

Volume 1, Issue 11

July/August

Summer Issue



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## *High Falls Concert July 22 Features Pastor Debbie*

The Hochstein School of Music is presenting a series of 30-minute outdoor music concerts at Granite Mills Park at High Falls Thursdays at 12:15 through July. You are invited to bring your own lunch and blanket or chair. Come on July 22 to hear Duo Classique, the husband and wife duo of Pastor Debbie and her husband, Willie La Favor. They will present a program of light jazzy and summery classics.

## *June Session Highlights*

### **Financial Report**

- Receipts for May - \$12,328.65      Expenditures - \$12,960.92

### **Items for Action**

- Discussion of possible dates available in July for a Special Session meeting as a Personnel follow-up of the July 16, 2010 meeting.
- Consensus was given to call a congregational meeting for July 18, 2010 to approve the Session recommendation on Designated Pastor part-time and elect a DPNC.
- Volunteers will be sought to form a writing team to establish our Mission Statement.



## *Tidbits From The Congregational Survey*

Thanks to the 62 people from IPC who filled out the congregational survey that is an important component of the transitional process. The survey helps paint a picture of IPC, who you are as a congregation, what current programs you value, what characteristics you desire in a pastor, and your theological beliefs. Together, the findings of the survey help you all understand IPC with better clarity and that in turn aids in nuancing the ways IPC is explained to pastoral candidates.

Many thanks to Tricia who used her knowledge of online survey tools both to put the survey online for better access and to input the paper copy results whereupon the results could be tallied. It was a huge help to be able to rely on her! The whole packet of results is 56 pages long, too long to distribute broadly except to the church officers. We will feature results over the next months in the Chancel News. Here are some tidbits about yourselves and your views on what the church ministry should emphasize:

- 17% of you were not attending church anywhere before coming to IPC. That's some good outreach to unchurched folks!
- The financial giving level of \$1,000-1,499 per year is nearly the median of your giving range.
- You have nearly even percentages of people who have a high school education or less and those who have graduate degrees. 31% of you have a 4-year college degree.
- You are somewhat split over the importance of the church becoming involved in community issues with just over ½ seeing it to be important and even splits above and below.
- Few of you ranked as very important the connection of faith to social, political and economic issues. 91% see those relationships as slightly important or important.
- 94% of you believe the church should help people develop their personal piety with prayer and meditation.
- When it comes to Christian education, more of you (87%) rate adult Bible and Christian tradition classes as important or higher than highly rate contemporary topics (78%).
- You're clear that teaching children about the Bible and Christian tradition is important or very important (98%), but you're somewhat less convinced about the importance of children seeking an open, sense-making faith.
- When it comes to teaching teens, you're less enthusiastic about Bible and Christian tradition classes than you are for children, although you overwhelmingly support it, and both more and fewer of you think it important for teens to seek an open, sense-making faith.
- 40% of you think it's very important for the church to provide fellowship and discussion opportunities for teens, with the majority ranking it as important.

## *Tidbits From The Congregational Survey (cont.)*

- You are evenly divided between those who think that it's very important for the church to provide pastoral care and counseling to members (50%) and those who rank it as slightly important or important.
- You are very mixed about the importance of the church sharing the gospel with the unchurched. 46% say it's important, while a few more say slightly or not important (30%) than say very important (24%).
- You are also very mixed in your desire to support world mission through study and giving. 53% think it's important, 29% say slightly or not important, and not quite 19% view it as very important.

Two of the most striking findings show the generational diversity of the congregation. There are even percentages (19% each) of 40-49 year olds, 50-59 year olds and the 80+ group. 43% of you all are under 60. 47% are over 60. So as the church continues to update practices and behave in ways that accommodate younger people, understanding the generational picture is important.

In addition, the questions that asked about the style you prefer for a pastor were intriguing. 44% of you highly desire a dignified, formal style while 70% prefer a relaxed, informal style. The raw data was even clearer about this split, with a smaller portion being emphatically for formal and another larger portion being decidedly for informal.

Stay tuned for more interesting findings about the diversity of views at IPC!

