

During This Season of Lent, Take A Break From Life's Frantic Pace

A Weekly Column From Members of the Westfield/Mountainside Ministerium

By DR. WILLIAM ROSS FORBES

In my vocation, I often have the opportunity to be a part of some of the "significant" moments of life. We, clergy, are present at some of the times that people have traditionally used to mark our life journeys — baptisms, weddings, births, deaths, illnesses, various life crises.

It is surely one of the privileges of my vocation to be present at such occasions. Difficult moments are usually easier to bear when the pain of the moment can be shared with another. The celebrations of life always welcome one more observer and participant to mark the day!

I find that in the time used to prepare for such occasions, I often advise individuals, couples, and families to savor the moment — that it will typically be over before anyone realizes how fleeting it was.

In recent years, I have found that people are more hurried and rushed than ever. At the same time, we are trying to cram more and more into every waking hour. It affects us at work and in our personal lives.

Weekends used to be a time for a slower pace and an opportunity to "recharge" for the next work week. Those days seem long past! Weekends now are a blur of frenetic activities. Children are rushed to various sporting activities with more time needed for the more "skilled" levels (which are, of course, desirable and carry with them some enhanced social status). Lessons in the arts, equestrian skills, preparation for test-taking manage to pack Saturdays and Sundays to the max. Have we forgotten how to play and amuse ourselves?

I have the opportunity to watch the end result of what this kind of frenzied living causes. People seem to have forgotten how to relax and unwind. "Non-productive" time is frowned upon. I wonder how most of Europe is able to enjoy four- to six-week vacations and we seem to be destined to spend our vocational and

personal lives on a "hamster wheel" of activities.

In the counseling that I do with individuals and families, I hear over and over the refrain of not having any discretionary time; of running from one activity to another and not really enjoying life as much. I see stressed children, stressed adults, stressed marriages, stressed people, in general.

We are in the midst of the Lenten season in the Christian church. Historically, Lent has been a time of taking stock, of reflecting on one's life, and altering our consumptive tendencies toward a more judicious use of resources. There is nothing uniquely Christian about trying to be more contemplative and more disciplined in living one's life. Most of the major religions give attention to such matters.

In the weeks ahead, try to jettison some of the world's baggage and adopt a simpler lifestyle. Spend more time reading and reflecting. Spend more time with those whom you love. Be supportive of those who must bear some difficult burdens. Encourage them. Work on your listening skills. Re-order your priorities where necessary. Examine your daily and weekly calendar — where can some cutbacks be made?

Take some time for walks in the woods and treks on the beach. Read that best seller. Listen to music that brightens your spirits. Take a stroll in a museum. Spend a Saturday with a blank page on your appointment book. Count your blessings. Call your parents. Encourage a child. Recall a teacher who inspired you. Write a nice note to someone who lives alone. Smile at strangers.

You get the idea. Life goes by so fast. Let's not accelerate the pace. Savor each hour of every day.

The Reverend Dr. William Ross Forbes is the Senior Pastor of The Presbyterian Church in Westfield.



A GREAT TEAM...Helen Grayce, center, and Callie Gravanis, right, are among those members of the intergenerational Washington Rock Girl Scout Chorus who have been named as Lifetime Members. At 86, Mrs. Grayce is the oldest to become a Lifetime Member, while Callie, at 10, is the youngest. Also inducted were eighth graders Rebecca Mason and Natalie Allcock, and great-grandmother Harriette Koved. Joining Mrs. Grayce and Callie during a recent weekend at Camp Hoover in Newton is Carina Gerveshi.

Girl Scout Council Chorus Presents Camp Activities

WESTFIELD — The Washington Rock Girl Scout Council Chorus, an intergenerational ensemble, recently spent a weekend at Camp Hoover in Newton.

With "Make Love Your Aim" as their theme, participants ran a song workshop for Daisy Girl Scouts and rehearsed music for future events.

In addition, they prepared food representing the four international Girl Guide centers, including India, England, Mexico and Switzerland.

They also went hiking, held a "scouts' own" event and inducted five new mem-

bers into the Lifetime Membership/Hall of Fame. There are now 17 Lifetime Members, all of whom have been active in the chorus for at least five years.

The chorus has performed recently at the Lyons Veterans Hospital, Children's Specialized Hospital, the Westfield Neighborhood Council, the Chelsea assisted living facility and elsewhere, including various Girl Scout events.

The group is currently looking for a chorus manager to help with the administrative work of the group. Interested individuals may call the Washington Rock Girl Scout Council at (908) 232-3236.

Clergy and Others to Learn About Substance Abuse

WESTFIELD — Prevention Links, Inc. will host a two-day Congregation Assistance Program (CAP) training event, featuring information for clergy members and others on educating their congregations on the dangers of substance abuse, on Saturdays, March 24 and 31, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The program will be held at 300 North Avenue, East, in Westfield.

The CAP, a branch of the Union County Coalition for the Prevention of Substance Abuse, was developed to assist congregations of all denominations and faiths in helping individuals and families with drug and alcohol problems. Prevention Links, Inc. is the lead agency of the Coalition.

