

CROSSTIES

APRIL 2016

PASTOR'S THOUGHTS: THE GOOD SHEPHERD

I try not to inflict my travel reminiscences on you too much, but... I had a great time in New Zealand! It is a beautiful country, and I've loved visiting our son there and getting to know his new home.

New Zealand is famous for many things, most recently as the vacation destination for those who love the films on the "Lord of the Rings" and "The Hobbit," all six of which were filmed there. It has also long been noted for its sheep ranching. Perhaps you have heard it said that New Zealand has more sheep than people. That has been true for ages, though it may not be quite accurate today.

So here's the connection at work in my mind. Our scriptures were written in a time and a culture that depended heavily on sheep for food, clothing, and religious practices. King David was a shepherd, first literally, then metaphorically. Psalm 23 ("The Lord is my Shepherd") is one of the very first scripture passages most of us learned. Jesus is the "Good Shepherd" who lays down his life for his sheep.

Among the many stories in the four gospels about what hap-

pens after the resurrection is an account of Jesus meeting the disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee where they have gone back to fishing.

You'll find the story in John, Chapter 21. The story culminates in a dialog between Jesus and Peter. During Jesus' trial, Peter had three times denied knowing Jesus or having any association with him. Now Jesus three times asks Peter if he loves him. Peter tries to assure Jesus that yes, he does love him. This is a painful exchange but seems intended by Jesus to open Peter's wounded heart and heal it with forgiveness and grace. Three times Peter answers Jesus, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." And each time Jesus reaffirms Peter by commissioning him to "feed my lambs," "tend my sheep," and "feed my sheep."

There is so much grace in this encounter: tenderness, forgiveness, healing, trust, restoration, and great love. I can only imagine how overwhelmed



Peter was with gratitude and love in return. I also believe that this encounter was meant as a paradigm for our relationship with Christ. Our intentions may be great, but so also may be our failures. Yet I am convinced that Jesus never gives up on us, that he always approaches us with this same honest, tender question: "Do you love me?" And to the extent that we answer humbly, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you," then we may also experience again the depth and power of his grace, healing, and restoration.

This was the Easter story for Peter. It is our Easter story as well. It is grace and it is a commissioning: Feed my lambs... tend my sheep...feed my sheep."

—Rev. Rob Williams

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**UNITED CHURCH OF
SPRING VALLEY**

*Affiliated with Reformed Church in
America & United Church of Christ*

Pastor

The Rev. Robert D. Williams,
D.Min.

Office Manager

Carolyn J. Giles

**Director of
Music Ministries**

Melissa Manning

Assistant Director of Music:

David Adams

Gospel Choir Director

Justin Footman

Crossties Editor

Marianne B. Leese

CONSISTORY

Elders

Robert Kinsley

Lynn Boulter (Clerk)

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Deborah Stedje

Milton Stewart

Robert Craig

Lizabeth Miedowski

Together, we strive to serve
and love our neighbors in
Rockland County and the re-
gion around us, and to support
the mission work of Christ's
church, in this country and
throughout the world.

SPRING CONCERT, APRIL 10

All are welcome to the Spring Concert, Sunday
afternoon, April 10 at 2:00 in the sanctuary.
Local guest choristers will join our Chancel Choir
in singing anthem favorites as well as the beauti-
ful and moving *Praise the God of Resurrection:
An Easter Cantata* by Mark Hayes, Lloyd Lar-
son, Joseph Martin, and Ruth Elaine Schram.



This short cantata takes us through the last day's of Jesus' earth-
ly life and is a blend of scripture and inspired music, a reminder of
the power of the living God. Liz Miedowski will be the narrator.

A volunteer orchestra will accompany the choir, all under the di-
rection of our director of music ministries, Melissa Manning.
There will also be a special guest appearance by Samuel
Waymon, brother of Nina Simone.

Admission is free.

SAFE HAVEN AT UCSV APRIL 11-13

Elements for a hot meal are needed when Safe Haven is at our
church for three evenings, beginning Monday, April 11. See the
sign-up sheets on the piano in the Mendum Room.

Safe Haven is a hospitality network of 26 houses of worship,
which provides overnight shelter and a hot meal to anyone who
needs it, and is administered by Helping Hands Interfaith Coalition
for the Homeless.



