"IF I HAD ONLY ONE SERMON TO PREACH"

A Sermon By

Rev. Philip A. C. Clarke

Park Avenue United Methodist Church
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New York, New York 10028
February 9, 1986
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One was this. It's as if we are prisoners hailed before a Judge. We know we are guilty. The judge knows we are guilty. And we know that he knows. And yet he says to us: you are acquitted. I have taken upon myself the enormities of your crime. I'm offering you forgiveness, the opportunity for a fresh start, for a new beginning.

This is hard for us to take. We're apt to say: look, give us something to do. let us work it out. Go ahead. Punish us. But he says: there's nothing you can do. I've done it. Why don't you just accept what I'm offering you.

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So an interesting incident occurred once...as Jesus was going through the city of Jericho. There was a man there by the name of Zaccheus, who was the District Collector of Internal Revenue. And in those days this was a very distasteful job, because he was a servant of the occupying powers. He was taking money from his own people, not only to line his own
pocket, but also to pass on to the occupation powers. So Zaccheus was a very unpopular man. But he wanted to see Jesus, who according to His reputation, was willing to talk to and deal with outsiders.

Because he was short, Zaccheus couldn't muscle through the crowd that was lining the street. So he ran to a sycamore tree, climbed up and crawled out on a limb right over the street where Jesus was coming. Jesus saw all this, knew who the man was, and when He came to the place where Zaccheus was, out on a limb, Jesus looked up and said, "Zaccheus...come down...I'd like to have supper with you tonight."

A hiss went through the crowd. He's to eat with that sinner! And the only defense Jesus offered was, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost". And that, dear friend in Christ, is what God is like. That's why Jesus came among us..."to seek and to save the lost".

WRAPPING IT UP Now, I don't know how you experience your lostness, but I suspect that, in some way or other, you do. Maybe when you wake up in the middle of the night...when maybe you've botched something...or hurt someone...maybe when you feel lonely as the deuce...maybe when you don't know just how to cope. The truth of the Gospel is that God in His love seeks you in your lostness. And it's so easy to get lost here in this city.

Many of you, I believe, have accepted this and your lives have been transformed by it. You can easily sing of the deep joy of "amazing grace". Some of us have never quite admitted that we're lost...though at times we may suspect it. The Christian Gospel is simply that God cares for you and seeks you in your lostness - so that you can find yourself, know where you're going and where you're supposed to be.

It is one of the deepest convictions of my life that if we are not right at this point, we don't have much chance of being right at any other point. It is my conviction that if we are right at this point, then we have the gracious and joyous opportunity of being right at every other point. T. S. Eliot wrote in a poem:

"And the wind shall say, 'These were decent people. Their only monument the asphalt road and a thousand lost golf balls.'"

As followers of Christ, decency is not enough. We can do better. As the college student said, "You gave us the spokes, but forgot to give us the hub". Jesus Christ is that hub. Through Him we feel the grace of God coming to us and it's ours to receive...in faith and in trust. So may it be. If not here, where? And if not now, when?

PRAYER Move in our hearts, O Loving God - Father and Mother of us all. Make us sensitive to Your spirit at work in our lives. Confirm within each of us the feelings of this hour, for we sense more deeply than we can express the beauty and wonder of Your love. Seal the decisions we have quietly made here with You. Be with each of us on this day and with all those whom we love and have remembered in this service, wherever they may be. In the spirit of Christ, Our Lord.
"IF I HAD ONLY ONE SERMON TO PREACH"

INTRODUCTION There are really aren't words to express what it means to come back to this Church and share in a Homecoming Service. The life, the vigor, the excitement, the hope and promise that one feels flowing through this congregation are almost beyond expression. One has only to be away from it for awhile and return "home" to it to realize this fact all over again.

Don't ever underestimate what we have going for us here in this Church. Thank God for it. And work like the devil to keep it. (Because if there is a devil, you can be pretty sure he's trying to undermine it if he can and we just have to work hard to beat him at his own game!)

DEVELOPMENT I heard a story recently that's worth sharing...about a minister who one Sunday morning as a part of the children's sermon asked this question, "Boys and girls...tell me now...what's got a grey, bushy tail, lives in trees and gathers nuts?" A ten year old raised his hand and replied, "God". You can imagine the response. A ripple of laughter went over the congregation and all wondered how the flustered minister was going to work his way around that one. Somehow or other he did and rather quickly concluded the sermon and moved on.

After the service was over the minister spotted the boy that had given him that answer and he asked him why he had answered that way. The boy said to the minister, "You see sir, when I come to Church I want to hear about God and not squirrels". So be it. "Out of the mouths of babes...."

Several weeks ago, As I set myself to preparing a message for today's Homecoming Service, I found myself toying with the thought, "If I had only one sermon to preach, what would it be?" What would you say? What would you do? The more I wrestled with this question in recent weeks, the more convinced I became of the underlying theme. In fact, finally there was no question at all: it would have to do with the mystery and the miracle of the grace of God which aims to evoke our commitment in faith. This had to be the theme. The question more and more became: how best to articulate it.

TODAY'S THEME THEN I remember some years ago that my son, David, said to me following a service, "Dad...you know it seems to me you're always saying just about the same thing." I replied, "Yes...I know. I have only one thing to say". And I suspect that this is really it: the mystery of the grace of God which wills to evoke our personal response in faith...to take that "leap of faith" because we believe in a loving power, a loving Father at the heart of this universe revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

So all I want to do this morning is to portray the grace of God in the Biblical figure of speech with which Paul and Jesus struggled to articulate this extraordinary insight. Because the heart of the Christian Gospel is an affirmation so striking that we find it almost impossible to take in...to believe. It is simply that God offers us life and health as a gift to be received by faith.

