

The Rolling Stone

Rollstone Congregational Church

May 2019

What's the Preacher to Preach?

I have been asked on several occasions where the ideas and basis of my sermons are formulated and how they come to life. Those questions are not easily explained because in ministry and the delivery of the Word of God are often a mystery caused by the Holy Spirit's movement in my life and the world around me. Many mysterious things happen in the life of a preaching pastor — like why the mike fails to work on Christmas Eve, why the sound equipment breaks down on Easter Sunday morning; why the best-prepared sermon often falls flatter than roadkill on Route 2; and conversely, why those sermons finished coming together at 6 a.m. Sunday are so often blessed with the fire of the Holy Spirit. It is sometimes weird, very, weird, but we need to trust that God is somehow working through the things that are coming together.

But perhaps nothing is more mysterious than the process — if there is one — by which preachers decide the text and topic for Sunday's sermon. There are moments when you get a text to preach and you cry out, "I am supposed to preach from this?" There are some great texts that I am sure that I will eventually preach from such as, "Let beer be for those who are perishing, wine for those who are in anguish" (Proverbs 31:6 NIV). So I take on the challenge and think, "I have decided to preach on this text *why?*"

Don't you wish you could have Jeremiah's experience? "God, just touch my mouth and put your words there!" (See Jeremiah 1:9). I guess if you aspire to be a *prophet*, you could legitimately ask God for a manuscript. When you're speaking on someone else's behalf, you don't want to mess up. So *prophets* are mouthpieces; not *preachers*. They're something else.

Moses is another example. Have you ever said to God what Moses said? Here's Moses with his umpteenth excuse: "O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue" (Exodus 4:10). God responds saying, "Go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak." Moses wavers and pushes back, and God explodes: "Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses ..." (4:13).

Many pastor/preacher types feel the inadequacy of Jeremiah or Moses for reasons of our own. Preaching may not be our strongest skill, but we do what we have to do. Perhaps the best we can do is to trust the promise God made to Moses: "I will be with your mouth."

But, what to say? What text to use? What's in play when a preacher chooses a text or topic for the Sunday sermon? What factors enter into the decision? Here are some possibilities.

The need to be organized: Many preachers do not like to be ignorant of the topic at hand. Waiting until Saturday night might work for some, but many of us prefer to lay out a proposal before the Lord and say, "Here's what I am thinking of doing this week or for the next couple of months. If you'd like to revise this, feel free. But give me a sign."

So, we go on a retreat or utilize some study time away and we have the Bible before us, and a chart or list of topics and texts from previous years, and a file of possible themes for future

consideration. In the end, we come up with a laminated, color-coded preaching schedule that's more complicated than Bill Belichick's offensive game plan.

This long term preaching schedule takes the mystery and anxiety out of the preaching task. Yet, why the texts, topics and series were selected is a question that remains unanswered and is as mysterious as ever.

There are two methods of selecting texts for preaching; lectionary and expository. Our tradition relies on the sometimes dreaded lectionary with the shaking of the head and anguish of the preacher saying, "You really want me to preach on this and why!" Thank God that we actually have four texts to draw from – Gospel, Epistles, Old Testament, and Psalms. One of them will certainly work.

Expository preachers usually do not need to select a mere *text*; they need to target a *book* through which to preach, beginning at 1:1 and meandering verse by verse until they're at the end. Some preachers will spend three years going through Romans. No Sunday morning angst for these preachers.

The advantage for lectionary preaching is the assurance of working through the "whole counsel of God" in a three-year cycle. It keeps a preacher from becoming a "one string" preacher — from harping on one theological chord.

The late Robert McAfee Brown comments on this very tendency: "My three and a half years with the lectionary taught me a number of things about the faith and its proclamation. ... Using the lectionary means that we can't confine our preaching to the 'canon within the canon' that each of us erects with his or her favorite texts. ... My own penchant in this regard has been to tilt toward social-justice issues. But if I take the lectionary seriously, I can't get away with concentrating only on those themes, for the same people come back Sunday after Sunday, and they will yearn for and finally demand more.

By looking into people's faces I discovered that I'm not faithful to the gospel if I preach only judgment and social concern week after week. Not only do members of any congregation need to be roused out of complacency; most of them are hurting and need support and comfort, not an unwavering diet of chastisement. Time in the pulpit sensitized me to the lives of those who are not in the pulpit. A rousing denunciation of the Gulf War isn't necessarily what a couple needs when they've just learned that their daughter has cancer."