GIVE NOW TO CWS HYGIENE KITS

Through April 10, monetary donations are being
accepted for Hygiene kits for Church World Ser-
vice. The Missions Committee will buy the sup-
plies needed for each kit and invite people to help
assemble the kits toward the end of April.

To help determine what to give, CWS figures that one kit costs
\$15 plus there is a \$2 processing fee that CWS uses to process
the kits at their warehouse in Maryland.

Please place your donation in an envelope marked "CWS Kits"
and place in the offering plate by April 10, or mail your gift to
United Church of Spring Valley, PO Box 398, Spring Valley, NY
10977-0398. Please make checks out to United Church of Spring
Valley and mark on it that it is for CWS Kits.

Hygiene kits make a difference between health and sickness for
struggling families around the world. Please give whatever
amount you can.

TOMORROW IS A NEW DAY: THE FUTURE OF UCSV

The Sunday that I left for New Zealand, we used the sermon time to have another congregational discussion about the future of our church. I am grateful for the way in which these conversations have taken place. As we all love our church dearly, we all want only good for our future. It takes courage on your part to look honestly at the implications of what is happening in our county and our congregation. It will require both courage and wisdom to chart a course for the year ahead and beyond.

Before I left, I updated you on our thoughts about neighboring congregations with whom we might explore partnerships of some kind. I encouraged you to visit those churches or others of interest to you. I suggested you get a sense of who they are, how they worship, what they value, what we may have in common, and how we may differ. I hope that many of you have done that. I look forward to hearing about your visits and what you experienced.

I am very conscious of the passage of time as my retirement approaches. Some of that is because there is so much Nora and I must do to prepare for that day, not least of which involves selling our house and finding our new home. But even more, I feel my own growing sadness about leaving this family of faith that means so much to me, and has given me and my family such loving care. Every service takes on added emotional significance as I recognize it is the last one of its kind at which I will serve as a pastor. Many more "lasts" lie ahead for me. In some sense, that's also true for you; that's the nature of change.

Because it is important that we keep talking, exploring, and praying together about God's call for your future, I want to take time in the worship service again on April 10. I also want to have opportunity for us to talk together in smaller groups.

On some of the Sundays during my absence, there were Consistory members who invited you to sit with them after worship to talk about your questions, concerns, and ideas. I think this is an important part of the way we seek out the best path forward. So I



The Sunday School children show off the palm crosses they made on Palm Sunday with the assistance of Bruno Neretich.

and some consistory members will host more of those group con-



versations after worship on April 10 and 17. I also welcome requests for one-on-one visits. Call me and I'll meet you here in my office or your home or over a meal in a diner.

It is not for me to tell you what you must do for the future of the church. Your Consistory bears formal responsibility for adopting a plan for the future. If that plan involves a move of some kind, then it must be approved denominationally. But our Consistory and our denominations know that any decision must be supported by a great consensus of the congregation in order to succeed.

In the May *Crossties*, I plan to write about our financial and missional responsibilities. This will coincide with our stewardship season. With the departure of those members who have already left and those who will be leaving in the next year, the building of the budget for 2016-2017 will, I believe, intensify our reflections on the future and give them an added pragmatic focus.

As always, I ask you to pray for our church, to pray for one another, and to pray for me. In this Eastertide, I believe in the future!

—Rob

INVITATIONS

**Baby Shower,
April 3, after
church.** During
fellowship hour
we will shower



Melanie & Miguel DeJesus-Russell with our love and best wishes as they anticipate the arrival of their baby boy. Melanie is registered at Babies R Us.

Race & White Privilege (Not for Whites Only), 7:30 P.M., Wednesday, April 6. The Rev. Lori Knight-Whitehouse is leading a monthly conversation on the book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander. Meet in the Colonial Room at New Hempstead Presbyterian Church, 484 New Hempstead Rd., New City.

Afternoon Tea, 2 to 4 P.M., Thursday, April 14. Come for tea and good conversation in the Mendum Room. Need a ride? Contact Debbie Stedge, 914-953-8674.

Men's Fellowship, April 16, 9 A.M., Nanuet Diner. Please let Jeff Miedowski, 845-354-8073 know that you plan to be there.

