

First Notes

*The First
Presbyterian Church
in the City of New York*

Volume XVI Issue 6

June 2008

About Organized Religion

From June 20th through the 28th, the Presbyterian family will meet, eat, worship, sleep, legislate, argue, debate, and otherwise refine this imperfect vessel of the Kingdom of God known as the Presbyterian Church USA through its biennial gathering, the General Assembly. As the national church gears up for this quintessential expression of religious organization, or disorganization, depending on your point of view, ironically in recent weeks I have run into a lot of people who tell me that with the exception of First Presbyterian Church in New York City, which they love very much, they find the whole idea of organized religion off-putting to say the least.

Sometimes the complaint I hear is that the church has too much doctrine and too little understanding of the human condition. At other times it's the idea of the church's "obscene wealth" in the face of the world's enormous poverty and need, although they must be talking about other denominations, since nationally, Presbyterians have been on austerity budgets cutting back at the top levels for years. Other complaints center on the church's focus on ethereal theological complexities in a world of crushing realities demanding hard and proven answers. And most recently a chorus of voices has been raised complaining that war and intolerance can be traced to the world's great religions that incite their devotees into a frenzy of irrational and violent action. The fundamentalist sects of Islam, Judaism and Christianity are used as evidence of this intolerance.

Whatever the source, complaining about organized religion is nothing new. As a young man going through college in the late 1960's and early 70's I remember hearing that nothing was more detrimental to human freedom and progress than religion, and in those days the wave of feeling against organized religion reached a frenzied

pitch. Individual thought and personal freedom is cherished in America, so it is no surprise that concern for the influence of religion in American life was viewed askance. The nation's formalized opposition to any organized state religion is present in the founding documents of the nation's history. We are inherently suspicious of coercion expressed in the religious realm.

Jesus himself was skeptical of the religious leaders of his own day. A quick scan of Matthew 23 is a sobering reminder that Jesus had serious reservations about "organized religion." "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them" (Mt. 23:13-14).

If one needed any warrant to be cautious about trusting religious influence too much, one need only look to Jesus. So I don't know whether it helps or hurts the matter that I am something of a skeptic about institutionalized religion myself. In a sense I am a skeptic who lives and ministers among skeptics. Nonetheless, I persevere as a Presbyterian.

I believe the Presbyterian Church provides order and resonance to being a Christian. It offers participation as well as ordination for lay people in the governance and oversight of the Church at every level, an important check against the excesses of the clergy that dates to our Reformation roots. Our historic emphasis on the sovereignty of God, on the importance of education for both clergy and laity, and our reverence for the mystery inherent in the sacraments are all elements of what is good about the church. Our emphasis on global mission which has made us partners in the faith with others

(Continued on page 7)

In All Things Give Thanks



WHAT DO PRESBYTERIANS BELIEVE ABOUT...? Sundays at 12:30 p.m.



June 22 **The Apostles' Creed**
The Rev. Barbara E. Davis

BIBLE STUDY

Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

June 8

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT?
The Rev. Sarah Segal McCaslin

The term ecumenical suggests the broadness of God's cosmos and incorporates both the unity dimension as well as the mission dimension of the movement. Goals for this session include: to gain a sense of the theological and biblical basis for ecumenical efforts; to acquire a sense of the variety of forms of modern ecumenism; and to evaluate the role of ecumenism in our own lives of faith.



June 15, 22, 29

LOVING FRIENDS AND STRANGERS: HOSPITALITY IN THE CHURCH
The Rev. Barbara E. Davis and Guests

Hospitality is a theme most Christians take very seriously. How do we welcome friends and strangers into our community? How do we welcome those who might be considered outsiders in our culture? What are our obligations to be allies to those who might fear religious institutions for not welcoming them as they are? Beginning with the importance of hospitality in the ancient Near East and in the time of Jesus, participants will consider principles of hospitality through the ages and consider ways current Christian communities might maintain this practice to friends, strangers, and all who walk through their doors.

