



March
2012

PASTOR'S NOTES



"Spoofery"

It will be Lent by the time you get this issue of the Chatterbox, but I am writing this article on Fat Tuesday, and I'm kicking up my heels. (Please don't try to imagine me actually kicking up my heels!) I figure I'll have time to repent on Ash Wednesday.

Lately, my revelry has taken the form of parodying songs from famous Broadway musicals. This all started last December when I was asked to direct the annual musical spoof at the faculty holiday party at the college. I re-wrote a song, conducted a rehearsal, and then went into hiding on the day of the party. I was only hit by two tomatoes all night. Okay, I exaggerate about the hiding and the tomatoes, but I thoroughly enjoyed myself.

Soon after that event (I hesitate to call it a performance), I started working on a new 30-minute spoof for the 2012 holiday party. So what if it's ten months away? You can never start too early.

The musical that I've been dismantling and rewriting over the past two weeks is *The Phantom of the Opera*. My Muse has been Weird Al Yankovic -- and I must say, I've been on a creative tear. So far I've "redone" three songs from *Phantom*; three or four additional choruses from famous Verdi operas; Luigi Denza's famous Neapolitan classic, "Funicuni, Funicula;" and Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* (yes THAT Queen).

In case you're interested in this craziness, under my pen, *Phantom's* "The Music of the Night" became "The Coffee of the Night" about a ghostly department head at some college that shall remain unnamed that drinks too much coffee late at night. *Bohemian Rhapsody* became an adjunct professor's incoherent lament to his dean about the agony of grading exams.

I've carved out time from my busy schedule to do this. I'm not sure if anything I've written is any good (you'll have to define good at this point), and I may be fired from rewriting any more musicals after they see what I've done to *Phantom*, but this is what I've been

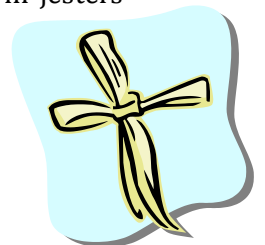
up to during my free moments. It's pretty strange, but it's the truth. And it's certainly too crazy for me to be making up.

I say all of this in order to say the following: humor, ridicule, and "spoofery" are time-honored traditions, in life and even in the church. Many years ago when I was in college, I spent a summer serving as a counselor at a Christian camp. While there, we spoofed some rather well-known and beloved church hymns. "Just a closer walk with Thee, Grant it Jesus is my plea" became, "Just a bowl of butter beans, Pass the biscuits if you please." (You may have your own version; this is a commonly spoofed hymn.) On the other hand, we left the lyrics to "Let Us Break Bread Together on Our Knees" alone, but we added special movements while singing it -- of physically breaking a stale loaf of Italian bread in half by cracking it hard on our knees.

I don't think there's anything wrong with any of this.

Centuries ago, in the medieval church, a special day was set aside each year when laypeople would mock the customs and the leadership of the church. Priests and bishops all became the butt of farcical jokes. The humor was broad and at times coarse -- of the Three Stooges variety and worse. In its own way, I think that this one day of mockery every year reinforced the church's authority on the other 364 days. It was a way of letting off steam -- of adding a bit of color to an otherwise gray and difficult life.

Somehow, I think Jesus would have approved of that medieval tradition, and of much of the revelry that we now associate with Mardi Gras and Fat Tuesday. After all, he himself was known to eat and drink with sinners. And he was always mocking the religious authorities of his own day. Jesus understood that there's a special kind of holiness in jesters and clowns -- and equally, that the most dignified bishops or clerics are susceptible to taking a pratfall at any moment.



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Isn't that the way all of life is? Even today, God is in the business of humanizing us, of bringing us down a peg when we start taking ourselves too seriously.

So it is my hope for you that this season of Lent will be a season of grace. May you discover important insights, and even holiness, in the most trivial things that you do -- in the crossword or Sudoku puzzle you solve. In the entertainment that you attend, watch, listen, or participate in.

Equally, I pray that you will encounter unexpected joy, hope, and even a touch or two of hilarity in your prayer and worship, at work, and during the most serious activities and difficult tasks that you undertake during this holy season.

Blessings to you and your loved ones!

Pastor Chris



MARCH ROAST BEEF SUPPER

March's First Saturday of the Month Supper will take place from 4:30 p.m. till gone on Saturday, March 3 in the church's Lower Hall. The menu will be a Roast Beef Supper. The prices will be \$8 for adults, \$7 for Senior Citizens (age 62 & over), \$7 for children ages 5-10, and children under age 5 may eat for free.

Please enter the lower hall via the Church Street side entrance of the church, which is also handicapped accessible. Everyone is welcome!