This is a radical reversal of ordinary religion. Religion says to us: here's what God expects you to do. Now get to it and you'll be alright. But Christianity - when it is faithful to itself - does not say that. It says that God loves us
with such incredible grace that He gives His love and power to us - to be received by faith.

Paul Struggled with This Truth  Now Paul was the first Christian preacher to struggle with this extraordinary truth as it had come to him. And he had to resort to a variety of figures of speech in order to articulate it. Always remember that Paul was a first-century Jew, writing in the Greek language, trying to express insights which had never been expressed before. He had to resort to every device that he could authentically use. And there were three figures of speech which he used predominantly.

One was this. It's as if we are prisoners hailed before a Judge. We know we are guilty. The judge knows that we are guilty. And we know that he knows. And yet he says to us: you are acquitted. I have taken upon myself the enormities of your crime. Ifm offering you forgiveness, the opportunity for a fresh start, a new beginning.

This is hard for us to take. We say: look, give us something to do. Let us work it out. Go ahead. Punish us. But he says: there is nothing you can do. I've done it. Why don't you just accept what I am offering you.

And as he says this, we catch a glimpse of a man, hanging on a cross, and He looks like a judge. Within ourselves, we know what the price has been. We find it difficult to accept, but we know deep down it's our only hope.

Or, Paul, in a figure of speech more familiar in his day perhaps than ours, said: it is as if we are slaves in bondage, longing for our freedom. Yet we know that our freedom is costly. It must be paid with a ransom note. It is as if our owner were to come to us and say: "look, I'm offering you your freedom. I've paid your ransom; you are your own person now." Again, there flashes through our minds the image of a man hanging on a cross, and He looks like the person who has offered us our freedom. The ransom, He says, is paid. We know what the price has been. And we are almost afraid to accept the offer.

A third figure of speech which Paul used is this. It is as if we have offended a dear friend. I've done something which I know has hurt him deeply, but I just can't bring myself to tell him I'm sorry. I can't close that gap. It is as if that friend comes to me and says, "Look, let's get this thing done with. Let's get this barrier between us broken down. Let's be...reconciled."

I know what it has cost him to make this approach. And even though my resistance doesn't quite crumble, yet I sense my defenses are breached.

Paul's Effort to Express This  This was Paul's effort to express this incredible initiative of God, coming to us in forgiving, unearned love, saying to us, "I want nothing but your good. Why don't you accept my offer?"

We wonder: how did Paul get to this? It was his insight into the life, the ministry and the work of Jesus. The fact is that Paul did not have the Gospel records in which he could sit down and research all of this. He had little or no records and what he had was mostly word-of-mouth. But the whole impact of the meaning of Jesus Christ burst upon him in such a way that he knew that this was what God was trying to do in Jesus Christ.
And the amazing truth is that as we look carefully at the Gospel record, we discover that this is indeed what Jesus Christ was all about. The radical reversal of religion is in the teachings of Paul only because it was first of all in the teaching and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. For instance -

A STRANGE STORY OF JESUS Jesus told that strange story of the laborers who were hired at different times of the day. Some of them worked from the first hour of the morning; some of them began at noon; some of them began at the last hour of the day. Yet, when it was time to pay them their employer gave them all the same wage. A strange story, indeed.

What on earth was Jesus trying to say? Simply this: your worth as a person does not depend on how much you have accomplished. Your worth as a person depends upon the grace of God, who cares about you all - equally. He gives you the abundance of His grace. It is amazing. You can't earn it. It's not something you deserve; it's the freely offered grace of God. That's what gives you worth as a person. You may need to hear it today. It's hard to take in for the ghost of John Calvin plagues us. We all share some of the same problems of coping with conscience. Who knows, you may be a closet Calvinist, at heart.

Talk about guilt and conscience, one of my favorite stories at this point has to do with a telegram that was sent out one New Year's Eve to 25 well-to-do man in London which simply said:

"All is discovered. Escape while you can."

And there was a considerable increase in traffic across the English channel the very next day.

Jesus said - and probably with a bit of a grin - that two men went up to the Temple to pray. One, you'll recall, was a very proper person - religious, a good citizen and all that. The other had nothing to stand on at all. One man was thankful for his blessings, properly so. He thanked God for all the good things in his life. The other man sort of hid from the public and said, "Lord, be merciful to me - a sinner."

Jesus commented that it was this latter man who went up to his house forgiven, joyful, released - rather than the other. His guilt was relieved. His anxiety was eased. All because he had thrown himself on the mercy of God.

THREE EXTRAORDINARY TEACHINGS In the 15th chapter of Luke's Gospel, Luke has crowded together three of the most extraordinary teachings of our Lord. God is like the shepherd who goes out to look for a lost sheep. He's like the woman who turns the house upside down looking for her lost savings. He's like a father who cares about his lost son. So that our alienation, our rebelliousness, our loneliness can be healed by the knowledge that God is seeking us in our lostness.

And Jesus not only talked like this, it is the way He carried out His ministry. As you know - and it's a little ironic - but this is what finally got Him into trouble, with the respectable people of His time. Jesus turned easily and freely to those who needed Him. He wasn't at all careful about who they were, or what they looked like, or how they lived. If they needed Him, He turned to them.
ZACCHEUS  So an interesting incident occurred once...as Jesus was going through the city of Jericho. There was a man by the name of Zaccheus, who was the district collector of internal revenue. And in those days this was a very distasteful job, because he was a servant of the occupying powers. He was taking money from his own people, not only to line his own pocket, but also to pass on to the power of occupation. So Zaccheus was a very unpopular man. But he wanted to see Jesus, who according to His reputation, was willing to deal with outsiders.