TRIPLE SILVER
SUNDANCE
WINNER
AMERICAN
SOCIETY OF
FILM DIRECTORS
WINNER
FELIX
BOGARDY
FESTIVAL

"Confronts, with whimsy and hellfire,
the clash between religion and homosexuality."
—NEW YORK MAGAZINE



**for the BIBLE
tells me so**

A film by DANIEL KARSLAKE



www.forthebibletellsmeso.org

TUESDAYS @ FIRST **June 24 at 6:30 p.m.**

FILM SCREENING: *For the Bible Tells Me So*

Discussion to follow film.

Can the love between two people ever be an abomination? Is the chasm separating gays and lesbians and Christianity too wide to cross? Is the Bible an excuse to hate? Through the experiences of five Christian, American families – including those of former House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt and Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson – *For the Bible Tells Me So* explores how insightful people of faith handle the realization of having a gay child. Informed by such respected voices as Bishop Desmond Tutu, Harvard's Peter Gomes, Orthodox Rabbi Steve Greenberg, and Reverend Jimmy Creech, this film offers healing, clarity, and understanding to anyone caught in the crosshairs of scripture and sexual identity.

EDUCATION ALERTS! If you would like to be on the Education at First email list to receive updates and reminders about upcoming programs, please email education@fpcnyc.org and put "add me to the list" in the subject line.

There are many ongoing education programs at First Presbyterian Church. Please see the *Adult Education Brochure, April 2008-June 2008*, available now in the Mellin-Macnab lobby, for more information.

NEW SANCTUARY MOVEMENT



NEXT STEPS? INFORMATION AND CONVERSATION

On Sunday, June 1, at 12:30 p.m. in the Morrow Room, the Adult Education and Church and Society Committees will co-sponsor a forum, "Next Steps? Information and Conversation." Guest speakers will highlight what their organizations have done to raise public awareness about the need for immigration reform. The discussion will be led by speakers from the New York New Sanctuary Coalition and the Cabrini Immigrant Center, organizations with whom our congregation has developed ongoing relationships. You are invited to help guide our congregation's next steps toward bringing justice to immigrants. It is our hope that their experiences will inform First Presbyterian's next steps in its quest to bring justice to this issue. Come and be a part of the conversation!

End of Church School Year—SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER!

On Sunday, June 1, during worship, First Church will present Bibles to the following Church School students completing the third grade:

Alana Nicole Whitaker Boyer
 Finlay Rose Doyle
 Benjamin Fitzroy Francis
 Samuel James Francis
 Austen Booth Freda
 Willa Grace King
 Claire Lezhen
 Damian L. Mecs
 Zoë Frantsis Patterson
 Jackson Somerville Robbins
 Elijah David Robinson
 Leon Scheffs-Bevington
 Isabella Grace Simonetti
 Jihae Song Simpkins
 Natalie Chang Gray White.

Also on Sunday, June 1, we celebrate this year's Church School teachers for their dedication and creativity. Current Church School teachers will share their experiences with members interested in teaching next year.

Sunday, June 8, will be the last day of Church School until the fall.

