



## SECOND THOUGHTS

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March 2006

FROM THE DESK OF ....

REV. ANDY RIENSTRA

### Struggle Can Strengthen Us



Recently a young person talked with me about some of the problems he was facing. As we talked he became very despondent, and finally breathed a big sigh and said - "life is so hard!!" Having listened to his litany of struggles for quite a period I figured it was time to share a story which a friend had sent me on e-mail.

It was about a man who found a cocoon of an emperor moth. He took it home so that he could watch the moth come out of the cocoon. On the day a small opening appeared, he sat and watched the moth for several hours as the moth struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could. It just seemed to be stuck. The man, in all kindness, decided to help. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The moth emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the moth expecting that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the little moth spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never was able to fly.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the moth to get through the tiny opening were God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the moth into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon. Freedom and flight would only come after the struggle. By depriving the moth of a struggle, he deprived the moth of a full life.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If God allowed us to go along without any obstacles, we would be crippled. We would not have the strength to live freely and vigorously.

This is not only true for individuals it can also pertain to life in the church. Sometimes churches struggle because of changes in leadership and the demographics in its community. This causes some people to lose hope and abandon ship and the church has to press on without the resources and leadership it once enjoyed. Such a time of struggle can be most difficult and many churches experience this after a long pastorate. One of my favorite Bible verses is a promise God made to the children of Israel as they faced a time of struggle: (Deut 33:25) "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." (KJV)

The paths we have to travel are often filled with giant obstacles, but God promises to give us shoes of iron to protect our feet, and just enough strength to endure. When the struggle is over we will be the healthier for it. May such faith inspire us for living in this time between pastors, and in this Lenten season.



### Deacons' Congregational Care Committee Wants to Know.....

if you or anyone in your home is in need of any help such as seasonal yard work or occasional repairs. The Deacons want to provide help to church members and neighbors with meals during times when one of our members may be ill.

Please let Kathleen Williamson, Chair of the Congregational Care Committee know if you have a need or think someone else may need some help.

## Crossroads Retreat

Just a reminder that the Crossroads retreat for women is Friday, **April 21** and Saturday, **April 22**, 2006 at Harvey Cedars Retreat, Long Beach Island, NJ. The Keynote speaker will be Rev. Renee House, Minister of Word and Sacrament, RCA. The theme will be "Encourage One Another: Mind, Body, Spirit"  
Join them for the day or weekend. For more information, visit their website at [www.crossroadsrca.org](http://www.crossroadsrca.org).

[www.secondreformednb.org](http://www.secondreformednb.org)  
*Have you been to our website lately?*

If you are looking for that good article on "What is RU or (Rutgers Protestant Campus Ministry) Campus Ministry?" you will find it posted on our webpage. Second Reformed Church is deeply indebted to Rich Horr for his work on developing the



The website. Rev. Rienstra, who we all know to be very internet savvy and connected, has been working with Rich on the webpage. This is a very valuable resource, and the possibilities are limitless. If you have some ideas about additions to the webpage or if you are willing to contribute some material, contact Rev. Rienstra or Kathy Fisher. We just need to see a few more programs added to our calendar. *Phyllis Beals*

## Sunday School News

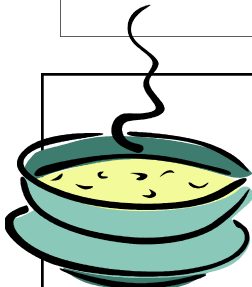
Touched by Jesus, Healed by Jesus...These are the themes of the current Sunday School lessons our children are experiencing now. Mary and Martha, Zacchaeus...Ask your children if they can tell you something about these people of the New Testament! Representing some of the money that the tax collectors might have collected unfairly, the children had to give to the mean tax collector. Mrs. Van Glahn some of their ten pieces of money (wrapped chocolate Easter eggs)! They definitely experienced that this was not fair, and one of the kids flatly refused to give up his money!

How did the people of Jesus' time feel toward someone like Zacchaeus? No wonder they looked on in such horror and surprise when Jesus singled out Zacchaeus to visit his home! Knowing that Jesus loved and accepted him even though he was a sinner enabled Zacchaeus to repent of his sins, to be forgiven, and to change his life.

