



Seasons

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."
Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NRSV)

The Presbyterian Church At Tenafly
Summer 2007

UPCOMING SCHEDULE

JUNE 3

- 9:15 Sunday School
- 9:15 Adult Seminars
- 10:30 Worship
Confirmation & Communion
- 11:30 Coffee Hour

JUNE 10

- Sunday School & Youth Recognition
- 9:15 Sunday School
- 9:15 Adult Seminars
- 10:30 Worship
- 11:30 - 1:30 Church Picnic

SUMMER SCHEDULE

(June 17 - September 2)

- 10:00 Worship
- 10:00 Summer Enrichment
for children
- 11:00 Refreshments

SEPTEMBER 9

FALL WORSHIP

- 9:15 Sunday School
- 9:15 Adult Seminars
- 10:30 Worship
- 11:30 Coffee Hour

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Presbyterian Church at Tenafly
55 Magnolia Avenue
Tenafly, NJ 07670
201-567-0111

cwrule@tenaflychurch.org
lynn@tenaflychurch.org
cecilia@tenaflychurch.org
www.tenaflychurch.org

Office Hours 8:30 - 4:30
Monday through Friday

Are You Having Trouble Forgiving?

Reverend Craig W. Rule

Matthew 6:12, 14-15; 18:21-22
Romans 12:14-21 (NRSV)

The issue most often raised with me over the years by Christian people is that of forgiveness. I hope this excerpt from the May 6 Sunday worship is helpful.

As my parents aged and got quite feeble - my mother with dementia, my father, a brittle diabetic, barely able to see - my brother lived right next door. His abusive, neglectful treatment of our elderly parents was inexcusable (unforgivable?). He was also insulting and abusive to me. He has no remorse or apologies for his atrocious behavior which went on for years. I confess I've had plenty of anger and resentment toward him.

Ever feel like that?

Is there someone you have not forgiven or are having trouble forgiving? It is part of our human situation, isn't it? C. S. Lewis perceptively said, *"Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive."*

So the reality is much more like what the Irish comedian quipped: *"Do you know what Irish Alzheimers is? You forget everything but the grudges."*

This facing of reality about what's going on in us, and not a lot of pious Christian talk about "I know I should be more forgiving," is a necessary first step which means **FORGIVENESS IS NOT FORGETTING!**

We remember it all. What can change

are our own actions and feelings toward the person who has offended us.

And **FORGIVENESS IS NOT FAIRNESS!**

When forgiveness happens there is no fairness or justice over what has occurred - things are never made quite right.

Forgiveness is not easy, simple or quick - and many of us find ourselves stuck in unforgiveness.

Yet in Christian faith forgiveness is not an optional side issue; it is right at the core. *"How many times shall I forgive a person offending me? Seven times? No, seventy-seven or seven times 70."* (Matthew 18:21-22)

Don't read this literally ("well now, I'm at 77 and I don't have to forgive") rather as an expression of an attitude.

The question for us who have given ourselves to Christ is whether we are trying, even wanting to consider forgiving? (There are periods where we can't and don't want to.) But in the end if we don't try, we are ignoring God's voice; our heart is not aligned with God's.

But - **FORGIVENESS IS ALSO NOT RECONCILIATION!!**

Forgiving doesn't mean we have to be buddies or even friends.

FORGIVENESS IS WHAT HAPPENS IN ME - it has to do with my attitude. You and I may be struggling to forgive but at least we're trying versus just holding onto our bitterness.

In his letter to the Christians in Rome,



Paul says, "if possible, as far as it is up to you, live peaceably with all."

Some folks won't let that happen. Every time I draw near to my brother is another attack from him - so I keep my distance - we will not have a relationship or a friendship. BUT, can I put my anger aside? Can I let it go? And, if the right moment comes, try to do a kindness for him? That is the state of forgiveness.

If we do not forgive, there are consequences, especially in our own soul. The resentment diminishes our compassion - some good things begin to die within us.

So forget about the person who offended or injured you!

How, instead, is the state of your heart? Has anger and bitterness killed off some of your heart's compassion?

I know I need God's help to let go of some of these things - to begin to see that offender as a Child of God also.

So what can we do? Foremost begin to pray for the person who hurt us, even if it is to express our rage.

A teacher of spirituality relates that a middle aged woman angrily told her Christian mentor: "I never got what I needed from my father. We had all we wanted but he was never

available; always work came first, and he never told me that he loved me. Then he died when I was 17".

All these years later, under the guidance of her spiritual director, she expressed her bitterness toward her father to God in her prayers, and she slowly experienced a change of heart. She began by praying about all the times her father wasn't there for her. As she prayed her heart began to soften - and she unexpectedly found herself praying for her father.

