



The Church of Gethsemane

Liberation Voices!

Spring 2008



Pastor's Report — Rev. Liz Alexander



Dear Members & Friends of Gethsemane,

What a blessing it is to serve in a church where the members live out the gospel of Jesus Christ in their lives each day. As we share our struggles and joys together we experience God's radical grace freely given to all.

New additions to our church family have come to us this year from men and women who are incarcerated throughout New York State and beyond, from people returning home from prisons and jails, neighbors, and friends. In addition two interns have served with us, Janet Martin and Nettie Paisley (see below.)

New things are happening inside and outside our church building every day. We are presently getting a face lift on the front of the building as much needed repairs are being done on our windows and masonry. We hope that our fresh appearance will help to make us even more inviting and welcoming to all. A banner and new signage will be added soon.

Along with new connections, we have also experienced the loss of two of our long-time members and elders, Orlando Haynes and Louisa Horton Hill. They are greatly missed. You can read more about their impact on our congregation in this issue.

If you are learning about the Church of Gethsemane for the first time through this newsletter, make sure you read our mission statement and check our website if you are able (www.thechurchofgethsemane.org). If you are a long time friend or member, thank you for your ministry with us, and your continued support. Thank you also to those who give their time and resources to our unique ministry.

Blessings and Peace, *Rev. Liz*

Minister of Evangelism — Chibueze Okorie



Greetings to our Project Connect Members & Friends,

It has been a very promising year for Project Connect, we have had several new people enrolled in our Members Correspondence Course. Project Connect is open to anyone who is incarcerated and interested in our Membership. Project Connect has been a vital link that connects our friends and members in prison and the congregation of The Church of Gethsemane. Upon release, members and non-members are encouraged to participate in our Re-entry Support Group Program designed to help make a successfully re-entry back to society.

After prison, many formerly incarcerated people face more hardship as a result of no housing, job placement and support. The parole requires employment, housing and many other conditions that make it difficult to succeed due to ones criminal records. Our society should find a common ground to accept those released into the community and give them the opportunity to go forward. Formerly incarcerated persons who have served their time in prison, and have turned their lives around, and have been contributing members of society should be allowed to exercise their rights as humans, brothers, sisters, neighbors and fellow children of God and should not be allowed continued punishment. Our society should forgive others the same way of God's forgiveness to mankind. Forgiveness is the key to success.

This year we have made stronger connections with others regarding re-entry concerns. I have participated in programs at Pace University, The Re-Entry Working Group of the Presbytery of NYC, Congregational Job Connections Task Force. I will be leading a workshop about Project Connect at a conference in June entitled The Promised Land! We welcome your support and involvement.

Peace & Love to All, Chibueze

GETHSEMANE INTERNS JANET MARTIN & NETTIE PAISLEY



I feel so grateful and blessed to be part of the ministry of the Church of Gethsemane. It was my participation in the life of this congregation a few years ago that helped me to discern my call to become a Minister of The Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA). I plan to graduate from the New York Theological Seminary with a Masters of Divinity Degree in May 2009. I am an Elder of The Church On The Edge (PCUSA) in Edgewater, NJ where I assist with social justice programs and serve as Seminararian for the South Bergen Larger Parish, NJ. I am in Inquirer with the Presbytery of the Palisades as part of my journey towards ordination. Through Gethsemane, I am presently networking with other groups to create a congregation job connection program to help prospective employers connect with persons seeking jobs who are coming out of prison or drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs.

I graduate from the One Spirit Seminary in New York City on June 22, 2008 as an Interfaith Minister. In 2002, I became a Reiki Master and provide holistic services for self care (healing). I am a member of the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture where I have organized and presented numerous events promoting ethical living. In addition, I am a social justice activist who believes strongly in empowerment through the beauty of peace. I have adopted PS 44 in Bedford Stuyvesant Brooklyn providing fundraising and student enrichment services. As a life long educator, I teach computer applications, character development and job readiness. My ministry will focus on youth at risk and prison reform.