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

First Presbyterian Church

Sun	Mon	Tue
<p>1 <i>Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time</i></p> <p>9:30 Adult Education 9:30 Family Ministries 10:45 Child Care 11:00 Worship♥ Communion—Dr. Walton preaching <i>Last Full Choir Service</i> 12:15 Coffee Hour♥ Church School Teacher Recruitment 12:30 Mission Trip Meeting 12:30 New Sanctuary Movement Forum 3:00 Piano Recital</p>	<p>2</p> <p>9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 12:00 Sanctuary Open</p>	<p>3</p> <p>9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 6:00 A.A. Groups 6:30 Major Gift Committee Orientation Meeting 6:30 Co-Op Board Meeting 6:30 Grief Recovery Follow-up</p>
<p>8 <i>Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time</i></p> <p>9:30 Adult Education 10:45 Child Care 11:00 Worship♥ Dr. Walton preaching 11:20 Church School (last day) NO Children's Choir Rehearsals 12:15 Coffee Hour—Spring Garden Event♥ 12:30 Pre-Baptism Meeting</p>	<p>9</p> <p>9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 12:00 Sanctuary Open</p>	<p>10</p> <p>9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 6:00 A.A. Groups 6:30 Personnel 6:30 Buildings & Grounds 7:00 House Committee</p>
<p>15 <i>Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time</i></p> <p><i>Father's Day</i></p> <p>9:30 Adult Education 10:45 Child Care 11:00 Worship♥ Baptism—Rev. Davis preaching 12:15 Coffee Hour♥ Deacons' Baby Shower for Foundling Hospital</p>	<p>16</p> <p><i>N.S. Early Summer Program (2 weeks)</i></p> <p>9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 12:00 Sanctuary Open</p>	<p>17</p> <p>9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 6:00 A.A. Groups 6:30 Major Gift Report Meeting</p>
<p>22 <i>Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time</i></p> <p>9:30 Adult Education 10:45 Child Care 11:00 Worship♥ Rev. McCaslin preaching 12:15 Coffee Hour♥ 12:30 Adult Education 12:30 Young Adult Brunch/Planning Meeting 1:30 Literary Group</p>	<p>23</p> <p>9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 12:00 Sanctuary open</p>	<p>24</p> <p>9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 6:00 A.A. Groups 6:30 Major Gift Report Meeting 6:30 Tuesdays @ First</p>
<p>29 <i>Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time</i></p> <p><i>Gay Heritage of Pride Sunday</i></p> <p>9:30 Adult Education 10:45 Child Care 11:00 Worship♥ Rev. Davis preaching 12:15 Coffee Hour♥ 1:00 Evelyn Davidson Water Table Project ♥ 3:00 Bailey House ♥</p>	<p>30</p> <p>9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 12:00 Sanctuary open</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>DEADLINE FOR JULY/AUGUST FIRST NOTES: FRIDAY, JUNE 13</p> </div>

JUNE 2008

Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
4 9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 9:00 Planning Meeting 10:30 Staff Meeting 12:00 Midday Prayers <i>(last one for season)</i> 6:00 Vespers 6:30 Fellowship Supper Committees Meet	5 <i>P.S. 226—Staff Conference Day</i> 9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 12:15 Al-Anon 6:00 N.S. Roof Party 8:00 NA Solutions	6 9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 12:00 Sanctuary Open 6:00 NA/D.A. Groups 6:00 Alvarez/Dismukes Wedding Rehearsal Dr. Walton/Dr. Carter, Officiants	7 Deacon Retreat (off-site) 6:00 Alvarez/Dismukes Wedding Dr. Walton/Dr. Carter, Officiants
11 9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 10:30 Staff Meeting 12:00 Sanctuary Open for Meditation 6:30 Tartan Fair Meeting 7:00 Justice Works	12 9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 12:15 Al-Anon 4:00 Confirmation Reunion 8:00 NA Solutions	13 9 to 5 Caring Community♥ <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; text-align: center; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> First Notes and Calendar Due </div> 12:00 Sanctuary Open 6:00 NA/D.A. Groups	14
18 9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 10:30 Staff Meeting 12:00 Sanctuary Open for Meditation 6:30 Homeless Shelter Planning Meeting 6:30 Deacons/Trustees/ Session	19 9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 12:15 Al-Anon 8:00 NA Solutions	20 9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 12:00 Sanctuary Open 6:00 NA/D.A. Groups	21 General Assembly Convenes San Jose, CA
25 9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 10:30 Staff Meeting 12:00 Sanctuary Open for Meditation	26 <i>P.S. 226 Closed</i> 9 to 5 Caring Community♥ <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; text-align: center; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> First Notes Mailing Team </div> 12:15 Al-Anon 7:00 60+ Circle Meeting 8:00 NA Solutions	27 9 to 5 Caring Community♥ 12:00 Sanctuary Open 6:00 NA/D.A. Groups	28 General Assembly Ends

**DEACONS
FOR THE MONTH:**

Michael Blanton
(646) 279-5098

Ellie Garlow
(646) 239-5357

The First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York
 12 West 12th Street (at Fifth Avenue), New York, NY 10011
 Tel: 212-675-6150 Fax: 212-675-8674

All data subject to change without notice. Check with Church Receptionist for confirmation and details.

Indicates Volunteer Opportunities ♥

Volunteer Opportunities

Welcome to the **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES CALENDAR**, published monthly to let you know of events where you can help.