God's love did not overlook Zacchaeus...even in a tree. Have you ever been surprised to feel God's assuring presence when you felt you were the least deserving? Jesus came to tell us that God loves all of us. Look for ways to be a path to God's unconditional love for all people... you, the children and adults in your life.  
*(adapted from our One Room School House curriculum)*

Looking ahead, the children will be learning some songs for Palm Sunday and Easter. Please try to attend regularly, and encourage them to stay for Sunday School so they may learn the music.

*Phyllis Beals*




**Wednesday Nights in the Parlor....**Come join us every Wednesday evening in Lent, starting **March 8th**, for soup and a series of videos called, "Questions of Faith" in the Parlor. We'll start our fellowship at 6:30 pm with a light supper. Rev. Rienstra will be leading the group. We're asking participants to volunteer, if able, to choose one Wednesday when they can provide soup and bread for the program.

Look for the sign-up sheets on the bulletin board. One list is a general sign-up so we can get an idea of how many people will be attending and the other for those who can provide food on one of the evenings. Come nourish both your body and your soul. *Annie Hays*

# March 2006



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Ash Wednesday Services 8:00, 12:00 4:30 & 7:30	2	3	4
5 10:00 Communion 11:10 Coffee Hour 11:20 Christian Ed. Congregational Mtg: Election of new consistory members	6	7	8	9	10	11
12 10:00 Worship 11:10 Coffee Hour 11:20 Christian Ed.	13	14 12:00 pm Women's Lunch 7:00 pm Consistory Meeting	15	16	17	18
19 10:00 Worship 11:10 Coffee Hour	20	21	22	<div data-bbox="1015 1060 1490 1486" data-label="Complex-Block"> <p><b>DON'T FORGET.....SPRING AHEAD. TURN YOUR CLOCK FORWARD ON SATURDAY, APRIL 2ND BEFORE YOU GO TO BED!</b></p>  </div>		
26 10:00 Worship 11:10 Coffee Hour 11:20 Christian Ed.	27	28				

## Soup, Salad and Bread for RPCM

If you would like to contribute soup, salad or bread for the nourishment of college students at Trinity House, the home of the Rutgers Protestant Campus Ministry, across the street please let Phyllis Beals or Martha Palmer know. Church members have been providing this meal for the students over the past few months and we would like to continue this through the school year.

We are trying to see if once a month on Monday or Thursday we can provide a meal. Also, RPCM is looking for any church volunteers who would be interested in helping to man their welcome room so that students may drop in for conversation, Christian dialogue.

If you have an interest in that activity, please contact Rev. Barbara Heck of RPCM at 732-745-9985. The website for RPCM is [www.rutgersministry.org](http://www.rutgersministry.org) Check out their webpage, too!



## To Consistory at Second Reformed

February 17th, 2006

Dear Andy, Helmut and all the  
Consistory at 2nd Reformed:

Thank you all so very much for sharing so generously with the Seminary on the day of Gregg Mast's Inaugural.

Your Sanctuary was so beautiful that morning-sunlight streaming in. The wall's were glowing in a golden light-and for me to have had the privilege to stand in the pulpit and enjoy the faces and the moment. It was just grand.

We came to you last minute and you said yes. We came by the hundreds and you were prepared.

I am so grateful as is all of the Inaugural committee. It was a grand day for 2nd Reformed and NBTS. I look forward to doing more with you again soon!

PS. I know Dr. McCormick enjoyed it!

Sincerely,  
Robin Suydam

## Consistory Nominations...

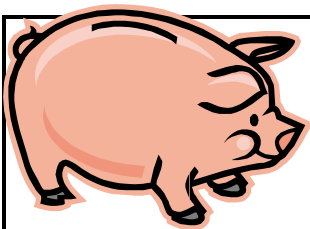
Deacons Helen Pally and Phyllis Beals, Elders, Steven Sandor and Helmut Horr's terms on consistory are ending soon.

These four individuals comprise the nominating committee for new consistory members. We tried a new approach this year by having a meeting with some individuals to share our thoughts and insights about consistory so these individuals could have a better understanding of the calling to serve as Elder or Deacon. We still do not have a complete slate of Elders and Deacons.