The needs of the congregation: Sometimes, we choose a text because we believe it works really well given the emotional and spiritual health of the congregation. Perhaps some specific event triggers a text. Our preaching is often affected — as it should be — by such events as a death, an anniversary or a celebration of some kind. Perhaps our city has been beset by riots or shootings, or the hometown basketball team is headed for a championship game, requiring that prayers and imprecations, liturgical colors and even the sermon be adjusted accordingly. Therefore, context helps to inform our selection of a preaching text.

Something we've read. Our sermon next Sunday may be influenced by something we've read or a conversation we've had. I've often had this experience. I read something very interesting to me, and then I fervently pray that the RCL has a text into which I can fold the thoughts I've read like you'd fold egg whites into a soufflé.

When the sermon is being prepared all of the things current and around the preacher at the moment, have an impact on what we say and what we do. It is life and its experiences that provide us new and exciting insight that causes the sermon to be fresh and relevant (most of the time.) We always pray to be timely and inspirational because we know that only a portion of our responsibility is to give you something that will help you to get through the coming week. While it doesn't happen every single week, we do hope that what is brought forth helps you to face whatever you may be facing.

I truly hope that what I do and when I do it, that it is making a difference in all of our collective lives. Peace and love to all of you as I strive to make a difference through the inspiration found in the Word of God. Hope to see you on Sunday!

Pastor Dave

News from the Deacons

I am so glad spring is finally here. The trees are starting to bud, flowers are blooming and the grass is growing and pretty soon will have to be mowed. Everyone seems to have a spring in their step.

We have had a wonderful Lenten and Easter Season. During lent we had 40 days of Lenten giving. We were challenged instead of giving up something for lent to give to others. We were challenged to bring in personal hygiene products, clothing basics, and ready prepared food items. These were placed in the basket in the sanctuary. This basket was soon filled to the brim and others had to be brought in. These were distributed to various organizations for those in need.

During Lent we also had Bible study in Cookman hall which was held Sunday morning from 9am to 10:40 am. Everyone who attended enjoyed them a lot and we hope to have more of them in the future or something similar. These were led by Pastor Dave.

Maundy Thursday service was held in the chapel. This was a memorable service in which the Last Supper was enacted. The Deacons took part along with some parishioners. Communion was served.

The Easter service was in the sanctuary. The altar area was all decorated with the most beautiful flowers. It was just breathtaking. Pastor Dave and Don did a wonderful job arranging the flowers. Pastor Dave gave an inspirational sermon.

A big thank you to all the people who worked hard to make our church look so wonderful.

I would like to leave you with this thought. Each new day is a gift from God. How you live it is your gift to Him.

Linda Haas, Deaconate chair

Day Camp week is June 24 - 28 and we are hoping for sun.



Please get applications in PROMPTLY to save your spot!!
Do you know of any kiddos to join us ages 5 - 12 or 13??

****"Living In Massachusetts" is our theme of the week!! ****

The kids at Day Camp enjoy snack time -
we invite you to add to the fun by Sunday June 16th

Please and thank you for dropping off an item or two.
We will have a sign-up sheet in Cookman Hall by mid May
so that we will know what you might like to offer.

Some items will include:

Dry drink mix (Lemonade preferred)

****Apple Jacks and Marshmallows (yup for making "Johnny Appleseed" squares)**

****Corn Muffin Mix - Massachusetts State Muffin**



GORP (good old raisins and peanuts) Ingredients:

Fruit Loops, Kix and Cherios cereal
MINI - marshmallows, sm pretzels,
goldfish, raisins, M&M's, peanuts

Ritz crackers

Peanut butter & Jelly

Sandwich bread

Freeze Pops/large box



Desserts are fabulous-sent in ANY DAY- for lunch treats if you enjoy baking.

****Please; a few volunteers to send in a batch of our State cookie chocolate chip!!**

**** Linda Gallant is making mini Boston Crème Pie cupcakes!!!**

Watch for the Sign-up Sheet in a few weeks!!!

Thank you for your kind snack or dessert donation!

Another option to help if baking isn't your idea of fun - see Beth Porell if you wish to donate a Campership \$ in any amount - remember small donations add up fast!



CAMP WELLVILLE INC.

At our Christmas Eve service at Rollstone, I was told that the raft was in the middle of the lake. This happened years ago, and we all felt we had solved the problem. Going up to Lake Winnekeag a few days later I was dismayed to see that not only was the raft in the middle of the lake, but the strong winds had ripped out the weights and posts on the fishing dock and taken that also. After some humor about enlarging the swimming area, changing the swim test and getting binoculars for the lifeguards, we realized that the company we purchased the system from would come and move the docks and repair any broken or missing pieces. I also realized that camp is fortunate to have campers who walk the property and check out these things during the winter season. Let us hope this is our only problem this year!