Heartfelt Tributes to the Memory of Two Beloved Members

Orlando Haynes
July 31, 1951-November 3, 2007

Orlando was born in Harlem in 1951 and as a young man divided his time between family in New York and Maryland. He was an avid reader and sports fan and had amazing manual dexterity in sewing, knitting and crocheting. He conducted arts and crafts workshops at Brooklyn United Methodist home where he resided. He also made banners for Gethsemane and costumes for Brooklyn Family Theatre. Orlando was employed as a railroad clerk with the NYC Transit Authority for 15 years.

He came to Gethsemane through his wife Gail and his three children Altovise, Willie and Nikki. He was a deacon and elder, served as treasurer and finally as Clerk of Session. He made many visits to prisons and shelters speaking about Gethsemane's ministry. As a board member for JusticeWorks Community, he participated in rally programs and was the most prolific maker of origami flowers, the symbol of the mothers in Prison, Children in Crisis Campaign.



Louisa Horton Hill
September 10, 1920-January 25, 2008

Louisa died at the age of 87 at the Actors Fund Home in Englewood, New Jersey. Professionally Louisa was a stage, film and television actress whose film debut was in 1948 in *All My Sons* opposite Burt Lancaster and Edward G. Robinson. She appeared on Broadway, in numerous television dramas and with the Heritage Theatre until 2002.

Louisa became passionate about criminal justice after the Attica uprising in 1971. She was involved in an interfaith coalition for justice and then served on the board of Citizen Advocates for Justice, the predecessor of JusticeWorks Community. She became a member of Gethsemane in 1988 and was ordained an elder in 1989 and served as the Clerk of Session until 2003. Louisa wrote many Project Connect letters, participated in numerous prison visits and devotedly tended the garden.

Orlando and Louisa will ever remain in our hearts.

Gethsemane News



Gethsemane Gets A Face Lift Before Our 20th Year Celebration! We have been busy repairing and restoring the front of the church building. All of the stained glass windows are being repaired and restored as needed. In addition, pointing and other repairs are being made to the masonry. Come to our Homecoming Celebration and Open House on September 7th to learn more about how we are getting ready for our 20th year celebration in 2009.



We Say Good Bye to Brooklyn Family Theater after six years of incredible performances at Gethsemane. Hundreds of children and adults were entertained by amazing performers at musicals that included *Godspell*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Annie*, *Barnum*, *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*, *Snoopy*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Pirates of Penzance*, *Peter Pan* and *The Wiz*. Our own elder, Phill Greenland, Jonathan Valuckas, and the cast of supporters of BFT have decided that it is "time to move on" to other endeavors. They will be missed by the entire Park Slope Community. Thank you BFT for the time and talent that you have shared with us! We send good wishes to all of you.

Gethsemane Elder Pam McAllister has written another book -- her 10th! This one is a tribute to the world's 1st global celebrity and most quotable American, Mark Twain. A book party/ Twain celebration will be held on May 31st, at 6 p.m. at the Park Slope United Methodist Church (6th Ave./8th St/ Brooklyn). The book is available by order at any bookstore or from Amazon.com. Congratulations, Pam!



Highlights & Events



Children's Christmas Party



Children's Christmas Party



Gethsemane Choir



International Interfaith Peace Day



Pace University Re-entry Event



Easter Pancake Breakfast



New Members Dennis & Gloria



Rev. Liz Alexander's Installation



Ray & Jolene tie the knot



Staff Birthdays!



Criminal Justice Sunday



Summer Reflection Group



Inquirer for Minister of the Word and Sacrament, Rosemarie Napoli



State Senator Montgomery speaks on Criminal Justice Sunday



Rowan Belle is baptized & Mom Pam is ordained an Elder

Project Connect Re-Entry Program



The Church of Gethsemane's Project Connect Re-Entry Peer Support group is growing in numbers and enthusiasm. The group presently meets on the 2nd and last Wednesdays of the month from 6-8 PM. Food and car fare are provided. Group members take turns facilitating the meeting and topics such as transition challenges, relationships, parole requirements, and budgeting are discussed. There are also opportunities at the meeting for networking with others about housing and job opportunities.

