

Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church

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Rev. M. Muriel Burrows, Pastor

Rev. Dr. Louise Johnson, Director of Christian Education

David Shedden, Seminary Intern

Anne Blackwood-Chirchir, Lector

Beverly Owens, Music Director

Amy Shortt, Organist

Alex Benestelli, Guest Organist

Jean Escarpeta, Verse Speaking Choir Assistant Director

March 18, 2007

10:00 a.m.

Fourth Sunday in Lent

*Enter Reverently, Meditate Quietly, Worship Devoutly,
Leave Gratefully, Serve Christ Faithfully*

PRELUDE

INTROIT

I Lift Up Mine Eyes

Levine

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CALL TO WORSHIP (Based on Psalm 32)

Leader: Happy are those whose sins are forgiven.

**People: Happy are those to whom God attributes no wrong,
those in whose heart there is no deceit.**

Leader: When we keep silent about our wrongdoings,
our lives disintegrate with worry and guilt;

**People: When we struggle to hide from God,
the heaviness in our hearts consumes our strength.**

Leader: But when we seek your truth, O God, and acknowledge our sin,
we experience your forgiveness.

**People: Let all people reach out to you in prayer, O God,
and know your protection and strength.**

Leader: Surrounded by your grace-filled presence and filled with your un-
deserved forgiveness, we sing your praise; we shout for joy.

**People: Stubbornness melts away and tempers are controlled when we listen
for God's word and follow God's direction for our lives.**

Leader: When we fail to listen, and persist in following other than God's way,
our hearts are hardened and our lives tormented.

**People: When we put our trust in God, we are surrounded and filled with
God's steadfast love.**

Leader: Rejoice and shout for joy all those who are upright in heart.

All: Let us worship the living, loving God!

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND PRAISE

All: God of steadfast love, you give us so many reasons to rejoice – the best reason of all is having been brought so close to you in Jesus. Through him you enable us to be new people – part of your new creation. And you have entrusted us with the task of continuing to give shape to this new creation by commissioning us as ambassadors of Christ. By aligning our hearts with yours, we can speak the words to others which you have spoken to us in Christ: “You are loved. You are forgiven. You are saved.” We praise you and adore you, O God, as we offer this prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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*OPENING HYMN

I Come with Joy

#507

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Leader: Merciful God, you have brought our lives into harmony with yours through the sacrificial love, life, and death of Jesus Christ. You have created us anew in Christ and have entrusted us with the task of living out this newness of life so that others will also come to know you through Christ. We confess that we readily accept the privilege of being a new creation in Christ, but all too often we fail to live up to the responsibility which that brings. When we are content to enjoy newness of life in Christ as a personal experience only, and fail to accept the challenge of sharing this experience with others;

People: Forgive us, O God.

Leader: Being a new creation in Christ means having our identity shaped by Christ himself. When we believe that our identity is shaped by what we do and how well we do it;

People: Forgive us, O God.

Leader: Being a new creation in Christ means accepting others in love as we are accepted by him. When we allow prejudice and judgmental attitudes to undermine our call to be agents of reconciliation;

People: Forgive us, O God.

Leader: Being a new creation in Christ means being commissioned to spread the good news of peace and love, justice and mercy, to a world sorely in need of such news. When we fail to live out the values of the gospel, forgetting the high cost to Jesus when he showed us just how much he values and loves us;

People: Forgive us, O God.

Leader: We come to you, merciful God, in penitence and faith, praying that you will heal us and forgive us in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR REFLECTION AND SILENT CONFESSION

Congregational Response (Sung):

#370

**Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou biddest me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!**

**Just as I am, Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!**

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Leader: *If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new! We have been reconciled to God through Christ and all this is from God who does not count our trespasses against us – but entrusts us with the message of reconciliation (based on 2 Corinthians 5:17-19). The good news, therefore, is this: in Jesus Christ we are renewed and we are forgiven.*

All: Thanks be to God!

*GLORIA PATRI (kids' pink page)

#579

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WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

People: And also with you!

Leader: Let us offer each other a sign of peace!

(Students in grades 7-12 are dismissed for their Bible class.**)**

READING

I Believe

Verse Speaking Choir

*HYMN

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

#376

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Pages 78-79

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

(Students in grades 1-6 are dismissed for their Bible classes.**)**

SPECIAL MUSIC

God Is

Fryson

SERMON

Will the Real Prodigal Stand Up?

