

CROSSTIES

MARCH 2016

PASTOR'S THOUGHTS: PRACTICING

"Practice what you preach!" That's a phrase we've all heard. We know what it means, and usually it comes with a bit of irony, if not sarcasm. I don't know where or how it originated. Since it has the word "preach" in it, I suspect it began as an accusation aimed at clergy who failed to live the way they preached others to live. Ouch! They're talking about me!

First, a defense. Of course there is and always will be a gap (a chasm?) between what we (I) preach and what we (I) practice. Our faith tells us that only Jesus perfectly practiced what he preached, and some of the stories about him are cause for doubt about that. So it is inevitable that every preacher like every pew warmer will fail to practice what s/he preaches. That's a good reason to include a Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon in every worship service.

On the other hand, preachers in particular are sometimes the worst at practicing what they preach. Here I am not just referring to financial scandals or sexual abuse of minors or adults. I'm talking about our day-to-day garden variety failures to do even the basic

things that we tell others they need to do.

Those central spiritual practices that we preach to nurture our faith and discipleship, like prayer, Bible reading and meditation, tithing, and serving others (who aren't our own church folks).

This is exactly why preachers need Lent for themselves. Of course the danger is that we'll do Lent the way we do the rest of the church year: tell others to do what we won't find time to do ourselves! Too many years this has been true of me. Perhaps it's a function of age, but I seem to have done a little better in the last few years. Or perhaps it is related to all that has gone on in my life during this period. In any case, I welcome this communal season of reflection and a little more intentional time to spend with God. Don't get me wrong, I can predict it will remain spotty, but I know I want it and need it. Plus, you've given me some time away in which I can/might do it.

For the next two weeks, Nora and I will be traveling around



the south island of New Zealand in a campervan. We'll roam about from campground to campground, national park to national park, surrounded by nature's glory, God's handiwork. No agenda, no responsibilities except to enjoy creation, enjoy each other, and enjoy the God who made us and all this. I hope I'll take time each day to read my Bible a bit, pray a bit, journal a bit, and sink into the strong, warm embrace of my God.

This Lent, I'm making a real stab at practicing what I preach. That's my prayer for you too.

—Rev. Rob Williams

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Faith Journey

**UNITED CHURCH OF
SPRING VALLEY**

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

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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.

WOMEN'S SUNDAY, MARCH 6



**Rev. Dr. Marsha
Williams, guest
preacher**

Do join us for worship on March 6 when women of the church lead us in worship. The theme is "Celebrate the Gifts of Women." The Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams will be preaching on "A Holy Hook-Up," based on Mark 5:24-35.

Rev. Williams is the Associate Conference Minister for Clergy and Authorized Ministry Concerns in the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ.

As has become our tradition, a special tablecloth will be spread on the communion table. Over the years, we have written on it the names of women who have played an important part in our lives. Names may be added to the tablecloth on Women's Sunday.

PALM SUNDAY SERVICE

With palms and hot cross buns we will celebrate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. The children will go downstairs following the children's message for the Children's Workshop to make palm crosses.

Orders for Easter flowers are due Palm Sunday.

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

**Maundy Thursday Upper Room Communion
Service, 7:30 P.M., March 24**

**Good Friday Tenebrae Service
7:30 P.M., March 25**



EASTER SUNDAY CELEBRATION, MARCH 27

During the 10 A.M. service, the children will present "The Easter Story" in place of the children's message. And as always, the service ends with the singing of the "Hallelujah" chorus from *The Messiah* by G. F. Handel. All who wish may join the Chancel Choir at the front of the sanctuary in singing this perennial favorite. Music will be provided.

GUEST PREACHERS IN MARCH

While Rev. Rob & Nora Williams are away, the Rev. Lauri Craig will be available for any pastoral care needs. She may be reached at 845-735-4346 (home) or at 315-317-5740 (cell).