## *Congregational Meeting July 18 Following Worship*

The Session has called a congregational meeting for July 18 after worship for the purpose of voting on the Session's recommendation for IPC to call a Designated Pastor 50-75% time for a total package not to exceed \$45,000, and to elect the DPNC (Designated Pastor Nominating Committee). Names of the nominees will be sent to congregation members via e-mail or postcard.

## *Blessing Cup in Sanctuary*

In times of anxiety, it's helpful to have a visual reminder of who and what it is that holds the church together: not the pastor, not the elders, not the members, but God's blessings. This isn't even our church; it's God's! At their meeting on June 21, the Session ended the meeting by passing around this Blessing Cup which now sits for the summer on the communion table as a reminder that God's blessing's encompass all our fears and disappointments and shower them in grace.

## *From Debbie's Desk*



It's summertime! Feeling grass between your toes and smelling barbeque wafting through the air, sipping lemonade on the porch and riding bikes around the neighborhood, picnic blankets and outdoor concerts, sand from the beach and flowers from the garden: all these make up the sensations of summer. In the church, summer is distinctive as well: no liturgical holy days and no regular choir, no Sunday school or confirmation classes, members who depart for their cottages or camps. Instead of averaging 60, we'll likely average 40 through the summer. When people bid farewell, saying "See you in the fall," and head for the Thousand Islands, the Finger Lakes, the campgrounds, or for traveling vacations, I always say, "We'll miss you. Be sure to worship wherever you are on Sunday!" Summer is when our understanding of the wider church stretches more than usual, as we worship in disparate places.

Summer is also a time for a different rhythm of life. Kids are out of school, civic organizations meet less or not at all, young adults make trips home and the grandkids come to visit, and area arts groups change their focus or take a seasonal hiatus. As the days get longer, we are fed by the colors and light, we walk or bike more places, and we see neighbors out and about, all bringing a different quality of life to our days. As we live in summertime rhythms, health and wellness emerge and return us to our roots.

The place where I find the rhythms of health and wellness is at Chautauqua Institution. Some of you have been there, and I hope that all of you will have a chance to experience it. I have spent part of every summer at Chautauqua, having been born in the nearest hospital in Jamestown on a summer vacation, and because I have lived in a variety of places, going to Chautauqua is going home. My family roots are there – Andrew is a 6<sup>th</sup> generation Chautauquan – so when I am there, I'm surrounded by reminders of my grandparents and generations before them who loved the place. Chautauqua is a pedestrian and biking community with small streets, front porches, and public space that enable community. People come back year after year and become like family to each other. It's one of the safest places you'll find where people don't lock their doors and kids, as a rare and treasured gift, can be sent off on their own to explore. The community runs to a common schedule, and even if you don't go to particular events, your day is shaped by the community's comings and goings. For me, Chautauqua is a place to be restored, to recover the sanity of a life reasonably lived. Chautauqua offers healing for fractured, frazzled lives, fragmented by the way we so often live otherwise. Because of the connective community and the restorative rhythms, my family and I find it most beneficial to spend chunks of time at Chautauqua that let us thoroughly unwind from our other lives and immerse ourselves in what puts us back together.

The program Chautauqua offers is part of what restores. Hearing some of the best preachers in the country every day for a week, attending lectures for a week by some of the best religious teachers, spending the morning with 4,000 other folks being challenged and stimulated by leading experts and professionals in diverse fields, taking classes and pursuing recreation, hearing 3-4 symphony concerts a week along with big name performers, master classes and recitals, professional operas and plays, and being shaped by a community where discourse is civil and reflective – all of this is the gift of Chautauqua.

When we're there, Willie and I and my mom sing in the Motet Choir, an auditioned choir that sings each morning for worship and forms the core of the Sunday morning choir. For that we get a gate pass that reduces our expenses. Andrew attends, like I did as a child, the Boys and Girls Club, the oldest continuing day

## *From Debbie's Desk (cont.)*

camp in the country. This year, Willie and I will present a Guest Artist recital on July 6 at Lenna Hall reprising the program we did at Hochstein in January, and this time Andrew will join us on one piece. I'm involved with the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, the oldest continuing book club in the country, and on July 28, I'll be presenting a book review. This year, Andrew will be attending the middle school band camp for a week, and I'll be teaching and coaching clarinet students. In between are scintillating weeks hearing preachers Barbara Brown Taylor, Jim Forbes, and Bill Carl, and lecturers Ken Burns and Karen Armstrong and others building an interfaith community among the Abrahamic Faiths.

