

Pastor's Corner

Giving Something Up For Lent

Pastor Tom Philipp



One morning during the first week of Lent I stopped at the Bistro in Bellport (my regular routine) to pick up the morning newspapers and then head up to the Royal Oak for breakfast. At the deli counter a customer was playfully reprimanding the clerk. It seemed the customer, who regularly ordered an egg sandwich with bacon, had specifically indicated this day "no bacon." When his order came it was his typical egg with bacon sandwich. The clerk apologized and indicated she also gave up meat for Lent. I was the next customer, handing the clerk the \$3.50 for the papers, and then commented: "I wonder if God cares?" Looking at the expression on the clerk's and earlier customer's faces I decided I better move along quickly!

For years the practice of giving something up for Lent has been traditional for Roman Catholics and many other Christians as well. Some Protestants, however, have developed the practice of taking on a new discipline rather than giving up something. This has meant perhaps doing a Bible study or following a daily liturgy and meditation provided by their denomination, and in our case giving support for the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering which meets the needs of others.

I have been thinking of things to give up during Lent and in fact making the "giving up" a permanent discipline. Some are personal, but I am bold enough to suggest some for our national leaders as well: Here are a few:

Personal:

1. Feeling my position on a particular matter has more merit than that of someone who differs.
2. Feeling my friends should be and need to be committed to the same worthwhile causes to which I am committed.
3. Feeling I need to do the task that needs to be done when no one else steps forward to do it.
4. Feeling time relaxing is wasted time and being busy is seen as the more worthy virtue.

For our national leaders:

1. Feeling being elected is more important than being firm in one's convictions and commitments.
2. Feeling partisan party obligation is more important than seeking the common good and working together with the opposition in dialogue and compromise.
3. Feeling the show of military to other nations is more important than a commitment to finding peaceful solutions to international conflicts.
4. Feeling our self interest is paramount even if it excludes the legitimate concerns of the people of other nations.
5. Feeling the financial support of particular individuals or lobbying groups merits the commitment to their causes.

Yes, Lent can still be a time of giving up those things that hinder our being and doing that which we are called upon to be and do.

Presbytery Supports OSHPC's Action

After New York State passed its Marriage Equality Law, which permits the marriage of same sex couples, our Session wanted to go on record to approve its Pastor performing same sex weddings if and when he wished to do so. Pastor Tom recommended that we not take immediate action on this matter until he had opportunity to explore the best way to proceed on this. The Presbyterian Church (USA) stance has been to permit its clergy to conduct "holy unions" but not a Marriage Ceremony. Our former pastor Jeannie Baum conducted several holy union ceremonies at our Church.

Pastor Tom in exploring the matter discovered that the Presbytery of Boston had passed an overture submitted to the 2012 General Assembly, to be held this June which would amend the Directory for Worship in the section of Marriage by changing the wording wherever it states "the man and the woman" to "two people".

Our Session passed the following motion at its meeting on January 17, 2012:

"The Session of Old South Haven Presbyterian Church has studied the Overture from the Presbytery of Boston to the 220th General Assembly (2012) of the Presbyterian Church (USA) "On Amending the Directory for Worship and the Rules of Discipline to Support Equal Protection and Foster Great Inclusiveness, and has voted to strongly recommend that the Boston Overture be brought before the Presbytery of Long Island with a motion to concur with it."

In addition Pastor Tom shared with the Session on January 17 an overture coming from the Presbytery of Mid-Kentucky which raised concerns regarding the for-profit health care industry and the resultant denial of health care to millions of people. This overture instructs the Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) to report to the General Assembly corporate practices of several named health insurance companies.

The work on this overture was done by The Rev. David who died a year ago. David was a founder of Smith Haven Ministries and now known as The Ministries. He had a long time commitment to addressing the national health care crisis.

The Session voted "to recommend that the Mid-Kentucky overture be brought before the Presbytery of Long Island with a motion to concur as has Albany Presbytery."

Our Session's two recommendations were submitted to the Presbytery's Committee on Bills and Overtures. At the next meeting of the Presbytery, attended by Sean Moran and Pastor Tom, the recommendation of BBO was "that Presbytery not concur with overtures from other presbyteries this year" and indicated that our Presbytery does not "ordinarily act to concur with overtures from other presbyteries" and that neither request for concurrence added any new information to the discussion" on these matters.

Pastor Tom rose to challenge the action of this Committee stating it had indeed been the practice of our Presbytery to concur at times with actions of other presbyteries and stated, as well, Old South Haven's and the Presbytery's strong support of both the

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Wedding Bells

My wife and I were married in Old South Haven Church by Reverend Thomas Philipp on October 8, 2011. Kiersten and I would like to thank the Old South Haven Church for the opportunity to be married in such an incredibly special and beautiful place. We also would like to thank Pastor Tom for all of his time and for his truly great wedding ceremony.

