



The Clarendon Connection

News of Clarendon Hill Presbyterian Church November 2007

Sunday Schedule

Choir rehearsal 9:45 a.m.
Worship 10:30 a.m.
Children's Education 10:45 a.m.
Refreshments and fellowship 11:30 a.m.
Communion will be celebrated on November 4th.

November Calendar

November donation drive for Somerville Early Head Start (for more info, see page 3)



Peace, Justice and Mission committee will meet at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 1st

Friday, November 2nd, at 8:00 p.m.m End of an Empire Presents...Alasdair Roberts, Charalambides, and Heather Leigh Murray at the Nave Gallery.(for more info, see page 4)

Orders for Equal Exchange items will be taken at church on November 4th (for more info, see page 2)

Adult Ed will meet right after the service on Sunday, November 4th (for more info, see page 3)

“Young Turks Two” runs at the Nave Gallery through November 4th, (for more info, see page 4)

Joint Session and Deacon's meeting on Wednesday, November 7th, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 8th at 7:30 p.m., Worship Committee will meet (for more info, see page 5)

Once a month Bible Study, beginning on Friday, November 9th at 3:00 p.m. (for more info, see page 5)

Adult Ed will meet right after the service on Sunday, November 11th (for more info, see page 5)

Sunday Evening Forum at 7:00 p.m. on November 11th, “Peace Is Every Step”, a film and discussion about Thich Nhat Hanh, Zen master, author and spiritual leader. (for more info, see page 5)

Writing Group will meet on Wednesday, November 14, 7:00 p.m. (for more info, see page 6)

Friday, November 16th, Night out on the Town, concert with Marcel Khalife, UNESCO Artist for Peace, 8:00 p.m. (for more info, see page 6)

Yoga, at 12:15 p.m. on November 18th (for more info, see page 7)

Potluck, right after the service on November 18th

Yoga, right after the service on November 25th (for more info, see page 7)

Book Group/Bible Study on Wednesday, November 28th at 7:00 p.m. (for more info, see page 7)

COMING IN DECEMBER:

Serenata Chamber Musicians, Winter Solstice Concert, Friday, December 7th, 7:30 p.m.
Saturday December 8th and Sunday, December 9th: December Salon: An Affordable Art Sale at The Nave Gallery – opening reception on Saturday the 8th from 2:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Pledge cards due by Sunday, December 16th

Thursday, December 13th through Sunday, December 16th: December Salon: An Affordable Art Sale at The Nave Gallery

Serenata Chamber Musicians, Classical Holiday Concert, Sunday, December 16th, 2:00 p.m.

Parish News

We will celebrate the baptism of Thomas Siggers, son of Keri and Trevor Siggers (and brother of Reid) on Sunday, November 18th. We wish God’s richest blessings for Thomas!

The Presbyterian Coffee Project

Orders will be taken for Equal Exchange COFFEE (drip or whole bean) and TEA (English Breakfast, Earl Grey, Green, Rooibos) and CRANBERRIES, at church on Sunday, November 4th. You can send orders to Katherine no later than the evening of November 4th by phone (617-628-6716) or email (kgkg@gis.net). Delivery should be on November 11th.

Due to higher organic cocoas prices, Equal Exchange has had to increase their chocolate bar and cocoa prices. The 12 oz cans of organic hot cocoa mix and the 8 oz cans of organic unsweetened baking cocoa will now be \$5.00 per can.

Katherine will have a sign up list for chocolate bars to see if there is any interest among the congregation.

Remember that Equal Exchange makes contributions to the national Presbyterian Church. For every pound of fairly traded products that Presbyterians purchase, Equal Exchange donates \$0.15 to the Presbyterian Church USA. For 2006, that amount totaled \$21,012. The funds were used to support a reforestation and environmental sustainability project with a coffee cooperative in Nicaragua.

What is EQUAL EXCHANGE? In 1991, Equal Exchange became the first U.S. company to adopt international fair trade standards as guiding principles on 100% of their products. By working with democratic farmer cooperatives around the world and paying a fair price, Equal Exchange supports efforts to improve local communities, putting more control and greater income in the hands of impoverished, small-scale farmers in developing nations. We also serve freshly made Equal Exchange coffee at Clarendon Hill's coffee hours!

Adult Education

Adult Education class will continue on Sunday, November 4th and the 11th after service at 12:15 p.m.. We will continue our study of *The Golden Compass*, the first book in Phillip Pullman's trilogy entitled "His Dark Materials." Selected in 2007 by judges of the CILIP Carnegie Medal for children's literature as one of the ten most important children's novels of the past 70 years, this novel has also drawn considerable attention for the ways in which it portrays the life of faith. (See Book Reviews for more information about the book.)