I know that Pastor Bobbi didn't always take all of her vacation and study leave time. We are told that most Americans don't take all the vacation their jobs allow, and that US workers get and take far less time than our European counterparts. I also know that at IPC, you have a very long history over decades of pastors working too many hours week after week, for their own health and the church's well-being. I'm certain from what I know of your previous pastors going back 30 years and more is that you've been shaped by 50-60-+ hours a week from them, at great peril to everyone's health. I have always believed that the church should be a place of health and wholeness, and that means that the pastor works reasonable hours of 40-45 on a normal week with flexible comp time to compensate for necessary emergencies, and that the church attends to the pastor's needs for balance. As the pastor with whom I did my field work taught: plan for 35-40 hours, and leave 5 open for emergencies. If you don't have any emergencies, there is always ministry work to be done, but if you plan for the full hours and then have emergencies, you'll end up overworking, and to do that on an every-week basis is debilitating. I have presented to IPC the model of a full-time pastor working reasonable full-time hours, and I know that it has felt uncomfortably different to some of you. As you prepare to go to a part-time pastor working 23-34 hours, it will continue to feel even more uncomfortable. Part of your job as a congregation is to help your pastors have health and wholeness, even as part of their job is to help you live into health and wholeness. This interim time presents a good opportunity to help everyone build new habits with intentional awareness.

So as you work on that as a church, I also pray that you will find those places in your personal lives that restore your rhythms of life, that bring you back to your roots, and that connect you to a larger community of meaning. It's summertime, a good time to start!

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## *Concert on the Lawn*



### **July 14th, 7 p.m., New Life Presbyterian Church, 243 Rosedale Street**

Come hear our own Colin Pritchard at a Concert on the Lawn. In addition to being the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Victor, Colin is a Christian Singer-Song Writer.

Bring your lawn chair or blanket and enjoy this evening of music.

## *Worship in July and August*

July 4 Rev. Kathy Madigan preaching  
Lectionary scriptures:  
2 Kings 5:1-14  
Psalm 30  
Galatians 6:1-16  
Luke 10:1-20

July 11 Pastor Debbie preaching  
Communion  
Lectionary scriptures:  
Amos 7:7-17  
Psalm 82  
Colossians 1:1-14  
Luke 10:25-37

July 18 Pastor Debbie preaching  
Congregational meeting following  
Lectionary scriptures:  
Amos 8:1-12  
Psalm 52  
Colossians 1:15-28  
Luke 10:38-42

July 25 The Rev. Laurie Tiberi preaching  
Lectionary scriptures:  
Hosea 1:2-10  
Psalm 85  
Colossians 2:6-19  
Luke 11:1-13

Aug 1 Sister Barbara Moore preaching  
Lectionary scriptures:  
Hosea 11:1-11  
Psalm 107  
Colossians 3:1-11  
Luke 12:13-21

Aug 8 Rev. Lawrence Hargrave preaching  
Lectionary scriptures:  
Isaiah 1:1-20  
Psalm 50  
Hebrews 11:1-16  
Luke 12:32-40

Aug 15 Jack Wheeler preaching  
Lectionary scriptures:  
Isaiah 5:1-7  
Psalm 80  
Hebrews 11:29-12:2  
Luke 12:49-56

Aug 22 Pastor Debbie preaching  
Lectionary scriptures:  
Jeremiah 1:4-10  
Psalm 71  
Hebrews 12:18-29  
Luke 13:10-17

Aug 29 Pastor Debbie preaching  
Lectionary scriptures:  
Jeremiah 2:4-13  
Psalm 81  
Hebrews 13:1-16  
Luke 14:1-14