Preaching in Rob's absence will be:

March 6, Women's Sunday, the Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams

March 13, the Rev. Sara Henke, Stony Point Center

TOMORROW IS A NEW DAY: THE FUTURE OF UCSV



As I listen to folks all around the church, I hear so many different feelings about our church's future. Some are sad, even fearful. Some are glad we are finally talking about the "elephant in the room." Some are hopeful, even excited about creating something new and energizing. Some are angry. I feel

all this myself at different times.

I think the people of God over the ages have all gone through such feelings at times of significant change. Change is almost always hard. It is less hard when you feel like you have stopped banging your head against a wall! Perhaps that is where we are. We have been banging away for several years now to grow our church. I think you can even trace that back to 1980 when the Reformed Church united with the Congregational Church. The two churches needed each other. The new United Church felt all the excitement and energy of a fuller sanctuary, Sunday school, youth fellowship, choir, etc. That initial surge has gradually given way to a continuing decline in members, attendance, programming, and leadership that we have experienced over the past 10 years.

The issue isn't whether or not we want to make a change, because we are changing and have been for years, and not in a healthy direction. The issue is whether or not we have the vision and courage to be proactive about a healthy change. Can we envision and create a new future for our congregation the way our forebears did in 1865, and 1886, and 1980? Can we get excited about what God might do in Rockland County if two or more of our churches found a way to come together in strength of numbers, energy, and diversity of age and culture to create new ministries and missions for Christ? Can we be like Abraham and Sara and say yes to God when God says, I am sending you to a new land where you can grow and prosper; or like the disciples who rose up and went when Jesus said, "Come, follow me."

Ours is not the only congregation in Rockland County that is struggling. All five of our sister RCA congregations are also struggling, some even more than we are. All but maybe two of the nine Presbyterian congregations in Rockland County are struggling, and one is closing. This year, we are saying goodbye to Mary Sloley, the Steinmanns, the Kirsteins, and the Grammerstorfs. Due to distance and winter homes, we see several other families only occasionally or seasonally. At our service on January 10, when I asked for a show of hands from those who anticipated moving in the next two years or so, it seemed that about one quarter of those present raised their hands. Our church's financial secretary, Liz Miedowski, has looked at our records of giving and estimates that without the contributions from the mem-

bers who are moving away this year, our congregational income will drop by a third.

David Grammerstorf has served in two previous churches that chose to hold on until there were too few people left to open the doors. It was deeply painful to watch those churches wither away and die. I hope that won't be our story. I hope we can write a new chapter for our congregation. I don't believe we can write that chapter alone. I believe it will need to be written by people of faith from our congregation and others who want to be faithful to Christ's mission here in Rockland and believe we can be stronger together than alone.

I want to urge you to get to know our sister Reformed and Presbyterian congregations nearby. Consistory members have been visiting many of them. All are wonderful, faithful people with whom we have much in common. Visit a service and get to know them. Take some friends and go visiting, and come back and tell others what you experienced. In terms of geography and similarities, you might especially want to visit the New Hempstead Presbyterian Church (484 New Hempstead Road at Rt. 45, New City) and Germonds Presbyterian Church (39 Germonds Rd., New City). Our church is close to them in many ways, and we already share in some programs. Pray and go; see what God reveals to you.

—Rob

SPRING CONCERT COMING UP APRIL 10



On Sunday, April 10 at 2 P.M., our church is presenting a "Spring Concert" featuring the Chancel Choir, guest choristers, and volunteer instrumentalists in a presentation of *Praise the God of Resurrection: An Easter Cantata*, composed by four acclaimed living composers of church music. You may recognize some of the selections. They were lovely pieces that the Chancel Choir sang last year during Holy Week.

The concert will include several favorite anthems and will be approximately one hour long. Admission is free. Please be sure to pick up flyers when you are in church and forward emails from Carolyn Giles to all your friends and family when you receive them.

Anyone wishing to participate in the concert is welcome to contact me (845-353-4287 or manningschool@aol.com).