With this in mind, Adult Education warmly welcomes you to a casual discussion of the issues and ideas that present themselves in the novel. No prior reading of the novel is necessary, but you are welcome to do so if you feel inclined. In addition, this class is welcoming of all levels of age and experience. We hope to bring in a number of special guests to facilitate conversations about the novel, so stay tuned for more information. God bless, and I hope to see you there. Sarah Glass, Seminarian

November donation drive for Somerville Early Head Start

We have decided to collect food items to help the Somerville Early Head Start program. The director, Marie Galvin, came and gave a presentation to us on September 30th. Salam Lebbos, who works at the program, will be our facilitator. There will be a basket in the foyer to collect your donated items. Below is the list of things that the program would most appreciate. Thanks in advance for your generosity!

The list for Early Head Start

crackers

cereal

macaroni

canned black beans

rice in boxes (rather than plastic bags)

Baby Formula

diapers

peanut butter

The Nave Gallery

Friday, November 2nd from 8:00 – 10:00 p.m. \$10.00 End of an Empire Presents...Alasdair Roberts (Drag City), Charalambides (Kranky, Wholly Other), and Heather Leigh Murray at the Nave Gallery.

Scottish songwriter Alasdair Roberts' career as a recording artist sprung into a critically lauded, cult-praised profession when a demo he made with his group Appendix Out found its way into the hands of Will Oldham (Palace, Bonnie Prince Billy). Oldham identified with Appendix Out's similarly calculated sound enough that he released their first recording, the 7" titled Ice Age/Pissed with You, on his own Palace Records label in 1996. The momentum from this release's affiliation with Oldham sparked not only a series of split 7" releases, but also to a recording contract with Chicago indie label Drag City. After Appendix Out's third release for the label, released in February 2001, Roberts immediately recorded and released his first solo album, released on Secretly Canadian and titled The Crook of My Arm. Roberts later followed with his second solo release, Farewell Sorrow, which garnered more critical acclaim and showcased the development of his songwriting growing tendrils around the roots of the British and Scottish folk traditions. The stark and beautiful No Earthly Man arrived in 2005, followed by the more band-oriented Amber Gatherers in 2007.

To say that the words "unique" and "singular" are over-used in describing music is to state the obvious. To apply these words to the sounds created by the various duo/trio configurations of the Texas group Charalambides over the last decade plus would be understatement. To be sure there are numerous antecedents to their music; to deny this of any artist's work would be akin to saying that they are deaf. But they have surely broken new ground in the primitive/ folk/mystic/improv/psych valley in which they toil. As Marcus Boon wrote in *The Wire*; "...here is a truly 21st century experimental ethnic music that explores quietness and stasis... in the same way that musicians in the second half of the 20th century discovered amplification, noise and speed."

"Young Turks Two" will run at the Nave Gallery through Thursday, November 4th.

The Nave Gallery's Young Turks returns for a second year with an exhibition featuring art and artists 'taking a walk on the wild side.' The show aims to highlight all that is not part of the status quo. The work of ten artists questions, confronts, and, yes, attacks ideas, images, and ideology that others take for granted. Built on the joint premise that dissent can be healthy and rebellion may be messy, YTT artists show work exploring the world, their position in it and whatever commentary they feel the need to make on this relationship. This show was curated by Beth Driscoll of the Lady Cougars Art Gang. The artists are: Head Clausnitzer, Barbara Cone, Katie DiChiara, Tali Gai, Sydney Hardin, Jesse M. Kahn, Edward Middleton, Lee Powers, Melissa Sullivan, and Taryn Wells

The Nave Gallery is an important partner in Somerville's vibrant arts community. It is a project of ARTSomerville, a volunteer organization that draws upon the talents of local creativity, strengthening communication among artists and the public by presenting exhibits, performances, and educational activities, in collaboration with the Clarendon

Hill Presbyterian Church. The gallery is a noncommercial art space featuring work of both emerging and established artists. Run and staffed completely by volunteers, the Nave provides an important exhibition space for both local and regional artists.

All exhibitions are free and open to the public. Gallery hours are Friday 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. and Saturday & Sunday 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

To see a schedule of events, which is updated often, please look at the website: www.artsomerville.org/upcoming.html

Worship Committee

Worship is the heart of everything that happens in any church, or should be. We have begun talking about what worship means and may mean for us at CHPC. A new Worship Committee has been formed and met twice. Although small in numbers so far the committee has already had some insightful conversations about the meaning of worship and has the way we order our services on Sunday mornings. The goals of this group are purposefully being kept widely focused at this point so that we can be more open to the Spirit's leading. If you have an interest in worship at CHPC we would love to have you join us. The next meeting will be Thursday November 8th at 7:30 p.m. We want to remind people also to continue thinking about music that they like to hear and sing during worship as we begin to compile a 'master list'. People can email Sarah Glass with those selections.

