

The SPIRE
Park Avenue Congregational Church
The United Church of Christ
Arlington, Massachusetts

The Rev. Dr. William Albright, Pastor

May, 2011

Special worship services in May

Worship services every Sunday through the year at 10:00 a.m.

May 8 – **Anniversary Sunday**: We honor those who have been members of Park Avenue Church for 25 years or more.

May 22 – **New Member Sunday**: We welcome those who have decided to make the commitment to become active members of this church.

other special activities this month

Sunday, May 1 – Walk for Hunger
Stand Against Racism video/discussion

Tuesday, May 3 – PACC-Men go to Chateau Restaurant

Thursday, May 5 – Women's Guild Annual Meeting, presentation by Dick Erickson

Friday, May 6 – Sarah's Circle sees video of Electra

Saturday, May 7 – Welcome brunch

Tuesday, May 10 – Discussion of *The Unbroken*

Saturday, May 14 – Craft Fair and Bake Sale

Sunday, May 22 – Youth Group bike ride to Lexington for dinner
Singing new hymns

Monday, May 23 – PACC-Women discuss hobbies

See inside for more details.

Christian Education News

Sunday School Lent boxes

Please bring your Sunday School Lent boxes back to church in the next week or so. After the questions that have been raised in the media about the financial practices of Greg Mortensen's Central Asia Institute, leaders of the CE Ministry (Josh Young, Barbara Wagner and Kate Lindheim) have decided to donate the money from our Sunday School collection to the Arlington Food Pantry. Please contact Kate if you have any questions or concerns about this. Thanks!

Youth Groups-- Bike ride to Mario's for pizza

It's time for our annual bike ride to Mario's in Lexington center for pizza. The bike ride/dinner will be Sunday, May 22. We'll meet at PACC with bikes and helmets at 4:30 p.m. and ride our bikes on the bike path to Mario's. We'll return to PACC for dessert. Pick up will be at PACC at 7 pm. This is open to members of both youth groups. We'll need a few adults to ride with us. Please let Kate know if you'd like to join us.

Upcoming dates

June 12 Youth Sunday

June 26 last day of regular Sunday School; PACC picnic at Lexington Christian Academy after church

Evening Bible Study continues examination of lectionary readings

The Evening Bible Study Group will continue its series, "From Text to Sermon." Everyone is welcome to join the group Wednesday, May 11, and May 25 at 7:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Room. So that you can prepare, these are the texts:

May 11 -- Readings for Fifth Sunday of Easter: Acts 7:55-60; Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14.

May 25 -- Readings for Seventh Sunday of Easter (Ascension Sunday): Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47 or Psalm 93; Ephesians 1:15-23; Luke 24:44-53. (The Acts and Luke texts will probably be the main focus.)

Singing new hymns Sunday, May 22 (note new date)

Come learn some new hymns! Andy Hart will lead a workshop with the focus of trying and learning some new hymns that Pastor Bill would like to consider for use in worship. Teen and adult singers are welcome -- and if you are non-singer and would like to come and listen, feel free! The workshop will be on Sunday, May 22, (rescheduled from May 1) at 7:00 p.m. in the Nicoll Room (upstairs).

PACC-Men schedule restaurant outing

On Tuesday, May 3, all men are welcome to meet at PACC at 7:30 p.m. to go to dinner at The Chateau Restaurant, 195 School Street, Waltham. All men are welcome. Please contact Mike Rich to let him know if you plan to go and whether you will need a ride.

Dick Erickson will speak at Women's Guild meeting

Women's Guild will gather Thursday, May 5, at 11:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Room for a potluck, its annual meeting and, as a special treat, a program by Dick Erickson. All women are cordially invited. Please call Diane Wells or Doris Wilson to let them know what you will bring for the potluck.

Sarah's Circle to view operatic version of Electra

Continuing their exploration of Greek mythology, members of Sarah's Circle will view a DVD of an opera version of Electra (from Jeffrey Brody's library) on Friday, May 6, at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Merrith Sabo-Jones in Woburn. This will be in lieu of a Saturday morning meeting in May. If you have questions please speak with Merrith, or call her.

Book discussion on *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand

A discussion about the book, *Unbroken*, will take place on Tuesday, May 10, at 7:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Room. Laura Hillenbrand, the author of *Seabiscuit*, has written this new book based on a true story of an airman, Louis Zamperini, who survives many days at sea after a plane crash and then as a POW during World War II. Words like mesmerizing, gripping, stirring and triumphant are used to describe this book. It comes highly recommended by several church members who have already read it. Please come and be a part of the discussion!