## *Virtual Circle of Prayer, Thursdays at Noon*

Through the summer, the Circle of Prayer will be entirely virtual. So keep praying! If we truly believe that the church is God's and that we can only get into God's groove by praying, then we have a responsibility to pray expectantly and boldly. Pray wherever you are on Thursdays at noon, and if you forget, pray at another time! Here are the lists for each week:

- July 1            Bill and Mary Girard  
                    Vernie Grammer  
                    Workers and patrons of the public library on Ridge Rd.  
                    Those looking for a new church home  
                    IPC Session
- July 8            Pastor Debbie, Willie La Favor, and their son Andrew  
                    Violet Hanson  
                    Nominees for the Designated Pastor Nominating Committee  
                    Business owners and patrons of our nearby Starbucks  
                    Metro Coalition for Habitat for Humanity
- July 15           Virginia Harrison  
                    Ann Held  
                    IPC's Session  
                    Business owners and patrons of our nearby Salvatores  
                    Culver Ridge Fire Department
- July 22           Carol Herring  
                    Joe, Carolyn, Sara, and C.J. Hinchman  
                    IPC's Church and Community Committee  
                    Business owners and patrons of our nearby PetCo  
                    Irondequoit Food Cupboard
- July 29           Betty Hopkins  
                    Zeke Hurd  
                    IPC's new mission task forces  
                    Business owners and patrons of our nearby Walgreens  
                    FaithLink Transportation for Seniors
- August 5        Gary, Debbie, Kara and Zada Hustis  
                    Timo, Robin, and Issak Huttunen  
                    IPC's Worship Committee  
                    Business owners and patrons of our nearby Bruster's  
                    Joe's Closet

## *Virtual Circle of Prayer, Thursdays at Noon (cont.)*

- August 12    Bev and Jim Jerzak  
 Jennifer and Mo Kantar  
 IPC's Finance Committee  
 Business owners and patrons of our nearby Abbotts  
 Eastern Service Workers Association
- August 19    Ron and Gayle Kendig  
 Cindy, Stuart, Hannah and Emily Kristensen  
 IPC's Property and Maintenance Committee  
 Business owners and patrons of nearby Eastridge Family Restaurant  
 Irondequoit Ministerial Association
- August 26    Kay LaTourette  
 Mary Lauer  
 IPC's Christian Education Committee  
 Business owners and patrons of our nearby Wegmans  
 Literacy Volunteers coordinated by Isobel Goldman

## *Strawberry Social*

Hurrah!! The strawberries are picked, cleaned and frozen, ready to be enjoyed on Saturday, July 31. There was a wonderful crew of pickers, some went from their homes and some from the weekend camping grounds. It was gratifying to have such a wonderful turn-out and we hope they all had a good time. The kitchen crew was equally busy and had a great time. The old saying "many hands make light work" is certainly true.



What next?

Carolyn Hinchman has made a great sign-up sheet listing jobs and hours needed. We hope to see everyone participating on some way; set-up, clean-up and all the things in between. Remember, "many hands make light work."

Along with the strawberries we will have hot dogs, potato chips and soft drinks all reasonably priced. All of the proceeds from this even will go to our church, so we will all benefit.

At the same time Leslie Weber will be holding a yard sale at our church and a percentage of this will also be given to our church. Please see Leslie if you interested.



Let's all participate in this Strawberry Social and make it a huge success.

~ Marge Arend

## *Make A Joyful Noise!*



Children's/Youth Sunday saw several of I.P.C.'s young musicians sharing their talent with family and friends. Many thanks to:



Kenny Conrow - Tuba Prelude



Kenny - Tuba, and Kevin Conrow and Tyler McHugh - Trombones,

for a special musical interlude trio



Andrew La Favor - Piano Offertory



Ian Monigle - Vocal solo on Closing Hymn



Bethany McLean - Flute Postlude

They all did an outstanding job playing their instruments or singing and we look forward to hearing more from them over the summer and throughout the coming years.

There are a few Sundays remaining for people to sign up for "Special Music" during July and August. Just a reminder that two Sundays, July 25 and August 29 are "Pick-up Choir" days...come to the choir room (on the 3rd floor at the end of the hall) at 9:30 a.m. on each of those days and we will prepare an easy or familiar anthem to be sung during the service.

