

A nondenominational Christian congregation



for persons of all faiths and of uncertain faith  
meeting in historic St. Peter's Church  
346 West 20<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10011  
Sundays, September – July, 11:45 a.m.

[www.chelseachurch.org](http://www.chelseachurch.org)

(212) 886-5463

# THE CHELSEA COMMUNITY CHURCH NEWSLETTER

Spring 2009

## Special Services, Events, Dates (all dates Sundays unless otherwise noted)

March 8

**Daylight Savings Time begins.** 'Spring forward' an hour if you don't want to miss the service with Franc Perry.

April 5

**Palm Sunday**

Dr. Mary Ann Cejka, speaker; Heather Davis, special music.

April 9

**Maundy Thursday**

CCC "in home" service, time and place to be announced.

E-mail [jmagi@aol.com](mailto:jmagi@aol.com) for more information.

April 12



**Easter Sunday**

Pastoral Counselor John Magisano, speaker; CCC Choir, special music. Please contact Christopher Johnson or Thad McGar if you would like to participate in the choir, which will rehearse two or three times in the preceding weeks. Traditional CCC Easter potluck brunch will follow the service.

April 26

**CCC Community Meeting** following coffee hour (see below).

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### Sunday Offerings Have Declined

To date in 2009, Sunday weekly offerings have dropped off. In January and February they averaged 20% less than the amount targeted in our budget and based on 2008 giving. The reason offerings are down is no mystery in these economically difficult times, but we ask the congregation and friends to try if possible to bring weekly offerings back up to 2008 levels or to consider making a special donation. The Board is also considering various options to reduce costs to help keep the Church in the black.

### Thank You

Joyce Kiefer of Plano, TX, and Jay Williams of Flushing, Queens, have recently sent special contributions to CCC. We are grateful for their support and send them our thanks and best wishes.

**URGENT: Take Action Now to Continue to Receive The CCC Newsletter**

We want to send this newsletter to everyone who wants it, but printing and mailing costs being what they are – and they're going up – we need to make sure if and how you want to receive it. You must respond to this request in order to continue to receive the newsletter by postal mail, if that is how you wish to receive it.

**To continue** to receive this newsletter **by postal mail**, you must a) let us know by e-mail to [info@chelseachurch.org](mailto:info@chelseachurch.org) or b) call and leave a message: 212-886-5463.

**To change** delivery from postal to **e-mail** delivery of a pdf file, send an e-mail to [info@chelseachurch.org](mailto:info@chelseachurch.org) from the e-mail address to which we should send future newsletters. If you are unfamiliar with pdf files, let us know and we will let you know how to download the free software necessary for reading them.

**If we don't hear from you**, this will be the last printed newsletter you'll receive through the U.S. mail.

We strongly request that you receive the newsletter by e-mail if you can. There are a number of advantages: it arrives days earlier, is in full-color, you can print as much or as little of it as you like, and you save CCC 42 (and soon 44) cents postage per unit as well as the printing, paper and other supplies costs. It's another way of making a financial contribution to CCC, as well as to the environment, and we thank you!

**Pastoral Reflections**

**by Rev. John Magisano, Pastoral Counselor**

Grace and peace to you!

As I write this, our first snowdrop plants have sprung up on the lawn and the crocus won't be far behind. By the time you read this, it will be Lent, a time of fasting and reflection for Christians all over the world. It is the time when we prepare ourselves for the Easter journey: Palm Sunday, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem and was greeted as a savior and liberator by the people; Maundy Thursday, when he dined with his disciples, washed their feet, and served them the Passover meal, an act that has become the tradition of the Eucharist, and where he was arrested by the authorities; Good Friday, when he was crucified in front of his family, friends and disciples; Holy Saturday, when all who knew Jesus waited in fear, not knowing what would happen to them; and finally Easter Sunday, when the resurrected Jesus appeared to them and instructed them to have hope and to bring that hope of new life to the world.



This journey, laden as it is with religious significance, also reflects the reality of our life together as a human race. An immediate victory may be followed by ambiguity or outright defeat. Jesus entered Jerusalem to cries of "Hosanna!" but was arrested, tried and killed within days. We all hope, work and pray for a better world, and sometimes we see progress or even a dramatic breakthrough. But at the moment, the world is in crisis, and none of us know where it will lead, what the end will be or how it will affect us personally. We can, however, take heart from the story of Jesus and the journey through Holy Week. I believe that it was Rev. James Forbes, Pastor Emeritus of The Riverside Church who first said, "We are an Easter People in a Good Friday world." No matter what challenges the months and years ahead of us may hold, our salvation lies in our life together as a community, and in the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves.