We are still looking for some new programs to round out the camp season and would welcome suggestions for these. Please let me or any of the members of the Board of Directors know of any ideas you might have.

Our camp staff this year includes Maureen Stenuis, camp director, David Holloway, maintenance, Mary Ann Fournier, crafts, Gary Freeman, custodian, and our waterfront staff of Kathy Rowe, Shawn Bingham, Jane Cheney and Taylor Taliaferro.

Work weekends are quickly approaching – May 11 & 12 and May 25 – 27. Let's also hope the water crew has few leaks as they get us ready for the summer. The water crew is planning to turn on the system April 27 and May 4 in anticipation of our work.

The Wellville reunion will be on May 25 at 5:30 pm in Pow Wow. Please bring a main dish and salad.

There are a few openings left in the cottage area so call if you would like a reservation – 978-827-5454. There are also campsites available – call Mary Ann Fournier at 978-729-2828. Remember that reservations need to be paid in full before the end of May to avoid a late fee. If you have a question about balances, please call me. Pet deposits need to be submitted as a separate check so Maureen can return them if your pet has been well behaved.

Thank you to the many people who ensure that Wellville continues to thrive! It would not be the special place that it continues to be without the help of so many faithful friends.

We are all looking forward to a great Wellville experience. Think summer!

Kathy Rowe

Camp Wellville 2019

Bible Study, Book Studies, Vespers, Conferences and Special Programs

BIBLE STUDY:

July 1, 15, and 29, August 12

“You know Him, now walk with Him” - a study on the letter to the Colossians.

Led by Pastor Debbie Moylan

MORNING PRAYER:

Wednesday mornings on the beach at 8:00 am led by Pastor Debbie Moylan

BOOK REVIEWS:

July 8 – Tattoos on the Heart by Gregory Boyle

Led by Sue Harris

July 23- Lost and Found by Jacqueline Sheehan.

Led by Marie Stansel

August 6- Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens

Led by Mary Ann Fournier

August 20- Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles

Led by Joan Rivard

VESPERS:

June 30th Rev. David Hanks

July 28th Rev. Ginger Asel

July 7th Rev. Ken Whitson

Aug. 4th Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Magill

July 14th Lay Pastor Curtis Schultz

Aug. 11th Pastor Wil Darcangelo

July 21nd

Aug. 18th Pastor Debbie Moylan

CONFERENCES AND SPECIAL PROGRAMS:

July 5 – Stephanie Beach - Magician

July 10 - Habitat for Humanity presentation

Led by Director Carolyn Read

July 31 - “When a Princess Begins to Read” –Come and hear how this changed a family in India dramatically. An intriguing story of an incredible girl who at the age of ten said she had the skills to teach herself anything and lived a life to prove it. Led by Rev. Ginger Asel

Aug. 2 – Kosmic Kelly - family STEM program

Aug. 7 – “Iconography: Decoding Arts Secrets”

Led by Amy Larsen

Aug. 23 – Closing Vespers

Please verify programs and times by calling our friendly Camp Director, Maureen Stenuis, at 978-827-5756. Most programs begin at 7:00 pm.

WAYSIDE PULPIT

“Selfage”

From time to time, on television, radio or in print, people will be asked to name and define a word that does not exist, but should exist. I would propose that “selfage” is such a word. We have a lot of words touching on the idea of self, but none expresses what I would want “selfage” to mean.

In a recent episode of the television show *This Is Us*, a young character complained to her uncle, “I don’t know who I am.” He counseled her, “People don’t get an identity handed to them at birth. Over the course of years, for some people very many years, a person’s identity is constructed out of the process of living. We are exposed to experiences and emotions, some of which we embrace, and others we reject. In this process of choosing ways to be and ways not to be, a stable idea of self gradually emerges.” It is this process of assembling identity out of experience that I would like to call selfage.

Having a healthy and stable sense of self is extraordinarily important. It is a prerequisite for lasting happiness, for deep relationships, and for love. As Christians, we believe that the most important choice we make in our process of selfage is to choose to follow Jesus Christ. For us to know who we are, we need to know **Whose** we are.

Chuck Funk

Hymn Story

The popular hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” was originally written by Joseph M. Scriven as a poem in 1855 to comfort his ailing mother who was living in Ireland while he was in Canada.

