellowship Hall each Sunday during coffee hour.

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"You can't put new wine into old wineskins." Jesus was saying that you cannot have a larger life with restricted attitudes. That lesson is still relevant today; We are set in our ways, bound by our perspectives, and stuck in our thinking. God is trying to do something new, but unless we're willing to change, unless we're willing to expand and enlarge our vision, we'll miss His opportunities for us.

The good news is, God wants to show you His incredible favor. He wants to fill your life with "new wine," but are you willing to get rid of your old wineskins? Will you start thinking bigger? Will you enlarge your vision and get rid of those old negative mindsets that hold you back?

Get Rid of Those Old Wineskins

This is a new time for Panther Valley Ecumenical Church....help us to set your goals for the future.

- Enlarge your vision
- Raise your levels of expectancy
- God has more in store for all of us

This church can grow and with that growth serve the community better. WE NEED YOU to make that happen.

Hackettstown Area Presbyterian Cluster Bible Study

At 7:30 on Wednesday evenings from March 8 - May 10 adults from six Presbyterian churches will gather for Bible study and fellowship. All are welcome to participate. Please see Bob and Jane Nichols if you have any questions. You are welcome to attend whatever sessions you can make.

This session will focus on the seasons of life and the seasons of the church year.

March 8 First Presbyterian, Hackettstown For everything there is a Season.

March 15 Schooley Mountain	A time for every purpose under heaven
March 22 Beattystown	Advent
March 29 Rockport	Christmas
April 5 Panther Valley	Epiphany
April 12	no meeting during Holy Week
April 19 Schooley Mountain	Lent
April 26 First Presbyterian	Holy Week
May 3 Pleasant Grove	Easter

Please Honor the Happenings Deadline

Please submit all articles by the 15th of the month for timely publication. It takes time to build the newsletter; however, if for some reason you don't have the information for the article that you know you will need space for, just let us know so we can reserve the space. We realize that sometimes events create the need for a last minute addition, so we will try to be understanding. Otherwise, any late submissions will be in the following issue. Thank you

Commission News

Stewardship & Communication

The Stewardship and Communications Commission has begun preparation for the One Great Hour of Sharing campaign. The date will be March 26. If you or your group needs to have an event publicized, please contact any member of the Stewardship Commission.

Worship

The Worship Commission has planned for several events that will be part of the Spring calendar. Be sure to add “**Easter Sunrise Service**” to your calendar and come prepared to have a hot breakfast and good fellowship after the service.

Support: continued from page 1 column 1

Center (comprised of Allamuchy and Hackettstown) Girl Scouts to celebrate Girl Scout Sunday, March 12th with our congregation.

This is a wonderful opportunity to thank the adults providing leadership for the program and to honor the girls who will provide leadership to our future world.

The Girl Scouts and their families will worship with us and join us for coffee hour.

Announcing...

Next month we will be adding a new column to *The PVEC Happenings*. It will be called **Family Forum** and will feature activities for Christian families such as Movie Reviews of films appropriate for the whole family to see, or upcoming area music concerts, festivals, etc. If you have something you would like to recommend, please contact *Happenings* editor, Ron Reece.

CHILDREN AND COMMUNION

In the past 30 years many churches in all our denominations have begun offering children communion education so that they can be welcomed at the table.

On March 19 and 26 our church school children in first grade and up will participate in special classes to teach them about the meaning and origin of the Lord's Supper.

Following church on March 26, Rev. Howson will hold a special program for children and their parents in the sanctuary. At this time the children can come forward to the altar as we explain what we do, why we do it, and what our various traditions are. Both children and adults will have an opportunity to ask questions. Following this program, we hope that parents will discuss with their children how their family receives communion and why they follow that pattern.

You do not need to have young children to join us after church on March 26. Everyone is welcome.

On Sunday, April 2 the children will have church school during the early part of the service. During the hymn of preparation they will join their parents and the rest of us in celebrating the eucharist. We plan to have our high school students and confirmands join us as well so that all of us will be “coming to the table” together to celebrate the sacrament of communion.

A Quiet Oasis

Are you looking for an island of quiet in a busy life? During Lent we will gather weekly in the sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. to celebrate Evening Prayer. We will use liturgies from the Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian traditions. Worship lasts about 30 minutes and will precede the Bible studies. Prayers for healing will be included.

Weds, March 8
Tues, March 14
Tues, Mar 21
Tues, Mar 28
Tues, Apr 4

The Prayer Ministry

Some of us grew up with the idea that we could only talk to God in church and at formalized times at home such as via grace at mealtime or just before going to bed at night.

In today's hurried and worried world it is good to remember that God is listening all the time and He is every- where at all times and He wants us to feel comfortable talking to Him. So if you're worried, talk to God...and if you've talked to God, don't worry.

