

...from the Heart

*Published quarterly by the
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene*



Winter, Give or Take

December 10th will mark the one-year anniversary of my mom's passing. Parting with those we love is always difficult, it's one of life's "colder" experiences. As I reflect on her life, the moments and conversations we shared, I remember her always saying she didn't like winter. Mom didn't enjoy the cold or the snow. But most of all she hated the sun going down earlier, in the day.

For many of us, winter has come to symbolize one of the more difficult seasons of our lives. Like a bitter cold, loneliness and loss have a way of creeping in and filling in the voids around us. Life, like heavy snow, can bury us in its many avalanches. And all too often the sun retires earlier than we'd like, leaving us to face the darkness of our fears and past failures. However, winter isn't a season that only *takes*, it also *gives*.

We all know that those who cease to move about in the bitter cold eventually freeze to death. The sting of winter's bitter cold prompts us to move, engage, and calls us to reach for the warmth of a blanket, the love and tenderness and help of others. But most of all it requires more than our humanity can muster up – the gift of faith.

Maybe it's time for new perspectives. After every "snowstorm" digging out is always required. However, instead of fixating or obsessing on snow removal take a moment to see and appreciate the beauty that's present. Our God is an artist! Each stroke of His brush creates snow drifts. He gently decorates every tree limb with imported fine *white* lace. In other words, the LORD is present in our storms.

Finally, how many times have we felt the sunset, too early? Or felt the darkness of another trial, lingered too long? Allow me to remind you, the sun has and always will, rise! Remember, light always dispels darkness; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can *never* extinguish it. John 1:5 (NLT)

As we've entered the coldest season of the year, whether literally or figuratively, remember we are not alone; we have each other, and most of all we have Christ. His presence changes everything! And as Advent/Christmas are right around the corner, we have reason to rejoice: The light of the world, the living Word, has arrived. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* Psalm 119:105 (ASV)

Pastor Vin



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is published quarterly by the

Patchogue Church of the Nazarene
Nazarene Way
Patchogue, NY

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Patchogue, NY 11772

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Sunday Service at 10am

Pastor: Vincent Linguiti

Check out our website at www.patchnaz.net for Sermons,
Church activities and other events



Pinched Nerve, Carpal Tunnel, Trigger Finger- *Whoa!*

On October 19th, I had corrective surgery on my right arm, finger, and hand. It was a good decision to do all three simultaneously, even though it would be more painful and take longer to recover. As I've healed, God has spoken to me through the many conversations I've had with the medical professionals who attended me.

Everything we encounter in life has a spiritual parallel and scripture to pair with the event. If we look for it, we will find it. When we find it, it helps us to see God at work in all of life and it helps us stay connected to Him at that moment. I want to share some of what I've heard the Lord saying to me, and I hope you find it applicable and meaningful to your own situations. No matter what, He has promised to, "...never leave you, nor forsake you."

From the surgeon:

"Some patients go back to work within a relatively brief time, but everyone is different."

Spiritual: Don't compare yourself with someone else. (John 21:22)

From the hospital nurse:

"You are being sent home with pain medications. Take them! At this stage, pain prevents healing."

Spiritual: We must allow ourselves to be comforted. Sometimes, keeping a 'stiff upper lip' is not the answer. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

From the nurse who removed the stitches:

"You may feel a slight burning sensation as I remove these."

Spiritual: It hurt, but stitches must come out, or they can cause an infection. (Ecclesiastes 3)

From the occupational therapists:

"Scar tissue must be broken up. If it's left to harden, you will lose range of motion that will never come back."

"We break it manually. It isn't fun, and it's going to hurt at first. It will get easier to bear."

"You will have at-home exercises because coming here twice a week will not be enough."

Spiritual: Scar tissue of the heart and emotions is detrimental to healing. Even though it is painful to remove, full healing and 'range of motion' depends on it. Going to church isn't enough. We must also work daily in the quietness of our own homes if we want to see real, lasting results. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

From my "Note to Self":

I am the patient. I am not the doctor, the nurse, or the therapist. I have a choice. I can trust their expertise and follow all their instructions (Proverbs 12:15b), or I can do what makes me feel good and not do what doesn't (2 Timothy 2:14-16), or I can ignore them entirely and do it my way. (Proverbs 14:12, 16:25)

Spiritual: Who is in charge? Me, or God? I cannot a la carte my faith-walk, and it isn't a buffet. Either He is one-hundred percent in charge, or He isn't in charge at all. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Finally, there were some funny moments when, having to rely almost solely on my left hand, I had to remind myself to laugh and roll with it:

I never knew how much my brain and my left arm would be opposed to reason; they do not even *try* to work together!

Wax on-Wax off.

It all seems backward.