We hope you enjoy the pictures and look forward to seeing you at church soon.

Sincerely,
John Corral



One Great Hour of Sharing and Mission Concerns

Since 1949 Presbyterians have joined with millions of other Christians through One Great Hour of Sharing to share God's love with those in need. Your generous gifts assist those affected by natural disasters, provide food to the hungry, and help build strong communities.

We will be receiving this offering on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday.

This is one of many mission (sending out) projects that we at Old South Haven Presbyterian Church participate. We also support the Christmas Joy Offering, the Peace Offering, the Deacons Program, the Food Shelf and "Other Designated Offerings". Since I have been working on the Mission and Outreach Committee of the Session I have been reviewing our Mission projects. I will be reporting, in future newsletters, on each mission project that we support so that we can be more knowledgeable about that which we support.

Brian Mullahy



Looking from a blown out window at destruction caused by one of the early March 2012 tornadoes

Third Annual (!) Peace Essay Contest

Nancy Best

It is hard to believe that two years have gone by since we started our Peace Essay Contest at Bellport High School. I have been in touch with teacher, Ellen Hoffman, at the school and she will be urging her students to participate. She also said she would post our flyer with criteria for all students to see.

Our deadline for receiving the essays is April 16, and I am looking forward to reading this year's entries. I will keep you posted.



Session Report

Sean Moran

The session would like to welcome Shirley MacKay and Linda Scott. This is Shirley's first time serving as an elder here at Old South Haven and we look forward to working with her on session. We warmly welcome back Linda Scott. Linda has served previously on session and we welcome her experience. We thank Ann Wiswall and Darcy Stevens for all the work that they have done on session the past 6 years.

The reading of the minutes for Old South Haven will take place on March 27 at the Presbytery Center in Commack. The next stated meeting of the Presbytery will be in April in Roosevelt.



Long Island Presbytery Supports Old South Haven Church

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concerns for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals and also concern for the delivery of health care services. He pointed out, as well, that the Boston and the Mid-Kentucky overtures were not put in the hands of the Commissioners to this meeting of Presbytery though the report from the BBO report stated that they were! He moved that the Presbytery not vote in favor of the Committee's recommendation and that motion passed. It was then decided that the Presbytery take a break for lunch and that Pastor Tom and our General Presbytery oversee the printing of this material and this matter be placed as the first item of business when the Presbytery reconvened after lunch. Upon reconvening the two motions from Old South Haven passed with overwhelming majorities.

A personal note from Pastor Tom: "I share this long account with our members and friends to show both how democracy works in the functioning of the Presbytery and how the voice of a small congregation like Old South Haven, with its strong commitment to justice for all, can make an impact in our Presbytery and even in the Presbyterian Church (USA)."

Late News

The Board of Directors of the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (USA) voted on March 3 to provide coverage under the Benefits Plan to same-gender domestic partners, beginning January 1, 2013.

Jason Neal's Essay

When Jason Neal was "home" with us this past Christmas, Pastor Tom indicated to him that at the next annual meeting of the South Country Peace Group members of the Veterans for Peace, Long Island will be honored. He suggested that Jason write something about his experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan and on those who serve. Jason responded favorably to the suggestion and two weeks later sent Pastor Tom an essay titled "It's A Matter of Perspective". He read it to the Planning Committee for the SCPG event and they felt it should be read at that event. We are happy that Jason has given us permission to print it here. His e-mail to Pastor Tom stated "It covers a few of the things we discussed, but basically it show how much confusion there can be inside of the mind of a combat veteran, and it only looks at the military aspect. What I left out is how PTSD, injury, illness, and isolation impact the soldier and his family. That would require a whole book." You can find pictures taken by Jason on his Facebook.

It's a Matter of Perspective

By Jason Neal Monday, January 2, 2012



Let me start by saying that this is not for the squeamish. My words and my photos are explicit. Parents, I implore you to monitor your children's reading on Facebook, and make sure they skip this note, especially the photos. Thanks!

As a veteran of both Afghanistan and Iraq, I always find it interesting when the media reports half of a story. When I was in basic training, the media released photos from Abu Graib. Of course, there was outrage all around. There were investigations and trials. Soldiers were punished. And rightly so. What happened there was just plain wrong.

The fact that such photos were ever taken shows that there was a lack of discipline, a lack of good judgment, and a failure of leadership at all levels. The fact that they ever saw the light of day outside of that prison showed us something else, a failure of the people involved to understand the socio-political context in which they had become enveloped. Some folks say the decision to share those pictures was a lack of common sense. I saw it as simple sheer stupidity by people who should have known better.