God Loves You

By Betty Schultheis

*When black clouds surround you
and there's no end in sight,
Just remember He's there to help
with the fight.*

*His love will cloak you and
keep you from harm.*

*His love is the Light at the
end of each storm.*

*God will be with you from
beginning to end.*

*Just talk with Him daily
for He is your friend.*

GROUNDWORK II

Digging Deep for Change and Growth
A Lenten Study from the Episcopal Church

As Christians, we are God's beloved children. How do we claim this love that we so long for? How do we live from it so that others may know that they, too, are loved?

This study invites us to root our lives in God's love for us and to explore how we can both as individuals and as a congregation live so as "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." (*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 855) Rooted in the lectionary texts we will hear in worship this Lent, it asks us to engage the Gospel's timeless call to transformation, discipleship, vitality, and mission.

continued in next column

The Choir of the College of William & Mary is offering a free concert at First Presbyterian Church, Hackettstown on Saturday, March 19 at 8:00 pm.

If anyone is able to house two choir members, please call First Presbyterian at 852-4011.

Groundwork II continued

We will offer each of the five sessions during the day at 10:30 am and in the evening at 7:30 pm. Classes will be as follows:

Day (10:30 am)

Evening (7:30 pm)

Session I: Covenant and Commitments.

Tues, March 7

Weds, March 8

Session II: Living the Gospel Promise.

Tues, March 14

Tues, March 14

Session III: Getting it Wrong . . .
Getting it Right.

Tues, March 21

Tues, March 21

Session IV: Abundant Opportunity .

Tues, March 28

Tues, March 28

Session V: Seeing Jesus Through Us.

Weds, April 5

Tues, April 4

Each session provides 3 discussion tracks.

1. Welcome and Incorporation
2. Congregational Advertising
3. Covenants and Commitments

In each session, we will select one or more of these tracks, depending upon the interests and number of people participating. The approaches offered relate directly to the work we are doing in our taskforces and that Council is addressing so this study is particularly timely for us.

Because each session stands alone, you need not commit to all of them in order to attend some of them.

If you are interested in attending or if you have questions, please contact Rev. Howson so that she can plan appropriately.

Meet the Congregation

Bob and Irene Lobell have been members of the church for five years. They moved to Panther Valley seven years ago from Pittstown in Hunterdon County where they had a farm.



Bob and Irene Lobell

They have been active members of the Worship Commission since right after they joined the church. Bob has also served a term on Council.

They have seven grown children, 12 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Bob is a mean horseshoe player, an avid reader, puzzler, and woodcarver. If you ever want to laugh until tears run down your cheeks ask Bob to dazzle you with his repertoire of radio commercials.

Irene says Bob has become a good cook, bottle washer and launderer during her recent broken arm injury.

Irene does exquisite quilting, cross stitching and hooking handwork.

They love the friendship and fellowship of our church. They usually sit near the back of the church and frequently sell grocery store coupons before church in the narthex and during coffee hour in Fellowship Hall. You can recognize them by their big smiles and sparkling eyes.



Coffee Hour

The Calendar for 2006:

- March Church Council
- April Stewardship Comm.
- May Episcopal
- June Methodist
- July Choir
- August Pastoral Care Comm.
- Sept. Christian Outreach
- October Presbyterian
- Nov. United Church of Christ
- Dec. Growth & Fellowship

Worship Enhancing Accessories

Do you need longer arms in order to read the church bulletin, pew Bible or Hymnal? Do you wish the announcements were louder? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, you need to utilize the items placed on the "Worship Enhancing Accessories" table on the left in the narthex.


You will find large print bulletins, pew Bibles, and Hymnals there as well as hearing aids.

Anyone needing a wheelchair during Worship Service should contact an usher as there is one available.

Blood Drive

The Parish Nurses in conjunction with Miller Memorial Blood Center are hosting a Blood Drive at PVEC on Sunday March 26th, 2006 from 8:30 to 12:30 in our fellowship hall. Registration will be ongoing Sundays at coffee hour or you may call Carol Miller at 850-8170 or e-mail her at pmiller@goes.com. You must be over age 17 and weigh over 110Lbs. If you have questions about whether you can donate because of medical conditions, travel, or anything else you may call 1-800-223-6667 x288 and everything is kept confidential. On the day of donating please eat a full breakfast but refrain from drinking caffeinated drinks for 4 hours prior to donating. You need to bring photo ID and be prepared to spend about 45 minutes in the donation area. More detailed information will be available in fellowship hall regarding requirements and restrictions for donating blood.

We will be holding drawings for prizes so please come, donate for a wonderful cause that can save many people's lives.



FROM THE PASTOR

Lent

Lent is not tidy. Days grow longer . . . the ground thaws, and the next thing we know, everything is filthy. Our windows need washing, our temples need cleansing, the earth itself needs a good bath. . . . Winter doesn't leave without blustery battles that push things over and mess things up and even break things. Lent, if we honestly face its fury, will leave the landscape littered with bits and pieces of ourselves.

