



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 2010

*As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?* (Psalms, 42: 1-2)

## Special Services, Events, Dates

(All dates Sunday, 11:45 a.m., unless otherwise noted.)

- March 28**                      **Palm Sunday** Rev. Lisa Hill, special music by Otto Walberg (see p. 7)
- April 1**                         **Maundy Thursday Communion Service**, 6:30 p.m. in a member's home. The location is to be determined and will be announced at our regular worship services, or call the number above.
- April 2**                         **Good Friday** (no CCC service)
- April 4**                         **Easter** Rev. John Magisano, special music by Deb Karpel (see p. 7)

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## CELEBRATING CCC's th ANNIVERSARY

### Part One: Hilda Regier Recalls the Birth of the Church

I was among those who attended the meeting convened in September 1975 by Paul Gay to consider the possibility of forming a new church in Chelsea. A prominent realtor, Paul helped spur Chelsea's renaissance in the 1960s. With broad concerns for the community, he saw the need for another church to supplement the neighborhood's Episcopal and Roman Catholic parishes, a church whose services would have greater appeal for "mainline" Protestants.

Those attending that meeting decided to explore the idea of founding such a church and formed a committee. On the committee were Paul, his partner Hunter Tillman, Joanne Downes, Bonnie Supplee, myself and a few others. We settled on Chelsea Community Church as the name for the new congregation. In devising a format for our first worship services we listed elements with which all of us were comfortable. Before calling the initial meeting,

### **Birth of the Church, cont'd.**

Paul had gotten the support of the rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Rev. Rick Houghton, so we would have a place to meet. Paul also engaged a faculty member at Princeton Theological Seminary to preach at our first service and arranged for an organist. We produced a printed program and posted flyers announcing the first service on November 2. Fifty-five people attended. In less than two months, Chelsea Community Church became a reality.

Having guest speakers was a necessity in our first months, but there was an assumption that eventually we would call a pastor. As time went on, however, most of us came to appreciate the variety of speakers. Perhaps God was leading us to a nontraditional way of being a church.

Some of our speakers began comparing us to the early Christian Church. The comparison had some merit: we were inventing the church as we went along. The collaboration and commitment that marked those formative years continue today as we work together to keep our church relevant to the community, responsive to our members and mindful of the spirit of its founding. *(to be continued)*



Photo: Hunter Tillman (left) and Paul Gay, 1986. Hunter was choir director for our first Candlelight Carol Service in December 1975.

Note: If you have memories, pictures, etc. regarding the history of CCC which you would like to share as this series progresses, please contact us!

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



I am writing this on Fat Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Season of Lent. As I write, a fine, wet snow is falling outside. The ground is covered from last week's snow storm, and there appear to be no signs of life or spring though the calendar tells us that it is coming in just over a month. A walk in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden this past weekend, however, revealed something else. The magnolia trees have fuzzy, fat buds just waiting to explode into colorful blossoms.

We observe the season of Lent to remember the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness wrestling with various temptations, itself an echo of the forty years the Hebrews spent wandering in the Sinai desert. It was after that wilderness time that Jesus burst forth into his public ministry.

Traditionally, Christians engage in some kind of fasting during the season of Lent. For some, it is literally a fast from eating. For others, this fast may be from specific pleasures like chocolate, coffee, television, etc. My practice is generally a spiritual and financial one. I try to practice a brief period of silence each day during Lent (a fast from talking, noise and distraction) and I put a small amount of money, usually a dollar or two, into an envelope and give it to a charity at the end of the season.

Whatever your Lenten practice, if any, I wish for you a spiritually fertile season. I hope that you will burst forth in beauty and color like the magnolias when spring, and Easter, finally hit.

Much love, John

## **Reading Group**

The group is currently considering which book to read next. When in session, the group meets at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday mornings in the Rectory chapel. For more information, email John Magisano at [jmagi@aol.com](mailto:jmagi@aol.com) Please see the second article below for examples of the sacred writing done by the group.

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

CCC's 35<sup>th</sup> annual candlelight carol service was once again a beautiful and moving ceremony, one of our best according to several long-time attendees. Despite a day of heavy rain which had not yet stopped, the audience numbered nearly three hundred. The musical selections and an introduction of Denise Lute, the reader of *A Visit from St. Nicholas*, were covered in the previous newsletter; for this year's post-'coverage' we have two special points of view to offer – that of a first-time visitor to the service and that of a choir member.