- **COFFEE HOUR HOSTING** – Hosts, coffee pourers, and greeters are needed for Coffee Hour after church. To volunteer, call **CHARLOTTE WALLACE** at (973) 692-0541.
- **USHERS FOR WORSHIP SERVICES** – Volunteers are needed to usher for **Sunday morning services**. To volunteer, call **JOAN RYAN** at (212) 765-2141, or **SUZANNE FREEMAN** at (646) 827-4559.
- **FIRST NOTES** – Volunteers are needed to help assemble and label **FIRST NOTES** mailings. For the next mailing, volunteers will meet at the Church at 10:00 a.m. and work

until about 1:00 p.m., on **Thursday, June 26**. Call **PAULETTE GRIEFEN** at (212) 226-2531 to help.

- **BAILEY HOUSE** – Volunteers are needed to prepare and serve the evening meal to residents of Bailey House on the 5th Sunday of the month. Call **LIZ HUBBELL-RIGGS** to help (212) 247-0355. Next date is **Sunday, June 29, 2008**.
- **LAY READERS** – Those interested in participating as lay readers are asked to call **DENISE JACKSON** at (212) 675-4366.
- **CROSS BEARER** – To explore the possibility of carrying the processional cross at worship, please call **PAT PENICK THOMPSON** at (212) 242-6916.
- **IN THE KITCHEN** – If you can help with Vespers, please call **JAMES HOLLANDER** at (646) 335-2969 or e-mail hollander_james@yahoo.com. For all other events call **JACKIE FIKE** at (914) 793-4017 or e-mail jackiecf@verizon.net.

Wednesday, June 4—Vespers Fellowship Supper

Wed. June 4—3:00-8:00 p.m. Prep., Serve, Cleanup

Outdoor Coffee Hour Sunday, June 8

The Membership Committee invites you to a special coffee hour on Sunday, June 8, on the South Lawn following the service. Refreshments will be provided by Jackie Fike and the kitchen committee, and we hope you will join us for this opportunity to greet one another in our beautiful gardens, weather permitting. The North Lawn will be reserved for the activities of children and their families.

Deacons' Baby Shower

The Deacons of First Church are again sponsoring baby showers for the New York Foundling Hospital on June 15 (Father's Day).

Look for the baby stroller in the lobby of the Mellin-Macnab Building after church services on Sundays of June 1, June 8, and June 15, and drop off your gifts of new infant/children's clothing, blankets, diapers, toys—almost anything for small children can be used. Gifts may be wrapped or unwrapped, but must be new. Your generosity made this a most successful project the last four years, and we ask for your support again on June 15.



Homeless Shelter Summer Planning Meetings

The Homeless Shelter of the First Presbyterian Church is truly a year-round endeavor. Though our 10 guests only sleep here from November through April, planning and visioning for the next year begins as soon as the cots are put back in storage.

If you haven't been involved in the homeless shelter yet and are interested in learning more, or if you want to help with the shelter but know you can't commit overnights or late evenings during the fall and winter, join us for any or all of these summer planning meetings. The homeless shelter always needs volunteers willing to make phone calls, send emails, sit at tables for mission fairs and coffee hours, and generally help with the organizing.

For more information, e-mail shelter@fpcnyc.org or call Sarah McCaslin at (212) 675-6150.

Summer meeting schedule:

- Wednesday, June 25 at 6:30pm
- Wednesday, July 16 at 6:30pm (Volunteer Party on the North Lawn)
- Wednesday, August 20 at 6:30pm



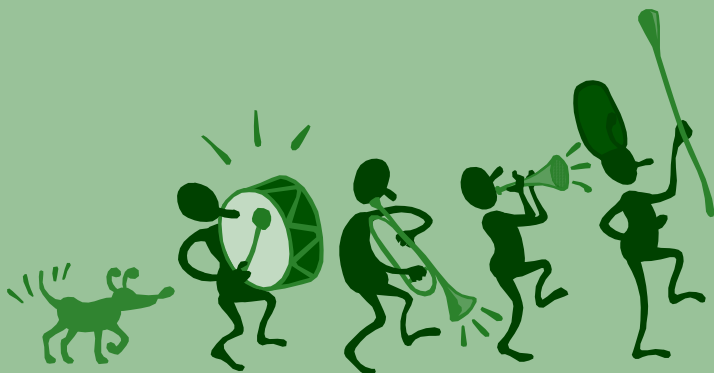
around the globe, brought schools and hospitals and water treatment programs, as well as churches to others is a gift the Presbyterian Church has shared with the world. Our reliance on scripture and its interpretation is a hallmark of our faith and an inspiration for our motto, "reformed and always reforming," which describes our openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit in the Church. All these things make me glad to be a Presbyterian.