In addition we have some great music in store for everyone in the month of March. We are bringing back some old favorite anthems for the Chancel Choir to sing. Selections are very diverse and include: "He Never Said a Mumbalin' Word," an Afro-American spiritual, on Good Friday; "Hosanna, Blessed Is He That Cometh" by Hazel Hedges on Palm Sunday; and "The Lamb, an Easter Processional" by Carl Schalk for Easter Sunday.

Other selections will include: "Morning Has Broken" by Eleanor Farjon and Cat Stevens on March 13 and "Tu has venido a la orilla" ("You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore"), a duet sung in Spanish and English by Cinthia Gondin and Chris Namarubessy on Women's Sunday, March 6. Of course, we will end the Easter service with our traditional sing-along, "Hallelujah" chorus by Handel.

Melissa Manning, Director of Music Ministries



POSSIBLE DUAL AFFILIATION IN UCC AND RCA



The Regional Synod of New York of the Reformed Church in America and the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ have been in discussion about their churches possibly holding dual affiliation. This is interesting because the United Church of Spring Valley already has dual affiliation within these two denominations.

A significant motivation for the dual affiliation is the UCC's Open and Affirming historic commitment to the LGBTQ communities. There is a possibility of forming a new Association within the New York Conference and the possibility for sharing of Conference and Regional Synod staff. Stay tuned.

INVITATIONS

Race & White Privilege (Not for Whites Only), 7:30 P.M., Monday, March 7. The Rev. Lori Knight-Whitehouse is leading a monthly discussion on Race and White Privilege in the Colonial Room at New Hempstead Presbyterian Church. The church is near Route 45 at 484 New Hempstead Rd., New City.

Afternoon Tea, 2 to 4 P.M., Thursday, March 10.

Come for tea and good conversation in the Mendum Room. Need a ride? Contact Debbie Stedge at 914-953-8674.

Ladies Night Out, 5 P.M., Saturday, March 12.

Next dinner date is at Banchetto Feast, 75 S. Middletown Rd. Please let Carolyn Giles know that you plan to attend, 845-356-2863 or unichurch@aol.com.

UCC Metropolitan Association Spring Mtg., Saturday, April 16.

The Metro Association will meet at Mt. Vernon Heights Congregational Church, 9 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. This year's theme: "Be the Church." *Protect the environment. Care for the poor. Forgive often. Reject racism. Fight for the powerless. Share earthly and spiritual resources. Embrace diversity. Love God. Enjoy this life.* Guest speaker: the Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams. Online registration form is available March 1.

AMONG THE FELLOWSHIP

In Sympathy

Our sympathies are extended to Anna deBok, family and friends on the death of her brother Jan Noothout on February 6. A funeral service was held in our church on February 13. Jan served as a trustee, volunteered on Thursdays in the Rockland Interfaith Breakfast Program, fixed things around the church, made the fancy waste bin in the Mendum Room, and designed handy gadgets, such as special poles to change lights and close windows high up out of reach. His quiet presence, humor and grace will be missed.

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
Daniel DeJesus
Miguelina DeJesus
Tom Greer, Carolyn Giles's brother
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
Victoria Stewart
Janet Wade's brothers & nephew

REMEMBER THE FRUIT

Please add bananas, oranges or fruit cups to your shopping list and bring the fruit to church for the Rockland Interfaith Breakfast Program. The yellow basket in the narthex is waiting to be filled up!

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 6 Chris Mallozzi
- 6 Ray Guarnuccio
- 13 Melanie DeJesus-Russell
- 16 Victor Aguirre
- 28 Jack St. Albord
- 29 Keith Jones
- 31 Bob Sorace

Order Your Easter Flowers Now

I (we) wish to order:

Easter Lily(ies), 7" pots @ \$12. Number: _____ = \$ _____

In Memory/Honor of: _____

Tulips, 6" pots @ \$10. Number: _____ = \$ _____

In Memory/Honor of: _____

Daffodils, 6" pots @ \$10. Number: _____ = \$ _____

In Memory/Honor of: _____

Total \$ _____

Plant(s) given by: _____

Please return this form with payment no later than Palm Sunday, March 20, 2016.