Rev. Muriel Burrows

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER (kids' orange page)

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

*Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
and put your trust in the Lord.*

OFFERTORY

*DOXOLOGY (kids' red page)

#592

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

All: Lord Jesus Christ, you gave yourself to us at such huge cost, to reconcile us to God and to create us into new people. In thanksgiving, we offer these gifts and the service of our lives to you, to be used to further the task of reconciling the world to God. Strengthen us with your Spirit that we may be your faithful ambassadors and eager agents of reconciliation. Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

#298

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION

In Me

Tindley

* Congregation stands
** Latecomers ushered in

ANNOUNCEMENTS



WELCOME - The Pastor, Elders and Deacons of Witherspoon welcome most warmly all worshipers. Our fellowship is enriched by your presence. If you do not have a church home of your own, we do sincerely invite you to be a part of our fellowship. Please contact the church office for further information if you are interested in church membership (609-924-1666 or witherspoon@verizon.net).



SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR ALL AGE GROUPS! Adults meet on their own schedule each month in the Fellowship Hall at 9:00 a.m. Sunday school classes for students in grades 1-6 begin immediately after the children's message in morning worship. The 7th-12th grade Sunday school class begins after passing of the peace. (A nursery is available for children in preschool and kindergarten.)

NURSERY CARE is provided for children 0-5 beginning at 9:45 a.m. Today Pam Johnson is assisting with nursery care.

*Altar
Flowers*



FLOWERS – Flowers for today’s service were given by *Maria Potts* in memory of her mother, *Aundria Owens*. If you would like to provide flowers in honor or memory of a loved one, or simply to beautify the church, please sign up on the chart located on the door of the sound room (left-hand entrance from the sanctuary to the parish house). After worship service, the donor may take the flowers home. At present, it is the responsibility of the person giving the flowers to make his/her own arrangements for preparation and delivery of the flowers for the Chancel. The next available date is March 25.

USHERS for this morning’s service are Gerald Delk and James Mack. Next week’s ushers are Christo and Lucill Claassens.



COFFEE HOUR - Please join us for a Coffee Hour in the Fellowship Hall following this morning’s worship service. Host for the month of March is Gerald Delk. Anyone who wishes to contribute to the Coffee Hour should contact Gerald (609-275-1941).

ATTENDANCE at the service of March 11 was 98.

LECTIONARY TEXT for next Sunday, March 25, is Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126; Philipians 3:4-14; John 12:1-8.



FOOD DONATIONS FOR CRISIS MINISTRY – The Deacons are collecting nourishing food for the Crisis Ministry. *****NO GLASS JARS, PLEASE.***** Checks made payable to the Crisis Ministry are always welcome and may be placed in the offering plate or given to a deacon. Please consider an extra purchase during your next grocery shopping trip and place items in the wooden box in the Narthex.



MICHELE MINTER, along with 13 other women, was honored at Princeton YWCA’s annual Tribute to Women of Achievement last Thursday, March 15. The tribute program was established nationally by the YWCA to honor women who have made significant contributions to their professions and community in executive, entrepreneurial, professional, educational and elected roles. Michele, director of development for Princeton University, spearheaded the university’s Women in Leadership Initiative and is a leader for the Princeton Area Community Foundation’s Fund for Women and Girls.



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY WORK WEEK – This was an exciting week for our Habitat Project – the reason we are doing this! Barbara Flythe and Meg Coghlan met with our partner family last Friday. Habitat’s term, “partner family” is used because each family that takes possession of a Habitat house must provide 500 hours of work on the house. Plus, remember they must also qualify for the mortgage, have steady employment and have good credit. We learned about our family

and find out how we can help them make this house a home. We propose to have a house warming event where anyone interested can choose to help the family by supplying them with specific pre-determined items. Gifts can be purchased through registries at local stores (or online). These gifts will range from least expensive to more generous offerings (i.e., a can opener to a set of pots and pans). We will let you know which stores we will be utilizing and when the gift registry is in place. For more information, please contact Meg Coghlan (609-651-2945 or meg_coghlan@yahoo.com).



RADIO GOLF – Witherspoon Futures Committee is sponsoring a theater party at McCarter Theatre **next Sunday, March 25**, for the 2:00 p.m. matinee production of *Radio Golf*, August Wilson's last play. Tickets are \$50 per person; proceeds will benefit the Robeson House Fund. A dialogue about drama with the actors and a private reception will follow. This production is appropriate for ages 12 and up. We have reserved 200 seats and are asking every member who is able to purchase or sell at least four tickets! You may reserve your tickets with Benjamin Colbert, Deborah Colbert or Paul Stephens. Please make checks payable to "Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church."