She saw that her father had obeyed the cultural rules of his time, which moved some men to put work before their families. She wept for his lost years as well as her own. She discovered how much she had loved him. As she expressed her love in prayer, she realized that in his own way he had loved her too. Then one day she realized she had forgiven her father. By expressing her struggles to God as she prayed, she could accept and receive the grace of forgiveness.

Nearly all of us have someone we have trouble forgiving. As we pray to God about him or her, even in anger, keep praying, because we expose ourselves to God's "besieging love" - and things change; we change and the bitterness leaves our hearts.

Amen.

"IT'S HARD FOR US TO LET HIM GO."

These were the words spoken by Rev. Rule at the Coffee Hour on Sunday, May 20, honoring Ted Lilley. A resident of Tenafly since September 1939 when he was a senior in high school (except for a



few short years elsewhere), Ted has been a member of our congregation since 1974 giving us 33 years of dedicated service. He has been an Auditor and served on the Budget and Financial Planning Committee, Board of Trustees, Session, and Mission Committee.

On hand to help him celebrate were his daughter, Cheryl, son, Ross, and his grandson, Josh. Ted will be moving up to Acton, Massachusetts, to be near them and his other son, Wayne. As Ted put it, "They will all be my neighbors." All three children joined our church with Ted in 1974.

In a closing sentence to those gathered to wish him well, Ted said, "I say farewell to you, but it's only temporary. I will be back to see you." Good luck, Ted, and may God be with you as you add another chapter to your life.

STILL INTERESTED?

With the recent rise in postage, we need your help. If you are currently receiving "Seasons" via e-mail, please let us know so we can remove your name from the mailing list. Also, if your address has changed, is incorrect in any way, or you no longer wish to receive this publication, please let us know by e-mailing Karen Boyan at k.boyan@verizon.net or calling her at (201) 567-4133. Thanks for your help.

Church Picnic

Sunday, June 10th
11:30 - 1:30 p.m.

Good food!
Great fellowship!

Suggested donation:

\$5 per adult

\$15 per family

Games on
the front
lawn



Bean bag toss, basketball
throw, Tot Spot for little ones
and more.

Two volleyball areas: one for
adults and a separate area for
children

Camp Johnsonburg Summer 2007

Camp Johnsonburg, a ministry of the seven New Jersey Presbyteries, is now accepting registrations for its 2007 summer program. They have programs ranging from one night to two weeks for campers from first to twelfth grade. For a full look at all of their offerings for this summer, please visit: www.campjburg.org/summer/.

CAN WE BE A FIVE FOR FIVE CHURCH?

"If you love me: Feed my lambs, tend my sheep..."



Rev. Eileen W. Lindner
Parish Associate

A few months ago I was asked by the national offices of the Presbyterian Church USA to serve as the Moderator of the Special Offerings Review Task Force. I agreed because I think we should always say "yes" to requests for our help unless we have some important reason to say no. My Task Force has now met three times, and I am delighted with what I have been learning about the mission opportunities offered by the national church. The job of the Review Task Force is to study the four "Special Offerings" sponsored by the national church and to assess how well they are doing in meeting needs, proclaiming Christ and calling men, women and children into services of love and kindness.

The four special offerings include **One Great Hour of Sharing**, which is usually received during Lent and is used to support the work of the Presbyterian Disaster Agency in aiding the victims of hurricanes, earthquakes and the like at home and abroad. This offering also supports the work of the Presbyterian Hunger Program which offers food support to those in need here and throughout the globe. The offering also funds the Self-Development of People program which offers support to disadvantaged communities so that they can grow in their ability to support themselves.

The **Pentecost Offering**, the newest special offering is received on the day of Pentecost (May 27 this year) and provides support for youth ministries including the Youth Triennium. It supports Young Adult Ministries, which sends college age young people on mission programs where they are needed in the United States and elsewhere. Finally, this offering supports our national church as it works on efforts to assist children at risk. Forty percent (40%) of this offering remains in the congregation to support activities for at-risk children. Think of it! We could support our local efforts while

also helping children in sweat shops in other parts of the world!

The third special offering is the **Presbyterian Peacemaking Offering**, which is received on World Communion Sunday. This offering brings speakers from other countries to build mutual understanding for world peace. This program also holds conferences, which train thousands of Presbyterians in living peacefully with each other, with neighbors who are quite different from us in race, culture, religion and perspective and in peace with the earth itself. Twenty-five percent (25%) of this offering remains with the congregation for local peacemaking efforts.

Finally, **Christmas Joy Offering**, received the Sunday before Christmas, is split between the Board of Pensions which provides pensions in retirement for clergy, Christian educators and other church workers or their survivors. Half of the offering also supports the work of the several racial ethnic schools and colleges related to the Presbyterian Church. This offering brings Christmas joy to young and old in need.