Ladies Night Out, 5 P.M., Saturday, April 23. Next dinner date is at Davey's Irish Pub & Restaurant, 5 Park St., Monvale, N.J. Please let Carolyn Giles know that you plan to attend, 845-356-2863 or unichurch@aol.com.

PASTORAL LETTER REGARDING THIS SEASON'S POLITICAL RHETORIC

March 13, 2016

As the Executives of the Regional Synod of New York, Reformed Church in America and the New York Conference, United Church of Christ, we join our voices and hearts in solidarity with the statement just offered by the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church and the Council of Conference Ministers of the United Church of Christ with the following Holy Week statement:



On Good Friday the ruling political forces of the day tortured and executed an innocent man. They sacrificed the weak and the blameless to protect their own status and power. On the third day Jesus was raised from the dead, revealing not



only their injustice but also unmasking the lie that might makes right.

In a country still living under the shadow of the lynching tree, we are troubled by the violent forces being released by this season's political rhetoric. Americans are turning against their neighbors, particularly those on the margins of society. We seek to secure our own safety and security at the expense of others. There is legitimate reason to fear where this rhetoric and the actions arising from it might take us.

In this moment, we resemble God's children wandering in the wilderness. We, like they, are struggling to find our way. They turned from following God and worshiped a golden calf constructed from their own wealth. The current rhetoric is leading us to construct a modern false idol out of power and privilege. We reject the idolatrous notion that we can ensure the safety of some by sacrificing the hopes of others. No matter where we fall on the political spectrum, we must respect the dignity of every human being and we must seek the common good above all else.

We call for prayer for our country that a spirit of reconciliation will prevail and we will not betray our true selves.

—Reverend David R Gaewski, Conference Minister
New York Conference, UCC

—Reverend Amy Nyland, Executive Minister
Regional Synod of New York, RCA

SUNDAY MINISTRY SIGN-UP—Sign up to be greeter, head usher, liturgist, fellowship hour host. Sign up sheet through July is on the wall in the Mendum Room, next to the kitchenette.

AMONG THE FELLOWSHIP

Wedding Bells

Best wishes to Danielle Steinmann and Casey Bugby, who were married in a civil ceremony at Stony Point Town Hall on March 11. Danielle's parents, Ken & Carol Steinmann, and her brother, Chris, were present for the ceremony. The couple reside in Stony Point.

In Sympathy

Our sympathies are extended to the Rev. Barbara Brecht and her family on the death of her husband, Warren, who died on March 23. Barbara and Warren were members of our church for a few years before moving to Virginia.

Fond Farewell

We are sad to see three of our members recently move out of state. Mary Sloley has moved to Alabama and Ken & Carol Steinmann, to Delaware.

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

Dave Adams
Ed Ball
Rev. Annie Bovian's brother, Robert, and nephew, Al
Virginia Bowman
Karen Breny's brother, Roy
Mildred Brooks, Nyack Manor Nursing Home
Conrad Brown,
Friedwald Center
Cynthia Burrows
Pauline Cummins
Daniel DeJesus
Miguelina DeJesus
Tom Greer, Carolyn Giles's bro.
Bobby Hornak
Keith Jones
Althea Mundy's mother
Garrick Mundy's mother
Audrey Nawoschik
Pat Neary
Stan & Georgianna Polhemus
Danielle Sorace, Chris Sorace's wife and Bob & Ursula's daughter-in-law
Ed Sorace, Bob & Ursula's son

FIRST SUNDAY

Please remember to bring nonperishable food items to church the first Sunday of each month (Communion Sunday) to help meet the needs of our own members and to give to the food pantry at the United Methodist Church of Spring Valley.

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Peter Andersen
- 3 Camille Van Schaick
- 7 Garrick Mundy
- 9 Deidre Russell
- 13 Dylan Branford
- 14 Mildred Brooks (age 105)
- 14 Wilma Keidel
- 14 Heather Viltimard
- 14 Mary Sloley
- 23 Bruce Brown

Is your name missing from the list? To have it added, please contact the church office.

AN EASTER THANK YOU

Holy Week and Easter Sunday were very special this year. I especially enjoyed the Tenebrae Service for Good Friday. We all felt closer to Jesus and his suffering that night.