Because he was short, Zaccheus couldn't muscle through the crowd that was lining the street. So he ran to a sycamore tree, climbed up and crawled out on a limb right over the street where Jesus was coming. Jesus saw all this, knew who the man was, and when He came to the place where Zaccheus was, out on a limb, Jesus looked up and said, "Zaccheus...come down...I'd like to have supper with you tonight".

A hiss went through the crowd. He's going to eat with that sinner! And the only defense Jesus offered was, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost". That's what God is like! That's why Jesus came among us..."to seek and to save the lost".

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as followers of Christ. Decency is not enough.

We can do better. As the college student said, "You gave us the spokes, but forget to give us the hub". Jesus Christ is that hub. Through Him we feel the grace of God coming to us and it's ours to receive...in faith and trust. So may it be. If not here, where? And if not now, when? calling us "home"...

Move in our hearts, O Loving Father... our lives...

PRAYER  Make us sensitive to Your spirit at work in our lives... Confirm within each of us the feelings of this hour, for we sense more deeply than we can express - the beauty and wonder of Your love. Seal the decision we have quietly and privately made here with You.
We pray that we may be truly open to your grace, to your mercy, to the presence and power of Your spirit that each of us may be enabled to live the kind of transformed life You would have us live.

Be with us on this special day and with all those whom we love and have remember in this service, wherever they may be. In the spirit of Christ, our Lord. Amen.
FIRST INTRODUCTION The week of toil has ended. Our day of rest is at hand. May the rest and the quiet of this hour of worship refresh our inner life. And may it renew in all of us a sense of God's holy and abiding Presence.

In silence, let each now pray as the heart may prompt.

SECOND INTRODUCTION Remaining in a prayerful spirit, let us enter now into a time of silent meditation...a time in which we prepare ourselves expectantly...that the Spirit of the living God may be made real to us in this hour of worship.

In quietness, let each now pray as the heart may prompt.

THIRD INTRODUCTION Remaining in a prayerful spirit, let us enter into a time of silent meditation as we come into the Presence of Him whom our faith declares to be the Source of all life and love, all peace and power, the Source of all hope and healing.

In silence, let each now pray as the heart may prompt.

FOURTH INTRODUCTION Remaining in a prayerful spirit, let us enter now into a time of silent meditation. In these moments, let us ponder the pattern our lives have been weaving as we come into the Presence of Him whom our Faith declares to be the Source of all life and love, all peace and power, the Source of all hope and healing.

In silence, let each now pray as the heart may prompt.

MEDITATION We rest our hearts in the Promise of Jesus who said:

"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light".

"Ask, and it will be given you. Seek and you will find. Knock, and it will be open unto you."

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father, but by Me. If you love Me, you will keep my commandments"

"For I tell you...do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat...or drink...nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food? And the body more than raiment."

"But seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."

"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present...to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature - shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, Our Lord."
"And all things... whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing... you shall receive. And as many as touched Him were made whole!"

"Wait on the Lord. Be of good course and He shall strengthen thine heart. For we dwell in the shelter of the Almighty. He is our refuge and our strength."

"We know that in everything, God works together for good with those who love Him!"

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint."

"God so love the world that He gave His only Son, that whatsoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Bless the Lord, 0 my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases."

"Thou wilt keep Him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in thee."

"In the name of Jesus Christ, I share with you the Good News: We are forgiven."

PRAYERS / LORD'S PRAYER

O Thou, who hearest prayer, hear our prayers... for others, as well as for ourselves. Touch with healing, 0 God... Father of us all, those whom we mention in our prayers this hour:

1. Marian Busk
2. Daisy Herrick
3. Rebecca Daseler, infant daughter of Kim and Alison...
4. Bert Williams
5. Craig Radnay
6. Hospital in Seattle.

...beloved members and friends of this congregation. Comfort the bereaved and the broken hearted among us... and especially be close to George White who in recent days has lost a loved one. Abide among us as a healing benediction. Heal each of us at the point of our deepest need.

Answer the upspoken prayers now offered to thee on the altars of our hearts, spoken in the name and spirit of Jesus, who taught us to say when we pray.... For we ask all of this in the powerful name and lifting spirit of Jesus who taught us to say when we pray...

"Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power and the glory, forever. Amen"
CELEBRATION OF A BAPTISM

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Today we are celebrating the Baptism of Kimberly Alayne Limon...the infant daughter of Barbara and Allan Limon.

- sister of Craig and Jeffrey Liman
- granddaughter of Pearl Keller...grandmother, Willnora Scheepmaker
- Niece of Dianne Keller and Doris Keller.

Friends...this is a very special moment in the life of Kimberly, and parents, two brothers, grandmother and her aunts....and all within the family circle. The flowers on the altar today are there in her honor.

We've all come to know Dianne Keller and her family and we're so pleased that we all can share in this moment together. Baptisms are very special. I would invite the Limans and the Kellers to join me here at the Baptismal Font. God-Parents: Pearl Keller (grandmother). Laura Ayres (her aunt) (Allan's sister)

GREETING / BOYS AND GIRLS

Boys and girls, it's good to have you all down here this morning and I understand that you're going to sing a song for us in a few moments....

I trust you all had a good Thanksgiving. The snow made it sort of special. Thanksgiving is always a special day for us...and we have so many blessings for which to be thankful.

We're thankful for all of you!

A story comes to mind. A Sunday School teacher asked her class of boys and girls...third graders...to write a letter to God that Sunday afternoon after they got home...and then to bring their letters back the following Sunday. They wrote their letters and brought them back the next Sunday.

One little boy wrote this letter:

"Dear God,

We thank you for our Church. We had such a wonderful time there this morning, and we only wish you could have been there!"

