

The Rolling Stone

Rollstone Congregational Church

March 2019

Monuments of Living Stones

In years gone by I would love to travel with the hope of visiting some historical places. I have visited England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland and took the time to visit the touristy places, but I also made time to visit the cathedrals, abbeys, and other places of worship. It was always fun for me and I have visited others on this side of the pond, always leaving with a sense of awe and amazement at these magnificent edifices of their history and multiple roles that they have played in the lives of so many people through the years. One of the things you notice as you walk through the various cathedrals and abbeys in Europe is that there are a lot of people buried under the floors — thousands, in fact. Westminster Abbey in London, for example, is essentially an indoor graveyard with the remains of dozens of famous and infamous people tucked under the stones or in the niches of that ancient edifice. In Bath Cathedral, some 6,000 people are buried beneath the floors; so many that it has created an underground void that threatens the stability of the church building. While a “great cloud of witnesses” is certainly present in the nave as people worship in these places, there’s also a great number of moldy saints under the flagstones!

The Abbey on the Isle of Iona is no exception, although the method of marking the burials is much more understated. Yes, a couple of stone sarcophagi near the altar serve as monuments to abbots buried there, but to see the other burial places, you have to look closer. Several small circles in the floor of the nave are filled with pebbles cemented in place. Some have more pebbles than others and there are no names attached to these little silent monuments. But they are grave markers nonetheless. They are the graves of the many monks who once served Iona Abbey.

The legend of the pebbles and stone of Iona Abbey is amazing and begs to be told. If visiting the Abbey, you are bound to hear one of the members of the Iona Community telling that these grave markers were unique in that the pebbles came from the beaches of the island — the same beaches where their predecessors from Saint Columba’s first community had landed. The differing number of pebbles indicates how many years each of these nameless monks served in that particular Abbey and monastery — one pebble for each year of service. These little circles of pebbles thus stand as a silent witness to lives lived for Christ in a faraway place.

These little monuments are far more compelling than any of the elaborate gravestones you may witness around the world. Each pebble represents a year in the life of a monk — years of tragedy and triumph, years of wrestling with God's call, years of praying seven times a day, years of endless chanting of psalms, and years meeting the needs of others who came to the Abbey for respite and hospitality. Even before they became grave markers, these little pebbles had spent thousands of years being rolled and shaped by the sea, perhaps all the way back to the time of creation. *They are monuments to a short period of time in the midst of the long story of God.*

The symbolism is fascinating, in that we should all create a living monument made from pebbles or small stones found near the places where we have worshipped and served God. One pebble from each place representing each year that we have been there. Those pebbles will serve to remind us of each place that we have settled or called home. While the stones may not hold any significant meaning to anyone but yourself, they will be a testament to your faithfulness through the years. Some pebbles will be different and help us to remember this journey we are living. These stones will tell a story to someone someday.

In reflecting back at the stones and pebbles of our lives may we celebrate the years of joy and even hardships that they represent. Look at each of those stones and celebrate that God takes each of our stones and brings them together to build a great and magnificent structure that speaks to worship God. As Peter wrote to the church of his day, "Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:4-5). My prayer is that this congregation and I will continue to build a spiritual house together out of the stones of years spent serving others and helping them to become more like the "living stone" of Christ Jesus.

Pastor Dave

Happenings in the life of our parishioners and friends.

(This is a new section that is being included in the Rolling Stone to celebrate our joys and significant events that are happening with our membership, families, and friends. Please supply information to Reverend Dave by e-mail or on the celebration slips collected during worship.

Congratulations to the new grandparents Hal and Meg Smith, their grand-daughter Jasmine was born prematurely and has been in the Pediatric ICU unit in Worcester. Jasmine continues to grow stronger every day and Hal had an opportunity to hold her before he goes in for heart surgery on February 26th.

Good reports have been sent that Tim Stansel's operation earlier in February went well and he is on the mend. Blessings and prayers continue to be sent to Tim.