A big and generous "thank you" to Kathy Cherrington for filling in for me on June 20, Father's Day, as we were winding up our over 45-year traditional church camping weekend. Although we were only 6 units of campers, we enjoyed a hot, sticky, rain-free, relaxing weekend. Saturday evening's Pot Luck Supper was it's usual bevy of delicious salads, a variety of meats, and of course, yummy desserts. The consensus of opinion is that Southwoods, in Bergen, NY, is a great place to camp, close to Rochester for anyone who might want to come out for the day, and best of all, the pavilion where we enjoyed Saturday night supper was excellent. No tables to move very far, a big refrigerator, plenty of room, and centrally located with lots of breeze, but an inside venue in case of inclement weather. All in all, it was a great weekend and hopefully more folks will join us next year.

I am looking forward to working with many of you over the next few weeks. May everyone enjoy a good summer, but don't forget Sunday worship with guest preachers and a variety of Special Music endeavors.

~Kathy

## *Thank You*

Thank you to all my church family during the last month of Murray’s time in the hospital, his death and his memorial service.

Betty, Lori, John and Jim

## *Mission Task Groups Forming*

Do you have an interest in deepening the church’s music and arts programs? Are you excited about creating opportunities for hands-on, local outreach?

It’s now time to form two task groups: one to work on ideas for expanding IPC’s music and arts into new avenues for outreach and another to create new ways for IPC to engage in local, hands-on outreach of a service or giving nature. Signup sheets are on the bulletin board across from the office. Each task group will plan to begin meeting sometime during the week of July 11 to brainstorm ideas. Please sign up now so that the mission goals you all selected can get underway.

## *Rochester Community Food Cupboard*

Our Church Family has always shown itself to be a caring and supportive group. Our recent questionnaire showed this and we have always had proof of this by our support of many diverse missions. Such missions are Cameron Community, The Eastern Service Workers, Sunset House, Faith Link Transportation, food cupboards and many, many others.

The Rochester Community Food Cupboard is forever grateful of our support by our food donations, money provided and of course by our hands-on help each month. Mary Lauer, Lee Blowers, Mary Davis, Ron and Gayle Kendig and Burl Etheridge all pitched in this past month. Thanks again to all who contribute food items and to those who help in person.

~Marge Arend

### **Items for July**

- July 4—Toilet Tissue
- July 11—Hand Soap
- July 18—1 lb. Bag of Rice
- July 25—Boxed Potatoes



### **Items for August**

- August 1—Tuna Fish
- August 8—Canned Fruit
- August 15—Canned Vegetables
- August 22—Pork and Beans
- August 29—Toilet Tissue

## *Pastoral Nominating Committee (PNC)*

The church has made a great leap forward in its decision on the future ministry of the church. Now we must move forward to establish a PNC and find our new minister.

We have already attempted to get people to be on the PNC but that attempt lacked the focus we now have as to our future plans. We will now once again ask for people to serve on this committee and to actively guide our church into the future.

I was a member of our last PNC. At the time I was asked I had three teenagers at home keeping me very busy going to sporting events and musical performances. I was completing my four year stint as scoutmaster of Troop 220 as well as membership on the training committee of the Otetiana Council. I had recently served on Session and was singing in the church choir. So my first thought was I was too busy. But as I thought about the PNC I began to realize what an opportunity it was as well as an honor to be asked by my fellow members of this church to serve on such an important committee. I felt a great sense of responsibility and agreed to serve.

We met every week, traveled to Corning for two day opportunity to meet with pastors, listened to many sermons, and interviewed many pastors. This opportunity to serve on this PNC was the most rewarding and delightful experience I have had in this church. As we worked together Gary, Carlene, Jeanine, Kathy, Linda, Jack and I came together as an excellent committee and as friends. As we worked we laughed. We had fun whether it was coming up with questions for interviewing pastors or wearing the same designed shirts to the Corning conference so they would know what church we represented. By the way, the conference coordinator said we were the first church ever to do this and he thought it was great. We did it because it showed our unity and it was a fun thing to do. I still have my sweatshirt.