Once a month, one hour a month Friday afternoon Bible Study

On Friday afternoon at 3:00 p.m., November 9th, all interested in a once a month Bible Study are invited to come to Salam Lebbos' house in Arlington. We will be using the 2007-2008 Horizons Bible Study: Above and Beyond - Hearing God's Call in Jonah and Ruth, published by Presbyterian Women. If you are interested in participating, please contact Gusti Newquist, Katherine Gustafson, or Salam Lebbos. Contact us even if the time isn't right for you. If there is enough interest, perhaps we could set up a second time.

Sunday Evening Forum

On Sunday, November 11th, our Sunday Evening Forum series returns with a film and discussion. "Peace is Every Step- Meditation in Action: The Life and Works of Thich Nhat Hanh."

Vietnamese Buddhist monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh is the subject of a film and discussion Sunday, November 11 at 7:00 p.m. at Clarendon Hill Presbyterian Church. The program is free of charge with a suggested donation of \$5 to help renovate the church so it is more accessible.

The one-hour documentary "Peace is Every Step – Meditation in Action: The Life and Works of Thich Nhat Hanh" was created in 1998 to highlight a man Tricycle Magazine calls "one of the great peace activists and Buddhists." The film shares teachings from his book "Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life" on living in the present moment (mindfulness) and "interbeing," his belief that we are deeply interconnected with every person and thing, and thus every being must be

valued. The monk's anti-war protests resulted in his exile from Vietnam for 40 years. However, this did not stop him from a lifelong commitment to social and peace activism, including convincing the Reverend Martin Luther King to publicly oppose the Vietnam War (King, in turn, nominated him for a Nobel Peace Prize) and chairing the Vietnamese Peace Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks.

Clarendon Hill Presbyterian Church is hosting this film and discussion as part of its Sunday Night Forum. The series was created as an extension of the church's Peace, Justice and Mission committee to engage the community through diverse speakers, spiritual and social practices, and means of expression. Previously, the Forum featured Sheila Provencher who described her two years in war-torn Iraq as a nonviolent Christian Peacemaker. Church pastor Karl Gustafson believes that "Thich Nhat Hanh's message and example of "being peace" strongly resonates, whether in the context of Vietnam or our current war in Iraq. We chose to include "Peace is Every Step" in our Sunday Night Forum to help cultivate peace and justice, and to examine how they can and must coexist in our own lives and in the world."

Moderating the film and discussion is Margrit Romang, a local psychotherapist in private practice who works with children and adults using the tools of Buddhist psychology, including mindfulness and self-acceptance. Margrit has been a student of Thich Nhat Hanh for many years and has attended his retreats in Plum Village, France, and in the U.S.

Writing Group begins at Clarendon Hill--all are welcome!!

It all began when Gusti and Liz realized they had a common dream of creating a space to be more intentional about exploring and sharing various writing exercises in a safe, spiritually-grounded environment. The dream is now reality! At our first gathering on October 31st, we shared our desires and fears, gave voice in writing to our "writing boogymen" (i.e. our inner critic) and our muse, and agreed to come together again on Wednesday, November 14th, at 7:00 p.m. in the Green Room. Please join us!! We will begin with a group check-in, move through 1-2 writing exercises, share as we feel moved, and finish with a group check-out. We are open to everyone, regardless of previous writing experience and will tailor each session to the needs and interests of those who show up. Contact Gusti or Liz for more information: gusti_newquist@yahoo.com or Cavatorta1@hotmail.com

Night Out on the Town – Marcel Khalife concert

On Friday, November 16th, there is a concert at Berklee that we would like to propose as a "night out on the town." Karl and Katherine are planning to attend, along with several other folks from the congregation, and Naila Jirmanus has tickets on consignment in rows L, M, and N (which she says are really good seats!) **If you are interested in attending, please contact Naila directly.** More about the concert below:

TAWASSUL & AMERICAN ARAB ANTI-DISCRIMINATION COMMITTEE

*Concert proceeds will make it possible for two music students from the Edward Said National Conservatory in Palestine to attend a /five /week music program at Berklee College, summer 2008.

World-renowned Lebanese Arab composer and oudmaster, and UNESCO Artist for Peace Marcel Khalifé in Concert with Al Mayadine Ensemble

Performing contemporary and classical Arabic music as part of their
2007 USA & Canada Grand TOUR

When: Friday November 16, 8PM, 2007

Where: Berklee Performance Center

Box Office, 136 Mass. Ave., Mon.-Sat. 10AM-6PM, <http://www.berkleebpc.com/>

Ticketmaster (617)931-2000 or [_www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com) <http://www.ticketmaster.com/>
Tickets: \$100, \$36, \$20 students and children under 12

Marcel Khalifé is one of Lebanon's leading musicians, reshaping traditional Arabic music into a novel communicative form of expression.

The program will consist of "Taqaqsim", a new instrumental work, as well as a predominantly vocal presentation drawn from the works of Mahmoud Darwish, the eminent Palestinian Arab poet.

The ensemble consists of Peter Herbert (double bass), and Marcel's sons Rami Khalifé (piano) and Bachar Khalifé (percussion and vibes).