WORSHIP LEADER POSITIONS

The Board of Deacons is hopeful that people will enjoy helping out in various leadership roles on Sunday mornings. If for any reason the schedule provided presents a hardship or any discomfort, please attempt to find a person to fill in for you or speak with Ron Moore or Carole Daugherty. Thank you for your willingness to participate.

PLEASE NOTE: Worship leaders are reminded that they need to speak directly into the microphones so that people in the rear of the sanctuary can hear the announcements and the scripture.

Those wishing to volunteer to provide a **Children's Message** should contact Chris Brown by calling 898-4612 or e-mailing her at Browns1992@a-znet.com.

Mar. 4

Announcements: Jeanette Keller

Scripture: Sue Parris

Ushers: Anita Kirby and Laura Eierman

Greeters: Tom and Chris Brown

Refreshments: Linda Mizer

Mar. 11

Announcements: Lucy Dates

Scripture: Phyllis Sims

Ushers: Dean and Edie Luce

Greeters: Anka Orak and Katie

Refreshments: The Hemming Family

Mar. 18

Announcements: Linda Mizer

Scripture: Paul Whatman

Ushers: Eric and Robin Ridley

Greeters: Shirley Avery and Nancy Beattie

Refreshments: Wendy Heine

Mar. 25

Announcements: Theresa Moore

Scripture: Jack VanCise

Ushers: Gary and Kathy Watrous

Greeters: Theo and Richard Moore

Refreshments: Tammy Buck

Please Note: Greeters and Ushers need to arrive around 9:10 a.m.

UCC PARISH LENTEN STUDIES

Pastor Chris and Sue Fast are offering a Lenten study for the three parishes in the Groton Area United Church of Christ Cooperative Parishes.

Place: McLean Community Church

Time: 6:00 p.m. for about an hour.
Soup will be included.

Dates in March: Mar. 6, 13, 20, 27;

Dates in April: April 3

The book the study group will be using is *Reaching Toward Easter* by Derek Maul.

Lenten Study Synopsis:

"Come walk with Jesus along the dusty path from Bethany to Jerusalem. Listen to his words of grace and hope. Eat with him at his last supper -- and witness his crucifixion and resurrection! Drawing from John's Gospel, Maul invites you on a 47-day devotional pilgrimage to prepare you and your small group to live as Easter people." 160 pages, soft cover, from Upper Room.

➡ IMPORTANT NOTE

Starting with the March issue, the Chatterbox will be sent by e-mail to as many as readers as possible and this will be the only copy that you get, **unless you call the office and tell the secretary that you want a hard copy.** Those of you, who don't have a computer or email, will continue to receive the newsletter in the mail.

Please remember that, if you change your email address; notify our church secretary, Mrs. Pagano, at groton.com.church@verizon.net or call the church office at 607-898-3100. Those receiving the newsletter via mail, please remember to notify us of any change of address, as well. - **Trustees**

MARCH CALENDAR

➡ REGULAR SCHEDULE

Every Sunday - Adult Bible Study, 8 a.m.
Children's Sunday school, during worship service

Every Monday, Wednesday, Saturday - AA
Lower Hall, 7 p.m.

Every Tuesday - Book Study
Refreshment Room, 6 a.m.

Every Tuesday - Choir Practice
Sanctuary, 7 p.m.

Every Thursday -- TOPS
Lower Hall, 5:30 p.m.

➡ MARCH EVENTS

Mar. 3 - Roast Beef Dinner, Lower Hall, 4:30 p.m.

Mar. 6, 13, 20, 27 - Lenten Bible Study, McLean UCC, 6 p.m.

Mar. 12 - Trustees, Refreshment Room, 7 p.m.

Mar. 13 - Deacons, Refreshment Room, 6:30 p.m.

Mar. 19 - Church Council, Refreshment Room, 7 p.m.

Mar. 20 - CHATTERBOX DEADLINE

Mar. 20 - Caregivers, Refreshment Room, 6 p.m.

Mar. 21 - Center Village Court Service, 2:45 p.m.

Mar. 21 - Groton Nursing Home Service, 3:30 p.m.



MISSION BOARD

I want to bring your attention to a special plea from the **Groton Food Pantry**, the local mission that we support so faithfully. Hunger is one of the biggest problems facing this country and the battle is going on right here in our own community. The Groton Food Pantry needs help and they have challenged our church to do even more than we have in the past. The Feinstein Foundation gives away \$1 million each year to anti-hunger agencies in the U.S. and Groton is being given a chance to receive some of this money. Please give what you can, through our church, and the Foundation will add money to it. Every dollar donation helps and continues to donate non-perishable foods also as they, too, count. Mr. Feinstein states "I believe each of us was put here on earth to do what we can to help those in need. I feel that YOU believe that, too."

