



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

CELEBRATING CCC's  th ANNIVERSARY

Fall 2010

*The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting;  
it has been found difficult and left untried. – G. K. Chesterton*

**Special Services, Events, Dates** (All dates are Sunday, 11:45 a.m., unless otherwise noted.)

- September 12**      **Services resume – welcome back!** Get ready for a 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary “**Welcome Back**” **potluck brunch** in the rectory and garden following the service. Bring your favorite dish, snack or beverage.
- September 26**      **Hymn Sing! SING A SONG! SING OUT LOUD! SING OUT STRONG!**  
As part of our 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, our regular service on September 26 will be an “old-fashioned” hymn sing with a nod toward some origins of congregational singing. It will be a service entirely of song and praises: *Amazing Grace, Leaning On the Everlasting Arms, Old Rugged Cross, Higher Ground* and more. Lay leader Lynn Ramsey will be joined by CCC’s friend Lany McDonald, who for many years led our Annual Hymn Sing. Lany will lead us through congregational line singing, recognized as the root of gospel and other modern day church music, a call-and-response tradition which in America dates back to 1640 and appears in the Massachusetts Bay Colony Psalm Book. We hope you join us for this service of celebration.
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- October 3**      **Annual Meeting** following worship service and brief coffee hour. Please join us and be part of creating the future of our church.
- October 10**      **Annual Blessing of Animals**  
Otto Walberg, lay leader. **Rev. John Magisano** of Chelsea Community Church and **Rev. Gary Ryan**, a member of St. Peter’s vestry, will individually bless animals or pictures of animals brought to the service. *Special Music: Otto Walberg*
- November 7**      **35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sunday of Chelsea Community Church**

## **Pastoral Reflections**

I recently paid a visit to the little United Methodist Church where I was baptized and confirmed in my hometown of Craryville, NY. It was a quietly joyous and emotional visit, and it left me with much to ponder. The church itself has changed very little since I was a child. (The only visible change I could see is that the church now has an indoor bathroom whereas we had just the outhouse when I was little.) For a moment, I was transported back to the day of my baptism at age 4, my mother standing behind me while the pastor sprinkled my head with holy water. While I did not really understand what was happening, I remember wearing a brand new suit and feeling very loved.



I often wish that I had been around during the founding and formative period of Chelsea Community Church, when the members of the new congregation were literally doing "a new thing," as the prophet Isaiah wrote. According to the founding members, there was a great deal of excitement among the people for this work and for the mission of founding a new congregation, blazing an uncharted path, finding common ground in the midst of such diversity.

As we journey through our 35th anniversary year, I hope that each of us will reconnect with that pioneering spirit, the honest searching for common ground, that commitment to diversity. In addition, as a church, we need to continually seek out God's call for us. What is our mission? How do we serve the community outside our walls? How can we be one Body with diverse (and divergent) views? How do we live out the call to beloved community, to spiritual growth, and to lovingly hold ourselves and each other accountable?

These are questions central to our historic faith, and to our life together in real time. Let us use this anniversary as a time of reflection, searching and renewal.

God bless you all!  
Much love, Rev. John

## **Music Director Christopher Johnson Resigns**

On August 4<sup>th</sup>, CCC Music Director Christopher Johnson submitted his resignation effective September 3<sup>rd</sup>. In a letter of response, Board Chair Lynn Ramsey thanked Johnson, who succeeded John Eggleston as music director in 2007, for his "tremendous contributions to CCC ... your great inspiration, lovely music, and [the] education that you brought to CCC. You will be missed."

Jeff Cubeta, organist at St. Peter's Chelsea, will assume the position of music director in September. Biographical details will follow in the next issue of this newsletter.

## **Reading and Conversation Hour**

This fall, the Reading and Conversation Hour of Chelsea Community Church (10:30 a.m, 3 Sundays per month) will once again host a Spiritual Writing Group. Last year's group brought a whole new level of excitement and engagement to the participants, and once again we will explore Biblical forms of writing and adapt them to our own stories. The initial meeting date is still to be determined, but I hope you will join us for this group. If you have any questions or suggestions, feel free to email me at [jmagi@aol.com](mailto:jmagi@aol.com). – Rev. John

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# **CELEBRATING CCC's th ANNIVERSARY**

## **Part Two: Thad McGar Reminiscences about Early Days**

I first became aware of Chelsea Community Church when I went to a hymn sing. I don't remember how I knew about it – maybe from a flyer or by word-of-mouth – but I enjoyed it immensely. When it was over I just stayed around. Others were staying, and I never leave a party early. It was held at the home of Joanne Downes, and

## **CCC's Early Days, cont'd.**

Joanne came over to me and invited me to stay if I wanted but said they were about to have a meeting of the Board of Trustees. I left hurriedly, thinking "What a nice bunch of people. I think I will go to their church."