This Program Is Sponsored by A Community Grant from The Berklee College of Music

Introduction to Yoga

Come join our small, half-hour class during coffee hour (12:15 p.m., on Sundays, November 18th and 25th) to practice mindful breathing and gentle yoga postures. Great for stress release, improved flexibility and strength. If interested, please email Liz at cavator1@hotmail.com for more info.

Book Group/Bible Study

There has been a simmering desire for more bible study opportunities at CHPC. The book group of the past few years is now a bible study that will be reading and listening to the Gospel of Matthew. We will go through it chapter by chapter at whatever pace we need. Although meant to be more about listening for God's voice through this gospel, we will certainly also be ready to look at issues of interpretation and history. If you have been looking for something like this you are invited to join us on Wednesday evening November 28th at 7:00 p.m.

Stewardship for 2008

The Stewardship drive kicked off on Sunday, October 14th in worship. Following is Deacon Michael Nickey's sermon. A reminder that pledge cards are due by Sunday, December 16th.

The Old Testament reading: 1 Chronicles Chapter 29 verses 10-16

The New Testament reading: Matthew Chapter 25 verses 31-46

If you have not read the October newsletter you may want to check out one of the last articles. It provides a theologian's perspective on the book "God is Not Great, How Religion Poisons Everything". In case you have missed it the author of the book lays out an argument that is hardly new. In fact it has been around as long as the church.

Essentially the premise goes something like this: People of faith are often short sighted, closed minded, and even dangerous. Devotion can lead to extremism. In short religion causes far more damage than good and the world would be a better place without it.

We may all like to scoff at such arguments. We take comfort in the good works people of faith do such as soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and relief work. What about Mother Theresa, right? However, if we are honest we have all shuddered at some of the actions of those who claim to worship God. After all, terrible atrocities have been committed by people of all faiths and religion is often used as a way of dividing people into groups that split cultures into factions such as Catholic & Protestants in places like Northern Ireland, Israel – Palestine, or even Sunni/Shia Iraq with devastating consequences.

Closer to home one of the prime examples of the danger of faith that people point to of course are the events of September 11th. Not just critics of religion are left with questions about the faithful after such a terrible event. Can we truly blame people if after seeing such things they say if this is what it means to worship God then I want no part of this? Perhaps then it is appropriate to ask ourselves what does it mean to worship God and do the events swirling around this tragedy give us examples of how we should worship God? On the second part of this question the answer is yes.... and no.

First the no. Let me be clear the individuals who caused such terrible destruction were not worshipping God regardless of any claims to the contrary. The Bible gives us many images and names of God. He is the YAHWEH, the Great I AM, father, son and Holy Spirit. However, the very first sentence of the Bible states “in the beginning God created”. Therefore, our first image of God is as a creative force. Therefore, I believe that nobody can worship a Creator God by destruction.

What about the yes? How was God possibly worshipped during this terrible time? For those of you unfamiliar with lower Manhattan, in amongst the large office buildings and the bustling financial district and directly across the street from the WTC sits Saint Paul’s chapel. The oldest public building in NYC was built on farmland in 1766 on what was then the outskirts of NYC. The sanctuary and small grave yard has sat on Church street ever since with few changes. The city has constantly changed around from farmland, to seaport, to financial district but somehow St. Paul’s managed to stay put.

In the early chaotic days surrounding the disaster, St. Paul’s became a place of refuge for rescue workers. Meals were served on huge grills on their front porch made by volunteers from around the city. Exhausted rescue workers would collapse for a few hours of sleep in one of the chapel’s ancient pews or one of the many cots placed in the aisles. In fact if you see one of the pews today you would see large scuff marks from the workers’ boots.

The chapel became a full fledged rescue center, hotel, and mission. It became a hub where individuals could donate time to help those doing the amazingly difficult work of recovering people from the rubble. Ordinary people found their way to St. Paul’s to donate time including musicians who played on the piano every afternoon. Interestingly, regardless of the musician nobody at St. Paul’s can remember a day where two songs were not requested. Danny Boy and Amazing Grace. Yes, even faced with the worst of

what humans can dish out in the name of their God people wanted to hear about grace, and hope for something more.

The staff of Trinity Church and religious leaders from all over NYC provided counseling during this difficult time. In fact Trinity Church's rector has a vestment literally covered with badges from fire departments from around the world. The vestment itself was a gift from a Roman Catholic colleague. One night someone attached a handful of patches from some of the various fire companies working in the area as a sign of solidarity. In time the vestment became so covered with other patches from people passing through St. Paul's that you cannot even see the original fabric anymore.

The grounds of the building became a source of encouragement, healing and mourning. Thousands of flags, impromptu memorials and banners popped up all over St. Paul's ancient iron fence. These memorials came from all over the country and world and took their place along with the heart wrenching missing people posters.