You may place them in the offering plate or mail them to United Church of Spring Valley, P.O. Box 398, Spring Valley, NY 10977.

Make check out to the United Church of Spring Valley. Memo: Easter Flowers.

STORYTELLING—MY FAITH JOURNEY



Linda
Cantillano

This month Linda Cantillano shares her faith journey. She is a rather recent attendee of our church and enjoys singing in Chancel Choir.

I guess my faith journey began with my parents. My father was a Catholic from Chile. I know very little about his religious practice. I saw him go to church regularly, only after he became elderly. He always had a crucifix in his home.

My mother grew up Methodist in Puerto Rico and married a man who was Pentecostal. The marriage didn't last but produced my three older sisters and brother. They were raised in a strict Pentecostal home. One of my sisters was eventually ordained in the Assembly of God, where she served faithfully her entire life.

Later, my mother reconnected with the Methodists. My sisters and I went to Sunday school, church camps, participated in pageants, picnics, sang in the choir and attended youth group.

When I was growing up, there were both Pentecostal and Catholic influences (no meat on Fridays, never put anything on top of a Bible, no card playing), but for the most part, we were practicing Methodists.

I was raised in a mostly Italian–Jewish community. The other kids didn't know what Protestant meant, and forget about Methodist. Our church, Fisherman's Methodist in Brooklyn, sat in the middle of a small, residential street in the Italian section. It was an active church community where I attended youth group on Friday nights until I was eighteen.

Years later, the church closed and was eventually demolished. My in-laws kept a pew from the church in their home until they died. It was a heart break to lose that church that had been home for so many years. It was the first time as a young adult I was "without church" and without my mother to provide one for me.

A few years and major life events later, I found myself searching for a church community for myself and young daughter. Park Slope United Methodist in Brooklyn was also a dwindling congregation when I joined. A faithful few did everything. Our pastor was as devout in his faith as he was in his belief in social justice. It was an interesting and inspiring combination.

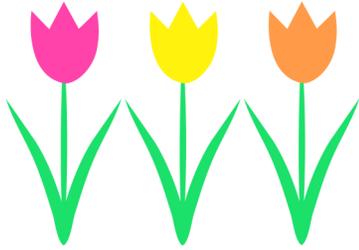
The congregation was spiritually diverse. I was the only confirmed Methodist in the bunch! I knew my scripture, but it was there that I learned to challenge, reconsider and interpret Jesus' teachings in a way that became truly relevant in the way I was living my life. That congregation became family for me and my child, without which I would not have survived those years. It

was a major, painful loss when I moved away after attending and forging relationships for almost thirty years.

In the ten years that have passed, mostly without a consistent church life, my faith has had quite a journey. It's not so easy to stay in touch with God and God's work without a church to do it for you. It's also not so easy when you're faced with trauma and disappointment. I am making an effort to "improve my conscious contact with God." It takes intention, awareness, desire and work to keep your "faith" active and current, beyond what you inherit from your family and traditions.

To this end, mindful meditation has been helpful. In the Christian tradition, they talk about "centering" prayer. I am touched by people who pray regularly and earnestly. It's about developing a relationship with God, as much as we would with anyone else.

I do this best when I intentionally sit silently, quietly for periods of time. A walk in nature is another way I am able to feel especially in communion with God. Being part of a church is another, different form of spiritual nourishment. It has its benefits and value. Right now, though, I'm trying not to let it take the place of my working on connecting with God personally and individually. My faith practice has to be able to survive the loss of my church community. When you're faced "without church," you're sometimes forced back to basics.