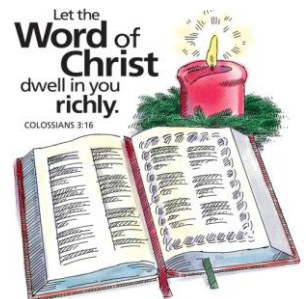
Stirring the pot can cause splashing.

When brushing your teeth, slow down. S..L..O..W..D..O..W..N.

Doing something different isn't the worst thing in the world.

The phrase, "Put on your big-girl underwear and deal with it" can be annoying, both practically and emotionally. I should not say it to myself.

Spiritual: A merry heart does a world of good. (Proverbs 15:13a, 17:22a)



Suzanne Cerruto



The Genius of Generosity

Kansas pastor Jack Wellman has been credited with the insight that “there is a certain genius in generosity.” He explains that when we open our hands — figuratively speaking — to allow something to pass through our fingers, rather than holding it with tightly clenched fists, God can give us new blessings.

“God cannot pour more into hands that are already clinging tightly to what they hold,” says Wellman. Whether material goods or time, ideas or talents, money or energy, the gifts God has given us so generously are to be shared just as freely with others. With our hands continually open to receive, give and receive again, God’s genius cycle of generosity goes on and on.

To Us a Child is Born

As I write this article, we are about to enter Thanksgiving week. I love holidays. I am so thankful for my family, and I love when we get together for a meal, or coffee, or just to hang out and be together. I am really a home person. I like to be home in my house, and I like to be home with family wherever.


This newsletter will span over Christmas and the New Year holidays. These are reasons to give thanks for family gatherings and togetherness. I know this may be a hectic time for many people – especially the shoppers who are concerned about the perfect gifts for loved ones, but I would rather receive a note written with love than an expensive material gift. I feel the most important gifts are those given in love, or just being with someone special – like family members.

As I think of these things, I can only reflect on our Heavenly Father. He wants the same thing. He just wants to be with us as a family. He loves to spend time just being together. The sense of family must cross over into the eternal realm. We are part of His family, and He wants to spend time with us as His children, even more than I want to spend time with my children.

How would He accomplish this in reality? The way I get to spend that quality family time with my children is to **go** to their home and visit with them. If I stay at my house, I can only think about how much I would like to be with them, but if I get in the car and drive to their homes, I can actually be with them and enjoy the fellowship. I think you're getting the idea by now.

John's Gospel says, ***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** John 1:1, 14 (NIV)

...the **free**
gift of God
is **eternal life**
in *Christ Jesus*
our **LORD.**
Romans 6:23



God wanted to spend “holidays” with us so much, but there was a spiritual distance barrier that blocked His way and our way to Him. He had to do something about that, and He did. He became one of us for a while to establish a permanent connection for us to spend quality family time with Him. There was only one way for this to be possible. He had to become human flesh and live with us and walk with us and understand all that we deal with in this life. Then at the appointed time, He paid the penalty of our sin upon Himself on the cross. This removed our distance separation from God. When He said, “It is finished,” He meant it. The separation was now gone. All who would believe in Him and what He did for us personally would be given the right to become sons and daughters of God. We can become His family, and He will spend every holiday and every day with us – if we want that. I want that every day.

This is His holiday gift to all of us – no one is excluded – everyone can have this. John 3:16 – ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*** John 1:12 – ***“Yet to all who did receive Him, to all who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”*** (NIV)

True holiday joy is spent in the presence of family members. We are the family of God. Enjoy the holidays with Him.

Merry Christmas and a Joyous New Year in His Presence,

Pastor Nick 😊



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*Stephanie Holland & James Lochren were married on October 14, 2018 at the Miller Place Inn. The nuptials were officiated by Rev. Nick Franco. We wish them Much Happiness as they begin their married lives.*



## WOMEN'S MINISTRY

As I write this article, we are having our first snow of the season and I can't say that I am thrilled about it! Yes, the "white stuff" is very pretty when it lightly covers the ground like a blanket but I don't like the cold and ice that come along with it. My grandkids love winter...the more snow the better! Guess I did too when I was a child.

We have had a busy year in the Women's Ministry. In our two Bible studies, we are just finishing up on the study we did on the book of Esther. We learned some interesting things that we didn't know about the customs of the time and also gained insight into the main "characters" of the story. For the weeks we meet in December, we will do an Advent study on selections from a book from Our Daily Bread. We will start another book in the new year but haven't decided yet exactly which one.

During the year, the ladies in both studies have been putting money aside so that we can purchase needed items for those struggling with poverty in other countries. We have a total of \$362 and will use it to buy 3 goats, 36 chicks (for 3 families), 2 soccer balls, 4 warm blankets and enough food to feed 2 families for a month. How blessed we are that we can so easily share what we have with those who struggle just to get the necessities of life.