We are striving to fill two-three year terms for Elder, one-two year term for Elder. For Deacons we are looking for two individuals to serve three year terms and one person to serve a two year term.

Please keep in your prayers the Consistory and people who have been called but may not have responded yet to this calling. At the March 5th Congregational meeting, nominations from the floor may be made, but the individual being nominated should first have been asked if he or she is willing to serve.

*Phyllis Beals*



## Finance & Treasurer Oversight Committee...

At present the members of the Finance Committee are Helen Pally, Tom O'Shea and Ed Winant, Treasurer. In January the Committee met along with Kathy Fisher, Administrator, Elder Steven Sandor and Deacon Phyllis Beals. Some actions were taken including moving monies around to take advantage of an interest bearing checking account at Wachovia, close the Bank of America checking account (zero interest) and place a significant portion of our endowment in a money market account earning 4.25%.

Tom O'Shea has agreed to review our investments with a USB financial advisor and move a portion of our investments into some mutual funds which should generate more income while not becoming overly aggressive in our investing.

The Finance Committee has made a commitment to meet once a quarter with our Treasurer. If you have questions or suggestions please speak to Helen Pally. While Helen Pally's term on consistory is ending in April, she has agreed to continue to serve on Finance Committee.

## Grandpa Lost?

**I remember the day when a police car pulled up to Grandma's house and Grandpa got out. The officer explained that this elderly gentlemen said he was lost in the park.**

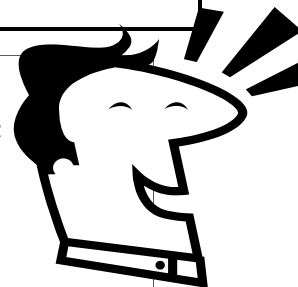
**"Why, Bill," said Grandma, "you've been going there for over 30 years!**

**How could you get lost?"**

**Leaning close to Grandma so the police officer couldn't hear, he whispered,**

**"I wasn't exactly lost. I was just too tired to walk home."**

**Submitted by Ellie Holz from "The Fish wrapper"**





## **Making God Personal: A Self-Assessment**

During this time of Lent the Elders of SRC urge all members to reflect upon their relationship with the Lord. Before we can plan a future for our church we- the people of this congregation- first need to take stock of our own individual spiritual condition. Here are some questions we need to answer for ourselves as honestly as possible.

### **The “Big” Question: *How important is God to me?***

The answer to this question may come by answering the following questions:

***Do I praise and worship God regularly as He commands-in other words, do I attend worship services regularly?*** Too often we use the expression “I’m going to church” when we should be saying “I’m going to worship God.” What else in our life is more important than joining together with fellow believers to praise God, pray, hear His Word and to show Him our gratitude? Sleep? A soccer game? A golf outing? Shopping?

***Do my offerings show God my gratitude for all He has given to me?*** The real question is not “what does the church need,” rather, it’s “what is God rightfully due?” Do I pledge and commit myself or do I wait to see “what’s left over” or if I’m in church on Sunday?

***Do I contribute my time and talents to the church?*** Do I regularly volunteer to serve on a committee or as a Sunday school teacher, have I offered to be a reader at a worship service, have I participated in a “clean up Saturday?” Do I wait to be asked or do I go out of the way to offer my ideas and services?

***Do I show and share my Christian faith with others-at home, at work, in the neighborhood, and in the community?*** We don’t need to stand on a soap box or badger people to bring the message of saving grace to the world. Rather, we demonstrate to others our faith and our discipleship and willingness to follow Christ by the way we act towards others and live our lives every minute of every day.

***Do I make personal time available to reach out to God, to pray, meditate and read the Bible? Am I seeking to grow in the faith?*** Although 90 percent of Americans tell Gallop polls that they believe in God or a higher power, only 39 percent “strongly agree” that prayer is a daily habit. Why can I make time to do e-mails, web searches, phone conversations, watch TV, or go to practice, yet not have time to communicate with my God? Why?

There is no “scoring” system for these questions. We can all do better...bit by bit...day by day. As we look to build a new future for Second Reformed Church, let us all ask God to help us individually and collectively to become spiritually stronger and more faithful to Him. It is our personal spiritual strength that will energize our collective effort.