As time went on more developed resource centers were provided by government agencies for workers. However, St. Paul's continued to provide various services for eight more months until the cleanup and recovery efforts ceased. For many St. Paul's provided something they could not get some place else.

Hopefully by now you will agree with me that worship is more than attending a service on Sunday. It is more than singing or a sermon. All those things are part of worship but so to, is stewardship. If you are like me you have probably thought that stewardship is the act of financially supporting the work of the church. Simply put it is our duty to do and is an example of spiritual discipline.

However, a few weeks ago Karl gave me a book which broadened my horizons. It helped me to understand that stewardship is an act of worship. If we simply give our time and money out of guilt or duty we are not worshipping God. However, when we offer our gifts back to God freely in recognition of what he has done for us it is an act of worship as divine as any prayer. We should never see stewardship and the offering as a worldly necessity in the midst of our Sunday service. In some ways it is the center of how we worship God when we leave this building. After all we can't go around singing all day or staying on our knees in prayer. However, we can offer our gifts and our talents throughout all our days.

In our first reading David is reflecting back on efforts to build the temple. Prior to the section that was read this morning David recounts the materials and financial offerings made to build the temple. Like all capital campaigns it involved challenge grants and responsive giving not unlike a NPR fund drive. Then we reach our section where David realizes that whatever we give to the work of God, we are really only returning what he has given us. That is why stewardship is part of worship. It is the part of the service where we acknowledge that all that we have is a gift from God. When we give time to a charitable cause, donate our time inside or outside the church, or money we are participating in stewardship and therefore worship.

In our NT reading is the classic story of the sheep and the goats. Essentially, upon Jesus' return he breaks people into two groups. The goats are those who ignored the needs of the poor and therefore ignored Jesus himself. The sheep, by caring for the needs of others, have worshipped Jesus. These sheep have not earned their way into heaven. I believe what we are being told in this passage is that if we really believe in

God, then we worship God. That worship of taking care of the needy is exactly what the people of St. Paul's did. They feed the hungry spiritual and earthly food; they quenched thirst for water and grace.

So what does it mean to worship God? It means to open our hearts, minds, and spirits to God. It means prayers and praise. It also means that we acknowledge the gifts God has bestowed on us and that we return some of those gifts back to God so we can do his work on earth.

Today St. Paul's continues to be a house of God for all people. In addition to its normal services as an Episcopalian chapel it is a museum to the people and work that happened during those difficult eight months. Today people can go and learn how one church opened its buildings and heart to worship God and how it brought several thousand volunteers along for the adventure.

The goal of this year's stewardship campaign is to see that stewardship is more than keeping this building open. It is a spiritual act of worship. To be honest I do not know what God is calling us to do with our time and talents. However, I do know that he does not intend for us to simply get along. If we worship him he will bless us with his vision for whatever lies ahead.

For this year the Stewardship Group is asking three things from the members and friends of this church.

1. Prayerfully consider how you can support the life of this congregation with your time, talents, and financial support for next year
2. Work to make stewardship an act of worship throughout the year
3. Here is the special goal... to raise money separate from the normal budget to make this building fully handicap accessible starting with our bathrooms. If we truly believe that there are no lesser children of God then we simply have no choice. Therefore, we are asking for a separate set of pledges towards this effort.

The goal is to raise \$20,000 for this project.

There are cards for your annual offering today. Also you will soon be receiving a letter with another card that you can also make your selection.

Calling all teachers.....

We need you to help teach our children's Sunday school class.

We are looking for teachers for November, December, January, March, April, May and June. There is a sign up sheet right at the bottom of the basement stairs.

You generally sign up for a month at a time. (Classes run from September to June.) You can teach solo, or recruit a friend to teach with you. The curriculum is excellent, and there are plenty of ideas for interesting activities and much more material than can be used in the 45 minutes or so that the class meets.

Help Needed.....

Thanks to those of you who have contacted me about helping out on Sundays. We are always looking for new people, so if you haven't had a chance to respond, please let me know.

We really need folks to help us with our fellowship time after church. If you don't feel that you can or want to take it up on your own, you can always find someone else to share the responsibilities with you.

Or you can ask to be paired up with others who want a partner! You would only be asked to do the coffee hour about every 6 weeks (and if have more folks sign up, it would be even less often!)

Would you be interested in reading scripture on Sunday mornings? Do you have a passion about a mission project that you would like to introduce to the congregation? Could you help by bringing food and setting up the coffee for our fellowship time after Sunday morning services? Are you willing to be a backup for our childcare person? If you are interested in helping out with one or more of these things, please contact Ellen.

What can we learn from a 'church' of hate?

This appeared in the Wednesday, October 31st issue of The Boston Globe, and was written by Jeff Jacoby.