In summary, my experience on the PNC was the most rewarding committee experience I have ever had. I was blessed to serve with the members of this committee and have never once looked back on this experience and have not smiled. I hope when you are asked that you will give it much prayer. It is a great responsibility and a great opportunity. I guarantee that when this committee calls a minister that you too will look back on your experience and smile.

~ Glenn Murrell

# July Birthdays

Betty	Hopkins	7/4
Dale	Conrow	7/6
Jim	Thomas	7/11
Robert	Monigle	7/15
Jean	Hodge	7/18
Mary	Girard	7/20
Sara	Hinchman	7/20
Tracey	Aiello	7/24
Steven	Bryson	7/25
Ian	Monigle	7/26
Weldon	Brinson	7/26
Chaz	Aiello	7/28
Daniel	Gaede	7/30

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

# July 2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRIDAY	SAT.
<p><b>Note:</b> AA meets every day @ Noon except Sunday</p>				1	2 <u>Office Closed</u>	3
<p><b>4</b> <u>10:00am</u> Nursery/Worship <u>10:15am</u> Summer Sunday School</p>	<p><b>5</b> <u>7:00pm</u> Irondequoit Chorale Board</p>	<p><b>6</b> <u>7:00pm</u> AA</p>	7	8	9 <u>Office Closed</u>	10
<p><b>11</b> <u>10:00am</u> Nursery/Worship Communion <u>10:15am</u> Summer Sunday School <u>11:00am</u> Committee Meetings</p>	12	<p><b>13</b> <u>7:00pm</u> AA</p>	14	15	16 <u>Office Closed</u>	<p><b>17</b> <u>Noon</u> AA</p>
<p><b>18</b> <u>10:00am</u> Nursery/Worship <u>10:15am</u> Summer Sunday School</p>	19	<p><b>20</b> <u>7:00pm</u> AA</p>	21	22	23 <u>Office Closed</u>	<p><b>24</b> <u>Noon</u> AA</p>
<p><b>25</b> <u>10:00am</u> Nursery/Worship <u>10:15am</u> Summer Sunday School</p>	<p><b>26</b> <u>7:00pm</u> Flower City Stamp Club</p>	<p><b>27</b> <u>7:00pm</u> AA</p>	28	29	30 <u>Office Closed</u>	31



# HAPPY BIRTHDAY

## August Birthdays

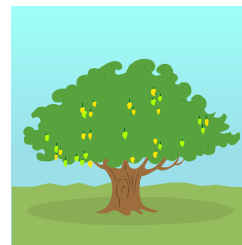
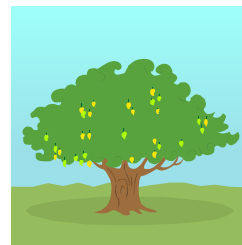
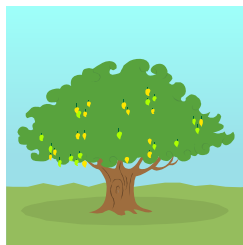
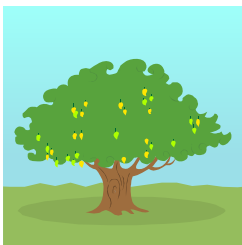
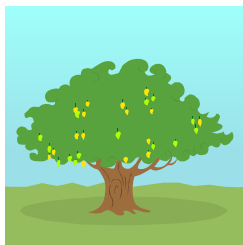


Cody	Thomas	8/6
Sean	Puckhaber	8/7
Gordon	Bryson	8/9
Jennifer	Nicoletti	8/11
Violet	Hanson	8/11
Barbara	Eisenmann	8/12
Margaret	McGuigan	8/14
Scott	Kantar	8/16
Beverly	Jerzak	8/18
Lee	Tuttle	8/19
Jenna	Thomas	8/20
Sharri	Caley	8/20
Steven	Barz	8/20
Zada	Hustis	8/20
Debbie	Grohman	8/30

# August 2010

**SUNDAY                      MONDAY                      TUES.                      WED.                      THURS.                      FRIDAY                      SAT.**