This year we have welcomed home several of our Project Connect members from prison. **Welcome Home!** Gerald Brown, John Flynn, Gerard Howard, Keisha Johnson, Kim Kolvinski, Gloria Ligon and John Williams.

John "Mojo" Flynn's poem "Am I Really Free" sums up some of the challenges people face upon release.

AM I REALLY FREE?

Am I really free?

As oceans of dreaded emotions bombards me
With things I no longer can relate to.

Am I really free?

As I cling to those who I feel will be
My salvation, fearing to tread alone
And stay humble and true.

Am I really free?

When I have become a blank face in
A crowd of mass chaos that forever
Devour itself with uncaring hearts
And minds.

Am I really free?

When I can no longer relate to the better
Part of self (women), fearing to be mis-understood
When sharing the compassion that has become
My legacy, avoiding pitfalls as I blindly
Search for those of my kind.

Am I really free?

When I have become a babe
Needing to be nurtured, and learning to
Walk anew.

Am I really free?

When even in a society of free opportunity
I am still shackled and chained to
My past, knowing that no matter what
Pains I go thru, to this new life and you
I will be forever true....

01/2008



Our food pantry provides food for project connect members in prison, people returning home and neighborhood persons in need.



Presbyterian Re-Entry Working Group
at John Jay College

Project Connect Voices



During the past year over 15 new people joined our Project Connect Program while incarcerated. Six people have completed our membership course. We mailed over 125 car packages (boxes of high protein foods) to Project Connect members in prisons throughout New York State, and church members wrote monthly letters to our 75 Project Connect Members. In addition we have written numerous letters of assurance to parole boards and have been in contact with family members. Over the year we visited over 35 Project Connect members in 10 prisons. With additional funding we hope to make even more visits this summer and fall.

No matter what, I have faith that the Lord will indeed bring me through this trial successfully and fully healed. He has never let me down and I know he won't now. Chibueze, my faith is intact and will remain that way here and when I am paroled. **Earl Martin**

I wish there was something good to write about, but in here there isn't very much that is considered good. We have been getting a lot of young kids in here. I don't usually call them children kids, but these guys have made some grown up decisions that was messed up. Their children days are over. I mean they have seventeen year old kids in here for life without the possibility of parole sentences. How do you tell a child that they will be in prison for the rest of their lives because of a mistake that they made when they were sixteen. **Frank Green**

Pam, you are 100% right about people taking life for granted. Most people in society don't care or want to know what's going on around them. God put us on earth for a purpose. People should want to change for the positive things that life have to offer. **Eric Nash**

So much noise in here
What is real and what isn't
I'm going insane.

God holds me at night
He knows how I need his love
Comfort he gives me.

Cardboard crucifix
Flowers from toilet paper
Powdered juice colors.

Frames from playing cards
Hanging plastic rosary
Paper fish mobile.

My cute cluttered room
Resembles hacienda
Gotta call it home.

Permanent stained floor
Ripped pages hang from my walls
Graffiti by Dawn.

**Jailhouse Haiku by
Dawn Alegria**

Beloved family in Christ, thank you for keeping me in your thoughts and prayers. Time isn't the easiest thing to do sometimes, but I am found ok and in victory through our Lord. **Eniezer Rios**

I have faith in God, knowing that with God nothing is impossible. I have enough faith that keeps me going when there seems no way to go on. Such faith is the understanding that God will see me through whatever it is that I am experiencing. **Aaron Talley**

Every third Sunday after worship we write letters to our Project Connect members. We welcome volunteers to help us. We offer a special thanks to students from Pace University and members of our partnership churches. We also want to thank families from Brick Church for helping with our recent PC packages.