First, an e-mail from a first-time visitor:

*My friend and I attended your Candlelight Carol Service after seeing a flyer for it on Saturday, December 12. We were visiting from Little Rock, Arkansas and wanted to get some Christmas spirit while in New York. (Yes, we had seen the windows on 5th Avenue but we were looking for a different sort of Christmas spirit!) We attended a lovely organ recital at Grace Church on Saturday afternoon and the worship service at St. Thomas with its angelic choir in its magnificent building on Sunday morning and then toured St. John the Divine that afternoon. We also attended a noon service at Trinity Church on Monday but we agreed that our favorite church experience was at Chelsea Community Church because of the simplicity of the readings, the sincerity of the choir, the coziness of the sanctuary and the warmth of the congregation. Please pass our thanks on to all the people (ushers, readers, choir members, choir director, pianist . . .) who made the service so special. Thanks, too, for inviting the congregation to sing along with the choir. It was great to participate in the service. – Peggy Matson*

And from choir member Fran Levy, on December 16<sup>th</sup>:

Wednesday's near, alas alack,  
Yet to the Church we can't go back.  
No *Wondrous Love*, no *Liddle Lamb*,  
No *Shiloh* or the great I AM.

And yet the glow of candlelight  
Still warms our hearts, our souls to light.  
And so to voices high and low,  
I wish more joy than you can know.

A portion of the offering from the service was donated to the food pantry at St. Peter's.

Thank you to all who worked so hard to make this 35<sup>th</sup> Candlelight Carol Service and reception such a success again this year!

## **Chelsea Community Church Sacred Writing Project**

Most members and friends of CCC are aware of our book reading group. We choose a book on a spiritual, religious or historical topic, read and discuss it over the course of several weeks in the hour before worship. This past December we chose to do something different: we became a sacred writing group instead, taking as our guide the Biblical forms of the psalm and the epistle. We read and discussed several examples of each, and then the participants wrote their own versions of both forms.

### **Sacred Writing Project, cont'd.**

This process culminated with the sharing of these writings by the group during a lay-led worship service on February 14th organized by Hilda Regier. For me, this group was one of the richest experiences I have had in our church. I was "blown away" by everyone's creativity, their willingness to share their innermost thoughts and feelings, and their ability to bring these Biblical forms to life. The participants were able to delve deeply and give us not only a glimpse of themselves, but a new experience of the Bible.

Listening to the writers share their work during worship was profound. I appreciated everyone's courage, creativity and willingness to share this part of themselves. Since this was such a successful experiment, some have suggested that we do this again. Rest assured that we will do something like it in the not-too-distant future.

Thank you again to all who participated! -- John Magisano

Featured here are a psalm by Merle Lister and an epistle by Kathleen Reid, two of the writings featured in the February 14<sup>th</sup> service.

### **Psalm**

God is the Giver,  
We are the receivers.  
We must open ourselves  
To God's presence to receive Him,  
His Word to us!

Listen, listen. Be still, be still.  
Feel God surrounding you  
To get His message.  
Trust the message.  
Faith, faith. Be still, be still.

The answer comes.  
Faith. Listen. Stillness.  
God's presence and you  
For eternity.



### **Epistle to the Faithful within Woodbourne Correctional Facility**

Kathleen, your sister and sometime teacher, now resting in the loving care of Chelsea Community Church,

To the beloved faithful at Woodbourne Correctional Facility, grace and peace be with you always, in full measure!

My brothers, you who seek a path of change and redemption through learning, prayer, and mutual support: know you are imprisoned in body, but your minds and spirits are free! You are always in my heart, as I reflect on the efforts you make to build each other up in community, so that as students and as teachers, you come to graduation and receive the honors due you from your peers and families.

Be not ashamed of the designation "prisoner," as you share that state with many men and women placed in that position to fulfill God's intricate designs. Remember Joseph in Egypt, Paul and



### **Epistle, cont'd.**

Silas, prisoners for Christ Jesus, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Malcolm X, and many others, men and women.

Neither dwell too long on your past crimes, for you have left them behind and turned your faces to new life. Keep your trust in God and do not be bewitched by the temptations you face – the lies of depression, the slick tricks of drugs, the urge to “just get by, just this once,” and cheat, or pass a cheater without challenge.

Our hope for you is firm. Therefore, Elder Jay, rejoice in your talents and resist isolation! Brother Choi, know that you have touched hearts and minds, so that even if deported, your good ripples outward. Brother Renny, feed your trust and not your doubts; draw strength again in prayer. Brother Bradford, once “rescued rather than arrested,” go forth in due time and rescue others! Elder Najee, continue to serve!

All others unnamed, know none of you is forgotten; you are always held in prayer, though you languish now in small cells and cold yards. There are those in churches, temples, and mosques – and on the streets --who seek to hear your voices, who want a dialogue, who support your strivings on your varied spiritual paths.

