

One church on September 11, 2001

Dr. Jon Walton, pastor of New York City's First Presbyterian Church, wrote a brief account about September 11, 2001, and the effect that day's events had on his church.

He recalled that the church had to be left open for the people who continually streamed in. Some came to escape the smoke that affected their lungs and their eyes. Some came hoping to find friends or relatives. Most came to pray, to seek solace and to try to sort out why the unspeakable death and destruction had happened.

Dr. Walton soon learned that the tragedy directly affected several families related to the church. The husband of the church secretary, a nephew of the receptionist, a church-school teacher, the father of a child in the nursery and a young mother of two children were all missing or known to be dead.

Dr. Walton said he now understands the opening words of the book of Lamentations, which refer to Jerusalem when the Babylonians invaded and destroyed the city: "How lonely sits the city that once was full of people! How like a widow she has become, she that was great among the nations!" (Lamentations 1:1, NRSV).

—Adapted from Dr. Walton's brief statement titled "Lonely City"



[image above: TOWERS_2037, TOWERS_2037C]

Special dates

- Labor Day, *September 5, 2005*
- Patriot Day (remembrance of 9/11), *September 11, 2005*
- Grandparents Day, *September 11, 2005*
- First day of Autumn, *September 22, 2005*

Preparation for worship

Lord, help us give you our full attention so that we may be aware of your many blessings.



Awaken us to your presence in our midst, Lord, that we may enjoy rich fellowship with you.



Enable us to open ourselves to you, O God, that your love might flow into our spirits.



Loving Creator of us all, please open our spiritual eyes so that we may see your intentions for us and that we may serve you better.

Words of welcome

(Feel free to use these in your worship bulletins.)

On this Labor Day weekend, we extend a friendly greeting to all worshippers. Welcome! And may God's guidance and strength be with us all.



St. Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome saying, "May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another ..." (Romans 15:5, NRSV). May that be our goal as we welcome and support one another in the name of the Lord.



"Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice" (Psalm 105:3, NRSV). Let us rejoice as we present ourselves before our loving Creator. Welcome to worship. Welcome to this house of God.



It is the Lord's desire that we love one another. In the spirit of love and friendship, we welcome all who have come to worship. May we all be blessed as we praise God.

- Properly understood and applied [prayer] is the most potent instrument of action.

—Mahatma Gandhi

- The person who creates or leads or labors will inevitably make many mistakes. But at least those who strive to accomplish something of worth will not make the mistake of doing nothing.

—Anonymous

- Our quest in life is to glorify God by simply being who we were created to be at the core of our humanity.

—Mac Schafer

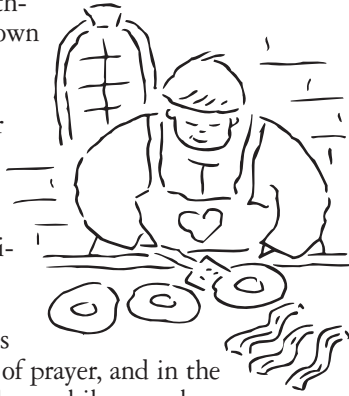
- He cannot have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother.

—St. Cyprian

The continuing conversation

When no one else is around, do you talk to yourself? When he was alone, the 17th-century Christian monk known as Brother Lawrence carried on conversations with God.

Lawrence was the cook for his religious community. He practiced the presence of God while he prepared meals. Describing his experience of work and prayer, he said:



“The time of business does not . . . differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are calling for different things, I possess God in the same great tranquility as if I were upon my knees.”

With God’s help, our prayer life can bring a similar tranquility to our busy days.

[image above: MONK_2036, MONK_2036C]

The most alive person

After the death of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, the author of the best selling book, *On Death and Dying*, her friend, Dr. David Kessler, hailed her as the “most alive person” he had ever met. She wanted to be known as an ordinary human, yet Kessler said she did extraordinary things with her life.

Elizabeth related so closely to those who were dying that she garnered from them the five stages of dying: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. She encouraged the dying to vent their feelings, and if they couldn’t, she tried to be a voice for them by explaining their experiences to others. Her work produced more than 20 books about many kinds of losses, including loss of loved ones, divorce, loss of a job, rejection and more.

She chose to die at home with her family members and Dr. Kessler nearby. Her grandchildren even played at the foot of her bed. From her bed she could see the loveliness of the Arizona desert through a picture window. She lingered for three days, and then peacefully slipped away. A victorious memorial service was held in a Scottsdale church.