On March 18, we will be receiving our first special collection of 2012 -- the **One Great Hour of Sharing**. This collection allows the UCC to have funds available to be able to respond quickly to natural disasters and other needs. These might be refugee assistance and resettlement, health education, help with agricultural problems. In 2011, for example, Africa received flood relief, Japan benefited with help after the earthquake/tsunami, and South Asia had flooding and dengue epidemic relief. Don't think that only other countries benefit from this collection. Many U.S. states had floods, tornados and other types of disasters and received help from the UCC. In N.Y.S. people were helped after hurricane Irene and there is ongoing disaster support after the World Trade Center disaster. Our neighbor to the south, Pennsylvania, was helped after huge storm damages. Prayerfully consider what you can give to this collection. Envelopes will be available for cash; checks are to be made out to our church.

The **Gift of the Heart Kits** program is one that everyone seems to like to take part in and you will find the information on how to do a kit elsewhere in this Chatterbox. It is easy to shop for the items needed for the health kit or the school kit and you'll find that you don't have to spend a lot. These kits are

designed to be as useful as possible wherever and whenever they are sent throughout the world. Can you imagine if you had been unfortunate enough to be in a flooded area how much you would appreciate a bar of soap and a toothbrush? Can you imagine children not being able to attend school because they do not have any school supplies? Let's do what we can to help so that the UCC will have kits on hand whenever they are needed. If you prefer, you can donate cash since we have to provide money for shipping each kit. **Do not put money in your kit - we send a church check. Kits are due April 15.** I'll gladly shop for you if you don't feel able, just give me the money.

Barbara Exton
Mission Board Secretary



CHRISTIAN ED. BOARD

We have begun our annual fund raiser of selling Gertrude Hawk. If you'd be interested in seeing a book or ordering please contact me at **898-4612**. Orders need to be in by March 4. Items will be here on March 25.

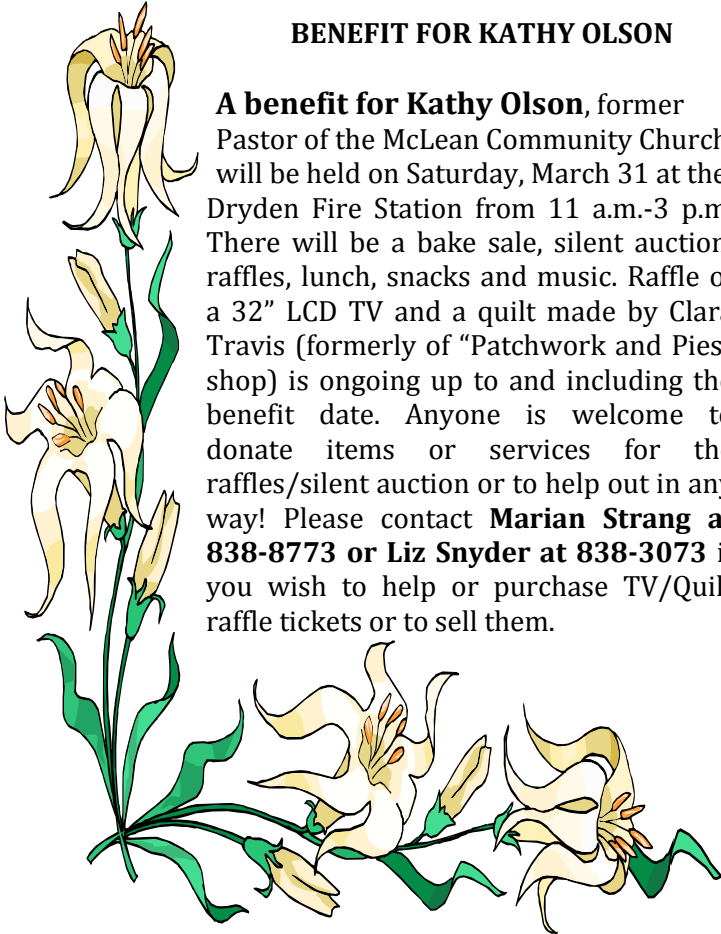
Upcoming events include our annual continental breakfast on Easter Sunday from 7:30 till 9:15. Also the children are working on a Heifer International project. More details to follow.

May God Bless,
Chris Brown



BENEFIT FOR KATHY OLSON

A benefit for Kathy Olson, former Pastor of the McLean Community Church will be held on Saturday, March 31 at the Dryden Fire Station from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. There will be a bake sale, silent auction, raffles, lunch, snacks and music. Raffle of a 32" LCD TV and a quilt made by Clara Travis (formerly of "Patchwork and Pies" shop) is ongoing up to and including the benefit date. Anyone is welcome to donate items or services for the raffles/silent auction or to help out in any way! Please contact **Marian Strang at 838-8773 or Liz Snyder at 838-3073** if you wish to help or purchase TV/Quilt raffle tickets or to sell them.



