



The Church of Gethsemane

Liberation Voices!

Summer 2007



Pastor's Report — Rev. Liz Alexander



Dear Members and Friends of Gethsemane,

This program year has been filled with both challenges and great joys. Our worshipping community grows in its passion and conviction to our mission, as we share our faith tradition and our life stories with one another, and proclaim the Good News of God's love for all.

I wish to thank all the members and friends of Gethsemane for your continued support. The needs of those coming home from prison are great, and grants for re-entry support and our Project Connect Program for those still in prison are essential to our ministry. While we received a significant grant from Brick Church this past year to fund our re-entry support group and enhance our Project Connect program, this was a one time grant. We will need additional funding this coming year if we are to continue these programs. We pray that faithful supporters, including individual donors, partner churches, and councils, etc. from the denomination will continue to walk in solidarity with those who have been marginalized and disempowered by our society.

I also wish to thank those who volunteer their time at our church. A special thanks to the Reading Group volunteers from Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, who have provided tutoring and mentoring for our children over the years. Our intern Melodee Bottari also graciously donated her time with us this year. We thank her for her energy and insight, as well as her compassion and preaching skills. We wish her well on her path towards ordination.

If you are not familiar with The Church of Gethsemane and are reading our newsletter for the first time, please contact us for further information about how you can become part of our church family.

Blessings and Peace, *Liz*

Minister of Evangelism — Chibueze Okorie

Greetings to our Project Connect Members and Friends,



There is hope for those who believe in working hard and moving forward to success. Moving forward should always be the ultimate goal in ones life. No one should give up from the struggles of ones life journey. Failures should not be the end of our lives, but we should continue to strive for success. Having spent many years in prison should not make one dehumanize one self. We are all human beings and loving children of God who seek changes to our lives. Many of our Project Connect Members who have been released from prison still struggle to get their lives back. Finding a job and affordable housing can be a challenge for folks coming home. Those difficulties should not deprive us from trying to achieve our dreams.

When you're released or about to be released, equip yourselves with faith in believing that you will make it, determination to go with your faith, and the principles to guide you. Remember being released from prison does not end the struggle to survive in the community. You will have to help yourself to find those services that might help you make a successful re-entry. Those changes you made to your life while in prison lead to your becoming a productive member of society when you are released.

At the Church of Gethsemane we welcome those who are released from prison as part of our church family. Project Connect Re-entry support group is our new program for those released from prison. The participants meet twice a month to support one another.

We continue to reach out to our brothers and sisters and friends in prison through our Project Connect Program. We welcomed four Project Connect members home this year. Who are now full members of our community of faith. We look forward to welcoming more members and friends by the fall. May God continue to guide you all, "Amen"

Peace & love to All! Chibueze

GETHSEMANE INTERN Melodee Bottari



I graduated from New York Theological Seminary May 2007 with a Master's of Divinity. Presently I am working on finishing ordination exams and will seek a call as a Minister of Word and Sacrament as soon as all requirements are fulfilled. Meanwhile, I am coordinating a few ecumenical events on Staten Island. I will be organizing an interfaith Thanksgiving service along with Father John O'Hara from St. Theresa's Roman Catholic Church. This event will take place at Olivet Presbyterian Church where I serve as an elder. I will also be organizing a choir fest with Rabbi Les Polansky from Temple Israel. I will be an active member of the Staten Island Council of Churches and I look forward to participating in many ecumenical/interfaith events. I enjoy spending any free time with my husband of 11 years, Gregory and the three cats who allow me to live with them, Laverne, Shirley and Pandora.