

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

Summer 2009

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

### July

**July is American Music Month** at Chelsea Community Church, featuring music by four of our most important and distinctive 20<sup>th</sup>-century composers. At our lay-led **July 5<sup>th</sup>** service, music director Christopher Johnson salutes Independence Day with two of Aaron **Copland's Piano Blues** and an excerpt from Copland's score for the film version of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. The remaining Sundays will be devoted successively to **George Perle, John Cage, and George Gershwin**, on a schedule to be determined. Highlights include Cage's "In a Landscape" (1948) and "Quest" (1935), selections from Perle's surprisingly romantic etudes (1973-76 and 1985), and three of Gershwin's preludes (c. 1925-26), including one only recently reconstructed from a manuscript fragment.

### June or July

**Hymn Sing, date and place to be announced.**

### August 2 – September 6

**Summer Break, No Services**

### August

**Summer Outing, date and place to be announced**

### September 13

**Services Resume, 11:45 a.m.**

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## Pastoral Reflections, by Rev. John Magisano, Pastoral Counselor

**Strategic Planning Update** In the strategic planning process that Chelsea Community Church completed last year, we identified four strategic areas on which to concentrate in our efforts to help our community grow. Those areas are: worship, outreach, spiritual growth/education, and community life. While we have not accomplished everything we set out to do, in my (humble) opinion, we have made some progress in all areas.



In the area of **worship**, we have incorporated the sound system and trained a pool of people on how to use it, expanded the number of people willing to serve as lay leaders for worship, and mentored several as co-lay leaders. Lay leaders are experimenting with innovative use of arts like dance and hymnody in worship. Under music director Chris Johnson there is excellence in our worship music, and we had an Easter choir this year in addition to our traditional Christmas Candlelight Service choir. There is wonderful music history and education in the music Chris selects and introduces each week. This builds on our long-term strengths of a large pool of excellent soloists and special musicians coordinated by music committee chair Joanne Downes. Our other main worship tradition of excellent and diverse preaching continues with an ever-expanding pool of guest speakers coordinated by worship chair Hilda Regier. Last but perhaps most important, our tradition of welcome and hospitality is going strong with our wonderful corps of greeters, ushers, and coffee hour hosts.

We are also more visible among the public due to the **outreach** work of the publicity committee, Alana Atterbury and Lynn Ramsey, and in new venues like community blogs and Facebook. Our website is achieving excellence through the efforts of Robert Hickey, reflecting our community values, events and activities.

In the area of **spiritual growth and education**, we continue our (almost) weekly book group discussions with a fairly consistent attendance and always wide-ranging discussions. Through the leadership of Mary Sheeran, we had a "silent night" retreat last year, and Mary has also started a list on the website of items of interest and of religious educational events around the city called "SOAC" -- "Services Or Activities Around Chelsea." After the visit of a happy and curious three-year old earlier this year, I made sure that we have some materials especially for children, including a Bible coloring book and some crayons so that very young visitors can have something to do while in church. While we haven't had any further visits from small children (or even bigger ones), I remain hopeful that some young families will find us and want to become a part of our extended family.

In the area of **community life**, we have instituted the wonderful practice of sending a weekly email to our list, with information on the worship, music, Scripture lessons and guest speakers. This has made us more cohesive as a community and extended family, and we have received wonderful feedback from members and friends who live far away and are unable to attend each week. Our excellent newsletter continues under the leadership of Kathryn Buck, and we have had poetry, biographical articles and excellent photographs.

That is a fairly impressive list. Many of these accomplishments were started before we began our strategic planning process, such as the leadership of regular members Alana Atterbury (our Facebook page and presence on community blogs), Lynne Robinson (the sound system), and Robert Hickey (the website). Much good work continues as always, with the superhuman effort to fill the regular worship positions of lay leader, usher and coffee hour host by Virginia Pfeiffer, Wayne Kammerer's efforts to ensure that there are always enough (and ever greener) coffee hour supplies.

The members of the church do tremendous work, as you can see. The major challenge we have is that there is only a small pool of committed people able and willing to do all the work.