Peter Mazur, Lent: Book I, p. vi

On February 19, when John Jurena reported during announcements on the taskforces' progress, he referred to a well known text in Mark 2:22, "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins." He wanted us to understand that if we are to mature in Christ and to grow as a congregation, we will need to let go of some old and comfortable ways of doing things. Teenagers, for instance, need to let go of their youth before they can become adults. Like Lent, that transition is not a tidy process and we can leave the landscape littered with bits and pieces of ourselves.

Rarely do those who refer to this text look at the verses that precede it. People had come to Jesus to complain that instead of fasting he feasted – even with unsavory people such as prostitutes, lepers, and tax collectors. He responded by saying, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they?" How do these two texts relate to each other?

I would suggest that the key is the joy that we share when the bridegroom is among us. Joy is the new wine that breaks the old wineskins. That joy breaks the fast; it supercedes the fast; it transforms the fast into a joyful feast.

Lent is the ascent up the mountain. It is looking at the earth that needs a good bath at the end of winter and cleaning things up. It is washing the windows, shaking out the dust, picking up the sticks and digging up the ground for the new flowers. Lent is preparing ourselves to be resurrected with Christ. It is letting go of the things that hold us fast in the tomb so that we can be on the way with our risen Savior. Old wineskins simply will not hold the joy of our transformation.

John Jurena drew us a wonderful imagery with the old and new wineskins. We are indeed in a time of growth and change, a blustery time that can even mess things up. There is work to be done: pruning, digging, planting. But we do the work for the joy of the harvest: the sure and certain knowledge of resurrection. Jesus is not in the tomb. He has gone ahead of us. He is waiting for us. The table is set; the celebration has begun. The new wineskins are ready, if we will just let go of the old ones.

In his great prayer at the Last Supper, Jesus prayed for us:

Very truly, I tell you . . . you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. When a woman is in labor, she has pain But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy. . . . Ask and you will receive so that your joy may be complete.

Let us open our hearts to receive Paul's blessing (Romans 15:13). "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." For the joy of resurrection in Christ is our inheritance.

Mary Lou

Upcoming Events

Weds March 1	Ash Wednesday 6:30 pm 7:30 pm	Soup Supper Worship	Thursday, April 13	7:30 pm	MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE OF TENEBRAE
Tuesday, March 7	10:30 am	Bible Study	Good Friday, April 14	noon	A Walk Through Holy Week: program for Children and families, other churches invited
Weds March 8	7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Evening Prayer Bible Study		Noon	Adult Service at St. James Episcopal Church
Sunday, March 12	10:00 am	Girl Scout Sunday	Sunday, April 16	EASTER SUNDAY	
Tuesday, March 14	10:30 am 7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Bible Study Evening Prayer Bible Study		6:00 am	Sunrise Service And hot Breakfast
Tuesday March 21	10:30 am 7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Bible Study Evening Prayer Bible Study		10:00 am	Worship
Sunday, March 26	9:00 am 10:00 am 11:30 am	Blood Drive OGHS offering received Family Communion Workshop	Friday – Saturday, April 28 and 29		Rummage Sale
Tuesday March 28	10:30 am 7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Bible Study Evening Prayer Bible Study	Sunday, April, 30	10:00 am	CONFIRMATION
Sat., April 1	9:30 – 2:00	Council Retreat	Sunday, May 14		Mother's Day
Sun., April 2	10:00 am 11:30 am 11:30 am	Family Communion Task force Reports back to congregation Outreach Easter Fair	Saturday, May 20		CHURCH AUCTION
Tuesday, April 4	7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Evening Prayer Bible Study	Sunday, June 4	11:00	Strawberry Festival Plant Sale
Weds April 5	10:30 am	Bible Study	Sunday, June 11	10:00	YOUTH SUNDAY Picnic – either Sunday or Saturday, June 10
Sunday, April 9	10:00 am	PALM SUNDAY – special service	Sunday, June 18		Father's Day
			VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL will probably be Mon – Weds., July 24-26. It will be in the evening and include programs for youth and adults as well as for children. The last night we will have a barbecue and evening prayer on the lawn.		

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A WALK THROUGH HOLY WEEK

Over my years in ministry it has become apparent that confirmands too often do not know the story of Jesus' last week. Clearly, adults are too often uncomfortable discussing the painful events with their children. Last year we offered a special program for our church school children called A WALK THROUGH HOLY WEEK in which we led them through the major events of the week in an interactive way. It was successful and we have been asked to repeat it.

This year we will hold the event at noon on Good Friday followed by a brown bag lunch and some crafts for the children in Fellowship Hall. We have invited First Presbyterian Church and St. James Episcopal Church to join us. Each of them will also send an adult to participate in the story telling.

We are looking forward to offering all the children an opportunity to know what happened to Jesus and why and to grow in their own faith. This is an informal atmosphere which is suitable for young children. Parents may accompany their children as they move from station to station or sit and watch.

The regular adult service will continue to be held at noon at St. James as it has in past years.