At that time, I believe it was 1980, the church was meeting in the Seabury Hall classroom of General Theological Seminary. There had been some sort of problem at St. Peter's Church, where CCC had been meeting. A new minister had made things difficult for them, and so they found a space in the Seminary. I liked the church and became a regular attendant.

Seabury Hall is on the second floor of a building on the north side of the campus quadrant. Every Sunday we had to roll the heavy metal sign that said we were meeting from the closet where it was stored. We had to roll it outside, down some steps, to the sidewalk in front of the door. I say roll it because it was too heavy to lift. I believe the sign was something that Paul Gay, the church's founder, had acquired from a funeral home. He had a lot of connections. After that, we had to convert the large room, arranged with large tables with chairs, from a classroom to a church setting with the chairs in pew-like rows. There was a wooden podium we placed in front for a pulpit. Luckily, it was not as heavy as that metal sign. Of course we had to move everything back into place at the end of the service. All this had to be done every Sunday before church could begin. I once remarked that this church was a lot of work.

At that time, as today, we didn't have a regular preacher, but rather guest speakers. But we did have one preacher who often preached for us. Ed Soares had left his active Catholic priesthood to marry and live with his wife on Long Island, commuting on the LIRR, which he called "The Silver Snail," to his work for the YMCA on 34<sup>th</sup> Street. He was a wonderful person and a great help to the church in its early days. He worked hard for us and used to quote me, that the church was "hard work." He was the forerunner of what became our pastoral counselor.

It was hard to keep going. Not having a presence on the street meant that it was difficult to attract people, but a dedicated core kept it alive. I guess it confirmed my calling it a "do-it-yourself" church. Eventually we were invited back to St. Peter's and things got a lot easier. Most of us were glad to leave that heavy sign behind until we learned that Kathy Reid, with great difficulty, had brought it along to St. Peter's! It's still a regular Sunday job for the usher to roll out the heavy sign. Maybe it keeps us from getting flabby.

Once I had some visitors from Los Angeles, a couple I had known for years. They asked me what kind of church it was. I said it is kind of a "do-it-yourself" church. It happened that the Sunday they were here we discovered that our "pulpit" was broken. So I took it home to repair it. Not a big deal, something I could cope with, but it needed to be done. But I guess it was a correct description. Everyone in the church was vital to its survival. Everyone worked hard to keep it going. I hope people today realize the legacy that those early people have left them.



### **That Dollar in the Collection Plate, by Virginia Pfeiffer**

Do you remember 1970? That's when I started my first job, earning \$8,000 a year. That's the year the subway fare went from 20 cents to 30 cents. A loaf of bread cost about 25 cents, Campbell's tomato soup 10 cents, Heinz ketchup 19 cents, Morton's TV dinners 36 cents, and Star Kist tuna 29 cents a can. Think about what you spend for those types of things today. Then think about what you put in the offering plate. How much has that gone up since 1970? Maybe it's time for all of us to introduce some cost inflation into our offering. After all, keeping CCC going costs money. Something to consider...

**St. Peter's Chelsea Food Pantry** operate from the rectory, Wednesday-Friday, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m., Saturday 11-11:30 a.m. Volunteers are needed for food distribution on Saturday mornings, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. Contact St. Peter's at 212-929-2390 for further information. Special hours on major holidays. The pantry can also use donations of clean plastic grocery bags.





### New Look for CCC Sidewalk Bulletin Board

You may have noticed that the bulletin board affixed to the sidewalk fence at St. Peter's got a makeover a couple months ago. We hope that its new eye-catching colors and logo, and its expanded information, will indeed catch (and hold) more eyes as people walk past. Postings include upcoming services and speakers, our mission statement, and a listing of special events.

### News of Friends

**Rick Carrier** had open heart surgery to replace a valve on August 19<sup>th</sup> at the VA Hospital. He is doing well and expects to be home soon. Rick and Lynn (Ramsey) send their thanks for the support and prayers they have received from their CCC and St. Peter's friends.