Last year, there were photos of American servicemembers posing with a dead body or bodies in Afghanistan. Once again, there was some outrage, there is an investigation, there will be consequences for those involved. And rightly so... But here is what most people do not understand: Content without context is the problem. War is not "normal". War is hell. War is ugly and messy. People die. People may be tortured. Young and old alike are disfigured, dismembered, defiled in ways you cannot imagine. And that happens to our own troops too, not just the enemy. I'm not saying these things are right or acceptable, but they do happen.

We pay young boys (and girls) a meager wage to fight our wars. We train them, give them weapons and equipment. We give them a briefing on the rules of war in between briefings on sexual harassment and motorcycle safety. And then we send them into one of the worst places on Earth for months at a time, with no support but their fellow soldiers, and we tell them not to do anything stupid. We teach them that they must be ready, willing and able to kill or be killed, and then we tell them not to misinterpret the rules of engagement, which may change at any time.

Go capture or kill the enemy, but do it quickly and quietly, and for heaven's sake, don't take any pictures. Why not? Because pictures are evidence! And if you do take a picture, please don't get caught smiling! People will not understand that your smile is not born of happiness, but rather elation that the enemy died and you are still alive. Some people, like me, smile when they are stressed out or angry. If you can see my teeth when I smile, it means you better run!

People will not see the enemy as a combatant that was trying to kill you. They will see a hapless and innocent boy who was probably tending his flock of sheep or walking to the market to buy vegetables. Soldiers know better. Boys can kill like men, given an AK-47, a grenade, or a sticky bomb. Boys can learn to hate just like men, and they can be trained to use a cell phone as a bomb detonator. They serve as lookouts for the Taliban, who may be their brothers, fathers, or uncles. They smile and ask us for

chocolate, and then throw rocks at our vehicles when we pass by. They try to sell us their little brothers as sex slaves, because they see it being done that way in their own world. War is absurd, and stranger than fiction.

War is dangerous, and that danger can lead to stress. Stress causes people to behave in strange ways, especially if those people do not have the necessary skills to process and cope with their stressors. I am not justifying anyone's behavior, but let's look at the root causes and influencers before we judge.

For infantry soldiers, humiliation is an everyday occurrence in training and deployment. And the lower enlisted soldiers bear the brunt of it. Hazing is normal and routine, regardless of official doctrine. Somebody somewhere has pictures of me tied to a cot when my mortar buddies realized it was my birthday in Afghanistan. By that point, we were on the way out of that country, and I had dropped my guard. Six or seven guys pinned me down and tied me to a cot, carried the cot outside, and left it there for about an hour. Somebody used a paint marker to write on my skin. Yes, I felt violated. Yes, I felt humiliated. Yes, I thought my fellow soldiers had lost their minds. But I also knew that this was a bonding experience. Right? Like I said, war is absurd, and its manifestations are not limited to anger directed at the enemy.

One soldier was bundled up and strapped to the front of a Humvee, then driven through the woods at night when he fell asleep on guard duty during a JRTC training rotation. Another soldier was tied to a pole naked for his birthday. Another was given wedgies until his underwear had blood in it. People who run too slow are given "remedial PT" where they may be forced to roll around in sand or swamp mud until it covers every inch of their uniform and skin, because higher ranks believe a soldier who has endured this will no doubt be motivated to run faster next time...

As strange as it sounds, these were considered rites of passage by the perpetrators, and later the victims understood that it's fairly "normal" for events like these to transpire. The guys I served with were some of the best men I ever met anywhere. I trusted them with my life, and still would in a New York minute. They are husbands and fathers and brothers. They are my brothers too. And I know that they respect the rule of law. Those are my battle buddies from 2-4 Infantry. The rest of the army, I can't speak for them...

But the world is a crazy place, and people in isolation do things they wouldn't normally do. If our plane crashes in the mountains, I might eat you (given the right conditions). If our plane crashes or we are shipwrecked on an island, we might become just like the boys in *Lord of the Flies*, and start killing each other for sport.

The point I'm trying to make is that there is no "normal" in war. "Normal" is relative. I worked with one officer who enjoyed shooting dogs and cats and throwing kittens into the burn pit. He called it pest control, and nobody in a position of greater authority gave it a second thought. Officers have all that college education, right? I am not saying it's right, but it happens. How would you feel if your pet/mascot was killed by your boss, or if the "sleeper cats" that provided you comfort were tortured and killed? Just watching it or hearing it or knowing it happened can be a stressor. And yes, it happens. You want to know why Michael Vick was involved in dogfighting? The same reason that curious young soldiers put a scorpion and a camel spider together in a box; they want to see what happens! No, it's not right, I agree. But it happens. On a humane level, in a country like ours, people like us respect all human and animal life, right? Rape, assault, theft, hazing, drug abuse... if it happens anywhere in our society, it happens in the military too. Why? Because the military is just a microcosm of our society.