As you travel through the season of Lent this year, reflect on the hope offered in the Resurrection, and the message that new life is real.

Much love, John

## **Book Group**

The CCC Book Group continues to meet three Sundays a month (non-board meeting Sundays) at 10:30 a.m. in the Rectory Chapel. We are currently reading Gary Wills's *Head and Heart: American Christianities*. Everyone is welcome, whether you have been reading the book or not. We also welcome suggestions on future selections. For more information, email John Magisano at [jmagi@aol.com](mailto:jmagi@aol.com).

## **Community Meeting - Sunday, April 26th**

CCC will hold a Community Meeting on April 26th, immediately after coffee hour. This meeting is a follow-up to last year's strategic planning process, and we will discuss the priority areas that we set during that process. The agenda is open for discussion, so if you have suggestions please email them [jmagi@aol.com](mailto:jmagi@aol.com).

## **A Special 'Thank You'**

A very special 'Thank You' to everyone who contributed to our holiday canned food drive. The food basket in the back of the Church was full nearly every week, and we are sure that everyone who uses the services of the St. Peter's Food Pantry is very grateful. While our formal food drive is over, the Pantry can always use donations of canned goods, non-perishables, and grocery bags, especially at this time of expanding need and diminishing resources. In addition, Rev. Dennis Winslow, Rector of St. Peter's (212-929-2390) also needs volunteers to assist with the Saturday food distribution, especially volunteers who speak Chinese.

## **Journey of the Spirits: Inauguration Day Eyewitness Betty Samuels**

It seemed as if I spent days trying to find an Amtrak ticket to Washington D.C. I found I could get there but getting a return ticket was difficult. I finally secured a return ticket at a reasonable hour. I was off.

Having never taken the NYC subway at 3:00 a.m., I was apprehensive. My night doorman spurred me on -- "Just sit near the conductor." Much to my surprise I found several people half asleep going to or from work. A young woman asked me for directions. Arriving at Penn Station, I felt safe and found myself attuned to the shout of "All aboard!" I was on my way.

I tried to catch up on the sleep I had missed but to no avail. At each stop more and more people boarded the train. As we neared Washington, I saw lines of people entering the Metro. What was I going to do without a ticket to the event? I followed the crowds out of Union Station and found myself in crowds of people with tickets waiting to get on the mall. A policeman told me to go behind a dump truck to get to the entrance for people without tickets. How was I to do that? I found myself just standing aimlessly on the sidewalk when my eyes met those of a woman nearby. We spoke and she told me she was from DC and said: "Follow me. I live here."

We went through the long line of ticket holders and found ourselves on the other side of a much smaller crowd but a crowd nonetheless. The woman put her arm through mine and cuddled close. With patience we finally passed security and found ourselves standing on the parade route. I could see the Capitol with the flags. It was bitter cold but everyone cheered as the Obama entourage passed by. It was thrilling! The ceremony started and we could hear some of the singing and the cheering. My new-found acquaintance, Cynthia (photo, right), had a transistor radio and would periodically give me the earphones so I could listen. Another woman, a firewoman, repeated the oath aloud for us as Barack Obama was sworn into office; the inaugural speech was read. She, as well as my new-found friend, was African American; she was overcome with emotion. I was there to cradle her. I was so touched by the coming together of so many people.



So much emotion was witnessed as Barack Obama became the 44th president of the United States. There I was, having lived through the Civil Rights movement, remembering how fervently I had felt. Back then I had been teaching for a few years, and I had a Martin Luther King, Jr. poster on the bulletin board. I remember

how passionate I became when speaking about injustice to the 5th graders who sat before me. I remember taking a class at City College and someone running in announcing that King had been shot. I remember the moment!

Inauguration Tuesday meant the world to me, and the urge to board that train came from my deepest being. Standing there in the sunlight facing the Capitol and experiencing it with my fellow citizens of the world was absolutely the right thing for me to do. Nothing could be better than to be a witness on that day.

I e-mailed my new friend Cynthia. She wrote back how she too had wanted to be there but had no idea whom she would hang out with. She said it was as if God had put me on her path! I felt exactly the same way! Even though I was disappointed not to be on the mall, just being with people and experiencing their joy was wonderful. I loved Cynthia ...she was a Godsend! I would not have missed the energy for the world. Several of my African-American fellow teachers have passed away. I was close to them, and they were in my heart, mind, and prayers as I experienced that day.