**Merle Lister and Winifred Sanders** each received Hudson Guild's Outstanding Volunteer Award at a ceremony on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. **Merle** is currently secretary of the Fulton Senior Center advisory board and has worked with the Guild in both paid and volunteer positions since 1960. She has taught dance to children and performed at the Hudson Guild Theater, worked at Fulton Center, and more recently has assisted in setting up and teaching in programs for seniors. She is also on the Hudson Guild neighborhood advisory committee. **Winifred** has also been active at the Guild for many years, teaching in the arts and crafts area. Both women have also been active in the Hudson Guild Farm, a resort area for seniors and children.

**Angela Romano** reports that she has been busy, recently visiting Princeton, NJ, and the PAC performance space in Newark. She is glad to be able to return to cat-sitting for a client in Chelsea whose cat Yall -- which means "Friend of God" -- is still spry at age 20! She enjoys walks around Chelsea and is delighted that many New Yorkers are planting a window box or garden and bringing cheer to all New Yorkers. She thinks of her friends at Chelsea Community Church often and looks forward to Blessing of Animals and the Candlelight Carol Service.

This past July 17<sup>th</sup> **Jean Frances Schwartz and Kevin Michael Pratt** (right), two of our CCC friends and attendees, were married by Rev. John Magisano in a joyous celebration. They publicly proclaimed their vows surrounded by nearly 100 friends and family members in a unique liturgy that combined Bible readings, passages from *A Course in Miracles* and other inspirational sources, and original prayers for each other. A festive reception with all the trimmings was held around the corner at the Desmond Tutu Center. Blessings to Jean and Kevin on your life journey together!



**Mary Sheeran's** novel, *Quest of the Sleeping Princess*, will be released by the beginning of October. Set in the year 1988 at a gala performance of the New York City Ballet, it raises provocative questions about Balanchine's legacy. Mary will also be studying acting this fall at the Stella Adler studio and resuming work on her screenplay about Martha of Bethany. She is again participating in the choir of the annual Broadway Blessing, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 7 p.m., at St. John the Divine, in which God's blessing is invoked as the new theater season begins. Produced by Retta Blaney, the production this year is scheduled to include Kate Burton (*The Grand Manner*), Charles West (*The Fantasticks*), Anthony Newfield (*The Royal Family*), Catherine Russell (*Perfect Crime*), Project Dance, and the Broadway Blessing Choir. A memorial tribute for Lynn Redgrave, who appeared last year, is planned. The event is free, and no reservations are needed.

St. Peter's informed us of the death in mid-August of their member and former warden, **Don Whelan**, who was also a good friend and supporter of CCC. Don had been in failing health for a few years. A memorial service is being planned for October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## **Remembering Bill Webber**



George Williams (“Bill”) Webber, a beloved speaker at Chelsea Community Church for many years, died July 10<sup>th</sup> at age 90 due to complications of Alzheimer’s disease. A member of the United Church of Christ, he was president emeritus of New York Theological Seminary

In his sermons he challenged listeners to join him in his devotion to Christian social activism. In one sermon at Chelsea Community Church Bill told of the master’s degree program he started at Sing Sing Prison in 1982 for New York Theological Seminary.

Our response was that because we have guest speakers every Sunday, our congregation could help in a small way by offering our pulpit to graduates of the program after their release from prison. We continue to do so and have expanded our outreach to include other ex-offenders. Scheduled every six to eight weeks, these speakers often bring us powerful, memorable messages.

Bill last preached at CCC on March 28, 2004. In his sermon he told of Rising Hope, a program he founded in 1995 to offer college-level classes in prisons. That sermon inspired Kathy Reid to volunteer to teach in its program at Woodbourne Correctional Facility. Most instructors are inmates who are graduates of the Sing Sing theological program.

George Williams Webber was born May 2, 1920 in Des Moines, Iowa. After graduating from Harvard *magna cum laude*, he served in the Navy during World War II. After discharge, having decided to become a minister, he earned a bachelor of divinity degree at Union Theological Seminary and in 1948 with two colleagues founded the East Harlem Protestant Parish, establishing several storefront churches. He moved his family into public housing in East Harlem and lived there until 2003. Bill earned a Ph.D. in philosophy of religion at Columbia University in 1963.

While president of New York Theological Seminary from 1969-83, he revised the curriculum to attract African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and women to the ministry and doubled the enrollment. After stepping down as president, he continued on the faculty as director of the Sing Sing program and later as an adjunct professor there. Bill knew how to seize the moment. When approached about the possibility of the seminary providing classes in Sing Sing, he sketched the outline for the program before that initial conversation ended. Some 350 men are now graduates of the program.

A memorial service will take place at 2 p.m. on Saturday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, at Union Theological Seminary.