I write these things well in advance of June 20th, the beginning of G.A., so that when I am at the Assembly and see some of the "disorganization" of our organized religion, I don't despair. Pray for the Assembly this coming month. Because for all the disorganization and disrepair of the Church, there is still a lot of good that it does, and still many reasons to be thankful for it.

Jon M. Walton

Heritage of Pride Day

Come help hand out water to thirsty parade walkers and spend a fun couple of hours! First Church members will again staff the Evelyn Davis Water Project, providing cold water to those marching in the LBGT Pride Parade. The parade takes place on Sunday, June 29 (1:15 - 5 p.m.). Sign up in the Mellin-Macnab building, contact Brian Macy at (917) 209-9694, or just show up!



Presbyterian
Welcome

**Join Us—
Show Some Pride!**

Calling all marchers,
float riders,
and volunteers!

Presbyterian Welcome, along with Methodists in New Directions, is participating in the **June 29th Heritage of Pride March**, and we want you to be part of the celebration! You can march, ride, coordinate, pass out water, and/or just give us your support. We need volunteers at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian, our Pride March headquarters, and at First Presbyterian, where the Evelyn Davidson Water Table will be. We also need folks to ride on the float! To get involved or to make a donation, please contact Meg or Carolina or mail a check to the Presbyterian Welcome office. Can't wait to see you!

Presbyterian Welcome

2095 Broadway, Suite 306, New York, NY 10027
917-441-8638; meg@presbyterianwelcome.org

*A Tartan
Christmas*

ARE YOU THINKING OF CHRISTMAS YET?

Well, the Tartan Fair Committee is! We are thinking of all those good used household items you are going to bring us for the White Elephant sale and all those books for the Book Balconies and all those real treasures for the Silent Auction. We are also thinking of Christmas in July – our craft night after the bar-b-q on Wednesday, July 16, and Christmas in August on August 13. So bring your stuff any weekday from 9 – 5 or on Sunday and come craft with us on July 16!



A Month of Sundays

Worship This Month at First Presbyterian

SUNDAY, JUNE 1

Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sermon: Dr. Jon M. Walton preaching
Sacrament: Communion

SUNDAY, JUNE 8

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sermon: Dr. Jon. M. Walton preaching

SUNDAY, JUNE 15

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sermon: The Rev. Barbara E. Davis preaching
Sacrament: Baptism

SUNDAY, JUNE 22

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sermon: The Rev. Sarah S. McCaslin preaching

SUNDAY, JUNE 29

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gay Heritage of Pride Sunday

Sermon: The Rev. Barbara E. Davis preaching

DEADLINE FOR JULY/AUGUST

FIRST NOTES:

FRIDAY, JUNE 13

SUPPER FOR ALL!

*Fellowship suppers at First Church
Every first Wednesday after Vespers*

Come enjoy a delicious meal with friendly, interesting people. You don't have to join a committee to enjoy committee night!

DEACONS FOR THE MONTH:

Michael Blanton (646) 279-5098

Ellie Garlow (646) 239-5357

First Notes

*The First
Presbyterian Church
in the City of New York*

Calendar of Events

CHURCH HOUSE
12 WEST 12TH STREET NEW YORK, NY 10011

Return Service Requested

**The First Presbyterian Church
in the City of New York**

12 West 12th Street, New York, NY 10011

Tel: (212) 675-6150 Fax: (212) 675-8674

<http://www.fpcnyc.org>

Jon M. Walton, Pastor

Sarah Segal McCaslin, Associate Pastor

Barbara E. Davis, Minister of Christian Education

Mark D. Hostetter, Associate Pastor

William F. Enriken, Organist and Choirmaster

Mia Alvar, *First Notes* Editor