As a church we are trying hard to find ways to live out our faith and to show the love of God which is in Jesus Christ. Now I know that special offerings provide us with a way to join with other Presbyterians to do good in the world where it is needed and wanted. It is also a way to provide us with deep connections to others and as a bonus provides some mission funds for local use in ways we can determine.

Congregations that receive all four Special Offerings and make a contribution to the General Assembly Mission budget (and we do!) are known as **Five for Five Churches**. These congregations are mission leader congregations in our denomination. They receive special mailings and a certificate of appreciation from the national church. I believe we can and should be a **Five for Five** congregation next year. I plan to work toward this and invite anyone interested in helping with mission project or distribution of materials to get in touch with me. **Remember, "the Lord has need of you."**

This summer our children will enjoy a wild west adventure with Group Publishing's Avalanche Ranch. Throughout the summer children will learn God is real, God is with us, God is strong, God is awesome and God is in charge.

Children will participate in a wonderful mission program called Operation Kid-to-Kid. This year the children make two soft cuddly bears. One bear goes to a child in Africa and one is kept as a special reminder to pray for the recipient.

Children's News



Pajama party: 4th, 5th and 6th grade girls

The summer schedule begins Sunday, June 17. Children will go directly upstairs to the classroom. Parents please note you can drop children off at 9:45 a.m. leaving you time to get to worship.

Youth News

What have our youth been up to? The Children's Ministry Team has been developing programs for all our children, which include prayer and a Bible message. The children enjoy their church friends and grow in faith. Here's what we've been up to: Pajama Party, 4th-6th grade girls; Game Day, 4th-6th grade boys; Clue Mystery Party, 4th-6th grade boys and girls; Farm Party, Pre-K-3rd grade.

Thoughts on our Trip to Ginghamburg, Ohio

by Elder Mary Kuttner



Where to start?
First thoughts were
A W E S O M E !
I N T E N S E !
INSPIRING! MIND
ALTERING! LIFE

CHANGING! Sounds almost like we went to see some radical cult, doesn't it? Well, it is a radical cult - *a cult called Christianity!* What I heard were many things that I "knew" already, but put in a way that I hadn't thought of before. There was an urgency to the messages of "when have I seen you naked and clothed you, hungry and fed you, in prison or sick and visited you...when you do this to the least of these my brethren you do it to me". I also think I finally understand the vague concept that I grew up hearing that we, as the church, are the body of Christ. Well, we really are the hands and feet of Jesus, literally! We can pray all we want about something that is fine and worthy, but by getting out and doing something about the hurts and injustices we see, we are doing what Christ directed us to do - take care of His sheep and make prayer a reality.

As our first session began, we were told that all of the people there had been praying for us, weeks before they even knew who we were and how happy they were to finally be

meeting us at last...to meet those whom God had led to them. Wow! And here I thought I was going just because I was interested in the subject matter. As we listened to speakers, watched videos, and experienced the spirit-charged atmosphere, I looked around and felt that I was in the midst of something very powerful...a glimpse of the power of God himself...transforming lives through His Word. One of the speakers was Rev. Mike Slaughter, whom consider to be a prophet of our time. In listening to him, I could almost understand how it must have been back in Christ's time listening to things I had heard over and over again in church, but finally with a perspective that made those teachings come alive: such as the phrase "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"; how we shouldn't be as concerned about getting people into heaven as we are about bringing the kingdom of heaven to earth, as it says in The Lord's Prayer.

"To live simply so that others may simply live" was another meaningful phrase I came away with. As I thought about all the things I own, I pictured doing without many of them so that someone else could actually make it through another day. The reason that phrase made such an impact on me was

because I saw a video about Darfur. It broke my heart to watch a mother try to get her sick son to stand but he kept on collapsing. I believe that if we actually saw more of the pain and suffering of others, we couldn't help but be touched and want to do something about it. As part of a global community, our actions or lack thereof, actually do matter. I think we may not fully understand how truly blessed, somewhat insulated, and quite comfortable we are in our secular world; at least I was in mine. At the conference, we were reminded that Christ was particularly sympathetic to the plight of the poor, the homeless, the widowed, the hungry, the hurting, etc. He was the radical thinker of His day. He associated with known sinners; enraged those in religious power who wanted everything the way it had always been; shook the people and tried to wake them up to what it all really means and matters; and to show us how much God really does LOVE us.

Those were just a few of the concepts I came away with that have refocused my thoughts and priorities about what Jesus considers important. If we really let Him, God can help us to help Him make this, His world, heaven on earth. What a wonderful concept and something of which I would like to be a part!

The Presbyterian Church at Tenafly
55 Magnolia Avenue
Tenafly, NJ 07670
201-567-0111
(Address Correction Requested)

Editors:
Martha Bower
Karen Boyan
Jane Majeski