<b>Note: AA meets every day @ Noon except Sunday</b>						
<b>1</b> <u>10:00am</u> Nursery/Worship <u>10:15am</u> Summer Sunday School	<b>2</b> 7:00pm Irondequoit Chorale Board	<b>3</b> <u>7:00pm</u> AA	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> <u>Office Closed</u>	<b>7</b> <u>Noon</u> AA
<b>8</b> <u>10:00am</u> Nursery/Worship <u>10:15am</u> Summer Sunday School	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> <u>7:00pm</u> AA	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> <u>Office Closed</u>	<b>14</b> <u>Noon</u> AA
<b>15</b> <u>10:00am</u> Nursery/Worship <u>10:15am</u> Summer Sunday School <b>NEWSLETTER DUE!!</b>	<b>16</b> <u>7:00pm</u> Session	<b>17</b> <u>7:00pm</u> AA	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> <u>Office Closed</u>	<b>21</b> <u>Noon</u> AA
<b>22</b> <u>10:00am</u> Nursery/Worship <u>10:15am</u> Summer Sunday School	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> <u>7:00pm</u> AA	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> <u>Office Closed</u>	<b>28</b> <u>Noon</u> AA
<b>29</b> <u>10:00am</u> Nursery/Worship <u>10:15am</u> Summer Sunday School	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>				



# THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

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## Should Our Congregation Use Internet Social Media?

The senior pastor of City Church, Rev. Jamie Osborne, serves the world's first "blended-model" congregation—a combination of Web and face-to-face interaction—spanning 100 cities.

Osborne explains the rationale behind the model: "Two hundred and fifty years ago, leaders like John Wesley led a revolution by taking the church outside its walls to where the people are. We're doing the same thing. It just happens that the Internet is where people are."<sup>1</sup>

Many institutions and religious communities now value Internet tools and social networking media. The Library of Congress holds an archive of the collected works of Twitter, the micro-blogging service whose users send more than fifty-five million messages daily. Thousands follow the Twitter posts of pastors Rick Warren and Joel Osteen, while thousands of others post on the Facebook "wall" of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI.

These examples are a small part of the 400 million active users of Facebook, one-half of whom log on to the site daily. Dozens of new social networking sites and thousands of applications emerge each year.

**What Would an Effective Social Media Ministry Look Like?** All types of social media offer a technological opportunity for accomplishing ministry.

As with all other communication technologies, the use of Internet social media must serve the congregation's ministry goals. Unrestricted by a set time or place, people can connect regardless of their schedule or location. Social media tools extend the boundaries of traditional ministry and establish a network of people who interact during the week—not just during worship services or on-site activities.

Wherever people are gathered—in this case, online—a ministry opportunity exists.

**Strengthening relationships.** Social media tools can strengthen relationships among church members and between leaders and members. Through Facebook posts, tweets, text messages, or other media tools, members take part in celebrations (birthdays, births, weddings, anniversaries, graduations, new jobs) and learn about others' challenges (illnesses, losses, deaths). Photos are the most popular feature of social media. Many churches post pictures or videos of events that can be shared with extended family and friends. The networking function of social media allows users to share ideas, resources, encouragement, and friendships.



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**Expanding evangelism and advocacy.** Social media transform the ways churches reach out to people outside the congregation. Different from a congregation's Web site, a church Facebook page creates an interactive tool for people to learn more about the congregation's mission and activities. Anyone can post updates or photos, use it as an online bulletin board or discussion room, call for volunteers, or send invitations to church events. Real-time communication encourages learning, sharing faith, and describing how God is working in lives.

Congregations can also use social media to highlight issues, encourage community volunteerism, and raise funds. The success of Red Cross fundraising for Haiti illustrates this powerful capability. When calls for emergency relief funds spread through social media sites, the Red Cross raised more than five million dollars through individuals' \$10 text-message donations.

**Reaching out to younger adults.** New forms of social media have replaced email as the communication of choice for youth and young adults: to learn what media and movies they prefer, what they are concerned about, and check out their profiles on Facebook or other sites. The use of social media allows congregations to express interest in young people's lives.