PACC-Women to discuss hobbies on May 23

The next meeting of PACC-Women will be on Monday, May 23, at 7:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Room. All women are invited to come and share some of our hobbies or perhaps be inspired with new ideas. For more information, contact Betty Rich.

Minister's Message

As I've said on the past few Easter Sundays, telling a joke at the beginning of the sermon is an ancient church tradition. It's a way for the church to taunt the devil because he has been defeated by Christ's resurrection. I don't know how many people in mainstream churches actually believe in the devil anymore, but the way things have been going in the world lately, some of us would rather not take any chances. There's no way this story is true, so I'm offering it as an Easter-inspired joke.

A pastor went into his back yard one day and found that a kitten had climbed up a tree. If you've ever had a kitten that has done that (I've had a few), you know that they are good at climbing *up* a tree, but some evolutionary flaw has made it so they're not so good at climbing back down. In fact, the kitten I'm telling you about seemed afraid to climb down.

The pastor tried several things to coax the kitten. He reached upwards, calling the kitten to jump. That didn't work. He offered the kitten some warm milk, but to no avail. And the tree wasn't sturdy enough for the pastor to climb. So he sat down and thought about it for a while. At last, an idea came to him—pretty crazy, but it just might work.

He got a rope and tied one end of it to the tree and the other end to his car bumper. Then he drove away, but slowly so the tree would gradually bend down close to the ground. When the branch with the kitten on it got close enough, the pastor could reach up and get the kitten.

The pastor did all this, checking his progress frequently, until he decided that if he went just a little farther, the tree would be bent sufficiently for him to reach the kitten. He inched the car forward until, all of a sudden ... the rope broke! You can guess what happened next.

The tree went "boing!" and the kitten went sailing through the air out of sight. The pastor felt terrible about it. He walked all over the neighborhood, asking people if they'd seen a little kitten. No one had. After searching a reasonable radius from his back yard, he gave up and said a prayer that went something like this: "Lord, I just commit this kitten to your keeping." Then he went back to business as usual, whatever it is that pastors do when they're not trying to get kittens out of trees.

A few days later, the pastor was at the grocery store and met one of his female parishioners. As he stopped to say hello, he happened to glance into the woman's shopping cart where he noticed several cans of, you guessed it, *cat food*. He happened to

know that this woman was not all that fond of cats, so he asked her,” Why are you buying cat food when you dislike cats so much?”

She replied, “Well, you probably won’t believe this.” She went on to tell him how her little girl had been begging her for a cat, but the mother kept refusing. As the begging persisted and Mom got tired of hearing it, she finally told her daughter, “Okay, if God gives you a cat, I’ll let you keep it.”

The woman told the pastor the rest of the story. “I watched my daughter go out in the yard, get down on her knees, and ask God for a cat. And—I know this is going to sound crazy, but a kitten suddenly came flying out of the clear blue sky, with its paws outspread, and it landed right in front of her!”

When we laugh at a funny story, it’s usually because there’s an irony in it that rings true. Some of our prayers are like the little girl asking God for a kitten. That’s prayer as wish-fulfillment, and it’s related to prayers of supplication and intercession. In prayers of supplication, we ask God for help in accomplishing something for us that we are unable to do on our own. Prayers of intercession are like prayers of supplication, only we make that kind of prayer on behalf of someone else.

I believe that God welcomes all kinds of prayers. If we think of God as our heavenly Father or Mother, then our prayers are like children asking their parents for all sorts of things. And what do the parents do when their children ask them for things? Sometimes the answer is yes, sometimes no, and sometimes not now. A good parent will answer the child’s request with what that parent deems, in his or her wisdom, is best for the child.

But there other kinds of prayers that move us more deeply into the presence of the living God. This is when prayer is less like *talking to* God and more like *listening for* God. It begins as something like meditation—you just sit and observe what’s going on, either in your own head or in the world around you. Meditation becomes listening prayer when you sit with a question like: “Where is God in this?” Some people I’ve known use this technique while reading the newspaper. After some practice in this kind of prayer, you may find yourself actually looking forward to regular times of being attentive to the presence of God.

There’s a story about Mother Teresa that a journalist once asked her what she said to God when she prayed. “Nothing,” said Mother Teresa. “I just listen.” So the journalist asked her what God said to *her* in times of prayer. “Nothing,” she replied. “God just listens.” If you get what she means by that, then you’re probably ready to do some listening prayer.

The season of Eastertide, as it is called, is upon us. For the seven weeks between Easter Sunday and Pentecost Sunday, the observant church focuses its attention on the risen Christ. It's a good time for practicing listening prayer as a spiritual discipline. Just be attentive to your thoughts and to the world around you while asking yourself: "Where is the risen Christ present in these things?" You might be surprised at your discoveries.