Belief in God is no guarantee of goodness. Piety without ethics – religious fanaticism – can be a prescription for great evil, as centuries of religious brutality and bloodshed make all too clear. A millennium ago, Crusaders massacred their victims to the cry of “Deus lo volt!” – “Gods wills it!” Islamist radicals exclaimed “Allahu Akbar” – “God is great” – as they beheaded innocent hostages and crashed airliners into the World Trade Center.

You don't have to look back into history or to the global jihad for evidence that zealots who care more about God than about goodness bring cruelty and pain into the world. Consider instead the Westboro Baptist Church.

A self-described “Primitive Baptist” congregation led by Fred Phelps, the Westboro Baptist Church in Kansas is a fringe hate group obsessed with homosexuality. (It is not affiliated with any official Baptist convention.) It numbers only several dozen followers who travel the country with picket signs insisting that America has been cursed because of its tolerance for gays.

The essence of what the Westboro members call their “picketing ministry” is mockery of the victims of tragedy, and the cheering of deadly disasters. They claim that they “used to pray for the good of America” but decided that the nation is beyond redemption. Accordingly, they now “pray daily for more outpourings of God's justice and wrath on this evil, hateful nation” and celebrate “hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, IEDS, collapsing mines, and more” as instruments of divine wrath.

What the Westboro Church lacks in members, it more than makes up in rhetorical poison. Among the messages featured on its pickets are “God Hates Fags,” “Thank God for Katrina,” and “Thank God for the California Fires.” The group's website proclaims gleefully that the “Utah miners are in hell,” as are “the Amish children in Pennsylvania” and “Coretta Scott King...with her husband.”

Westboro has become especially notorious in recent years for demonstrating at the funerals of US troops killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. “These turkeys are not heroes” one of the group's websites sneers. “They are lazy, incompetent idiots looking for jobs because they're not qualified for honest work... They voluntarily joined a fag-infested army to fight for a fag-run country now utterly and finally forsaken by God who Himself is fighting against that country.”

As a legal matter, it is not easy to silence such contemptible spewings. The First Amendment, as Oliver Wendell Holmes write, safeguards not just “free thought for those who agree with us, but freedom for the thought that we hate.” Several Legislatures have passed laws restricting protests in the vicinity of funerals, but such laws may be vulnerable on constitutional grounds.

A federal jury in Baltimore this week is weighing a different kind of legal challenge. The father of Lance Corporal Matthew Snyder, a 20-year-old Marine killed in Iraq, is suing the Westboro church for picketing his son’s funeral last year with signs reading “God Hates You” and “Thank God for Dead Soldiers.” Albert Snyder argues that the picketers’ unwanted presence and naked cruelty should be punished as an unlawful invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress. (Full details, and a fund to help defray the Snyder family’s legal costs, are at matthewsynder.org.)

But even if it isn’t legally possible to stop the Westboro hatemongers, it is possible to learn from them. They offer a vivid demonstration of why belief in God is dangerous if it doesn’t include the belief that God’s foremost demand is that human beings act with kindness and decency. Fred Phelps and his followers appear to believe fervently in God. Their literature is replete with quotations from the Bible. But the only passages that appear to interest them are those that warn of God’s punishment for wicked behavior. Glaringly absent from their signs, websites, and press releases is the central teaching of ethical monotheism- not that there is a God, but that God wants men and women to be good to each other. God does not smile on those who taunt victims instead of helping them.

Does the Bible condemn homosexuality? Yes – but not nearly as often as it condemns those who treat others with cruelty. To the Westboro fanatics, no calling is higher than hating homosexuals and anyone who doesn’t share their hatred. But the Bible they thump so intolerantly actually teaches something quite different:

“He has shown you, O man, what is good,” the prophet Micah said. “What does God require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” It is a shining mark in America’s favor that the Westboro Baptist Church is so small.

Save Souls or Feed the Poor?

(by Jim Wallis)

Friday, September 21, 2007

In honor of the publication 100 years ago of *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, the classic book by social gospel founder Walter Rauschenbusch, his great-grandson Paul Raushenbush published *Christianity and the Social Crisis* in the 21st century, the text of the original book with a contemporary response to each chapter. This week on *Beliefnet*, Raushenbush debates the issues his great-grandfather raised with Bill Hybels, senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church.

Yet this isn't a debate. It's a lovely dialogue between two people who show the significant new convergence occurring between traditions that have been at war for too long—the evangelical and the social gospel. I know both Bill Hybels and Paul Raushenbush and they are breaking out of the old dualisms. God is personal, but never private. The gospel is both personal and social. Without the personal, a life of faith and

commitment to social justice is very difficult to sustain, as some streams of the social gospel eventually demonstrated. And without the social, a personal gospel becomes completely private and loses its integrity, as modern evangelicalism has too often shown. But many Christians, like Bill and Paul, are refusing to make those false choices anymore. Bill Hybels talks constantly about social justice, the urgency of racial reconciliation, and the message of peace. Lynne Hybels spoke at the Sojourners Pentecost conference this past spring, and she impressed us all with her passion for justice.