**Encountering the culture.** Technology has traditionally been a weak spot for churches. But social media requires almost no additional expense, very little technical knowledge, and a modest amount of time. Congregations already appear in the virtual world through sites that evaluate worship services (such as churchrater.com and yelp.com) and through members who create content (such as blogs or posts). Proactive social media use enables members to show that we are all human, gives others a chance to know what the congregation values, and confirms that worshipers are open to communication with people who might be different from them. Social media use offers a rare opportunity for the Church to become more vital and central in people's networks, more relevant to their daily lives, and more helpful to them in making faith-reflecting decisions.

**How Do Pastors Use Social Media?** At least one-half of the adult population of the U.S. currently creates content for the Web. Internet social media provides a wide variety of communication opportunities not otherwise available to clergy.

**Sharing content.** Pastors already create content on a weekly basis—sermons, prayers, teaching materials, and newsletters. Posting that content or writing material on a social networking site becomes a logical next step for reaching a larger audience. Currently, one in seven pastors maintains a blog—to discuss their interests, what they are reading, what conferences or seminars they are attending, and what they are learning.<sup>2</sup>

**Listening to others.** Pastors gain real-time feedback from members and non-members when they comment on sermons, weekly columns, or anything else the pastor posts. People tell stories, give personal testimonies, contribute ideas, and share concerns. Some disclose thoughts online that they might never voice face-to-face.

**Interacting with a larger network.** Pastors use social media to communicate with a larger and wider range of people: to renew and maintain connections with other pastors, former seminary professors, and other professional or supportive networks. Networking tools even make some administration details more manageable (such as sharing documents and negotiating meeting times).

**What Are the Reservations about Social Media Tools?** Church leaders express misgivings about on-line communication—and for good reason. Caution is warranted because hazards are real. Examples of those misgivings include the following:

**"It takes too much time."** All interactions with people take time. Therefore, social media users must always weigh the time investment with the potential return. Additionally, in the beginning, some time is required to climb the learning curve.

**"It makes the message seem less spiritual and personal."** Some argue that on-line interactions demean the message. As one objector stated, "If God wants a personal relationship with us, how can that be accomplished through email, text message, or Twitter?" Any written communication—whether in

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hard copy or online—carries this risk.

**“The content can’t be controlled.”** When anyone can post comments or content, the possibility exists for some user statements to be off-message or negative. The congregation must decide whether it can dedicate staff or volunteer time to monitoring the congregation’s online presence (such as removing out-of-bounds postings). One benefit of on-line conversations: The congregation knows what others are saying and can respond to it.

**“It risks my privacy and security.”** While social networking sites offer ways to set privacy levels, in reality, all on-line content carries the prospect of becoming publicly accessible. Therefore, whatever content or messages users post should be done with the recognition that this on-line communication has a long shelf life. Users, especially the pastor and staff, should always use their real names on sites to avoid any suggestion of impropriety in their on-line interactions.

**The Bottom Line.** Create a list of your congregation’s most important ministry goals (such as “build and deepen relationships among members”). How might social media help church leaders achieve those goals?

Make a list of reservations and fears about social media. What steps could our church take to neutralize those liabilities or turn them into assets?

In addition to the pastor, identify three to five people to form a social media ministry team. The team members should include tech-savvy people as well as social media beginners who serve to alert leaders to likely mishaps and misunderstandings. Begin the team’s work by reading several excellent resources about social media technology and ministry.<sup>3</sup>

Expect church members to be located everywhere along the social media spectrum—from non-users to experts. Consider offering a social media workshop for church members, which helps them become involved in the congregation’s on-line ministries.

<sup>1</sup>See [www.onebigcity.com](http://www.onebigcity.com)

<sup>2</sup>Facebook for Pastors by Chris Forbes (Ministry Marketing Coach: 2008); <http://ministrymarketingcoach.com/free-e-books/>

<sup>3</sup>Reaching Out in a Networked World: Expressing Your Congregation’s Heart and Soul by Lynn M. Baab (Alban Institute, 2008); The Reason Your Church Must Twitter (<http://www.twitterforchurches.com>)

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