## **Our CCC “Travel Issue” Continues** (see also our Summer 2010 newsletter)

### **THE TAKING OF AN ACTION – Art Therapy for Widows and Their Children in Kausani, Northern India by Bruce Colin, photographer and educator**

The Chandra Project, established by educators, social workers, and husband-wife team Anand Joshi and Prema Behen Joshi, focuses on counseling and training fatherless families in and around the village of Kausani in northern India. Single mothers, many illiterate, often face extreme poverty, unemployment and family abuse, compelling them to sacrifice their children’s education by sending them into child labor in order to survive.

The Chandra Program achieves concrete objectives, reducing child labor in local districts within a 40-kilometer radius of Kausani, providing single mothers and their families with clothing and school supplies, with counseling services and parenting skills training, and with entrepreneurial skills for the mothers such as weaving, knitting, and sewing. Families remain intact and children stay in school.

Every three months, mothers meet with Anand and Prema to evaluate their children’s progress in public school as well as each mother’s progress in the community and in the home. The Chandra Program provides assistance in education and family counseling. It also distributes clothing and school supplies to participating children. While

Anand Joshi manages and supervises the entire project, Prema checks homework assignments and provides steadfast family support and academic evaluation.



Each April, Prema Behen Joshi interviews over 160 mothers who hope to enroll in The Chandra Project. I offered an Arts & Play Therapy, and “hands on” science interventions for the children and their mothers as they waited for their individual meetings with Prema. I am happy to report this was my second year of conducting art classes for the Chandra Program. My work this time consisted of teaching a series of 15 art classes, five within the girls’ camp. The rest of the time was spent teaching the remaining classes of the regular camp.

Carting a ton of art supplies donated from friends in the U.S. was indeed an event, and negotiating luggage weight restrictions at the airport became a

vexing factor. Miraculously, I was able to check the overweight duffle bag without incurring additional charges. The powers that be were with Chandra that day! These donations not only enabled me to conduct the art program but also meant extra funds to subsidize the purchase of much-needed school materials for the children.

I met Anand in Delhi where we made special arrangements to go on a shopping trip to purchase the additional materials for Chandra’s 2010 academic year. And what a trip it was, for we wound up with three rickshaws chock full of hundreds of notebooks, scores of paint boxes, piles of brushes, magic markers, geometry boxes and who knows how many more containers filled with assorted materials! I was an art teacher in NYC for many years and never in my life did I see so much stuff. I’m amazed that we and the supplies arrived in Kausani all in one piece, which we did; it sure was fun traveling with Anand in a caravan of rickshaws, watching over all those boxes while negotiating our way through the crowded streets of old Delhi.

It was my intent to create a therapeutic milieu, using art materials as a healing device, within Chandra’s family community. Another goal this year was to avoid the typical rigid and stereotypic kind of art work produced by most conventional primary and secondary art teaching.

I spent ten days conducting a variety of art lessons for the mothers and the children. With Prema’s direction, the mothers soon realized that they were required to participate in the arts program as well as the group games. Eventually a majority of the mothers actually enjoyed working with the art materials and joining in the games as much as their own children did.

We covered a lot of basic art concepts during the ten days of classes, but the highlight of the art projects was the creation of two beautifully designed murals made from cut paper shapes and mixed media. As mother and child worked simultaneously on the murals, they bonded as an artistic team. New relationships were formed within the safety net of this shared process, and the artistic success of the murals was the result of the combined efforts of mother and child.

It was with great joy that I had been invited by my dear friends Prema Behen and Anand Joshi to become a part of Chandra once more. With continued generous support this art program is scheduled again next year.

**SCHEDULE OF SPEAKERS and SPECIAL MUSIC**  
**Worship Service, Sundays 11:45 a.m.**

**September 12 Rev. John Magisano** (Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches) is Chelsea Community Church's pastoral counselor. He also works as a consultant to nonprofit organizations in the New York area. He earned his M.Div. degree at New York Theological Seminary and previously served as assistant pastor for development at the Metropolitan Community Church of Hartford. *Special Music: Mary Sheeran*

**September 19 Diana Ortiz** (Nondenominational) is the community liaison for Exodus Transitional Community, an organization helping ex-offenders adjust to life after prison. She was previously a job developer at the agency and before that was employed by Housing + Solutions working with women who have been addicted to drugs and at Osborne Association working with children of incarcerated parents. While incarcerated for 18 years at Bedford Hills and Beacon Correctional Facility, she worked with a prison ministry and earned an M.A. in English from Mercy College. For her path to parole see <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/06/nyregion/06parole.html>. For a short video about Ms. Ortiz and her work with Exodus, go to [www.mediastorm.com/training/exodus](http://www.mediastorm.com/training/exodus).