This is the 20<sup>th</sup> year that our church has participated in Operation Christmas Child. At our packing party we were able to pack 119 boxes. Along with the boxes that individuals and families brought in, we had a total of 145 boxes. Thank you to all of you who brought in items each month and for those who packed shoeboxes. This small act of kindness will result in many happy children and the possibility of them, their families and villages coming to know the love of Jesus.

We had several Saturday morning brunches which were well-attended and hope to have them bi-monthly in the coming year.

This is one of most the blessed seasons that we celebrate. We all look forward to spending time with our families as we gather to feast and exchange gifts with one another. Sometimes in the busyness of preparation and festivities, we lose sight of the "reason for the season." If it weren't for the miracle of the birth of Jesus, we would have no reason to celebrate like we do. I pray that each of us would focus on what is really important: thanksgiving for our wonderful Savior and the love He has shown to us.

My prayer for our community of believers is for a Christmas filled with sharing His love with our families, friends and strangers who might cross our path.

Blessings in His Name,  
Mary Ann



## Weekly Schedule

Subject to Change

### Sunday

10am - Service - Nursery available

10:45am - Children's Sunday School - Fellowship Hall

10:45am - Teen Bible Study - HPYC Building (65 Franklin Street)

First Sunday of the Month - Holy Communion

### Monday

7pm - 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month - **September through April** -  
M.E.N. (Men's Encouragement Network) - Fellowship Hall

### Tuesday

7pm - Every Tuesday - Ladies-In-Touch at Mary Ann Malcolm's Home

### Thursday

10am - Every Thursday - Ladies Prayer & Bible Study Group - HPYC Building (65 Franklin Street)

7pm - 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday each month - **Sept. thru Nov., Feb. thru June** - Ladies Sewing Circle - HPYC

### Friday

6:30pm - Worship Team practice in the Sanctuary.

### Saturday

8am - 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month - **September through April** - Men's Breakfast - Fellowship Hall



For other Winter activities, consult your Sunday Bulletin and Monday email memo's.

## Coming Up...

### In December... Four Advent Sundays

December 1 - Men's Breakfast

December 7 - Ladies Christmas Craft Night

December 21 - First day of Winter

December 24 - Christmas Eve

December 25 - Christmas Day

December 31 - New Year's Eve

### In January...Faith Promise

January 1 - New Year's Day

January 21 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

### In February...Alabaster Offering

February 14 - Valentine's Day

February 18 - President's Day



**FOOD PANTRY**  
OPEN MON, WED, FRI  
10AM - 2PM  
65 Franklin St. HPYC Building





## TALKING BANANAS



Talking Bananas, that's what the Virginia Beach, Kingston Elementary school students call them. Passing through cafeteria food lines, they see bananas with messages written on them. Now you may be asking, what kind of a banana writes a note on a banana? Cafeteria manager, Stacey Truman, is the culprit. After overseeing breakfast and lunch for 9 years, Tracey decided she would try something a little different. She started writing thoughtful, motivational notes on individual bananas. Students read inspirational messages like: "you are wise," "never give up," or "keep on trying." Could such a little thing really make any difference? Stacey, thrilled by student comments and reactions, thinks so. Not only have talking bananas created a school wide buzz, news stations across the nation are rushing to pick up the story. Not every student will choose a banana for the day but they still read the notes as they pass by. And though the banana peel is thrown away, the message resonates with students for the entire day.

Shouldn't that be the story of a Christian's life? Shouldn't our lives offer a distinguishable message to the people we come in contact with at: grocery counters, filling stations, coffee shops and dry cleaners. People you've never met need a word of encouragement, a message of hope. Even if there's no opening for conversation, there's always room for a smile, holding open a door or taking a personal interest in them. Just imagine if people that you come in contact with could read God's love in your eyes. Can you imagine the lingering impression you would leave?

In his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote these encouraging words: *You yourselves are our letter, inscribed on our hearts, known and read by everyone. It is clear that you are a letter from Christ ... written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.* 2 Corinthians 3: 2, 3 NLT

If it's really that simple why do we find it so difficult to illustrate God's love to outsiders? Could it be because we're self absorbed with our own struggle? Do we back away because we fear rejection or worse yet, fear of involvement?

*The truth is that loving somebody, anybody, makes you vulnerable and with enough loving, you get worn out at least on the outside. That's when the eternal within has a chance to step forward.*  
Ann Voskamp

There are moments that we need to be reminded that we're not alone in this world. We all face the torrential rains of life that threaten to wash away our secure footing. If we who have experienced God in a personal way struggle, how much worse is it for people trying to make it on their own?