Boys and girls. We are thankful for our Church...for all that it means to us....and we believe that God is here! Blessing us in our fellowship together. He is here...watching us...listening to us...and answering our prayers.

And now for your song....what are you singing. Resting in the after-glow of Thanksgiving, I think we can still sing a verse of one of our favorite Thanksgiving hymns...."We Gather Together". No. 131
ADVENT WREATH / CANDLES, BANNERS AND PRAYER

FOURTH SUNDAY

Today is the FOURTH SUNDAY in Advent....and once again, the boys and girls of our Sunday School have joined us down here to share in the lighting of the candles....and today we light the candle of LOVE, but before we do that we must re-light the candles of HOPE, PEACE AND JOY.

Our fourth banner is now "up".....over here on the wall joining our other three banners.....reminding us that HOPE, PEACE, and JOY.....and LOVE are always present when we think of JESUS.

This year, for the first time in a long, long time....our Jewish friends will be celebrating Channukah....they're only a day apart....and that doesn't happen very often. Channukah, like Christmas, celebrates LIGHT through the use of candles. We, as Christians, think of the LIGHT and LOVE that came into our world in the birth of Jesus.

CANDLES

Today's candle lighters are:

IVAN SAN DIEGO
MAY KHO
MIRANDA THOMAS
SAVANNAH TOMLINSON

And the prayer after we light the candles will be offered by SAERINA HANSON a member of this year's CONFIRMATION CLASS....whose father gave us those TEN REASONS last Sunday for making a pledge commitment to the Church.

I'd like to invite the boys and girls to join me now...

AFTER THE PRAYER

Before the children depart....let me thank them again for the wonderful pageant of last Sunday. And let me also give you something to make this Sunday even more special....a Jewish friend with whom I play racquet ball at the 92nd Street "Y"....went to Jerusalem back in the Fall to see his daughter and grandchildren who live there. He traveled up to the Sea of Galilee area and brought me back some stones from the Sea of Galilee and some candles from Safad, a city not far from Nazareth.....I thanked him and told him I would present each of you with a candle (have 12) on the Sunday that is closest to Channukah....and also a stone from the shore of the Sea of Galilee...

CAROL: Number 219 "What Child Is This?"
ANTHEM: "God Is Seen"

"Through all the world below God is seen all around, search hills and valleys through, there He's found. The growing of the corn, the lily and the thorn, the pleasant and forlorn, all declare, God is there, in meadows drest in green, God is seen.

See springing waters rise, fountains flow, rivers run, the mist that veils the sky hides the sun. Then down the rain doth pour, the ocean, it doth roar and beat up on the shore, and all praise, in their ways, the God who ne'er declines His designs.

The sun with all his rays speaks of God as he flies the comet in her blaze 'God', she cries; the shining of the stars, the moon, when she appears, His awful name declares; see them fly through the sky, and join the solemn sound all around, all around."

ANTHEM: "Gird on Thy Sword"

"Gird on Thy sword. o man, Thy strengthen due, in fair desire thine earth-born joy renew: Live Thou Thy life beneath the making sun till beauty, truth, and love in thee are one.

Thro' thousand ages hath Thy childhood run: On timeless ruin hath Thy glory been: From the forgotten night of loves for done Thou risest in dawn of hopes unseen.

Higher and higher shall Thy thoughts aspire, unto the stars of heav'n and pass away, and earth renew the buds of Thy desire in fleeting blooms of everlasting day.

Thy work with beauty crown, Thy life with love; Thy mind with truth up-lift to God above for whom all is, from whom all was begun, in whom all beauty, truth, and love are one, are one."

SUNDAY SCHOOL BEGINS TODAY

Sunday school for the children of our church gets underway today. Classes meet on the third floor from eleven to twelve. If you're tempted to take on an assignment teaching our youngest church-goers, share word of your interest with either Carl Condra, Education Committee Chairperson, or Tom DeBow, Sunday School Superintendent.

FINANCE COMMITTEE TO MEET

The Finance Committee will meet Thursday evening, September 21st, at 7:30 pm.

A FALL OUTING

Join us here at the church on Saturday morning at eight o'clock for some time together picking apples upstate and sharing in a barbecue lunch. The cost is five dollars and there's room for fifty to sixty on the bus. It leaves the church at 8:30 am. We ask you to sign up today with Doreen Morales, Coordinator.

HOMECOMING SUNDAY

We celebrate Homecoming Sunday next Sunday. It marks the official beginning of the Fall season in our church. All members and friends are invited to be present. Invite a friend to come with you.

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL TO MEET

The Administrative Council will meet on Thursday evening, September 28th, at 7:30 pm in the downstairs Russell Room.
Young Adult Fellowship

PRESENTS

Superbowl '98
Superbowl '98

Sunday January 25th at 6:18 pm
Hosted by Tina & Jay Sayers
355 E. 88th St, #5B
410-5278

AND

Games Night
Games Night

Saturday February 7th at 6 o'clock
Hosted by Kathryn & Ed Amstutz
312 E. 92nd St, #6F
987-6947
ANTHEM: "All Ye That Cried Unto The Lord"

"All ye that cried unto the Lord, in distress and deep affliction, He counteth all your sorrows in the time of need."

ANTHEM: "I Will Arise"

"I will arise and go to Jesus. He will embrace me in His arms. In the arms of my dear Saviour, oh! there are ten thousand charms. Teach me some melodious sonnet sung by flaming tongues above. Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it, mount of Thy redeeming love. Come, thou fount of ev'ry blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace. Streams of mercy never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise. I will arise and go to Jesus. He will embrace me in His arms."