Joseph Scriven was a man acquainted with grief and led a tragic but inspiring life. He was born in Banbridge, County Down, Ireland in 1819, and wanted to follow in his father's footsteps as a Royal Marine, but his poor health made that impossible. At age 25 he fell in love and was engaged to be married, but his fiancée drowned in an accident before their wedding could take place.

After that tragedy and wanting to start a new life, Joseph then moved to Port Hope, Ontario, Canada. While living there, he became engaged again, but his second bride to be became ill and died before they could be married.

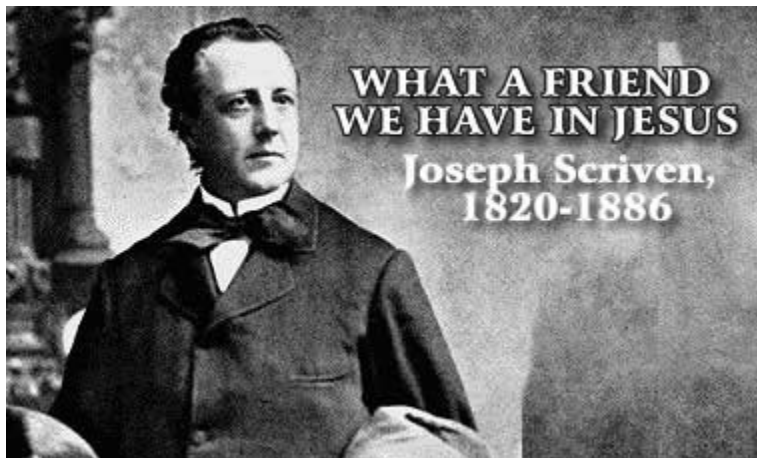
In his grief, he was determined to devote himself to a life of service, and history tells us that his faith in God sustained him. Soon after his second fiancée's death Joseph joined the Plymouth Brethren and began preaching for a Baptist church. He never married, but spent the remainder of his life giving all his time, money, and even the clothes off his back to help the less fortunate and to spread the love and compassion of Jesus wherever he went.

After some time in Canada, Joseph received word that his mother was ill. He couldn't afford to return to Ireland, so he sent his mother a poem in the hope that it would comfort her. The

poem began, "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!"

Many years later Joseph became very ill. A friend was visiting with him and was very impressed when he ran across his poems. As a result of this visit Joseph's poems were published in a book called "Hymns and Other Verses." Soon thereafter in 1868, noted musician Charles C. Converse put music to the "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" poem.

Joseph Scriven died from drowning, either by accident or suicide in 1886 at the age of 67. After his death, the citizens of Port Hope, Ontario, Canada, in order to recognize a man who gave so much of himself, erected a monument to his life. Another monument to Joseph was built in Banbridge, Ireland, his home town. The seemingly sad and obscure life of one man resulted in so many lives being uplifted whenever the beautiful and comforting words of "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" are sung. This hymn has maintained its popularity for a century and a half, probably because a man acquainted with grief, who happened to be a man of faith, helps us to see that faith can triumph over grief.



What a Friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer.

Andy Lipasti

What's Up, Trustees?

Trustees Activity, February - April 2019

A calendar quarter having passed since our annual meeting, it is a good time to let the congregation know what has been happening in the Board of Trustees.

Andy Lipasti has investigated sanctuary sound upgrade options. He researched four local sound system vendors for suitable equipment and pricing.

Discussions were conducted into other capital projects such as: sanctuary paint, lighting, leaking roof, and plaster work. Several sanctuary lights are out and in need of new bulbs, fixture repairs, and wiring upgrades. Two exterior doors should be replaced, the Lipton door and the rear door off Cookman Hall. The two upstairs bathrooms have needed finishing. This was done by Paul Stansel and Rick Lane.

The oil tank in the basement is very old and possibly leaking, and access to it is limited. Conversion to a gas boiler was suggested. Repairs are needed on the stained glass windows.

A small committee to be led by Eileen Berger was formed to plan and conduct a capital campaign to help pay for the projects from sources such as grants, annual appeal, special events, and Go Fund Me. It was suggested to note a few priority items, and to form a long range plan. The committee has begun to meet.

It was agreed that we should proceed with the roof repairs and the sound system upgrade first.

Paul Stansel has talked with the City Clerk and a State contact to use Rollstone Church as a voting place. To enable voting at the church, improvements are needed to the rear door and the platform outside the door. The Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority proposed giving to the church the rear parking lot that is now fenced off, provided that the church will improve and maintain it. A plan is being made to do this.

A company called Nexamp is building solar farms in Fitchburg and Lunenburg and is offering a solar program to save on Unitil electricity costs. We agreed to enroll in Nexamp's energy savings plan, for a potential saving of more than \$600 for the year.