**My questions to you are: What can you do to help? What are you willing to give? What would you like to see our community do?**

One Sunday in April, we were scheduled to hold a community meeting to explore what we have accomplished, what is left to do, and to discuss issues we believe to be important. Unfortunately, it was a warm, BEAUTIFUL day, one of the few Sundays we have had this year with nice weather, and turnout was low, so we cancelled the meeting. However, the door is still open to discuss these issues, brainstorm ideas, and look forward to our future as a church. I am inviting feedback on this article (like, dislike, horrified,

amazed) and for ideas on next steps and how best to move ahead. Email your ideas to me at [jmagi@aol.com](mailto:jmagi@aol.com), or talk to me at coffee hour. Let me know if you think we should reschedule the meeting or find another way to do it. All ideas are welcome, but please, no silence!

Much love to all,  
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 welcome suggestions on future selections. For more information, email John Magisano at [jmagi@aol.com](mailto:jmagi@aol.com).

### **New !! CCC Community Directory of Professional Services**

We know that our community, although small, is rich in experience and resources. Below is an initial, incomplete listing of services available from members of our CCC community. If you would like to make your areas of expertise known, please contact us prior to the deadline for the Fall newsletter. Provide a brief description and a preferred way to contact you for those interested in learning more about services you can provide. Here are our first listings:

**Kathryn Buck** Foreign language (incl. ESL) training; culture-general and culture-specific cross-cultural training; translation; consulting services re: foreign language learning (what to look for in a good course or program; what to expect when learning a foreign language; how to learn effectively and efficiently). [blsspks@aol.com](mailto:blsspks@aol.com) or 212-243-0273.

**Merle Levine** In-your-home care for cats (high recommendations from Sweet One and Pagoda Buck); consulting on senior citizens programming, care and creative work; planning and implementation of social, cultural and political events; dance performance for special events. c/o Chelsea Hotel, 222 W 23rd St. #717, NYC 10011 or 646-785-2550.

**John Magisano** In addition to his service as the pastoral counselor of Chelsea Community Church, Rev. John Magisano also provides consulting services to nonprofit organizations in the areas of grant-writing, program design and evaluation, staff supervision, board development and strategic planning. If you are interested in his services, he can be reached at [jmagi@aol.com](mailto:jmagi@aol.com) and by cell phone at 917-748-5264.

**David Robinson** Large or small odd jobs; woodwork, new cabinets and furniture, design and/or build; home or apartment maintenance; painting and decorating; “honey-do” lists. Contact Dave at 212-255-2757 or [drpex@yahoo.com](mailto:drpex@yahoo.com).

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### **The Newsletter**



Special thanks are due, with each issue, to those who help put it together and get it to you – to all of you who submit news and material, to Hilda Regier and Lynne Robinson for maintaining the mailing lists, to Lynne for picking up stamps, printing postal mailing lists and doing the e-mailing, to Kathy Reid for proofreading, to Robert Hickey for posting it to the website, and to all of you who “stamp and seal” at coffee hour! -- Kathryn

Please submit material for the next newsletter by **August 10**: [blsspks@aol.com](mailto:blsspks@aol.com) or call (212) 243-0273.

**Easter**

It has always been a mad dash to set up the Easter brunch in the rectory before the Easter feasters rush over after the closing hymn for the traditional ham and other delicacies, but this Easter the dash was madder than most. I couldn't skip out of church during the offertory and get a head-start on the set-up as I have always done -- I had to stay and sing *Was Gott tut, da ist wohlgetan*, the postlude to the service, with the choir, of



which I was half the bass section, Thad McGar being the other half. Thankfully, Joanne Downes and Virginia Pfeiffer, who have been through the drill before, started dashing madly without me, though Joanne could hardly dash on only one good leg. With lots of helping hands, we managed, almost, to get all the food, drinks, plates, and utensils out on the tables in some semblance of order before Communion-goers made their way over from the church, but not before the first-comers already in line started murmuring about the delay. Finally, we all sang grace and the feasting began. The potluck was graced by many delicious dishes and

desserts, particularly by the triumphal return of Lisa Mitchell's deviled eggs, by Robert Hickey's corn pudding, Joanne Downes's meatloaf, and the triumphal debut of Xris Kreussling's meringue treats. Overall, Merle Lister declared, "Smashing success--best ever #2!" Judging from the lack of leftovers afterwards, she was right, though Thad and Paul may still be eating the Easter ham, which in itself was a veritable feast for an entire congregation. Alas, the ham was to be our last from that beloved neighborhood institution, the Chelsea Meat Market, which recently closed after decades of serving the community.