ORGAN POSTLUDE

The organ postlude - a final offering of our praise to God - is played after the Benediction. Time permitting, we invite you to share in the beauty of it.

FOR THOSE WHO SING

New members are always welcome to audition to sing in the Choir. Rehearsals are held on Sunday mornings at 9:30 in the downstairs Choir Room.

SHARE WORD WITH US

The monthly news sheet for February is being prepared this week. Tuesday, January 27th, is the deadline for you to call the Church office with any news you wish to share.

BAKE SALE NO. I

The first of three Bake Sales for the benefit of our Spring and Fall Church picnics is "in the works" for today, as a part of the coffee hour. Doreen Morales, Picnic Coordinator, invites you to come down and make a purchase for a good cause. Thank you.

SUPER BOWL PARTY

The Adult Fellowship Super Bowl Party will be held later today at the apartment of Jay and Tina Sayer (355 East 88th Street, #1A). You might want to be in touch with either Jay or Tina at today's coffee hour for further details...the time and what to bring, etc.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE TO MEET

The Worship Committee will meet on Thursday evening at 7:30 pm in Fellowship Hall. Let Ken Borgeson, Chairperson, know if you can't be present for this important meeting.

PICK UP YOUR BOX

If you asked for a box of 1998 weekly offering envelopes when making your pledge, then be sure to pick up the box that has your name on it on the table in the rear of the sanctuary. Pledge cards are still being received. Another 22 pledges will help us reach our elusive goal of "250".

WINTER RUMMAGE SALE

The date is February 21st and workers are signing up for it. Let Margaret Fisher know at 662-6432 if you can lend a hand.
NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome into the membership of our Church the following persons. We trust that this fellowship will be a real blessing to them as it has been to us and we welcome the contributions which they will each make to the richness of our Christian life together.

Mr. Dan Ballenger: 201 West 72nd Street, Apt. 10A, New York, New York 10023. Transfer of Church Letter. Lovers Lane United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas.

Ms. Valerie Richardson Ballenger: 201 West 72nd Street, Apt. 10A, New York, New York 10023. Transfer of Church Letter. Lovers Lane United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas.


Ms. Perri Colley: 601 West 113th Street, No. 4K, New York, New York 10025. Associate Member. Home Church: First United Methodist Church, Athens, Alabama.

Ms. Margaret Fisher: 127 West 96th Street, New York, New York 10025. Transfer of Church Letter. United Methodist Church, Spencer, Nebraska.


Mr. Steven Parmely: 10 Gracie Square, New York, New York 10028. Transfer of Church Letter. Trinity Lutheran Church, New York, New York.

( over )
Transfer of Church Letter. Hanson Place Central United Methodist Church, Brooklyn, New York

Transfer of Church Letter. Calvary Baptist Church, New York, New York.

Ms. Heneriatta Sekyiamah: 200 East 89th Street, #6, New York, New York 10128.
Transfer of Church Letter.

Ms. Tracey Simmons: Post Office Box 4990, New York, New York 10163.
Confession of Faith.

Mr. Joe Stark: 78 West 82nd Street, Apt. 3B, New York, New York 10024.
Transfer of Church Letter. St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church, North Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

Ms. Traci Stark: 78 West 82nd Street, Apt. 3B, New York, New York 10024.
Transfer of Church Letter. Munholland United Methodist Church, Metairie, Louisiana.

Mr. Dan Tomlinson: 220 East 26th Street, Apt. 6H, New York, New York 10010.
Confession of Faith.

Transfer of Church Letter. Tabernacle United Methodist Church, Binghamton, New York.


Confession of Faith.

Transfer of Church Letter. St. Andrew's United Methodist Church.

Join us downstairs at the coffee hour / Art Connection III to welcome these new friends into the fellowship of our Church. Pictures of the new members will be taken and posted on the bulletin board next Sunday.

5/21/95
ANTHEM: "Let Thy Holy Presence"

"Let Thy Holy Presence come upon us, we pray. Come Holy Spirit, Thou gift of Heav'n bring love and joy to us, O Lord God. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia".

ANTHEM: "O Be Joyful In The Lord"

"O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands; serve the Lord with gladness, and come before His presence with a song. Be ye sure that the Lord He is God; it is He that hath made us and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

O go your way into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise; be thankful unto Him, and speak good of His Name. For the Lord is gracious, His mercy is everlasting and His truth endureth from generation to generation.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen."

ORGAN POSTLUDE

The organ postlude - a final offering of our praise to God - is played after the Benediction. Time permitting, we invite you to share in the beauty of it.

GREAT FICTION

The Great Fiction discussion group will meet on Friday evening, June 2nd, at 7 pm to discuss Mystical Paths, by Susan Howatch. The place will be announced next Sunday.

TODAY'S PREACHER

We welcome the Reverend R. Duane Thompson to the pulpit today. Our former student assistant minister, Mr. Thompson now serves as pastor of the United Methodist Church of Sheridan, a Pittsburgh suburb. It is a joy to welcome Duane and Brenda back to our church this morning!

TODAY AT TWELVE-FIFTEEN

We invite you to stay for brunch and "Art Connection III" after today's service. We are celebrating the talents and gifts of several "church artists" and friends. Art, music and "good fixins" are on the menu. Sponsored by our Membership Committee, it's a good way to "connect up" with church friends as well as to welcome our new members.

THIS WEEK

The "Hounds of Heaven" meet on Tuesday evening at 6:30 in Fellowship Hall to continue with the study of Maxie Dunnam's latest book. And on Wednesday, join the minister at 6:30 in Fellowship Hall for thirty minutes of prayer and spiritual reflection.