Bill Hybels wrote in the dialogue:

Usually within months of a person's salvation experience, there is both a sincere desire to pass on the message of Christ to any and all, and an equally intense desire to do whatever is necessary in the name of Christ to eradicate injustice, relieve oppression, and alleviate suffering of any kind. Selfless service of this sort isn't normal according to human nature; purely and simply, the desires are born out of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Paul Raushenbush speaks of the need for a vibrant personal faith to undergird the social gospel his great-grandfather espoused so eloquently. And both are critical of those in their respective traditions who are still stuck in the old separations. As he puts it:

Rauschenbusch in his time, and I today, feel that actions taken to carry out Jesus' commandments in this life are equally important as faith statements accepting Jesus. That is, we should try to realize the promise of the kingdom of God in this world as much as we proclaim Jesus as our personal savior for the forgiveness of our individual sins. It is through concrete action in this life that we most clearly experience the salvation that Jesus offers both right now and eternally.

I find their coming together in this dialogue very encouraging indeed. My essay in the book says it this way:

I still like his clarity in linking personal and social religion. "In personal religion," he says, "the first requirement is to repent and believe the gospel." But then, "Social religion, too, demands repentance and faith: repentance for our social sins." Faith requires, he said, "a reevaluation of social values." He says there are "two great entities in human life—the human soul and the human race—and religion is to save both."

posted by God's Politics

Religion and nation

Written by James Carroll, this appeared in the October 15th Monday edition of The Boston Globe.

One of my proudest boasts as a schoolboy was an ability to both identify and spell what my teacher insisted was the English language's longest word: antidisestablishmentarianism. I had, of course, no idea what it meant. Now I know that it defines the political third rail onto which John McCain threw himself when he recently said that the United States was established as a "Christian nation."

No, it wasn't! Or so answered a chorus of critics, heading off an inevitable denigration of minority religion – and no religion. The disestablishmentarians always point out that the Constitution nowhere mentions God, and that the founders were Deist gentlemen whose God was so impersonally detached from history as to be not recognizably Christian at all. The framers of the American political system, appalled by what “establishment” had led to in Europe, took pains to set their government on a religiously neutral ground.

But government is not nation. Just because McCain's assertion is dangerous – as I believe it to be – does not mean it is untrue. For one thing, what the founders intended may weigh less than how the nation developed over the next two centuries. The Constitution created “an open national space,” in the scholar Mark Noll's phrase, but, Noll says, instead of it being filled with Alexander Hamilton's economic planning, Thomas Jefferson's yeomanry, or John Adams's communalism, that space was seized by unexpected 19th-century “awakenings” of evangelical fervor.

Christian religion, from prairie preachers to elite universities, became the main “arbiter of national culture.” Eventually, Protestant revivalism, immigrant Catholicism, and African-American Gospel jelled into the public zealotries of “civil religion,” a term coined by Robert Bellah in 1967 when such religion braced the nation – and the government-in its contest with “atheistic Communism.” Jewish participation in this implicitly Christian consensus was necessarily uneasy. When Dwight D. Eisenhower underwent baptism in the White House 12 days after his inauguration in 1953, he showed how these pressures could squeeze national leadership. This was the era of Billy Graham's “Crusade,” a word Ike himself had used to define his war making.

The danger in mixing religion and nation lies in the way these two enterprises have exploited one another, each to advance its separate cause. This is as old as the early-4th-century emperor Constantine, who used Christian orthodoxy as a club with which to enforce political control of his vast empire. (The Nicene creed was a loyalty oath composed at his order, by the Council of Nicea in 325.) At the same time, Christian leaders happily enlisted Constantine's legions to suppress heresy. When the “Christian” is used today, the broad movement it defines owes as much to Constantine as it does to Jesus Christ.

Even pious Americans have been properly wary of efforts to use the state power to enforce uniformity of conscience. The vaunted separation of church and state is a minimal protection from such abuse, but civil religion points to a need for the broader separation of religion and nation. That protection comes not from law, but from the knowledge of citizens, which is unreliable. The fact that, since the founding of the United States, Christianity has been much used, against the intentions of the founders, to justify governmental impositions and adventures is one cause for concern. That is what McCain's critics warn of, in the name of a better America. That last thing needed today is a Christian nation embarked on a new crusade, at home or abroad.

But a warning must be sounded in the name of a better religion, too. What's bad for the state can be worse for the church, Jews, Muslims, Hindus and all religious minorities assaulted by even implicit claims of “a Christian nation,” but so are Christians. A government that blesses itself in the name of Jesus Christ, while waging war and

advancing empire, must first demolish the meaning of who that man was – three centuries before Constantine.

Scholars know very little about this Galilean rabbi (nothing, for example, about his attitude toward homosexuality), but there are two things that can be said with certainty. Jesus lived and died in resistance to the Roman Empire. And Jesus rejected violence. If there are two notes of identity that go to the heart of what America has become, they are violence and empire. A Christianity that makes its peace with those, as has so often happened, is an apostate religion. John McCain, and the objects of this appeal, betray the nation – and the faith.