A CAP is a structured prevention and intervention ministry within a congregation for which selected individuals — core teams — are trained to be

resources to the congregation and community regarding alcoholism and drug dependence, as well as promoting healthy lifestyles.

The training presenter will be Scott Sechrist, Executive Director of the Mercer County Council on Alcoholism and Drug Addiction.

A light breakfast and lunch will be provided. Individuals attending both days of the free training will become certified to provide this resource to their congregations. Participants will learn how to cultivate a CAP within their congregation.

Individuals interested in attending or obtaining more information are asked to call Prevention Links, Inc. at (732) 381-4100.

Methodist Church to Host 26-Hour Men's Retreat

WESTFIELD — The First United Methodist Church of Westfield will sponsor a 26-hour Men's Corner-

stone Retreat beginning Friday, March 30, at 7 p.m. and concluding Saturday evening with a church family celebration.

The retreat will take place in the church building and sleeping accommodations, meals and snacks will be provided. Prayer, scripture and small group discussions will also be part of the event.

The Cornerstone Retreat will be run by a team of members from the church. Men in the community are invited to participate. The church is located at 1 East Broad Street.

Pre-registration is required and there is space available for 30 participants. The cost is \$35. For further information, please call the church office at (908) 233-4211.

Mothers to Hear Talk On Raising Siblings

CRANFORD — The Union County Chapter of Mothers & More will host a roundtable discussion on Wednesday, March 21, at 7:30 p.m. on the joys and difficulties associated with having more than one child.

Led by a Mothers & More member, herself a mother of three, the group will discuss such issues as sibling rivalry, personality differences and shared family activities. The meeting will take place at Hanson House, 38 Springfield Avenue in Cranford.

Mothers & More is an international, not-for-profit organization which supports women who have altered their career paths in order to care for their children at home.

The Union County chapter offers evening discussion groups, guest speakers, mom's night out, a book discussion and weekly daytime play gatherings.

Chapter meetings are held on the first and third Wednesday of each month at Hanson House. New members are always welcome. For additional information, please call Mary at (908) 272-8982 or Jan at (732) 381-3199.

Professor to Discuss Jewish Diaspora In China During War

PLAINFIELD — Xu Xin, a leading expert of Judaic studies in China, will be a featured speaker at Temple Shalom in Plainfield on Friday, March 23.

As part of Shabbat services, Mr. Xu will discuss the Jewish Diaspora in China during World War II. A professor at Nanjing University, he has edited a one-volume edition of the encyclopedia of Judaism in Chinese and translated short stories from Hebrew to Chinese.

Temple Shalom is located at 815 West Seventh Street. Services will begin at 8 p.m. For further information, please call the Temple Office at (908) 756-6447.

Pianists to Perform At College Club Event

SCOTCH PLAINS — The College Club of Fanwood-Scotch Plains will present a "Musical Salute to Spring" on Monday, March 19, at 8 p.m. at the First Methodist Church, located at 1171 Terrill Road in Scotch Plains.

Featured will be Paul Kueter and Carole Ann Mochernuk. Their repertoire will include classical and semi-classical selections, as well as pieces from the American musical theater.

As a piano duo, Mr. Kueter and Ms. Mochernuk perform concerts in the United States and Europe. They also teach privately at their studio in North Plainfield.

The College Club is an organization dedicated to raising scholarship money for young women of Scotch Plains and Fanwood. The club is currently seeking new members to participate in fundraising and the organization's various social activities, including jazz, dinner and luncheon groups, as well as literature, tennis and bridge groups.

For additional information about the upcoming presentation or about joining the College Club, please call Anna Martinelli at (908) 233-1601 or send an e-mail to AnnaMartinelli@aol.com.

Woman's Club Presents Works Of Art to Historical Society

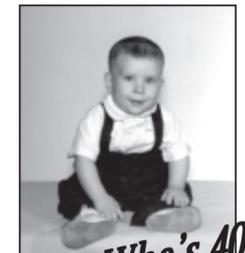
WESTFIELD — Third Vice President Sally Brown of the Woman's Club of Westfield recently presented the Westfield Historical Society with two works of art that had been displayed for many years in the club's former headquarters on South Euclid Avenue in Westfield.

One of the items presented was a framed tapestry consisting of 400 signatures of members. Mona Meyers Davies, Chairwoman of the Music, Literature and Drama Departments from 1955-1956, designed and executed the needlework as a feature in a fund-raising event.

The signatures were embroidered by Mrs. Davies in five hues and various shadings of fine floss. The work was done on eggshell satin squares and assembled into an aesthetically-pleasing design.

An oil painting entitled "Peonies," by artist, teacher and former member Ruth Price, was the second piece of artwork donated. Mrs. Price, a native of Virginia, was graduated from the Maryland Institute in Baltimore and the Famous Artists School in Westport, Conn. Her work was frequently exhibited in Westfield Art Association shows.

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