### **34<sup>th</sup> Annual Candlelight Carol Service**



Nearly 350 attended our 34<sup>th</sup> annual Candlelight Carol Service on Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup>. The CCC Choir numbered 28 this year, and actor David Costabile, a resident of Chelsea, read Clement Clarke Moore's "A Visit from St. Nicholas." For a complete description of the powerful musical



program, see the Fall-Winter newsletter. CCC participants read the lessons from the gospels, and Virginia Pfeiffer and Norma Miller were in charge of setting up and managing the traditional reception in the rectory with homemade holiday cookies, hot cider and eggnog following the service. Thank you to all who contributed in any way to making this beautiful, powerful and very labor(-of-love)-intensive service such a success. (Photos by Bruce Colin and Kathryn Buck)



### **Jegglestonny**

At the service on February 8, the group Jegglestonny (Jessica Valiente, Amy Slingerland, Beth Rake, Catherine Sieman, and Mary Sheeran), a name based on John Eggleston's e-mail address, sang two motets, "O viridissima virga" ("Most verdant bough, all hail!"), a plainsong chant by the 12<sup>th</sup>-century nun and visionary Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) and "Give Ear Unto Me," an arrangement of a piece by composer, politician, and satirist Benedetto Marcello (1686-1739) to verses from Psalm 17. The group was unaccompanied except for a drone from the organ during the Hildegard piece. The members of Jegglestonny are the last members of the late John Eggleston's St. Peter's choir. John was Music Director at St. Peter's from 1996-2005 and at CCC until 2006. The group had discussed performing Hildegard's work with John, and this performance was close to his February 17<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### ***This Beautiful City, from Virginia Pfeiffer***

For those of you interested in religion in America, I'd like to share some thoughts about a musical I saw recently at Vineyard Theater about the takeover of Colorado Springs, CO, by the evangelical establishment. I attended Colorado College there from 1965-1969 and went to various churches and their young adult groups, all of which were ordinary mainline protestant churches.

Colorado Springs was a conservative place then; there were some "town and gown" issues but not a heavily evangelical feel. I had been vaguely aware that Focus on the Family had moved in and that an anti-gay proposition had been passed. What I hadn't realized was that in the mid-80's Colorado Springs actively recruited evangelical organizations to come in to "grow" the city, and it is now one of the centerpieces of the evangelical movement. The musical is based on hundreds of interviews that the Civilians theater group conducted in Colorado Springs. In setting the words of the interviewees to music, I thought the production managed to convey various views in a way that was respectful, engaging and thought-provoking. It seemed to be trying to present the full spectrum of what's happening with religion in Colorado Springs. At the same time, it was a very lively evening of musical theater with excellent performances. Odd as the idea of a musical documentary might sound, I found it very enjoyable and effective. For more information, see <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/01/theater/01Solo.html?ref=arts> and <http://www.curtainup.com/thisbeautifulcityla>

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### **News of Friends**



**Paul Bodden's** show, "Fool For Love," which played three Saturdays in February at the Metropolitan Room, was featured as the "Opening of the Week" on Cabaret Exchange (<http://www.cabaretexchange.com/index.php>, bottom of page). Paul was especially honored that Barbara Lea was able to be there and thanks all CCCers who also helped make it a great evening! For a review of the show, see:

[http://www.cabaretexchange.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=695&Itemid=1](http://www.cabaretexchange.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=695&Itemid=1)

**Kathryn Buck** banged her hard head in a fall while allegedly ice-skating at Mohonk Mountain House in early February. She is no longer stapled together, appears to be nearly normal, and thanks everyone for their e-mails, card, and expressions of concern.

CCC music director **Christopher Johnson** will speak on the life and works of the composer and viola-player Rebecca Clarke (1886 - 1979) on Sunday, March 8, 2009, at 5:00 p.m., at the Pen and Brush (16 East 10<sup>th</sup> St). The lecture will include performances of a number of Clarke's works by Timothy Deighton, Associate Professor of Viola at Penn State University, and others. The event is sponsored by the New York Viola Society.





**Merle Lister** performed a choreographed selection from Erik Satie's *Trois Gymnopédies* as the call to worship at our February 22<sup>nd</sup> service (photo, B.Colin). She also performed on January 1<sup>st</sup>, to a poem written and read by **Bill Kushner**, at St. Mark's Church as part of their annual benefit for the St. Mark's Poetry Project.