TODAY'S ALTAR FLOWERS

The roses on the altar are given in loving memory of Koutou Tchoumou Elie and Koutou N'Drin Salomon, brothers of Azani Marcelline Colombe, a church member, and in deep gratitude to God for "His many blessings on my life...for all He has done for me these past three years in helping me with all my struggles".
PARK AVENUE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
106 East 86th Street
New York, N.Y. 10028
AT 9-6997

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Philip A. C. Clarke .................................. Minister
William Bonwitt .................................. Assistant Minister
Lyndon Woodside .................. Organist-Choir Director
Joseph Cifuentes .................. Business Manager
Judy Ferland .................. Secretary
Judith Keisman .................. Day School Director
Roberto Meriles .................. Custodian

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Larry Morales
Lay Leader ...................................... Larry Morales
Associate Lay Leader .................. Eric de Freitas
President, Board of Trustees ........ Michael Schaffield
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Chairperson, Worship Committee ........ Jane Chaney
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Chairperson, Day School Committee ........ Anna Delson
Chairperson, Ushers .................. Effie French
Superintendent, Sunday School, .......... Tom DeBow
ORGAN CALL TO WORSHIP 11 A.M.

HYMN NO. 545 "The Church's One Foundation"

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (seated)

Bach

God of our life, we confess in company with one another and before You, that we are wayward and less than faithful servants. We have loved things and used people; remembered slights and forgotten kindesses; called on You in trouble and ignored You at other times; praised You in word and failed You in deed; allowed the present age to mould us and left untapped the power of the age to come. Deal with us after Your mercy for we are sorry for our sins and earnestly seek Your pardon through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

SILENT MEDITATION - WORDS OF ASSURANCE - LORD'S PRAYER

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RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS Page 48

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ANTHEM "Let Thy Holy Presence" Tschesnokof

SCRIPTURE Luke 18: 9 - 14 Page 911

PASTORAL PRAYER

PARISH CONCERNS

ANTHEM "O Be Joyful in the Lord" Huston

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 593 "Here I Am, Lord"

SERMON "When Not To Join The Church" Mr. Thompson

HYMN NO. 117 "O God, Our Help In Ages Past"

BENEDICTION

ORGAN "Rigaudon" Campra

*** Interval for Ushering

LAY READER

We welcome Wendy Cooper to the lectern today. A native of Nassau, N. Y., Wendy has a BA from Allegheny College and a JD from Fordham Law School. She is Vice President and Associate General Counsel at the Equitable Life Insurance Company. Here in the church, Wendy serves on the Outreach Committee and helps out as a coffee hour hostess.

THE ENVELOPE IN THE PEW

It's there for a "Love Gift" to the May special Golden Cross appeal for the NY Conference Health Care Agencies. A few more gifts will help us reach our goal.

GREETERS AND USHERS

The greeters today are Stacey Staaterman and Lynn Clarke. The ushers are Michele Barton, Robyn Deaton, Jennifer Karim, Gary Klein, Lita Reyno, Tara Timmerman and Tom Weickert.

AN INVITATION

Light refreshments will be served in the Russell Room following the service as part of Art Connection III. Members and friends are invited to share in these moments of warmth made possible for us today by Jane Chaney, Ela Acuesta, Janet Jacobson, Jean Laupus, Jennifer Levin, and Natividad Miranda.

CHURCH SCHOOL AND NURSERY CARE

Sessions of Church School for children are offered Sunday mornings from ten-thirty to twelve. Nursery care for infants and toddlers is available on the fourth floor.

ADULT BIBLE CLASS

The Adult Bible Class meets on Sunday mornings at 9:30 in Fellowship Hall. The class is studying the Gospel of Matthew. Bill Bonwitt is class leader.
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Co-Chairpersons, Membership Committee ...... Margaret Bratton
........................................................................... and Jean Laupus
Chairperson, Outreach Committee .................. Janet Ernst
Chairperson, Worship Committee ................. Ken Borgeson
Chairperson, Publicity Committee ................. Sam Wilson
Chairperson, Day School Committee ............ Anna Deelson
Chairperson, Ushers .................................................. Effie French
Superintendent, Sunday School ................... Veronica Winder
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPHEPHANY
January 25, 1998

ORDER OF WORSHIP
11 A.M.

ORGAN
"Benedictus" Reger

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN NO. 674 "See the Morning Sun Ascending"

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (seated)
Gracious God, behold us and hear us for the erring children that we are. Gifted with sight, we miss the glory that surrounds us; gifted with conscience, we make our peace with sin; gifted with the power to think, we fall for lies that cater to our prejudices; gifted with imagination, we plod along afraid to dream on hope; gifted with the quality of love, we waste our affection on the things that matter little. Forgive our misuse of the many gifts of life and grant that the very act of penitence itself may get us started today in a new direction, lest we gain the world and lose our souls. Through Jesus Christ, we now pray. Amen.

SILENT MEDITATION - WORDS OF ASSURANCE - LORD'S PRAYER

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GREETING TO THE CHILDREN

A SONG BY THE CHILDREN

HYMN OF DEPARTURE ✠

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ANTHEM "All Ye That Cried Unto The Lord" Mendelssohn

SCRIPTURE I Corinthians 12: 12 – 30 Page 999

PASTORAL PRAYER

PARISH CONCERNS

ANTHEM "I Will Arise" Traditional

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 377 "It Is Well With My Soul"

SERMON "Body Language" Mr. Clarke

HYMN NO. 421 "Make Me A Captive, Lord"

BENEDICTION

ORGAN "Trumpet Tune" Charpentier

*** Interval for Ushering

LAY READER

We welcome Arthur M. Freeman, IV to the lectern today. A native of Alabama, a graduate of Columbia University, Arthur is an Account Executive in Advertising and Multimedia for the Renegade Marketing Group. A recent new member of the Church, Arthur's mother, Linda Poynter, and father, Arthur, were married here in June of 1972.

ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers on the altar today are in celebration of the 15th wedding anniversary of Astor and Nica Val Hackett and the 9th birthday of Pannonica Val Hackett, in recognition of God's grace and His many blessings.

USHERS

The ushers for today are Walter Spencer, Jill Gray, Mark Jenkins, Beverly Judge and Joyce Williams.

AN INVITATION

Coffee and tea will be served in the Russell Room following the service. All are invited to share in these moments of warm fellowship made possible for us today by Annette Tomlinson, Valerie Ballenger, Margaret Fisher, Mark and Kristin Raker and Brad and Amy Sublette.

CHURCH SCHOOL AND NURSERY CARE

Sessions of Church School for children are offered Sunday morning from ten-thirty to twelve. Nursery care for infants and toddlers is available on the fourth floor.

ADULT BIBLE CLASS

The Adult Bible Class meets on Sunday morning at 9:30 in Fellowship Hall. Tracey Simmons is class leader. Coffee and doughnuts are available.
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FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
September 17, 1995
ORDER OF WORSHIP
11 A.M.

ORGAN
"Cantabile" Franck

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN NO. 62 "All Creatures of our God and King" (1-5)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (seated)

O Thou who hast made us for joy and not for sorrow, forgive us that the cities we build are so heavily marked by fear and violence. Behind bolted doors we sit, neither seeking our neighbor's good nor finding our own. We look but do not see. We hear but do not listen. We crowd but do not touch. We reach but do not feel. Forgive us our sins, O God. Lengthen our reach. Broaden our sympathies. And help us, as Jesus loved the city of Jerusalem, to love this city that we call home. In His strong name we now pray. Amen.

SILENT MEDITATION - WORDS OF ASSURANCE - LORD'S PRAYER

PSALTER Psalm 2 No. 739
AFFIRMATION OF FAITH No. 888
GLORIA PATRI No. 71

ANTHEM "God Is Seen" Arr. by Parker
SCRIPTURE Luke 15: 1-10 Page 908

PASTORAL PRAYER

PARISH CONCERNS

ANTHEM "Gird on Thy Sword" Holst

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 375 "There Is a Balm In Gilead"
SERMON "Lost But Found" Mr. Clarke
HYMN NO. 378 "Amazing Grace!"

BENEDICTION

ORGAN "Toccata in G" Pachelbel

*** Interval for Ushering

LAY READER

We welcome Gail Bradshaw to the lectern today. A native of Graham, Texas and reared in Fort Worth, Gail is a May 1995 graduate of Columbia University. An Assistant Buyer with Bloomingdales, she has been part of our congregation for three years and plans to join our church this Fall coming to us from the First United Methodist Church in Fort Worth.

GREETERS AND USHERS

The greeters for today are Jean Laupus and John Oates. The ushers are Michele Barton, Robyn Deaton, Jennifer Karim, Gary Klein and Lita Reyno.

AN INVITATION

Punch and cookies will be served in the Russell Room following the service. All are invited to share in these moments of warm fellowship made possible for us today by Julie Klein and Doreen Morales.

CHURCH SCHOOL AND NURSERY CARE

Sessions of Church School for children begin today. Nursery care for infants and toddlers is available on the fourth floor in the Day School Room.

ADULT BIBLE CLASS

The Adult Bible Class meets on Sunday morning at 9:30 in Fellowship Hall. The Gospel of Matthew is being studied. Bill Bonwitt is class leader.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

The new and updated church directory is now available for the asking. If you'd like one, pick one up at the coffee hour or call the church office and we'll be glad to mail you one.
AHEAD LOOKING AHEAD

A ROSE ON THE ALTAR
The rose on the altar on December 3rd was in celebration of the birth of Thomas Maxwell Perkins, infant son of Bridget and Jim Perkins, born on Friday, November 17th, 1995 and "weighing in" at eight pounds and three ounces.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU
Thanks to everyone who worked so hard on our recent annual Church Christmas Fair. Special thanks to Julie Klein and Tracey Thornblade who served as Chair and Co-Chair of this year's Fair. Their gifts of leadership along with their tremendous and unlimited energy inspired so many others to really "get in there" and make the Fair successful! And it was. It takes a while for everything to settle, but at first glance it appears that receipts were up and over eight thousand, five hundred dollars.

Resting now in the afterglow of a successful Church Fair, it's reported that one pound bags of delicious holiday pecans are for sale at the cost of $6.50. Also, some very attractive bargains remain in terms of gift certificates.

Julie Klein says that there's one about "financial services" that should go rather quickly. And if you have ordered your Christmas cards and haven't picked them up as of Sunday, December 3rd, check with the church office during the week. They could be here.

THE LAST ONE HUNDRED
Pledge cards from members and friends of our Church are still being received in the church office. If you haven't turned in your pledge card for 1996, we invite you to do so today and help us to "wrap up" the Financial Canvass.

Karl Newlin, Canvass Chairperson, reports that we're off to a fine start with 158 pledges totalling $135,111 gratefully received toward our 1996 goal of $250,000 and $180,000. That leaves 92 pledges and approximately $45,000 still to be underwritten by pledges. We can make it if all lend a hand and have a part in it.

IS YOUR 1996 PLEDGE "IN"?
Pledges - large and small are always gratefully received. They have a wonderful way of quickly adding up. Pledges are not mandatory, but it's something we encourage each member and friend of the church to consider as a part of their spiritual commitment and exercise. We'll keep you posted in the weekly Sunday bulletin as to how we're doing. Meanwhile, thanks to all who are participating.