Melissa Beaulac is nearing the completion of her degree program and is planning a trip to Greece to celebrate her graduation.

Happy belated birthday wishes to Marie Stansel, hope you had a wonderful day.

If you have a special event, birthday, or anniversary that you are going to be celebrating, please pass the information along so that we can all wish you congratulations on the special day.

Deacon News

Hi everyone! I am so happy we are so much closer to spring. I am sorry I missed the Valentine Yankee swap. I heard that everyone had a good time. I look forward to it every year. I even got a pretty scarf even though I was not there.

We will soon be getting ready for Lent and Easter. Ash Wed is March 6th. There will be a worship service in the sanctuary at 7 P. M,

During Lent we will be having Bible study in the chapel on Sunday mornings. We will meet at 9 a.m. And finish at 9:40. Pastor Dave has copies of the scriptures we will be studying.

March 10th will be psalm 91

March 17th will be Philippians 3: 17-4:1

March 24th Isaiah 55: 1-9

March 31st Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

April 14th Luke 19:28-40 These are all on Sunday morning.

On MARCH 3rd we will be having a special fellowship hour. Everyone is asked to bring a dessert that is either chocolate or devilishly delicious. My mouth is watering already.

Paul Stansel has done a wonderful job making a church directory. If you would like one of them, please see Paul or Pastor Dave.

Mary Anne Smith is sending cards to shut ins, people who are sick or in the hospital or just need cheering up. Talk to her if you know someone who would like one.

In the near future, there will be forms for ordering flowers for Easter.

Please be sure to see the back of the bulletin for calendar of events.

That is all for now until next time.

Linda Haas

Getting to Damascus

“Be friends with one another, and kind, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you, in Christ.” Eph. 4:32

I am heartsick at the finger pointing and reputation ripping that has been consuming our country this past year. The outed sins range from youthful ignorance and buffoonery to more serious crimes including physical assault. Every day, people rush to judgment on former friends. We have become so desensitized that we are no longer able to calibrate the varying weight of these offenses. As a result, the alleged perpetrators all have been assigned to the same rung in Hell where the “untrustworthy” languish for all eternity.

Certainly, I have learned a lot about the sensitivities of others during this period, and I have done serious soul-searching aimed at reforming myself. Still, I am learning more about my heroes and anti-heroes than I need to know, and I worry that some good people are being thrust into the cold for reasons not entirely well thought out.

With all of this, I think about the amazing story of Paul, the Apostle. He was born about the same time as Jesus to an upper- class Jewish family in Tarsus, a large port city in Asia Minor. His family were religious conservatives, or Pharisees, and by all accounts, he had an excellent education by Jewish scholars. Small wonder that as a young man he committed himself to a life of terror against the heresy of Christianity. He is reputed to have been a leader in the early persecution against Christians, including the murder of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Stephen was stoned to death in a public square -- a particularly gruesome and personal form of execution.

On the road to Damascus, perhaps to persecute more Christians, Paul was struck down and blinded. As his friend Luke, the Evangelist, writes in Acts of the Apostles, in his turmoil he was visited by the risen Christ, who asked: “Why do you persecute me?”. Paul spent three days in blindness and prayer. He had to be led by hand to Damascus. When he arrived there, the Christian community welcomed him with open arms despite his appalling reputation and past deeds. After listening to him and praying with him, church leaders honored Paul’s request for baptism. Thereafter, by his letters and travels, he devoted his life to bringing the word of Christ to followers throughout the Mediterranean world until he was martyred in Rome. Thus, in Christian teaching, Paul is a model for repentance and the power of redemption.

I think about Paul a lot these days as I read about elected officials who are admitting their mistakes and asking for forgiveness and understanding. Some, by their actions in more recent times, would appear to deserve another look, perhaps another chance.

This country has a lot of work ahead in order to bring back the values it was founded upon. We need every good and willing soldier in the fight. It might help if we could get back to the spirit that burned in Damascus in the first century A.D. Who knows, we might unleash another St. Paul.