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#### CCC Mission Statement

An independent, non-denominational, lay-led Christian congregation, Chelsea Community Church is not a building but a people. We offer a supportive environment for people of all faiths and uncertain faith: TO ENABLE each individual to define personal religious beliefs, TO WORSHIP in prayer, music, reading and interpretation of Scripture with speakers from a variety of backgrounds, TO NURTURE each other in spiritual growth, while respecting and accepting a diversity of beliefs, TO SHARE with and support each other in the daily and extraordinary events of our lives, TO HELP those in need both inside and outside our congregation. We welcome anyone to worship with us and become part of our extended Christian family. [www.chelseachurch.org](http://www.chelseachurch.org)

Please submit material for the next newsletter by May 15: [blsspks@aol.com](mailto:blsspks@aol.com) or call (212) 243-0273.

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### SCHEDULE of SPEAKERS and SPECIAL MUSIC

Worship Service, Sundays 11:45 a.m.

The Lenten and Easter music features a complete traversal of Franz Liszt's *Via Crucis* (1878; piano version 1879), related material from his *Choräle* (1878-79), and *Consolations* (1849-50). *Via Crucis* (The Way of the Cross) consists of 15 movements: a prelude based on the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Passiontide hymn VEXILLA REGIS PRODEUNT ("The royal banners forward go"), and separate depictions of each of the traditional Stations of the Cross. At CCC, the movements will be reordered and grouped thematically to correspond with the Gospel readings for six successive Sundays, as indicated (indented) below. Taking part in this serial performance are Heather Davis, soprano, on Palm Sunday; the CCC Choir on Easter Sunday; and music director and pianist Christopher Johnson, throughout.

**March 1 Dr. Katherine Kurs** (Episcopal/Jewish) compiled and edited the award-winning book *Searching for Your Soul*. She has a private practice in spiritual counseling and direction and is an ecumenical associate minister of West Park Presbyterian Church as well as teaching at General Theological Seminary and New School University. She holds an M.Div. from Harvard and a Ph.D. from the Royal College of Art, London. *Special Music*: Andre Solomon-Glover.

**Music 1 (Lent 1)**: Station X, "Jesus is stripped of his garments," and Station I, "Jesus is condemned to death," are tragic inversions of Mark 1:9-15, which narrates Jesus's baptism and temptation. The offertory is the chorale O LAMM GOTTES! (O LAMB OF GOD!)

**March 8 Rev. Franc Perry** (Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches) is principal attorney to a civil court judge in New York as well as being the national evangelist for First Metropolitan Community Church of Atlanta. He also chairs Community Board 10 in Manhattan. He holds a J.D. degree from George Washington University and an M.Div. from Union Theological Seminary. *Special Music*: Franc Perry.

**Music (Lent 2)**: Station II, "Jesus is charged with his cross," Station III, "Jesus falls for the first time," and Station V, "Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross," reflect Mark 8:31-38 ("If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.").

**March 15 Rev. Elizabeth Junod** (United Methodist) was ordained in her denomination but has dual standing as a pastor in the United Church of Christ. Until this past year she was for 15 years the pastor of the Scarsdale Congregational Church in Scarsdale, NY. She holds an M.Div. degree from Yale Divinity School.

**Music (Lent 3):** Station XII, “Jesus dies on the cross,” and Station VIII, “Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem,” correspond to John 2:13-22, in which Jesus scourges the Temple and alludes to its destruction, and to His own. The offertory is the chorale O TRAURIGKEIT (O SORROW).

**March 22 Darryl Johnson** (Baptist) is a coordinator with the Center for Law and Justice in Albany working on a re-entry program for ex-offenders. A certified substance abuse counselor, he is also a consultant to Exodus Transitional Community in New York in mentoring children of incarcerated individuals and as a life coach for ex-offenders. After being incarcerated for 10 years, he earned an A.A. degree from New York Community College in Brooklyn. *Special Music:* Barbara Mundy accompanied by Jerry Scott.

**Music (Lent 4):** Station IV, “Jesus meets his most holy mother,” Station VI, “Saint Veronica,” and Station XIII, “Jesus is taken down from the cross,” portray three acts of mercy, corresponding to John 3:14-21 (“Those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”).

**March 29 Rev. Susan Switzer** (United Church of Christ) is director of the Campaign for New York Theological Seminary. She is also serving as interim pastor at Wantagh Community Church on Long Island. She previously served in a similar interim capacity at Emanuel United Church of Christ in Woodhaven, Queens. A former director of stewardship and fund development at Riverside Church, she received her M.Div. degree from Union Theological Seminary.