JusticeWorks Community

As a separate 501(C)(3) organization, JusticeWork's mission is to engage in public education, advocacy and community organizing to change inhumane and unjust criminal justice policies. Visit www.justiceworks.org

JusticeWorks held its annual benefit on March 11, 2008 at the Biltmore Theatre for the Manhattan Theatre Club's production of *Come Back, Little Sheba*. This revival of the William Inge play starred JWC board member, S. Epatha Merkerson. The 8th annual Rev. Dr. Constance M. Baugh Achievement Award was given to Sharon White-Harrigan by last year's awardee Joanne Archibald. Ms. Merkerson's portrayal of Lola which was powerful and compelling, recently merited her a Tony award nomination. Kathryn Erbe, a JWC board member, presented a well-deserved bouquet to Epatha at the curtain call. This benefit marked another memorable and successful event in JusticeWorks' history.

The Census issue where prisoners are counted as if they were residents of the communities where they are incarcerated, even though they remain legal residents of the places they lived prior to incarceration. Seven upstate NYS Senate districts meet the minimum population requirements only because prison inmates are included in the count. Prisoners cannot vote! We ask participants in all our public education events to sign cards addressed to the Governor asking that NYS follow its constitution and count prisoners in their communities of origin.

We continue to work with Community in Unity Coalition to oppose the construction of a new jail in the South Bronx and to collaborate with the Women in Prison Project Reconnect and the Drop the Rock coalition of the Correctional Association. JWC staff, women from our Speakers' Bureau and young people from our Fighters for Justice joined these groups on their advocacy days in Albany on March 4th and 27th to meet with legislators and call for much needed legislative change.

The Church of Gethsemane is a More Light Presbyterian Church

To:

The Church of Gethsemane
1012 Eighth Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11215

The Ministry of the Church

Ministers: All the People
Pastor Rev. Liz Alexander
Director of Community Life: Mary-Elizabeth Fitzgerald
Minister of Evangelism: Min. Chibueze Okorie
Music Director: Pam McAllister
Executive Assistant: Victoria Schell-Wolf
Bookkeeper: Margery Davis
Custodian: Peter Villanueva

Officers of the Church

Elders/Session: Rosemarie Napoli, Clerk of Session, Helene Means, Treasurer, Pamela Schafer-Ramoutar, Doris Randolph, Ray Rios, Nathaniel Wright
Deacons: Raymond Gillyard, Joseph Petty, Sr., Anthony Simpson & Brenda Ward

Please Join Us for the Upcoming Events: Gethsemane will be leading two workshops on **June 13th at 2PM at the conference *Becoming The Promise Land: Faith, Community, and The Prison Reentry Population*** held at Union Theological Seminary on 121st & Broadway. This is a two day conference beginning June 12th. Call 212-662-4315 for more information.

On **Brooklyn Pride Day, Saturday, June 14th** starting at 11AM The Church of Gethsemane will have a booth between 10th & 11th Street on Prospect Park West. We will also be marching in the parade at 9PM on 7th Avenue.

Summer Worship begins on Sunday, June 29th at Noon
Homecoming Sunday/Open House September 7th at 1:30PM

The Church of Gethsemane Mission

Statement: Founded in 1986, we are a Presbyterian Church created by and for prisoners, ex-prisoners, their families, neighborhood persons, and people who feel called into ministry with the poor. In solidarity, we seek justice for our world and the empowerment of the Christian gospel in our lives. We thrive on our diversity and value our inclusiveness. No one is turned away. All are welcome. We strive to create a spiritual community that comforts and challenges, struggles and sustains, heals and liberates. We value people for who they are, which frees us to struggle for who we and the world might become.

Phone: (718) 499-6704
Fax: (718) 832-2832
Website: thechurchofgethsemane.org

Directions:

Take the F train to 7th Avenue stop in Brooklyn ~ Walk to 8th Avenue ~ we are on 8th Avenue between 10th & 11th St.

Services are at 1:30PM Sept. thru June