

Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church

February 2010

Dear Church family,

This last Fall I rode for the first time on The Cyclone, Brooklyn's famous roller coaster. One learns quickly why this form of amusement is such a useful cliché. In the manner of two minutes and less than a mile of track, one goes up and down and around and gets jolted from side to side. In the meantime, one wonders for his/her safety, one considers his/her last meal, one laughs in exhilaration, one braces in anxiety, one tries to figure what fell from his/her pockets, etc. While much more protracted, church life is sometimes like that, with sudden stops and suspenseful starts.

On December 27, I preached at the closing service of Ft. Hamilton Presbyterian Church. Then, it was with great sadness that we received similar news about another Bay Ridge church, Salem Lutheran. These churches were faithful servants to their community for roughly one hundred years.

While it is clear to me that our mysterious and powerful God is not defeated by the closing of a church, it does raise some difficult questions as to why such a thing could happen. Congregants and scholars could fill pages with reasons, but whatever the cause, the closing of a church is always unsettling.

At the same time, I have witnessed the Church very much alive and well. I have been serving on the commission to transition ownership of the building formerly housed by Ft. Hamilton Presbyterian to Bethel Presbyterian. Bethel is an active worshipping community composed of members mostly from the country of Ghana. They already have strong leadership among their members

and have a gifted pastor, the Rev. Sam Atiemo.

Then on the 14th of this month, I attended the installation of lay pastor Ted Hickman at Duryea Presbyterian Church in Prospect Heights. The sanctuary, which was filled with African American and Afro-Caribbean worshippers, literally rocked with preaching, prayer, and singing for two and a half hours, expressing hope in God's call for their renewed church in Prospect Heights.

Our church, too, is filled with activity and vibrancy and hope. As this busy month comes to a close and I momentarily step out of the coaster's car, I pray that we can learn from the faithfulness of churches past while engaging the future with hope and creativity, knowing that God's love is steadfast and always with us.

Peace,
Rev. David Aja-Sigmon

This past Fall, we held two workshops that were well attended and fruitful in their honesty, openness, and discussion about some challenging topics. Here are a few summary points:

Talking To Your Children Faithfully About Death : This workshop was led by Denise and Carlos Prieto and David Aja-Sigmon. 1)Death is normal part of the life cycle that we must cope with instead of avoid. The best thing to do is listen to a child's questions and feelings, to be present to them, and to not be afraid of not having the right answer. 2)Through nature, life presents more than one opportunity to talk about death, and more than one chance to try again if you feel you've done so inadequately in the past. 3)Always consider a child's current

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developmental stage when talking about and dealing with death. Children, like adults, grieve in different ways and over different periods of time. There is no right way to grieve. 4) We don't fully understand why bad things happen to good people, but the assurance that we as people of faith take is that God loves us, is with us, and mourns together with us.

Living and Dying Faithfully as an Older Adult:

This workshop was led by Adele McMahon and David Aja-Sigmon. 1) Aging can obviously be challenging, especially when physical and medical issues arise. Therefore, do what you can to prepare yourself and your family in advance. 2) Be intentional about talking to your family, friends, and church about your hopes and expectations before your mental and physical faculties become limited. This could pertain to interpersonal reconciliation, funeral arrangements (i.e., worship and funeral home), etc. 3) Explore and decide upon issues related to a Health Proxy, your will, organ donation, paying for healthcare (insurance/Medicare/Medicaid), and end-of-life care. 4) In our Scriptures, Jesus spoke to us of another life in God. The assurance that people of faith take is that God is always with us in both our living and dying.

--The pastor can provide upon request a collection of helpful scripture passages for dealing with grief.

Upcoming Events

* The Bay Ridge Presbyterian Churches are again uniting to provide a series of joint Lenten worship services. All services will begin at 7:30PM. Ash Wednesday will be hosted by Bay Ridge United; Maundy Thursday by Union Church (April 1st); and Good Friday by Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church (April 2nd).

* On March 1st at 7:30pm, the book club will gather to discuss The Shack. All are welcome.

*On March 27th at 2 p.m., the Women's Association will be hosting children of all ages to participate in the annual Easter Egg Hunt.

Bring your children, grandchildren, and their friends!

*On May 1st at 2pm, a memorial service celebrating the life and ministry of the Rev. Richard Preston, a former pastor of our church, will be held at St Thomas Episcopal Church (53rd St and 5th Ave. in Manhattan). His wife Mary Mattis sends her gratitude for our continued prayers and support.

Adult Education

Adult education classes will once again resume every third Sunday of the month after worship. Starting in February, we will begin a study series called (Re)Introduction to the Bible.

Mission

On the second Thursday of each month until June, the Deacons will be hosting workshops for the Trinity Healing Center, a faith-based, not-for-profit community agency dedicated to the intervention and prevention of family violence and abuse which serves people of diverse faiths and backgrounds.

These specific workshops are designed for church leaders in Brooklyn, particularly in Bay Ridge and Sunset Park. They are intended to teach leaders how to make their churches into safe spaces for victims, whether in the form of rallying against domestic abuse or being a faithful link of support for victims.

We have been taking a collection for the Healing Center since the Fall in our Mission Jar located in the Fellowship Hall.

Please note:

If you're curious about the role of the various forms of governance (elders, deacons, trustees, etc.) in our church, please take a copy of a document outlining those general duties, located on the resource table in the Fellowship Hall.

Lenten Prayer:

As we journey towards Jerusalem with you, Jesus, help us to consider your love for us, your call to us, and your hope for the world. Amen.