Cleaning up after the brunch was more of a leisurely stroll, albeit a long-distance one. Thad and Bill Kushner discovered they make a fine wash 'n dry team, and with the added load of washing the vintage flatware I picked up from Housing Works to replace the disposable plasticware ( more greening of Chelsea Community Church's hospitality!), they needed to be on-the-ball. Luckily, all the serving spoons got back to their proper owners, and all the glasses, mugs, and miscellany somehow fit back into our little cupboard, a fitting postlude to another wonderful Easter potluck. (Photos: Lynn Ramsey, with Rick Carrier, supports the Easter bonnet tradition, above, and postprandial happy faces, right, attest to Merle's review, and Wayne's, of the brunch. Text, Wayne Kammerer; photos, Kathy Reid and Lynn Ramsey.)



**“Be still and know ... “ About Contemplative Prayer**

Note: The writings that follow are a succinct introduction to the practice of contemplative prayer. The only remark I would make would be about the Ainsworth article. I would not split people into contemplative vs. active, but rather people can have both prayer style needs and look to satisfy both.

If you are interested in meeting once a month for contemplative prayer (and it's quite a profound experience in company), please contact me at [marysheeran@yahoo.com](mailto:marysheeran@yahoo.com). In addition to silent prayer, music may also be used. – Mary Sheeran

***Are you a contemplative?*** (Adapted from an article by Martha Ainsworth)

Those who are drawn to contemplative spirituality hunger for an ever-deepening experience of one-ness with God, something more than can be accomplished through an intellectual, rational approach. St. John of the

Cross wrote, “As long as your spirit is filled with a God constructed from your images and words, there is no room for a God who goes beyond words.”

...If you tend to feel connectedness to God more through the abstract than the concrete, and more through feeling than intellect, you are probably a contemplative. If you prefer prayer groups to study groups, you may be a contemplative. If you like simplicity and silence in worship, you are probably a contemplative. If you find strength in emptying your mind of distractions and simply being in the presence of the Holy, then you are probably a contemplative.

One common experience of contemplative Christians is a sense of being out of place. Most Christian congregations...tend to place more value on intellect than on feeling, and on the concrete than on mystery; they are usually centered around activity and stimulation.... In most Christian church communities, silence and prayerful contemplation are rare. The Christian contemplative, longing for silence, can feel quite abandoned. Contemplatives often must search outside their congregations for ways to satisfy their spiritual needs. If one does not intentionally seek community with others on this path, through prayer groups, spiritual direction or the like, the contemplative life can lead to isolation.

Many modern contemplative Christians meet for prayer in small groups once a month or more. Much of the prayer is silent, with anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour of silence at a time. Learning contemplative prayer involves learning how to use that silence to focus one’s mind and heart totally on God, not to say anything to God, but to open one’s heart to listen for God. Naturally we all have things constantly reverberating through our minds—our little to-do lists, conversations, commercial jingles, whatever. In contemplative prayer we seek to quiet all those distractions, the better to be open to God’s voice. The highest experience of contemplative prayer is simply to be aware of God’s presence and delight in it. There is no agenda other than: “Be still, and know that I am God.”

This type of prayer does not appeal to everyone. God calls some people to activity; God calls some people to intellect and study. But God calls the contemplative Christian to seek the Divine in this interior landscape, in a cloud of unknowing, in love and by faith.

***Contemplative Prayer*** (Adapted from Carl McColman’s *The Website of Unknowing*)

From the earliest centuries of the common era, up to now in the third millennium, the heart of Christian spirituality is the practice of contemplation. ....Some of the earliest known Christian mystics, who abandoned a comfortable life in the Roman Empire to seek God in the deserts of Syria and Egypt, entered into deep silence to pray — a practice written about by spiritual teachers like Evagrius Ponticus, who lived in the fourth century. Today, such prayer of deep silence is known as contemplative prayer. It’s not just a relic from the ancient world: evidence of contemplation as a central Christian spiritual activity can be found in the middle ages, after the Renaissance, and into the modern and postmodern eras.