March 2016

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Find Us on Facebook!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>Mon.–Fri., 7–8 A.M. Rockland Interfaith Breakfast Pgrm. Mon.–Sun., 7–10 P.M. Iglesia Cristiana Mon.–Thu., 8 A.M.–12:30 P.M BOCES ESL Classes</p>		<p><i>1</i> 7:15 Elders Mtg.</p>	<p><i>2</i> 7:30 Trustees Mtg.</p>	<p><i>3</i> 7:30 United Sounds of Praise Choir Rhrl. 8:00 A.A. Mtg., DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p><i>4</i> 8:00 A.A. Mtg., DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p><i>5</i></p>
<p><i>6</i> Fourth Sunday in Lent Communion Sunday Food Pantry Collection 9:00 & 11:15 Chancel Choir Rhrl. 10:00 Worship & Sunday School 11:00 Fellowship Hour, Mendum Rm.</p>	<p><i>7</i> 7:30 Discussion: Race & White Privilege, Colonial Rm., New Hempstead Presby. Church</p>	<p><i>8</i> 7:30 Consistory Mtg.</p>	<p><i>9</i></p>	<p><i>10</i> 2:00 Afternoon Tea, Mendum Rm. 7:30 United Sounds of Praise Choir Rhrl. 8:00 A.A. Mtg.</p>	<p><i>11</i> 8:00 A.A. Mtg., DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p><i>12</i> 5:00 Ladies Night Out, dinner at Banchetto Feast, 75 S. Middletown Rd., Nanuet</p>
<p><i>13</i> Fifth Sunday in Lent 9:00 & 11:15 Chancel Choir Rhrl. 10:00 Worship & Sunday School 11:00 Fellowship Hour, Mendum Rm.</p>	<p><i>14</i></p>	<p><i>15</i> 5:00 RCA Classis Mtg., Hawthorne Reformed Church</p>	<p><i>16</i></p>	<p><i>17</i> St. Patrick's Day 7:30 United Sounds of Praise Choir Rhrl. 8:00 A.A. Mtg., DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p><i>18</i> 8:00 A.A. Mtg., DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p><i>19</i></p>
<p><i>20</i> Palm Sunday First Day of Spring 9:00 & 11:15 Chancel Choir Rhrl. 10:00 Worship & Sunday School Palm Sunday Workshop 11:00 Fellowship Hour, Mendum Rm.</p>	<p><i>21</i> Crossties Deadline</p>	<p><i>22</i></p>	<p><i>23</i></p>	<p><i>24</i> Purim 7:30 Maundy Thursday Upper Room Communion Service 8:00 A.A. Mtg.,</p>	<p><i>25</i> 7:30 Good Friday Tenebrae Service 8:00 A.A. Mtg., DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p><i>26</i></p>
<p><i>27</i> Easter 9:00 Chancel Choir Rhrl. 10:00 Family Worship & Sunday School Easter Pageant 11:00 Fellowship Hour, Mendum Rm.</p>	<p><i>28</i></p>	<p><i>29</i></p>	<p><i>30</i></p>	<p><i>31</i> 7:30 United Sounds of Praise Choir Rhrl. 8:00 A.A. Mtg., DeVoe Fellowship Hall</p>	<p>April 10—Spring Concert April 16—Metro Assoc. UCC Mtg., Mt. Vernon Hgts. Congregational Church April 28-30—UCCNY Women's Conf.</p>	



**UNITED CHURCH
OF SPRING VALLEY**

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FIND US ON FACEBOOK!

WORSHIP & SUNDAY SCHOOL 10 A.M.

OFFICE HOURS: MON.-FRI., 9:30–3:30



In a world that obsesses over data, statistics, and objectivity, it is easy to regard science and technology as relevant and the Church as anachronistic. Resist the urge to regard religion as obsolete and recognize that with its moral focus the Church complements and balances the advances of modernity. While we don't always live up to it, the Church aspires to live out the highest moral values—coincident with Jesus' teachings. The Church cannot continue to claim that it offers a moral compass for the modern world unless it engages the greatest moral challenge of our time—climate change.

New England Regional Environmental Ministries
web: <http://www.macucc.org/carbonfast>

FIRST
CLASS
POSTAGE

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