

2010  
FEBRUARY

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY OF FAITH

## BUILDING BRIDGES

BY ERIC DIEKHANS



St. George Melkite Greek Catholic Church in the West Bank is a long way from LVPC, but the Middle East Taskforce is hoping a partnership between the two churches will help bring understanding and relieve suffering.

Pastor Joy says that St. George's does have some similarities to our own church. "We both have about the same number of members," she shares, "a school, and lots of young children."

But for people living on the West Bank, life is a daily struggle. "The conditions there are worse than ever," says Laurie Empen, Chair of the Middle East Taskforce. "Though the Obama administration has taken measures, with special envoy to the Middle East George Mitchell, Palestinians are still being kicked out of their homes and nothing is being done about this."

The idea between the partnership, says Laurie, is "to connect on a human



FR. FIRAS DIAB

level and hear stories, first-hand, how people there are coping."

The Melkite Greek Catholic Church, with 1.3 million members worldwide, traces its origins to the Christian communities of the Levant and Egypt. St. George is located in Zababdeh, a small, predominately Christian village. Laurie met Fr. Firas Diab, the church's pastor, on her first trip to the Middle East in 2003 as a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams.

"What moved me the most," says Laurie, "was the incredible hospitality and perseverance of the Palestinians whose lives are unpredictable. For example, during that first trip, Laurie remembers, "the roads to Jenin were closed by the Israeli military, so our taxi drivers drove through Olive groves to get there."

"The people are not the radicals," she continues. "They are so similar to us, so full of love and generosity."

While Christians, who make up just 1.5% of East Bank residents, sometimes have the education and money to leave, Laurie says they suffer the same loss of daily freedoms as Muslim residents.

Joy and Laurie both say they're very excited by the partnership. "It means we will connect with Christians of the Holy Land on an ongoing basis," Laurie says. "I also believe that we, at LVPC can share with a wider audience, who these people are — their hopes, desires, struggles — and see how similar we might be."

If you'd like to become more involved in the partnership process, ask one of the Middle East Taskforce members — Laurie, Anita David, Deanna Boyd, or Catherine Rabenstine.

You can find out more about St. George at their website: [www.stgeorgeinzababdeh.com](http://www.stgeorgeinzababdeh.com).

# SEEKING THE HOLY



LARISSA KWONG ABAZIA

It feels to many of us as though our Advent and Christmas journey just came to a close. Still basking in the glory and light of the birth of our Messiah, we might not feel as though we are ready for the journey through Lent. At times it can be easier to think about the accessibility of a small child in a manger; that child isn't as confrontational as his adult counterpart revealed to us during Epiphany and the proceeding weeks. The Jesus

that calls us to action, models the importance of living on the boundaries of society, and just can't help but call others to another perspective of the world...you just might not feel ready for that Jesus.

In many ways, this is exactly how Lent functions in the life of the church. In a time when multitasking has become a natural presence in our daily lives (and I will confess that I have surfed the internet several times, text messaged, and taken part in a conversation all in the process of writing this article), it's a luxury to step back and take everything in. Lent is a time to deepen the understanding of ourselves, our faith, and our belief in who Christ was, is and will be for people of faith. We can only do that if we extract ourselves from the draws of society to truly experience the world that surrounds us. I'm excited about the Lenten book study this year, a wonderful toolbox jam packed with ways to see the holy in what we deem as ordinary. I hope that you will join a book group and discover ways that you can more deeply experience God's presence all around you.

In the end, it's not really about whether or not we're ready to hear Christ's call to us. The fact of the matter is that God's presence is already here, engaging us, calling us, beckoning us to action. So come and mark the beginning of the Lenten journey with Ash Wednesday on February 17th. Walk, pause, take a deep breath and then take another step along the journey of reflection and renewal.☞

## PROMISED LAND OR LAND OF PROMISE?

BY ERIC DIEKHANS

The Book of Joshua isn't approached lightly, especially by liberal Christians. After all, it recounts the mass killings of men, women, and children, ordered by God.

But Rev. Eunice Poethig isn't easily cowed. After all, she holds a PhD in Old Testament Studies. As a young seminary student,



she also stood on the mountainside at Shechem, where a stone was unearthed like the one described in Joshua 24, recording the covenant with Israel. It was an experience she describes as "Awesome."

Eunice will lead an LVPC class on Joshua on February 4, 11 and 18 at 7:00 p.m.

Israeli shells were exploding over Lebanon when Dr. Mary Mikael, President of the Near East School of Theology in Beirut, agreed to write a Bible study on the book of Joshua. Given the current political situation, it was a risky assignment for her, but in a recent interview here in Chicago she said, "As a Christian I knew I had to tell the story as I saw it."

Eunice will use Dr. Mikael's Horizons Bible Study manual, "Joshua: A Journey of Faith," for the class. It's part of an annual Bible study published by the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Dr. Mikael explores the themes of leadership, the promise of land, the concept of "holy war," and outsiders becoming insiders.

Joshua tells the story of God leading the tribes of Israel in the conquest of Canaan after they had fled from slavery in Egypt and endured 40 years in the wilderness of Sinai. One of the major difficulties for Christians reading the book today is God's order, when they enter the Promised Land, to "not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the Lord your God has commanded you."