As I meet up with all the people who are checking out our church lately, I'm asking that question. One thing I keep hearing is that some of our visiting friends like to think of themselves as "Easter people." And some of them, presumably some Pleasant Street Church people among us, have expressed their joy and thanks to the people of Park Avenue Church for "our extravagant and gracious welcome during a difficult time." So why not learn from one another *together* what it means to be an "Easter people"?

"May mercy, peace, and love be yours in full measure!" [Jude 2].

—*BILL*

Blessed by God: Honoring our past, Building our future

Check out the glass display case in the narthex for an exhibit about the building of the sanctuary, which was first used fifty years ago on Easter Sunday, 1961. We hope to create a new exhibit every month or two that will feature some history or some future plans for doing God's work in Arlington. If our friends from PSCC would like to help plan it, we can also do an exhibit about PSCC's history. If you have questions or suggestions, speak with Linda Cohn.

Welcome brunch May 7

If you are new to Park Avenue Church, we want you to know that we are glad you are here. If you would like to know more about our theology and programs, please come to a brunch on Saturday, May 7, at 10:00 a.m. in the Fireplace Room (upstairs). Meet some of our current members, hear about our faith journeys and share yours! If you are interested in becoming an official member of this church, we'll have information about how to do that. Please RSVP to Membership Deacons Scott Jones or Betty Rich or to Kathy Richardson in the church office if you would like to attend.

What's Happening at PACC

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|------|--------|------------|--|
| Sun. | May 1 | 10:00 a.m. | Worship service includes Communion |
| | | 11:30 a.m. | Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall |
| | | 11:45 a.m. | Video/discussion in the Fellowship Room |
| | | 11:45 a.m. | Youth Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room |
| Tue. | May 3 | 7:30 p.m. | PACC-Men outing |
| Thu. | May 5 | 11:00 a.m. | Women's Guild in the Fellowship Room |
| | | 7:30 p.m. | Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room |
| Fri. | May 6 | 7:30 p.m. | Sarah's Circle at 434 Russell St., Woburn |
| Sat. | May 7 | 10:00 a.m. | Welcome brunch in the Fireplace Room |
| Sun. | May 8 | 10:00 a.m. | Anniversary Sunday worship service |
| | | 11:15 a.m. | Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall |
| | | 11:45 a.m. | Youth Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room |
| Mon. | May 9 | 7:30 p.m. | Council of Deacons in the Fellowship Room |
| Tue. | May 10 | 7:30 p.m. | Book discussion in the Fellowship Room |
| Wed. | May 11 | 10:30 a.m. | Staff meeting in the Fireplace Room |
| | | 7:30 p.m. | Evening Bible Group in the Fellowship Room |
| Thu. | May 12 | 7:30 p.m. | Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room |
| Sat. | May 14 | 10:00 a.m. | Craft Fair in the Parish Hall (to 3:00 p.m.) |
| Sun. | May 15 | 9:20 a.m. | Youth Choir rehearsal in the Sanctuary |
| | | 10:00 a.m. | Worship service |
| | | 11:15 a.m. | Communion in the Sanctuary |
| | | 11:15 a.m. | Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall |
| Tue. | May 17 | 7:30 p.m. | Membership Ministry at 15 Bellevue Rd., Arlington |
| Thu. | May 19 | 10:00 a.m. | Women's Coffee at the home of Dorothy Gibson, 17 Mill St., #405, Arlington |
| | | 7:30 p.m. | Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room |
| Sun. | May 22 | 10:00 a.m. | Worship service includes reception of new members |
| | | 11:15 a.m. | Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall |
| | | 4:30 p.m. | Youth Groups meet to bike to Mario's for dinner |
| | | 7:00 p.m. | Singing new hymns in the Nicoll Room |
| Mon. | May 23 | 7:30 p.m. | PACC-Women in the Fellowship Room |
| Tue. | May 24 | | Deadline for June <i>Spire</i> |
| Wed. | May 25 | 7:30 p.m. | Evening Bible Group in the Fireplace Room |
| Thu. | May 26 | 7:30 p.m. | Choir rehearsal in the Nicoll Room |

Sun. May 29 10:00 a.m. Worship
11:15 a.m. Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall
Mon. May 30 *Memorial Day*; office closed

coming later in the year

Sun. June 5 10:00 a.m. Worship service includes recognition of choir
Sun. June 12 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday worship service
Sun. June 26 12:00 noon All-church picnic and pool party

CRAFT FAIR ON MAY 14th!