-Eileen Berger

I would like to share this with the Church:

Psalm 119:105

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

We make various choices in life. In order to make the right choice, we need God's word to guide us. It's our responsibility to study the word of God regularly, which will, in turn, produce a clear direction in our lives.

Michael Erhagbai

WAYSIDE PULPIT

Here Before

We have been here before. There is a party based on the belief that a flood of immigrants is threatening to ruin America. Their leaders are seeking to assemble a voting majority to impose a foreign ideology upon free Americans, who must stand united to ward them off. In the 1840s and 1850s, the foreign ideology was Catholicism, and the party was The American Party (originally called The Native American Party).

It began as a secret society, whose members were urged to deny any knowledge of its existence, and thus it became called The Know-Nothing Party. Prominent members included Millard Fillmore, Massachusetts Representative and Speaker of the House Nathaniel Banks, Samuel Morse, Sam Houston and John Wilkes Booth.

The party disbanded in 1860, divided and shattered over America's overarching issue of the day, which was slavery. Its members became mostly pro-slavery Democrats or anti-slavery Republicans.

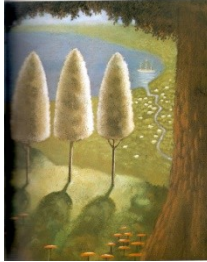
It has been said that history always repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, and the second time as farce. Maybe sometimes the farce comes first.

Whether we are now living through tragedy or farce, let us take comfort in the fact that we have been here before, and we will survive it again, with our faith and values intact, by the grace of God.

Chuck Funk

Church School News

Lent begins on Wednesday March 6th. In class we plan to use some of this time to study a very interesting story. Just as a teaser I'll share in a bit of the tale – author unknown – we will work from the retelling by Angela Elwell Hunt and then the video by Hal Holbrook*
*(ordered a new video as our past one disappointed us by not running).



The Three Trees: A Folktale for Good Friday Read on...

Once upon a mountaintop, three little trees stood and dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up...

Years passed, and the trees grew. And then one day, three woodcutters climbed the mountain...

The Lesson: God has a plan for each of us. There may be times we lose sight of our dreams, and we may not understand things that take place in our lives. We must remember that God loves us, has a plan for us, and is in control; therefore we can trust Him.

The next time you feel down because you didn't get what you want, sit tight and be happy because God is thinking of something better for you.

Also Please Look Forward to some important dates:

April 14th **Palm Sunday** we invite all youth to enter triumphantly swaying palms on the opening Hymn.

April 21st **EASTER SUNDAY** is a *Family Sunday* (no church school classes will be held on that day.)

Also - **Day Camp Applications** will be available and encouraged during all of April so that we can plan for each of our kids - let us know if you have questions!

Blessings, Beth and Hal



Palm Sunday....April 14th / Easter Sunday....April 21st

Calendar of Events



- 02 Community Dinner
Saturday, March 2nd • 4pm - 6pm
-

03 **All Things Chocolate and Devilishly Sinful**

March Fellowship

On Sunday March 3rd we will be trying a new and exciting fellowship hour to mark the end of the Epiphany season before we enter into the Lenten season with a time of fellowship entitled **"All Things Chocolate and Devilishly Sinful."** All are asked to bring a dessert that is either chocolate or devilishly delicious.



- 13 Spaghetti Supper
Wednesday, March 13th • 4 pm - 6 pm
-

- 16 Soup and Sandwich Lunch
Saturday, March 16th • 11:30 am - 3 pm
-



- 02 Community Dinner
Saturday, April 6th • 4pm - 6pm
-

- 10 Spaghetti Supper
Wednesday, February 13th • 4 pm - 6 pm
-

- 20 Soup and Sandwich Lunch
Saturday, April 20th * 11:30 am - 3 pm

New Excuse: I was on my way to church and was almost there when I look at my cell phone and it said "NO SERVICE"....so I turned around and went home. 