Contemplative prayer is not a method or technique of prayer. Granted, over the centuries various spiritual teachers have developed methods or techniques for fostering inner silence. But prayer itself can never be reduced to a mere procedure. Contemplative prayer is not so much about mastering silence or achieving a desired state of consciousness, but rather, it is a gentle, unforced opening-up of your mind and heart, a simple gesture of allowing yourself to sit in the uncreated presence of God. In other words, contemplation is not something we achieve, it is something we allow...

To enter into contemplative prayer requires nothing more than a commitment to spend time in silence, offering the time to God.... Of course, this is easier said than done! We live in a particularly noisy world — From machinery to music, from telephones to traffic, from broadcast media to mental chatter: ours is a world filled with frantic noise. As a result, for most of us silence feels foreign and awkward if not anxiety-provoking. Consequently, even the best-intentioned ...will face many obstacles to contemplative prayer: a busy life, an active mind, a nervous body, all contribute to forces both external and internal that conspire to

prevent us from simply sinking into the silence where God's presence may be discerned as a "still small voice" (I Kings 19:12).

For this reason, contemplation is not something that can be done once or twice. Contemplative prayer, like any other practice designed to foster a living relationship, has to be done frequently and regularly...

When we enter into silence, it is tempting to fill this time with "stuff" — we want to tell God all about our needs, and the needs of others. We want to fill our time given to God with lots of words. But isn't this like getting together with a friend only to insist that you do all the talking? ...

Often, we cannot discern God's presence, for even when we give up trying to control our time of contemplation with verbal prayer, we nevertheless seem to be continually distracted by the static of our thinking minds. But sometimes we do notice the Uncreated Presence within and beyond the silence that rests quietly beneath our mental clutter. Sometimes, time spent in contemplation is rewarded with an experience of ...joy and profound experiences ...For most people who walk the path of contemplation, these times are rare, and appropriately so...So contemplation ultimately nurtures us at a level far deeper than feelings or conscious experience.

To enter into contemplation is to go on an adventure within the wilderness of the mind and spirit — an adventure centered on the quest for Divine Love....

May God bless you on your journey!

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## News of Friends

**Scot Albertson**, with the Daryl Kojak Jazz Quartet, will be appearing Wednesday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, at 8 and 10 p.m., at The Kitano, 66 Park Avenue. He and Jerry Scott also have brunch appearances at La Med. For more information: [www.scotalbertson.com/pages/Engagements.htm](http://www.scotalbertson.com/pages/Engagements.htm) or [ScotA@ScotAlbertson.com](mailto:ScotA@ScotAlbertson.com).

**Anthony Anselmo** released his first CD in May. The release was accompanied by four performances of selections from it at the Laurie Beechman Theatre on West 42nd St. The CD will be available on [www.CDbaby.com](http://www.CDbaby.com) or from Anthony [santelmomona@yahoo.com](mailto:santelmomona@yahoo.com).

**Kathryn Buck** has an image in the juried photography exhibit "Contemporary Expressions" at the Pen and Brush, 16 East 10<sup>th</sup> St. Opening reception is Thursday, May 28, 4-7 p.m.

**Mike Campbell** visited on March 8; the death of his mother had brought him East for a few days.

**Bruce Colin** has a photography exhibit at Graymoor Spiritual Center in Garrison, NY -- "Moments in Nature" featuring natural images from India, Africa, North America, Graymoor and the Hudson River Valley. The opening and reception were May 2, and Kathy Reid, Lynn Ramsey and Rick Carrier attended.

**Robert Hickey** Robert Hickey is now working full-time promoting and speaking on his book "Honor & Respect: The Official Guide to Names, Titles, and, Forms of Address." The State Department, British Embassy, Protocol Office of the United Nations, and the Waldorf-Astoria already use the 576-page reference book, called by Library Journal "an essential reference for every library." The Harvard Law School Library is among those libraries to have acquired it. The book came out of Robert's teaching at The Protocol School of Washington®, where he has been conducting trainings since 1988. One unexpected, but enjoyable, moment was being interviewed on "CNN Newsroom with Tony Harris" as President and Mrs. Obama entered Buckingham Palace to meet the Queen in April 2009. Later the same day, part of the CNN interview

appeared on "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart." The CNN interview went very well ... and it only took 20 years to get ready for those 2-1/2 minutes! [www.formsofaddress.info/video.html](http://www.formsofaddress.info/video.html)

**Rising Hope Program** A few weeks ago actress Glenn Close came into Fishkill and interviewed inmates involved in the Puppies Behind Bars program at the facility. She was making a feature for an Oprah show which was aired Friday, May 15<sup>th</sup>. The feature is about a war vet learning the story of his guide dog, and the two men she interviewed were Roberto Rodriguez, who graduated from the program last year, and Clarence Jones, who is a current student.