We saints of Rising Hope and of Chelsea Community Church now call you forth to serve! We ask you to “do theology” as our beloved Rising Hope founder Rev. Dr. Bill Webber put it, to minister to each other on the inside and to us and the wider and still beloved community on the outside of those prison walls.

Lend your strength to the wavering student who has lost faith in himself! Listen to the half-formed ideas of another. Take the hand of your alienated brother, and speak your heart in prayer, so he may be enfolded in God’s love through your words and through your healing touch!

So I write to you with my own hand (though a computer enables it) to urge you most fervently to continue to seek the guidance and power of the Spirit, of Holy Wisdom, the Eternal, the One, by whatever name you choose – as you progress along your own path to the Light! Pray also for me, so that I may return to you when God wills it.

Peace and grace be with you all, always and forever. Amen.

### **St. Peter’s Chelsea Food Pantry**

St. Peter's food pantry operates from the rectory Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. -12 p.m., Saturday 11:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m., serving predominantly low-income families who live in the community, some of whom are homeless. Volunteers are needed for food distribution on Saturday mornings, 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Contact the church for further information. Major holidays: special hours to be announced. The pantry can also use clean plastic grocery bags. Tel. (212) 929-2390



### **Looking Ahead**

The Board has formed a special 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary PR committee to consider the ways in which CCC can mark this special year; we welcome your ideas for events, PR efforts, outreach projects, etc. The Candlelight Carol Service Coordinating Committee will be working with an annual schedule of preparation, coordination and publicizing of the event; a request and deadline for community suggestions for the 2010 service will be announced soon.



(Photo: Part of coffee hour “klatsch,” hosted by Gloria Schofner, on Sunday, February 14<sup>th</sup>. From left: Ying Leung, Gloria, Lynn Ramsey, Rick Carrier, Virginia Pfeiffer, Thad McGar, Hilda Regier, Kathleen Reid. Photo: Merle Lister)

## CCC Community Directory of Professional Services



Our community, although small, is rich in experience and resources. The last two newsletters have included a listing of services available from members of our CCC community. If you would like to make your areas of expertise known, please contact us. Provide a brief description and a preferred way to contact you for those interested in learning more about services you can provide. We are also exploring the option of adding the directory to our CCC website.

## Publicity and Social Networking: An Update from Alana Atterbury

CCC is expanding its presence on social networking sites. You can look for us on Facebook and MySpace. Please feel free to leave feedback which you feel would help describe CCC and its activities and help others decide to visit and participate. We also hope to freshen up the website in time for spring!

In the fall of 2008, ideas were passed around on promoting CCC in the social networking spectrum. Seeing the popularity of such sites as MySpace, which has a large artistic following (musicians, actors) and Facebook, with the Board's permission I went and created a Facebook and MySpace page for the church. Using my own personal experience on MySpace, I sought out other churches and musicians in the area that had followed the networking route and sought them out as "friends." MySpace allows a bit more creativity in setting a profile so I made sure that the page was filled with bright colors and a positive message based on the church's mission statement. Photos from past events such as the Candlelight Carol Service and Blessing of the Animals were also added so that people could get a more personal glimpse of who we are as a community. Everyone can view the page and so far we have close to 15 friends in the surrounding area. [www.myspace.com/chelseacommunitychurch](http://www.myspace.com/chelseacommunitychurch)

On Facebook, the artistic creation is a bit more limited, but anyone with a profile on the networking site can become a fan of the page, leave comments and upload pictures. Even though the response has been slow, if there is one thing I have learned, things start off small and can explode overnight, so you never know!

## Condolences

We extend our condolences to **the family of Patricia Milligan. Norma Milligan**, Patricia's mother, of St. Peter's Chelsea and a long-time friend of our congregation is instrumental each year in assisting with the Candlelight Carol Service reception. Norma often brought the young Patricia to CCC special events, and Patricia also taught in the CCC Sunday School.

## News of Friends

**Bill Kushner** (photo, background) and **Merle Lister** (photo, foreground) reprised their poetry reading and interpretation regarding a chihuahua at St. Mark's in the Bowery's annual New Year's Day event. Bill also read for The Poetry Project later that evening.



**Min. Yvette Vanterpool** wrote following her most recent visit to CCC:

*Dear Hilda, I am not sure where the month of January has already gone but I have been remiss in extending my thanks to you and Chelsea Community Church for the opportunity to preach again on Sunday, January 3rd. I very much appreciated the number of people who were in attendance despite the extremely frigid temperatures. The congregation was warm, friendly, and shared much appreciated feedback about the sermon. I also enjoyed the chance to share my musical gifts as well and count it as a double blessing that I was able to contribute to the worship experience as both preacher and soloist. I hope that you will convey my appreciation to the members of Chelsea Community and send my prayer that 2010 will be a year of rich blessings for the church.*

Best wishes to **The Reverend Dennis Winslow, Rector of St. Peter's Chelsea**, for his continuing recovery from multiple leg and knee fractures suffered early last summer. Please keep Dennis in your prayers.