I would like to thank Pastor Rob for his excellent leadership and guidance during this Easter season, Carolyn Giles for all her hard work in the office and creating beautiful service bulletins, Justin Footman for his great job as the gospel choir director, and Althea Mundy for her work in preparing the children for the

Easter Pageant. Special thanks also go to Ed Kirstein for helping to secure the timpani for Easter, David Grammerstorf for adding percussion to our Easter service, as well as Fred Brown for enhancing the service music with his trumpet playing. Thanks also to Kathleen Kelly, our soprano soloist on Easter. A very special thanks to our "Gal Friday" Cintia Gondin, who has been so helpful in keeping our music library organized and clean in addition to singing soprano in both of our choirs.



Please let our choir members and me know if you enjoyed hearing something that we presented. It's always great to receive positive feedback and constructive ideas. Anyone can join our choirs without auditioning

—Melissa Manning
Dir. of Music Ministries

STORYTELLING—MY FAITH JOURNEY



Tom Cramer

This month Tom Cramer shares his faith journey. He is a lifelong member of the church and sings in Chancel Choir.

For the first twenty years of my life, I lived at the opposite end of Church Street, a stone's throw away from the United Church of Spring Valley. I was baptized at this church by the Rev. David Jenks. Although my mother attended, my father was a non-practicing Catholic.

My first memories of the church include Sunday school with Jane Steinmann and Children's Day. This day was always particularly exciting because we each received a new bar to our Sunday School pin. During the summer months we looked forward to Vacation Bible School.

When I was about eight or nine, I started singing in the children's choir. The choir director at the time was Marilyn Sneden. She was very patient and helped me overcome my fear of performing before the congregation. I soon realized that I loved singing and noticed how it enhanced my worship experience (which it still does to this day).

The church and its surroundings were becoming a bigger part of my life. There was choir practice on Thursday, Boy Scouts in the Fellowship Hall on Friday, Little

League in Memorial Park on Saturday, and church on Sunday.

One week before my twelfth birthday the church welcomed a new pastor, the Rev. Elmer Hausmann. He helped nurture and develop the foundation of my faith as a young adult. As our youth group leader, he would take us to plays and movies with poignant topics and lead us in discussion about them afterwards. There was summer camp as well as retreats at Warwick Conference Center. He was also instrumental in the formation of a larger youth group within CREW (Central Rockland Ecumenical Witness), which included five other churches in the area. This strengthened the youth group by growing it in members as well as adding diversity.

After a year of study, I became a confirmed member of the church. The following year I decided to pursue a God and Country award from the Boy Scouts. It involved a year of memorization, such as the books of the Bible and the Apostles Creed, as well as weekly sessions with Rev. Hausmann. During one of our discussions we were talking about faith, and the word "intangible" came up. I asked the Reverend what that meant, and he described it as something that is hard to define or grasp. It was at the moment that I realized that faith is something that you have to work at. The first line of the Nicene Creed states, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and all things visible and invisible." I don't think I knew it then, but I would come to find

out that faith will carry you through the good times and bad.

While I was attending college in upstate New York, Rev. Hausmann was killed in a tragic accident. This was a great loss for me and for the church. After graduation I came home and was living on my own for the first time. Being busy with work, I drifted away from the church. A few years later while visiting my mother, she mentioned the church had a new pastor, the Rev. Jon Norton. Jon did not need a microphone while preaching. He had that voice and a smile, and you felt like he was talking to you. Soon I was attending church again. Jon's wife, Gloria, was the choir director and she welcomed me back into the choir.

A short time later, Judi and I were married. The following year I lost my mother, and my father's Alzheimer's had progressed to a point where he had to be placed in a nursing home. This was the most grief that I had ever felt in my life, but I was blessed with the support of Judi's loving family. Soon after, my daughter, Alexis, was born. It is said that when one door closes another opens and I found that to be true.

I have been blessed to have three wonderful pastors nurture my faith during my adult life, Jon, Jack and now Rob. I would also like to thank my church family for all their support and fellowship through the years, and I'm thankful to call the United Church my home.



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FindUs on Facebook!