ADVANCE SPECIALS IN THE WORKS
Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world...." For those of us who cannot "go", we can certainly help those who do "go". Our Church each year gives substantial funds to help Methodist missions around the world. These gifts are called ADVANCE SPECIALS. This December we hope to give $5,500 to the following mission projects: AFRICA - $500 to the Kayero Dispensary in Burundi for medicines and $500 to Kenya for a well-digging program. ASIA - $500 to a school for girls in Katmandu, Nepal. The CARRIBEAN - $10,000 to Haiti. (Greg Osgood's mother and dad are missionaries in Haiti and will advise us as to where they feel the money will do the most good). EUROPE - $500 to Estonia for a new church building-center for handicapped children. $500 to ITALY for a Gypsy Refugee Ministry in Trieste. LATIN AMERICA - $500 to Brazil for a Social Action Center in Rio De Janiero. $500 to MEXICO to help supplement salaries of pastors. $500 to CHILE for a Boy's Agricultural School where former members of our Church, Beryl and Stan Moore, have served as missionaries for thirty some years. MIDDLE EAST - $500 to JERUSALEM for the completion of the Galilee Community Center. These recommended gifts come from the Outreach Committee of our Church after much prayerful research and discussion. Once the Administrative Council votes its approval on December the 7th, these ADVANCE SPECIAL gifts will be on their way to help United Methodists serve all of God's Children.

A ROSE ON THE ALTAR
The rose on the altar on Sunday, November 26th, was in honor of the birth of Spenser Bogar, infant son of Kim Woodside and Tom Bogar of Walpole, New Hampshire and grandson of Lyndon and Jane Woodside. Spenser was born November the 16th, 1995.

LOOKING AHEAD
Our Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday celebration will be held on Sunday evening, January 14th, 1996. The Outreach Committee is planning to have a Potluck Supper at six o'clock that Sunday evening. If you have any ideas or any suggestions that will add to the occasion, please share your ideas with Janet Ernst, Outreach Committee Chairperson, or one of the other committee members. We feel that it is more important than ever to support the dream of racial harmony after a difficult year. Let's all try to make it a festive as well as a meaningful event. Stay tuned for further details.
NEW MEMBERS TO JOIN ON DECEMBER 10

Our semi-annual "Conversations in Membership" for new friends of recent months who may be considering strengthening a tie with our Church through membership will be held on Sunday evening, December 3rd, at 6:30 pm in the downstairs Russell Room. If you're tempted to consider membership in this Church and want to know a bit more about it before joining, then please join us on Sunday evening.

Those planning to join will do so on Sunday morning, December 10th, during the worship service and the coffee hour that follows the service on that Sunday will be in honor of those who now pledge to support this United Methodist fellowship with "their prayers, their presence, their gifts and their services".

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER 17

The children of our Sunday School are inviting you to stay in your seat after the worship service of Sunday, December 17th, and take a quick trip to Bethlehem. There you will see Mary and Joseph, the Shepherds and the Wise Men and relive that old but ever new story of the birth of the Baby Jesus in a lowly stable in Bethlehem.

After the pageant, there's a party for the children in the Russell Room, and of course, it's for anyone who was once a child. Plan to come and catch a bit of the Christmas spirit through the eyes of children. It's even rumored around the church that a jolly, white-bearded gentleman by the name of Claus will make a special appearance at the party.

A WORD FROM MERIEL WEST

Our usual coffee hour that Sunday will move up to the third floor Fellowship Hall. It will be a busy Sunday and a crowd is anticipated, so be sure to get here early and find your special seat in the sanctuary. And be sure to greet the children and tell them just how much you enjoyed their gift to us.

HERE WE COME "A CAROLING" ON SUNDAY EVENING DECEMBER 17

The Adult Fellowship Committee is once again sponsoring its annual evening of Christmas caroling. All are invited to gather at the parsonage at 21 East 87th Street ( Apt. 11D) from 6:30 to 9:30 pm. Gary Klein will be at the piano to lead us in singing the carols. Light refreshments will be served. All are welcome...even those who can't carry a tune. Children, teenagers...members and friends...our District Superintendent and his wife, George and Leticia Johnson, have signaled to PC that they'll be coming.

HANDEL'S MESSIAH, MONDAY, DECEMBER 18

The Oratorio Society of New York, under the direction of PAUMC's musical director, Lyndon Woodside, will be performing Handel's glorious Messiah on Monday evening, December 18th, at 8 pm at Carnegie Hall. Again, a sell-out crowd is expected, so get your tickets as soon as possible.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE AT 8 PM, DECEMBER 24

On Christmas Eve, the sanctuary will be filled with the glow of candles, the exultant music of carols and the warmth of good fellowship, as members and friends from the neighborhood join us for one of the loveliest services of the year, our Service of Carols and Candles. Plan to be with us for this special time of rejoicing. The service begins at eight o'clock.

A coffee hour will follow downstairs in the Russell Room. Volunteers are needed for the coffee hour. Please share word of your availability with either Fran Ellison or Helen Wilkinson if you can lend a hand. If you're free to usher that evening, let Effie French know. The church is filled for this Christmas Eve service and the coffee hour is well attended. HELP!

A WORD FROM MERIEL WEST

Meriel West wants her friends to know that she has arrived safely in England and is enjoying her new life in Ferndown though she does miss everyone. Due to a crippling disability, Meriel was unable to attend church in recent years, but she remained a loyal and faithful member, serving in the capacity of Corresponding Secretary for our Outreach Committee. Margaret Fisher is our new Corresponding Secretary and we ask that you continue to keep us informed of members who are ill, shut-in or in mourning.