A long life assured

Do you ever feel like the person who exclaimed, “God put me on Earth to accomplish a certain number of things, and right now I’m so far behind, I’ll live forever!?”

Gifts

God waved a large, majestic hand
And gave us sky and trees and land.
God gave us birds to chirp each morn
And stout, young rows of bright green corn.
God gave us forests in whose shadows deep
Deer keep watch as their children sleep.
God gave us clouds of fluffy white
To shield us from the sun’s bright light.
God gave us homes to keep us warm,
To keep us secure and safe from harm.
In short, God gave us all he could;
God gave us all things great and good.

—Unknown

When ears won’t hear

I went downtown shopping for designer sheets when someone whispered, “I have no bed.”

I stood at an appliance store comparing prices of microwave ovens when an Ethiopian woman wept, “I have no food.”

I hired a decorator to remodel my kitchen and to add more cupboards when a Cambodian child sobbed, “I have no cup.”

I dreamed of building a getaway place, a cabin in the woods, a country place. Across the water came the cry, “I have no country.”

I bought a new widescreen TV for a loved one’s pleasure when a war orphan murmured, “I have no loved ones.”

May God forgive us when our ears won’t hear and our eyes won’t see the sounds and sights of suffering around us. Amen.

God’s call to his people

Labor Day brings to mind a statement found in the Presbyterian Church’s *Book of Order*, which addresses God’s call to people of faith:

“God calls a people to use the gifts and abilities God has given, honoring and serving God in personal life, in households and families, in daily occupations, in community, nation and the world. . . . Persons respond to God’s call to honor and serve God in every aspect of human life: in their work and in their play, in their thoughts and in their action, in their private and in their public relationships. God hallows daily life, and daily life provides opportunities for holy living. As Christians honor and serve God in daily life, they worship God. For Christians, work and worship cannot be separated.”

Up to the task

When work — or life — gets difficult, we may think back to childhood. Things were a lot easier and our problems were much smaller when we were young.

Or were they?

The challenges we faced back then may seem small and insignificant now, but they surely didn't feel that way at the time. Somehow we endured each challenge — and grew as a result.

The next time you face a difficulty, remember this: The task before us is no greater than the power behind us.

And there is power behind you. "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).

Two happy marriages

Two happily married men were talking about their wives. One husband said, "My prayer is that as we grow older together and death approaches, I'd like to die first. I don't want to live without her."

The other man responded by saying, "My prayer is that God will make me and keep me worthy of my wife."

If you are married, how do you feel about your mate?

The purpose of the Church

He works on us in all sorts of ways. But above all, He works on us through each other. [People] are mirrors, or "carriers" of Christ to other [people]. Usually it is those who know Him that bring Him to others. That is why the Church, the whole body of Christians showing Him to one another, is so important. It is so easy to think that the Church has a lot of different objects — education, building, missions, holding services. ... The Church exists for no other purpose but to draw [people] into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other reason.

—C.S. Lewis

Bible quiz

Around 450 years before Jesus, the prophet Nehemiah heard some bad news about conditions in Jerusalem. The city still lay in ruins following an invasion by the Babylonian army many years before. The news caused Nehemiah to sit down and cry. After mourning for days, he felt that he should lead men to rebuild the wall and gates around Jerusalem. He organized a work force and, despite some opposition, they rebuilt the wall.

A well-known verse describes the accomplishment: "So we rebuilt the wall, and all the wall was joined together to half its height; for the people had a mind to _____."

Choose the correct ending to the statement:

- A. be protected
- B. work
- C. serve
- D. live

(The correct answer can be found in Nehemiah 4:6, NRSV)



[image above: WALL_2038, WALL_2038C]

Answer: B

A place for you

How much do you know about the Bible? Or Christian history? Or different ways of praying? Or Christian stewardship? Or Christian theology?

Do you even know why most — but not all — Christians worship on Sundays?

The point is, no matter what your age, there is much to learn from classes offered at the church. If you are interested in learning about a certain religious topic, speak to the pastor.

Look for the smile which breaks forth on the pastor's face. Why? Because an educated congregation thrills pastors. Learning is part of loving God with one's mind. Christian education helps us understand what living as Christians is all about. So go ahead, ask about a class that might interest you.

"It is not enough to have a good mind," said the French philosopher, René Descartes. "The main thing is to use it well." Learning about Christian beliefs and practices is using one's mind quite well. Your church is a place for you to learn. It has a class for you.