A draft was prepared to amend the pastoral call agreement regarding vacations, to remove any references to 'Shared Summer Services' as they no longer exist. The Pastor continues to have five weeks of vacation leave per calendar year to be taken at his discretion by approval of the Board of Deacons.

Bids for roof repairs and estimates for lighting upgrades are being sought.

For the Board of Trustees, Chuck Funk, Chairman

Community Dinner, Saturday, May 4, 2019, 4-6 pm, at the Rollstone Congregational Church, 199 Main St., Fitchburg, MA 01420.

Our gifted cooks have planned a wonderful dinner of chicken pot pie the way you like it (with or without vegetables); tossed salad and strawberry shortcake. This will be our last monthly community dinner until fall, when we pick up our schedule of two dinners and one luncheon a month.

We hope to see you there.

-Eileen Berger

Easter Flower Memorials

2019

In Memory	Given By
Ada & Arthur Nurmi	Carleton Finch
Aldo Baggio.....	Ron & Mary Anne Smith
Arline Finch.....	Carleton Finch
Bertil Shamull	Pat & Bob Goguen
Beth Porell.....	Sami, Tari & Bontu
Carroll & Martina Funk	Charles & Emily Funk (Son & Daughter-In-Law)
Charles & Betty Chicknavorian	Hal Smith
Dempsey Family	Barbara Berry
Earl & Mary Sanders (Mother & Dad)	Martha Quinn
Frank & Adelaide Stansel	Paul & Marie Stansel
Fred Miller (Husband)	Judy Miller
Gail Luther.....	Jackie Reiss (Sister)
Hal Smith.....	Sami, Tari & Bontu
Harold & Phyllis Smith.....	Hal Smith & Family
Herbert & Harriet Bibber.....	Paul & Marie Stansel
Howard & Kathryn MacFarland	Emily & Charles Funk (Daughter & Son-In-Law)
Isabel Stewart (Mother).....	Jean Suomala
Katie Berger	Eileen & Jay Berger
Kevin Fitzgerald.....	Mary Lyman
Lauraine & Joseph Pilesky.....	Lyman Children
Loved Ones.....	Linda Haas
Marjorie Smith	Ron & Mary Anne Smith
Richard & Eunice Brigham	Anne & Ruth (Daughters)
Richard & Eunice Brigham	Ruth Carpentier
Robert & Hazel Hurd	Hal Smith & Family
Roy & Lillian Westerman	Anne Westerman
Smith, Capone, Colwell Loved Ones.....	Becky, Beth, Emma & Ellen
Solo & Lempi Lipasti (Parents).....	Andy Lipasti
Stephen & Lydia Smith	Hal Smith & Family
Ullysses & Blanche Brigham	Anne Westerman & Ruth Carpentier
Ullysses & Blanche Brigham	Ruth Carpentier
Vincenza Baggio	Ron & Mary Anne Smith
Wilfred Lane & Evelyn Lane.....	Robert Lane & Doris

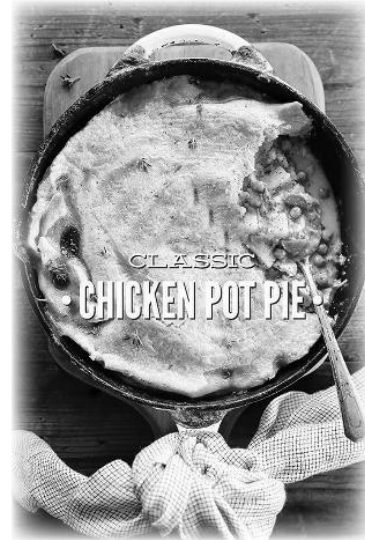
Calendar of Events



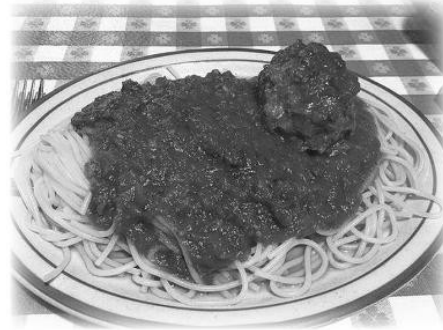
Join us for our
**Community
Dinner**

Saturday, May 4th • 4pm - 6pm

Chicken Pot Pie



Join us for our
Spaghetti Supper
Wednesday, May 8th
4pm - 6pm



**Sunday
May 12th**



**Friday, June 7th &
Saturday, June 8th**