CALLING ALL WSPC MEN! – The WSPC Men's Association will meet **this Saturday, March 24**, at 9:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Rev. Cornell Edmonds will lead a follow-up discussion on Paul's letter to Philemon. We will also discuss the Easter flower sale and plans for the annual Church Picnic. Members from the Nassau men's group are invited to join us. A light breakfast will be served.



SPONSORED WALK FOR THE CRISIS MINISTRY – We hope to send a team on the annual *Footprints Walk* on **Saturday, April 21**. The aim is to raise as much money as possible to help the work of The Crisis

Ministry. The Crisis Ministry is facing cuts in its funding this year, so every dollar will make a difference. The event begins at 8.30 a.m. with registration. The walk starts at Kingston Tow Path, on Route 27, up to Harrison Street and then back to Route 27. The entire walk is just over five miles. If you want to join the WSPC team, please contact David Shedden (david.shedden@ptsem.edu) or the church office. This will be a great opportunity to spend some time with other church family members. If you are unable to walk on that day, why not sponsor the team so we can raise as much money as possible?



FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THIS WEEK

(Questions on Sunday's readings for use by discussion groups, prayer groups, or for individual prayer.)

THE LENTEN SERIES

by Gail Keffer

This series is written in the first person of the character as he/she may have felt at that time. I feel that there is a place for almost everyone in the story of Christ's death, so study of it helps us to find what is expected of us for the spreading of His Word today. All of us are tempted daily and sometimes we also deny Christ or do not take the opportunity to spread the Good News. We are all sinners. Sometimes we want to give and do so generously. The series concentrates on Judas, Peter, Pilate, a Roman soldier, the thief on the cross, Joseph of Arimathaea, and Mary Magdalene.

The Thief on the Cross: *And Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."* (Luke 23:43, KJV)

"I had been a sinner all of my adult life. I had robbed people, rich and poor. I had taken advantage of people who tried to help me. I never killed anyone, but I probably would have if they would have been in my way. I needed their money, I thought. My language was only used to help myself. I was the only important person in the world. I had no friends. I had used them all. I deserved to die.

"As I listened to Jesus, I thought at first that I could use this man just as I had used so many others. He was so mild that I felt a new feeling inside that I had never felt before. He truly seemed to love people. I did not know what love meant. I had never loved anyone except myself.

"There were two of us, one on each side of him. They had wanted to make him the prime target because getting rid of him was going to affect many people. The people in charge of the government were afraid of him. They misunderstood him.

"During the time that we were all hanging there together, the other robber started tormenting him by asking him to save himself and us if he were really the true Christ. I had begun to believe that he was the real Christ and I asked the other thief if he did not fear God because we were all being condemned to death. I realized from the people that were there and from hearing what had happened in the high court that this man was indeed innocent. No one came to try to save the other robber or me. No one cared what happened to us. We were receiving what we deserved. But this man was different. People were crying and praying. They were not violent. The people were heartbroken. No one was breaking my heart, but I had broken the hearts of many other people by my words and my actions. His were words of kindness. He was concerned that someone take care of his mother, and he forgave the people who had put him on the cross saying that they did not realize what they were doing.

"I realized he really was the Messiah, the one he said he was. His kingdom was not of this small world, a much bigger world than any of us could even imagine in our wildest dreams.

"I asked him to remember me when he went to his Heavenly Kingdom. He didn't even ask my name. Now I know that he knew it because he knows all of us. I know that he knows the flowers, the hair on our head. He knows what is in our hearts. We don't

have to tell him. He already knows. His answer was the sweetest words I have ever heard. He said, *Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise.* Through his loving grace he had saved a wretch like me.”

Prayer: Dear God, We know that you alone are sinless. We have all sinned and fallen short of your glory. But through your love and grace we can be forgiven as long as we seek to put you first and ask you to help us. We can overcome anything this earth has to offer, even death. Help us, dear Lord, to be your servant today, tomorrow, and always. Amen

- † We may not be in jail, but have we hurt anyone by our words or actions?
- † How should we approach people that we know we have wronged?
- † How does the Bible say we should approach someone after we have hurt them?
- † Probably one of the most common hurts between people is gossip. How can we help this stop?
- † What do we share in common with the thief on the cross? If nothing else, do we share his earnest seeking for forgiveness and acceptance by Christ?