**September 26 Lay-Led Hymn Sing** (See page 1.)

**October 3 World-Wide Communion Sunday Rev. Gary Ryan** (United Methodist Church) is a member of the Vestry of St. Peter's Episcopal Church who has served as a human rights advocate for the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Anglican Observer's Office at the United Nations. He was pastor of several Methodist churches near Oxford, Miss., before becoming an Episcopalian. Currently a teacher at Brooklyn Friends School, he has worked as a journalist for Associated Press and as a chaplain at Massachusetts General Hospital and at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital. A graduate of the University of Mississippi and Harvard Divinity School, he holds M.A., M.Div. and Th.M. degrees. **The Annual Meeting of the Congregation will follow the service.**

**October 10 Blessing of Animals Service** (See page 1.)

**October 17 Rev. Gay Tompson Steele** (Baptist) is co-pastor of Faith Mission in Yonkers, a church started by her godmother in 1997. She is also an associate pastor at Grace Baptist Church in Mount Vernon and has for some 20 years been an advertising copywriter. While working toward her M.Div. degree at New York Theological Seminary she held an internship at Memorial Baptist Church in Harlem.

**October 24 Rev. John Magisano** (Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches) is Chelsea Community Church's pastoral counselor. He also works as a consultant to nonprofit organizations in the New York area. He earned his M.Div. degree at New York Theological Seminary and previously served as assistant pastor for development at the Metropolitan Community Church of Hartford.

**October 31 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: Sarah Miller*

**35<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF CHELSEA COMMUNITY CHURCH**

**November 7 Rev. Dr. William Weisenbach** (Presbyterian) is the senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Katonah in Westchester County. Previously pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Philipstown in Cold Spring, NY, he earlier was vice president for academic affairs and professor of church management at New York Theological Seminary. He earned his D.Min. degree at the seminary and was awarded an honorary D.D. after his 24 years of service to the institution. In the early years of Chelsea Community Church he was a frequent speaker at our services and informally advised the Board of Trustees on a variety of issues. *Special Music: Pam Palmieri*

**November 14** Two young men from **Youth Shelter Program of Westchester, Inc.** in Mt. Vernon will share their experiences, accompanied by Christian M. Philemon, executive director. The residential, 12-month program serves at-risk youth, ages 16-21, who participate in lieu of going to jail or prison. The goal of the program is to educate and motivate the young men to return to their communities as positive, contributing members of society.

**November 21** **Rev. Patricia Lawson** (Baptist) is an associate minister at Convent Avenue Baptist Church. From 2002 until 2009, she was the director of Children and Family Ministries at The Riverside Church. She joined the Riverside staff as an intern in the Youth and Young Adults program in 1996 while studying for her M.Div. degree at New York Theological Seminary. Before attending the 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: Martha Bernard*

**November 28** **Rev. Josh Staten** (Nondenominational) is associate pastor of the Trinity Grace Church meeting in St. Paul’s German Lutheran Church on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street. He has been with the congregation, which has four neighborhood churches, since 2006. He is a graduate of The Kings College in Manhattan, where he studied the liberal arts with a concentration in theology. A native of Nashville, he is a Chelsea resident.

**December 5** **Min. Yvette Vanterpool** (American Baptist) is an associate minister at Memorial Baptist Church in Harlem. Previously development assistant for a multi-faith youth program, Face to Face/Faith to Faith, at Auburn Theological Seminary, she also works with the Rites of Passage youth ministry. She has written for several religious publications and designed and facilitated workshops at area churches on such topics as “Sexism and Our Faith” and “The What, Why and How of Praise and Worship.” She received her M.Div. degree summa cum laude from Drew Theological Seminary, Madison, NJ, in 2008 and was awarded The Rev. Florence Spearing Randolph Prize given to an African American woman student who demonstrates powerful preaching skill and potential for outstanding pastoral leadership. She also holds a Master of Music degree in voice/opera from Binghamton University. She has sung with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, The New World Symphony, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Texas Opera Theater and has toured with the New York City Opera and Glimmerglass Opera. *Special Music: Yvette Vanterpool*

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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)

**The Newsletter**

**Published quarterly in December, March, June and September**



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 Lynne Robinson for maintaining the mailing lists and procuring 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 “stuff, stamp and seal” at coffee hour. **Please submit material for the Winter newsletter (Dec-Feb) to Kathryn Buck by November 10th: [blsspks@aol.com](mailto:blsspks@aol.com) or call (212) 243-0273.**