Book Reviews

Life Lessons From My Dog by Patricia Budd Kepler

(This book was written by the former pastor of Clarendon Hill!)

ISBN: 1425739989

ISBN-13: 9781425739980

One fall day, I found myself in the car holding on to a squirmy, very adorable puppy. We were taking her home. From the moment we picked her up, she became my mentor, teaching me life lessons without ever trying. She loved the world and all of us. She became a world traveler, and over time, she became socialized. She taught me patience, got me through some rough times, showed me how to be playful, and strengthened me spiritually. I began to record some of our experiences together. Those reflections became this book. The book ends with her first birthday and our celebration of Dog who opened insights to God.

Patricia Budd Kepler is a Presbyterian minister who lives in Massachusetts with her husband, Thomas, and their dog, Miranda. In addition to writing her Dog Book, she is writing a book on the changing landscape of work. She is leading adult study groups on Religion and Ritual at the Lifelong Learning Center at Tufts University. She has pastored churches, worked in the Educational Ministries of the national Presbyterian Church, been on the faculty of Harvard Divinity School, and served as Interim Chaplain at Tufts University. She holds graduate degrees from Princeton Theological Seminary in Theology and Psychology. She is the mother of three grown sons with families and pets of their own.

Since God is the owner of all that is, and since God is the source of all the abilities and resources that allow me to live a more comfortable life, then there is no room left for me to imagine that I am the source of my good life. God is.

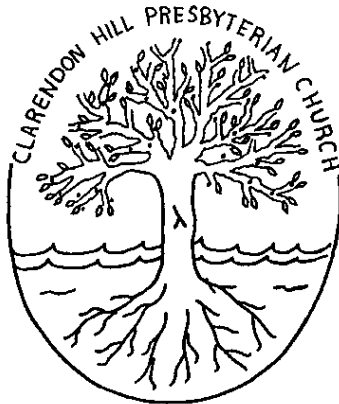
The proper response to the blessings of this life is not to pat myself on the back and try to find a way to get more stuff. The proper response is to give God the glory and the thanks and to ask serious questions about how I am called to use what God has entrusted to me.

From Ask, Thank, Tell by Charles R. Lane

The Clarendon Connection is edited by Ellen D. Schemerhorn.

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 Augustus Kwaa, Parish Associate/Evangelist..... Arnie James, Sexton
 Sarah Glass, Seminarian

LECTIONARY TEXTS

Nov. 4: Hab. 1: 1-4, 2: 1-4; Ps. 119: 137-144; 2 Thess. 1: 1-4, 11-12; Luke 19: 1-10
Nov. 11: Hag. 1: 15b-2:9; Ps. 145: 1-5, 17-21 OR Ps. 98; 2 Thess. 2: 1-5, 13-17; Luke 20: 27-38
Nov. 18: Isa. 65: 17-25; Isa. 12; 2 Thess. 3: 6-13; Luke 21: 5-19
Nov. 25: Jer. 23: 1-6; Luke 1: 66-79; Col. 1: 11-20; Luke 23: 33-43
Dec. 2: Isa. 2: 1-5; Ps. 122; Rom. 13: 11-14; Matt. 24: 36-44
Dec. 9: Isa. 11: 1-10; Ps. 72: 1-7, 18-19; Rom. 15: 4-13; Matt. 3: 1-12
Dec. 16: Isa. 35: 1-10; Ps. 146: 5-10 or Luke 1: 47-55; James 5: 7-10; Matt. 11: 2-11
Dec. 23: Isa. 7: 10-16; Ps. 60: 1-7, 17-19; Rom. 1: 1-7; Matt. 1: 18-25
Dec. 30: Isa. 6: 7-9; Ps. 148; Heb. 2: 10-18; Matt. 2: 13-23

Church Assignments

	Scripture	Focus on Mission	Coffee hour	Nursery backup
Nov. 4	J. Bray	K. Graf	Jirmanus	E. Schemerhorn
Nov. 11	J. Auger	P. Beran	Augers	N. Jirmanus
Nov. 18	R. Winchester	S. Donovan	POTLUCK	K. Gustafson
Nov. 25	E. Sweeny	D. Anderson	Reynolds/Graf	V. Donovan
Dec. 2	M. Jirmanus	M. Reynolds	Milanesi/Kumpa	E. Schemerhorn
Dec. 9	L. Cavano	T. Siggers	Newquist/Glass	N. Jirmanus
Dec. 16	P. Auger	E. Schemerhorn	Gustafson/Cavano	K. Gustafson
Dec. 23	G. Newquist	T. Fink	Donovan	V. Donovan
Dec. 30	D. Anderson	S. Otami	Siggers	E. Schemerhorn