GROTON COMMUNITY SURVEY

We have been asked to do a hymn sing. To facilitate this [and also for selection of hymns in general] I would like you to consider the hymns you like to sing.

We are going to have two lists: one liturgical (seasons of the church year) and one scriptural -- that's how I pick them and also general favorites especially for a hymn sing (one verse, a chorus or all).

I am asking your help to fill the form out because we cannot assume that there are only a few favorites because we come from various backgrounds. There is also a section that you can fill out for the choir or a special one with your favorite in mind. You can e-mail me or put it in the offering.

Thanks for your help,
Valorie
valxenakis@juno.com

SEASONS OF THE CHURCH YEAR

Please list at least one in each category and hymn number, if you are looking at the hymnal.

Advent (Second Coming) _____

Christmas _____

Epiphany (light) _____

Lent (reflection, prayer, cross) _____

Easter (Joy) _____

Pentecost (Spirit) _____

Trinity (Growth) _____

Psalms, scriptures put to music: _____

GENERAL:

Hymns that you think you could sing anytime:

Choral: you would like choir to sing again

Solo, ensemble: you would like to sing or play

* **Extra Credit***: What hymn would you like to learn because you have heard it, but don't know it well enough yet? _____

TRUSTEES' BOARD REPORT

In a recent building code inspection by the Village of Groton, it was pointed out to us that any assembly area in the church that can hold 50 or more people must have emergency lights installed to light up exits and stairways in case of power failure. While our new construction is up to code, the older portions of our building will need some attention in order to pass. We are currently making plans to upgrade our exit signs in the Sanctuary to include emergency lights and will be installing similar lights in the lower hall and the old Narthex in order to comply. Our plan is to meet the requirements, with a minimum cost and labor using existing wiring as much as possible. This is in addition to the work already in progress to bring the electrical wiring up to code in the lower hall.



Another measure cited requires us to more clearly label where the gas shutoff valve for the kitchen stove is located.

The trustees expect to be meeting Tuesday nights at 6 p.m. to start working on these projects. If anyone would like to pitch in, please check with **John Hoster (898-4864)** or **John Hemming (280-7110)** to see if we will be working, on any given Tuesday.

John Hemming,
Trustees Chair

EASTER LILIES ORDER FORM

Easter lilies are available at **\$9** per plant this year. You may order lilies up to **Sunday, March 4** in memory of or in honor of whomever you would like. Please fill out the following form and return it to the church office before or by the deadline. Checks should be made out to The Groton Community Church, UCC and write *Easter Lilies* in the memo section. Your lily will grace the church sanctuary on Easter morning and then plants ordered may either be picked up or we will do our best to deliver the plant to our shut-ins and bereaved.



My name is _____

I would like to order _____ number of plants.

Please designate my order as:

In remembrance of _____

In honor of _____

GIFTS OF THE HEART KITS



Church World Service Kits are small packages of supplies assembled by volunteers and shipped to people in need around the world. Make a world of difference in the lives of refugees, displaced people and victims of natural disasters. Your continuing support of this program is very important and helps to ensure kits are available for immediate response after a disaster in another part of the world or here in the U.S. Thank you for giving from the heart!!

HYGIENE KITS - In the face of natural disasters, violence or poverty, hygiene kits can mean the difference between sickness and health for struggling families throughout the world.

Include

- 1 hand towel measuring 16" x 28" (no fingertip or bath towels)
- 1 washcloth
- 1 wide-tooth comb
- 1 nail clipper (no metal files or emery boards)
- 1 bar of soap (bath size in wrapper)
- 1 toothbrush (in original packaging)
- 6 Band-Aids



Seal all items in a one-gallon plastic bag with a zipper closure. **Please do not add toothpaste to the Hygiene Kit.** Toothpaste that has an extended expiration date will be added to Hygiene Kit shipments just prior to shipment.

SCHOOL KITS- School kits provide basic tools for children in impoverished schools and refugee camps or other difficult settings some of the basic tools for learning.

Include:

- 1 pair of blunt scissors (rounded tip)
- 3 70-count spiral or tape bound pads of 8" x 10½" ruled paper, for a total of 200-210 sheets of ruled paper. (Please do not provide loose-leaf or filler paper)
- 1 12" (30 centimeter) ruler
- 1 hand-held pencil sharpener
- 1 large eraser
- 6 new pencils with erasers
- 1 box of 24 crayons (only 24)
- 1 12" x 14" to 14" x 16" finished size cotton cloth bag with cloth handles



Pack all items inside the cloth bag. Dollar-type stores are a good place to shop for these.

ALL KITS DUE AT CHURCH APRIL 15
A \$2.00 processing cost is requested with each kit.