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<p>Mon.Fri., 7:30 A.M. Rockland Interfaith Breakfast Pgrm.</p> <p>Mon.Thu., 8 A.M. 12:30 P.M. BOCES ESL Classes</p> <p>Mon.Sun., 7 P.M. Iglesia Cristiana</p> <p>Coming Up May 24 Potluck Dinner & Mini-Auction</p>					8:00 A.A. Mtg., DeVoe Fellowship Hall	
<p>9:00 & 11:30 Chancel Choir Rhrl. 10:00 Worship & Sunday School 11:00 Fellowship Hour & Baby Shower, Mendum Rm. 5:30 Four Churches Mtg., Fellowship Hall</p>		7:15 Elders Mtg.	<p>7:30 Trustees Mtg. 7:30 Concert Rhrl. 7:30 Race & White Privi- lege Discussion, New Hempstead Presby. Ch.</p>	<p>7:30 United Sounds of Praise Choir Rhrl. 8:00 A.A. Mtg., DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p>8:00 A.A. Mtg., DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p>9:00 Men's Fellowship, Nanuet Diner</p>
<p>9:00 Chancel Choir Rhrl. 10:00 Worship & Sunday School 11:00 Fellowship Hour, Mendum Rm. 1:00 Concert Warm-up 2:00 Spring Concert Cantata, Sanctuary</p>	<p>8:30 Safe Haven, DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p>7:30 Consistory Mtg. 8:30 Safe Haven, DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p>8:30 Safe Haven, DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p>2:00 Afternoon Tea, Mendum Rm. 7:30 United Sounds of Praise Choir Rhrl. 8:00 A.A. Mtg.</p>	<p>8:00 A.A. Mtg., DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p>8:30 Metro Assoc. UCC Spring Mtg., Mt. Vernon Hgts. Congregational Church</p>
<p>9:00 & 11:30 Chancel Choir Rhrl. 10:00 Worship & Sunday School 11:00 Fellowship Hour, Mendum Rm.</p>	<p>Crossties Deadline</p>			<p>7:30 United Sounds of Praise Choir Rhrl. 8:00 A.A. Mtg., DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p>8:00 A.A. Mtg., DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p>5:00 Ladies Night Out, dinner at Davey's Irish Pub & Restaurant, 5 Park St., Montvale, N.J.</p>
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Musical *Hairspray*, Ramapo High School
 Steven Branford, Director
 7:30, April 8 & 9 and 2:00, April 10
 \$8 students; \$10 adults; \$5 seniors, veterans



**UNITED CHURCH
OF SPRING VALLEY**

11 E. Church Street
Spring Valley, New York
Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 398
Spring Valley NY 10977-0398

Phone: 845-356-2863
E-mail: unichurch@aol.com

Website: [unitedchurchofspringvalley.org](http://unitedchurchofpringvalley.org)
FIND US ON FACEBOOK!

WORSHIP & SUNDAY SCHOOL 10 A.M.
OFFICE HOURS: MON.-FRI., 9:30-3:30

**No matter who you are or where
you are on life's journey, you are
welcomed at United Church.**

COMMUNITY GARDEN IN SPRING VALLEY

Spring Valley residents are invited to grow healthy and nutritious vegetables in the community garden located next to the pool in Memorial Park. Free garden plots (4' x 10') are available, first-come/first-served, with seeds, tools, and water also available on the site.

- * Saturday, April 2, 10 A.M to 2 P.M.: Garden cleanup – Help prepare the garden and your own plot. (Raindate: Saturday, April 16)
- * Saturday, April 23, 10 A.M.: Earth Day Blessing of the Garden
- * Saturday, May 14, 10 A.M to 2 P.M.: Garden planting; garden experts will be on hand to offer advice.
- * Sunday, May 15, 1 to 4 P.M.: Garden planting; garden experts will be on hand to offer advice.

To reserve a plot and/or volunteer to help prepare the garden, contact Garden Coordinator Elise Bilali-Nyota at 845-406-3751 or elisebilalinyota@gmail.com.

This garden is made possible by the Village of Spring Valley and the Rockland County Department of Health, with support from Wickes Arborists and Konbit Neg Lakay in Spring Valley.

FIRST
CLASS
POSTAGE

UNITED CHURCH OF SPRING VALLEY
PO BOX 398
SPRING VALLEY NY 10977-0398