## **SCHEDULE OF SPEAKERS and SPECIAL MUSIC**

Worship Service, Sundays 11:45 a.m.

**March 7 Rev. Joanna Tipple** (Reformed Church in America) is working on establishing Pearl Creek Farms and Sanctuary in Columbia County; it will offer hospitality and healing to humans and animals as well as retreat facilities. She earned her M.Div. degree in 2005 from New Brunswick Theological Seminary and also has training in spiritual direction. Ordained in 2006, she served for two years as pastor of Livingston Memorial Church in Linlithgo, NY. Before attending seminary she served as a local pastor in Methodist churches upstate.

*Special Music:* jegglestonny

**March 14 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. *Special Music:* Jeff Cubeta

**March 21 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. March 4-13 she will co-lead a study tour of Israel for Marble Collegiate Church.

**March 28, Palm Sunday, Rev. Lisa Hill** (Presbyterian) is director of quality care for the West Side Federation for Senior & Supportive Housing. She was previously the director of the Frederic Fleming House in Chelsea, which is operated by the same agency. She holds an M.Div. degree from Union Theological Seminary.

*Special Music:* Otto Walberg

**April 4, Easter, 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:* Deb Karpel

**April 11 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

**April 18 Min. Thomas L. Ryer** (Pentecostal) is a case planner for the fathering initiative at the foster care agency Forestdale in Forest Hill, Queens, working with youths 14-25 years of age. He is also an adjunct professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. He was ordained at Christ's Temple in Harlem in December, four months after being released from prison. Before being incarcerated in 1997, he was a youth services director for New York City, working with the Children's Aid Society and settlement houses. He earned an M.A. in criminal justice at Oklahoma University in 1984 and a master of professional studies degree in 2004 in the New York Theological Seminary program at Sing Sing. *Special Music:* Pamela Palmieri with Jeff Cubeta

**April 25 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.

**May 2 Rev. Patrick Cheng** (Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches) will receive a Ph.D. in systematic theology from Union Theological Seminary in May. A lawyer, he is general counsel for the national pension fund of the Episcopal Church. He earned a J.D. from Harvard Law School magna cum laude and was

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executive editor of the *Harvard Law Review*. He also holds M.Phil. and M.A. degrees from Union Theological Seminary. He taught “Religion and Sexuality” at Marymount Manhattan College in 2009 and is the author of the chapter “Rethinking Sin and Grace for LGBT People Today” in the second edition of *Sexuality and the Sacred*, to be published by Westminster John Knox Press this year.

**May 9, Mother’s Day, Rev. Dr. Lauren Hunter** (American Baptist) is a minister on the staff of Potter's House Church of the Living God in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn and a guidance counselor at DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx. She earned an M.Div. degree at New York Theological Seminary and an Ed.D. at North Central University in Minnesota. She also holds master's degrees in counseling and education administration. **Special Music:** Ginger Ray

**May 16 Rev. Clifford Frasier** (United Church of Christ) is religion coordinator of the Health Care Reform Campaign of the Service Employees International Union. He was previously coordinator of Presbyterian Welcome—a program encouraging inclusivity, associate pastor of Jan Hus Presbyterian Church, centennial coordinator of the American Waldensian Society and a member of the social justice staff at Riverside Church. In 2003-04 he spent six months in prison for civil disobedience at Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (formerly School of the Americas). He earned his M.Div. at Harvard Divinity School.

**May 23 Rev. Gabriella Velardi Ward** (Roman Catholic) pastors the St. Praxedis Catholic Community of New York and is active in Roman Catholic WomenPriest. She was ordained a Roman Catholic Woman Priest in Boston in 2008. In active ministry since 1988, she spent 12 years in a Roman Catholic parish teaching meditation, contemplative prayer, spirituality, scripture and feminist theology. A spiritual director and retreat leader since 1997, she works with survivors of child abuse and other oppressed members of her church. She also has degrees in fine art and architecture and is working toward a master’s degree in theology. **Special Music:** Jeff Cubeta

**May 30, Memorial Day, Lay-Led Service** with Lynn Ramsey, chairperson of the Chelsea Community Church Board of Trustees in charge.

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### CCC Trustees Plus

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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 Summer newsletter** (June – August) to Kathryn Buck by **May 5th**: [blsspks@aol.com](mailto:blsspks@aol.com) or call (212) 243-0273.