**Music (Lent 5):** Stations VII and IX, “Jesus falls for the second and third times,” and Station XI, “Jesus is nailed to the cross,” fulfill Jesus’s prophecy in John 12:20-33, “Now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

### **Palm Sunday**

**April 5 Dr. Mary Ann Cejka** (Roman Catholic) is a writer, grants professional and passionate activist for peace and justice issues as well as for reform within the Catholic Church. She serves on the board of the Federation of Christian Ministries, a national organization of ministers that engages in interfaith dialogue, provides pastoral and spiritual care and offers training and certification for ministry. She holds an M.Div. degree from Yale and a Ph.D. in psychology from Purdue. *Special Music:* Heather Davis

**Music (Palm Sunday):** Two settings of VEXILLA REGIS, one for piano and the other for voice, evoke the Palm Sunday narrative, while the chorale O HAUPT VOLL BLUT UND WUNDEN (O HEAD, ALL BLOODY, WOUNDED) marks Jesus’ Passion. After the benediction, the service ends in silence: Holy Week has begun.

### **EASTER**

**April 12 Rev. John Magisano** (Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches), Chelsea Community Church's pastoral counselor, earned his M.Div. degree at New York Theological Seminary. He previously served as assistant pastor for development at the Metropolitan Community Church of Hartford. *Special Music:* CCC Choir (see page 1)

**Music (Easter Sunday):** A somber prelude—Station XIV, “Jesus is placed in the tomb”—completes *Via Crucis* and sets the stage for Easter music consisting of the first of Liszt’s *Consolations* and the hymns CRUX AVE BENEDICTA (HAIL, BLESSED CROSS!) and WAS GOTT TUT, DAS IST WOHLGETAN (WHATEVER GOD DOES, IT IS WELL).

**April 19 Rev. Patricia Lawson** (Baptist) is the director of Children and Family Ministries at The Riverside Church. She came to Riverside as an intern in the Youth and Young Adults program in 1996 while studying for her M.Div. degree at New York Theological Seminary. She was appointed to her current position in 2002. Before attending seminary, she was an actress, appearing Off Broadway and in the TV series “The Jeffersons.” She was also a jazz and gospel singer, clothing designer and executive assistant. *Special Music:* William Safkow

**April 26 Rev. Dr. Robert J. Owens** (Disciples of Christ) is professor of Old Testament at General Theological Seminary. He was previously professor of Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern studies at

Emmanuel School of Religion in Johnson City, TN, and for two years was a visiting scholar at Oxford University in England. He earned his Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins University.

**May 3 Lay-Led Service on Hymn Histories** Joanne Downes and Hilda Regier will draw on research about the people who gave us some of our favorite hymns. For example, one prolific hymnodist went for a weekend visit at an English country estate and stayed 36 years, writing the texts of more than 600 hymns. *It Is Well with My Soul* was written by a grieving father as he sailed near the spot in the Atlantic where his four children drowned. The Doxology we sing after our offertory every Sunday was written by a clergyman who stood firm against demands of the King of England that he considered immoral.

**May 10 Nathaniel Evans** (Nondenominational) is a certified HIV counselor at the AIDS Center of Queens County. He became an HIV counselor while in prison and continued his training after his release in related areas such as hepatitis. He is a graduate of Metropolitan College of New York.  
*Special Music:* Mary Sheeran.

**May 17 Sister Carol Perry** (Roman Catholic) is resident Biblical scholar at Marble Collegiate Church in Manhattan. A member of the Sisters of St. Ursula, she studied at Regina Mundi in Rome, where she earned the equivalent of a master's degree in theology. She also holds an M.A. in theology from St. Mary's College in Notre Dame, Ind. She has retired from the faculty of John Coleman High School in Hurley.  
*Special Music:* Alice Frazier, accompanied by Don Rebic.

**May 24 Rev. Brent Backofen** (Reformed Church in America) held pastorates in various churches of his denomination on the East Coast before his retirement. He also served on the staff of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic Reformed Church in America as associate for church planning, development and missions. He received an M.Div. degree from New Brunswick Theological Seminary. Before attending seminary, he was involved in child care work.

**May 31 Rev. Sylvia Shirk Charles** (Mennonite) is pastor of Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship. Previously campus minister at Goshen College in Indiana for 10 years, she earned a master of theology degree at Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, MA. *Special Music:* Scot Albertson, accompanied by Jerry Scott.

**June 7 Rev. John Magisano** (Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches), Chelsea Community Church's pastoral counselor, earned his M.Div. degree at New York Theological Seminary. He previously served as assistant pastor for development at the Metropolitan Community Church of Hartford.

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