Please mark your calendars for our 9th annual Craft Fair which will be in the Parish Hall on Saturday, May 14th, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Seventeen talented crafters will be selling unique and affordable crafts including jewelry, earring trees, photographs, wood-turned gifts, scarves, greeting cards, fabric bags, doll clothes, small quilts, wooden toys, baby onesies, cuddle blankets, shoulder bags and more. Remember those birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, graduations, baby showers and other special occasions? The Fair is the perfect venue to purchase all those gifts and something for yourself!

What can you do to help make this Fair successful? First of all, please come, browse, support the crafters with your purchases and join us for lunch. Invite your family and friends to come. A big crowd often translates into more sales for the crafters who then want to return to the Craft Fair next year. Volunteers are needed to bake yummy goodies (individually wrapped please) to sell at our bake table. We also need volunteers to work at the bake table as well as folks who could help prepare and sell lunch which will be available for purchase.

You can obtain flyers from Barbara or Betty for displaying at your place of employment or for posting in visible locations around town (or in neighboring towns) to promote the Fair. We also have an electronic version of the flyer to send to your family and friends. Pick up some flyers in the Narthex or ask us for flyers or for the electronic version. Your participation is greatly appreciated. All proceeds go to the PACC general fund. Thank you!

Please contact Barbara Wagner or Betty Rich if you can help or have questions.

Financial Report

	January – March 2011	<u>budget</u>	<u>actual</u>	<u>difference</u>
Quarterly	income	\$61,940	\$62,601	\$ 661
Report	expenses	<u>66,471</u>	<u>75,545</u>	9,074
		(\$ 4,531)	(\$ 12,944)	

Most expense overruns are in the Property budget, due to unusually high expenses for snow plowing and heating oil. Pledges through the first three months are more than \$1600 behind budget; more than anticipated building rentals help to fill this gap.

Capital Campaign Outreach Funds

Five per cent of the funds raised in PACC's Capital Campaign (approximately \$16,000) has been designated for a special outreach project or projects. With so many worthy organizations and so many pressing needs, how do we decide? The Mission and Justice Ministry wants to hear from you. Do you know of a charitable organization with a special need or project – not just a donation to the organization's general operating fund – that we might support as a congregation? If so, please fill out the Capital Campaign Outreach Project Proposal on the next page and submit it by June 19. The Proposal forms also will be distributed in church on May 8. The M&J Working Group will meet over the summer to compile a list of projects which will be distributed to the congregation on Regathering Sunday. After an opportunity to review and discuss the projects, we will vote as a congregation to select the project(s) most meaningful to us. Proposals may be submitted to Anne Kelly Contini, Karen Friedman, Kathy Richardson in the church office, or they may be dropped in the box in the narthex. Questions can be directed to Anne Kelly Contini or Karen Friedman. Thank you for your input and support.

Other news from the Mission and Justice Ministry

Walk for Hunger: We'll have a PACC team participating in the Walk for Hunger on Sunday, May 1. We'll start early and walk 10 miles. Please talk to Jill Lewis or Kate Lindheim if you'd like to join us.

Stand Against Racism: On Sunday, May 1, about 15 minutes after church, in support of the YWCA's weekend Stand Against Racism, we will show a very short video and have a discussion. Mike Rich will lead/moderate. The DVD is only 4 minutes, with no talking - only music. Ah, but the discussion afterwards. We hope you'll join us.

Thank you for your generosity: PACC members and friends have responded generously to recent appeals to aid those in need. Our One Great Hour of Sharing donations totaled \$1378, and we collected \$565 for the Arlington Housing Corporation's Walk for Affordable Housing.

Help us to conserve resources: Get your *Spire* by email. It arrives as a Word document attached to an email and is reformatted to letter-size paper, so you can print any pages that you wish. You will have it earlier than if it is sent via the postal service. What you will not receive is the clip art. Call 781-643-8680 to request this change.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN OUTREACH PROJECT PROPOSAL

As you know, five percent of the funds raised in PACC's Capital Campaign have been designated to support a special outreach project or projects. If we receive all funds pledged, that amount will be approximately \$16,000. If you know of an organization with a special need, please fill out this form with your proposal. The proposal should be for a special project rather than a donation to an organization's general operating fund. Please return proposals to Anne Kelly Contini, Karen Friedman, Kathy Richardson in the church office or drop them in the box in the narthex. Questions? Contact Anne Kelly Contini or Karen Friedman. Thank you!

Your Name: _____

Your contact info. _____

Name of Charitable Organization: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Website: _____

Contact person/Contact information: _____

Year established: _____

Brief Summary of Organization's Mission/Goals:

Description of specific project in need of funds:

Approximately how much money would be needed to fund the project? _____

How would the organization use the amount designated?

Why should PACC, as a church, support this organization/project?