During the course of the interview they also talked about the certificate program, saying how influential it had been in their lives. Rising Hope graduates are occasionally speakers at our services and recently Kathy Reid spoke of her experiences upstate teaching in the certificate program.

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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)

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#### **SCHEDULE of SPEAKERS and SPECIAL MUSIC**

Worship Service, Sundays 11:45 a.m.

Summer Break: August 1<sup>st</sup> through Labor Day. Services Resume on September 13<sup>th</sup>.

**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, Mass. *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. *Special Music: Martha Bernard*

**June 14 Rev. Linda Tarry-Chard** (United Church of Christ) is associate minister for new members, ecumenical and interfaith relations at The Riverside Church. She was previously an associate minister for social justice at Broadway United Church of Christ. A founder of the People Project Foundation, which works in the townships of South Africa, she brought 1,000 dolls with African features to the children of that country in its first project in 1996. She holds an M.S. in education from Fordham University and an M.Div. from Union Theological Seminary.

**June 21 Rev. K. Dennis Winslow, Jr.** (Episcopal) is rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church. Before coming to Chelsea in 1998, he was rector of the Church of the Atonement in the Bronx. Also a former canon of St. Paul's Cathedral in Syracuse and chaplain at Syracuse University, he holds an M.Div. degree from Nashotah House in Wisconsin. *Special Music: Kathyne Langford, accompanied by Jerry Scott.*

**June 28 Jean Coaxum** (Pentecostal) is correspondence secretary at Exodus Transitional Community, answering letters from prison inmates who are seeking parole and the organization's help in re-entering society. Herself incarcerated for 23 years, she was recognized as an honor inmate. Among her activities at Bedford Hills was training guide dogs for the blind. She was released in 2006.

**July 5 Lay-Led Service** See page 1 for information on a celebration of American music in July.

**July 12 Imam Shamsi Ali** (Sunni Muslim) is acting imam at The Islamic Cultural Center of New York, director of the Jamaica Muslim Center (Queens), chairman of Masjid Al-Hikmah and leads the annual Muslim Day Parade. Appointed “Ambassador for Peace” by the International Religious Federation in 2002, he was chosen one of the seven most influential religious leaders in the city by *New York Magazine* in 2006. He participated in the 2006 International Conference of Imams and Rabbis for Peace in Seville and in an interfaith dialogue at the White House. With the Foundation of Ethnic Understanding, he organized an Imams and Rabbis National Summit in New York last year and recently took part in a transatlantic dialogue in Frankfurt. He is the author of several books, including *The True Love in America* (2009).

**July 19 Rev. Dana Fenton** (American Baptist) teaches sociology at Lehman College. She earned M.Div. and M.Phil. degrees at Union Theological Seminary and has an M.Phil. in sociology from the CUNY Graduate Center. Her research is on the crisis in the Anglican Communion. She is a former pastor of churches in Long Beach and Queens.

**July 26 Rev. Vincent Corso** (Roman Catholic) is manager of spiritual care and bereavement services at Hospice Care of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York. A member of Celibacy Is the Issue, a consortium of married Roman Catholic clergy, he received an M.Div. degree from St. Anthony on Hudson and an M.S.W. from Syracuse University.

**I am**

i am courage.

i am strength.

i am wisdom.

i am faith.

i am me.

- Jeffrey Richardson

(Photo, below, by Mike Campbell; from Presentation of the Colors ceremony honoring the dead at Willamette National Cemetery, Portland, OR, May 2009)

**CCC Trustees Plus**

Wayne Kammerer, Chair (Hospitality)

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Christopher Johnson, Music Director

Joanne Downes schedules special music. Virginia Pfeiffer schedules ushers, lay leaders and hospitality hosts.



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**c/o St. Peter's Chelsea**

**346 West 20<sup>th</sup> Street**

**New York, NY 10011**