We expect our soldiers to do the unthinkable and the impossible. And at the same time, we want them to follow rules. I'm all for it. But let's give them some coping skills so that they can handle the mental stress of combat. Until we do, only those who have been there can rightly say what they would do or could have done differently.

I am only writing this so that people might put things in perspective. Don't trust that what you have been spoon-fed by the media is the truth; and don't rush to judge without knowing the circumstances. The only way to know what people are thinking or feeling is to walk a mile in their boots.

The only way to get our troops to treat people with dignity and respect is if we teach them compassion, sympathy, and empathy, and if we as a society embrace these values. And the only way to ensure atrocities don't become institutionalized is if we ensure that laws and rules are obeyed, and that there is enforcement from the bottom to the very top. In one word, accountability. Peace.

Peace and blessings,
J. Neal

Christian Education

Darcy Stevens

Sunday school just started the spring trimester of the "One Room Sunday School" curriculum. We remain small in number but enthusiastic. Many thanks to Lorraine and Bobby for their help through the year. A thank you is also extended to Mark and the choir for helping us with our anthem, which we'll be singing on March 11.

All visiting children are most welcome to join us in an Easter Egg Hunt after church on Easter Sunday. If you know ahead of time that a friend or grandchild will be joining us, please mention let me knowit will help in the planning.



Music Department

Mark Quintana

We would like to welcome Peggy Angus back to the choir after having some health problems. Our tenor section is small in number, and she was missed by the other singers.

On March 11th we enjoyed the children singing "Truly God is Good" (M. Barrett).

Selections for Lent and Easter include "Send Down the Fire" (M. Haugen) for Lent, "The Road to Dark Gethsemane" (Parker/Drennan) for Palm/Passion Sunday, and "Christ Arose" (R. Lowry) for our Easter Sunday Anthem. We also look forward to having our trumpet player Joe Porcelli play for the service, which is always a special addition to our regular presentations.

2012 MORNING WORSHIP ASSIGNMENTS MARCH - JUNE			
DATE	GREETER	LAY READER	COFFEE HOUR
Mar 4	K. Tilney	P. Angus	N. Best
Mar 11	S. Moran	F. Decker	G. LaFace
Mar 18	J. Barry	K. Barry	H. Altomare
Mar 25	Morgan	L. Majowka	Frankie/Majowka
Apr 1	K. Tilney	N. Best	Angus/Tilney
Apr 8/Easter	H. Altomare	J. Deitz	R. Thomas
Apr 15	S. Moran	J. Neal	K. Tilney
Apr 22	K. Tilney	A. Stevens	D. Stevens
Apr 29	Morgan	D. Mayo	Bird/Scott
May 6	K. Tilney	B. Mullahy	Tilney/Wiswall
May 13	S. Moran	S. McKay	Hall/Mayo
May 20	K. Tilney	D. Jones	Burgess/Gallo
May 27	Morgan	S. Moran	G. Laface
June 3	K. Tilney	C. Taylor	Kellogg/Light
June 10	H. Altomare	L. Scott	S. McKay
June 17	J. Barry	K. Barry	H. Altomare
June 24	Morgan	L. Majowka	Frankie/Majowka

Local Mission Concerns

Sean Moran

The food pantry at St. Joseph the Worker church is in need of Pork and Beans, canned veggies, tuna, tomato sauce, juice in plastic containers, dish detergent, small shampoo, powdered milk, toilet paper, rice, instant potatoes, jelly and peanut butter. Please consider picking up a little extra when you are shopping and place your donation in our food basket at Narthax of the church.

Looking ahead to spring: Thursday's Child will be having a Spring Champagne Gala on June 14, 2012 held at Flowerfield Celebrations, 199 Mill Pond Road, St. James, NY from 6:30pm to 9:30pm. The event is to benefit their Safety Net Project providing an array of family services designed to maintain medical care and personal dignity. Tickets start at \$75. Please go to Thursday's Child's web site for more information and donation/ sponsorship information. John Deitz a former member of the Board for Thursday's Child is one of the honorees.



Holy Week Services

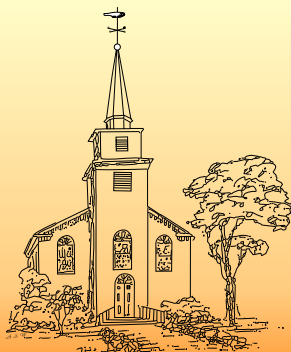
Palm Sunday April 1 10:00am
Communion and Distribution of Palms
Sermon: "The Point Of No Return"

Maundy Thursday April 5 7:00pm
"In the Upper Room" Service in the Gallery

Good Friday April 6 7:30pm
Service at United Methodist Church of Bellport

Easter

April 8 6:00am
Sunrise Service at the Bellport Dock
10:00am **EASTER SERVICE**
Sermon: "He Has Been Set Loose in the World"



Old South Haven Presbyterian Church

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