While Eunice won't say how she will handle these controversial passages, she does say that Dr. Mikael "seeks peace as justice." The focus for Dr. Mikael and Eunice is "the difference between being a Land of Promise and a Promised Land."

Eunice believes that Joshua has a lot to say not only to the LVPC community as we grapple with Middle East issues, but also to the United States, as we play a new role in the world.☞

# CALENDAR

Place Your  
Favorite  
Refrigerator  
Magnet Here

# FEBRUARY

## EVERY SUNDAY

Sunday service in the Sanctuary at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Childcare is provided in the Mulford Room. Coffee hour and time for fellowship immediately follow both services.

Sunday school for children at 10:00 a.m. Classes for ages 3-4, grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-up meet in the Parish House.

Choir practice at 10:15 a.m.

Share your thoughts about faith and life in Begin@10 class, 10:00 a.m. in the Chapel.

Free parking is available in the Recycled Paper Company lot north of the church. Access the lot from the alley.



## ADVANCE WARNINGS: SIGN UP NOW!

New Members Class—See February 4  
Book of Joshua Study—See February 4  
Winterfest—See February 6  
Katrina Taskforce Potluck—  
See February 7  
Young Adult Super Bowl Party—  
See February 7

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2

Regular exercise is the key to vitality, so join the Seniors in Motion fitness class. An exercise specialist from Advocate Fitness leads the group. Class begins at 10:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Young Adult Bible Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

Crossroads Intergenerational Bible Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3

Senior Book Group meets at 12:15 p.m.

Worship Committee meets at 6:00 p.m.

Choir rehearsal at 7:15 p.m.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4

Senior Movie Matinee at 12:30 p.m.

Deacons meet at 6:00 p.m.

Find out what it means to be a Presbyterian and a member of LVPC at the New Members class, beginning at 7:00 p.m. Sign up in the back of the Sanctuary.

*Rev. Eunice Poethig leads the class A Land Of Promise Or The Promised Land:*

*A Study Of The Book Of Joshua, beginning tonight at 7:00. Sign up in the back of the*

*Sanctuary. Israeli shells were exploding over*

*Beirut when Mary Mikael agreed to write*

*a Bible study on the book of Joshua. Joshua tells the story of God's leading the tribes of*

*Israel in the conquest of Canaan after they*

*had fled from slavery in Egypt and had*

*endured 40 years in the wilderness of Sinai.*

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5

A Taize service features scripture reading, repetitive singing, and meditative silence, combining traditional worship forms in a contemporary way. The goal is to enable participants to remain open to the voice of God and discover the prayer within themselves. Join us tonight at 7:00 for Taize.

Cafe Pride provides a safe social space from 8:00 p.m. to midnight for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning youth and their allies, ages 16-24.

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6

Come out in the cold, come out for some fun at Winterfest 2010. There will be ice-skating at Wrigley Field at 10:00 a.m. followed by a chili lunch at the church. Sign up in the back of the Sanctuary.

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Lake View Pantry food donations and Two Cents A Meal offerings will be taken at the morning worship service.

Sue Cox will give blood pressure screenings between worship services.

The Katrina Taskforce will report on their November trip to Louisiana during a potluck lunch after services. Sign up in the back of the Sanctuary.

Cheer on your favorite team (as long as it isn't the Bears) at a Young Adult Super Bowl party, beginning at 4:30 p.m. Sign up in the back of the Sanctuary.

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Eco-Justice Taskforce meets at 6:00 p.m.

Christian Nurture Committee meets at 6:30 p.m.

Finance Committee meets at 6:30 p.m.

Social Justice Committee meets at 7:30 p.m.

# CALENDAR The Flip Side FEBRUARY



## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9

Seniors in Motion meets at 10:00 a.m.  
See February 2.

Young Adult Bible Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

Crossroads Intergenerational Bible Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Senior Book Group meets at 12:15 p.m.

Choir rehearsal at 7:15 p.m.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Senior Movie Matinee at 12:30 p.m.

New Members Class continues at 7:00 p.m. See February 4.

A Land Of Promise Or The Promised Land: A Study Of The Book Of Joshua continues at 7:00 p.m. See February 4 for details.

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12

Cafe Pride meets from 8:00 p.m. to midnight. See February 5.

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13

The LVPC Book Group meets at 10:00 a.m. to discuss *Olive Kitteridge* By Elizabeth Strout.

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14

New Members will be received at morning worship.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Seniors in Motion meets at 10:00 a.m.  
See February 2.

Young Adult Bible Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Crossroads Intergenerational Bible Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

Senior Book Group meets at 12:15 p.m.

The Lake View Parents Group meets at 6:00 p.m. for discussion and fellowship.

While the parents are meeting, kids are invited to The Gathering Place. They'll sing songs, play games, and learn more about the Bible. It begins at 6:00 p.m.

Choir rehearsal at 7:15 p.m.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Senior Movie Matinee at 12:30 p.m.

A Land Of Promise Or The Promised Land: A Study Of The Book Of Joshua continues at 7:00 p.m. See February 4 for details.

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Cafe Pride meets from 8:00 p.m. to midnight. See February 5.

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Session meets at 9:00 a.m.

Grab your favorite game and snack and hurry over to Game Night. Relax and have some fun with fellow LVPC members. It starts at 7:00 p.m.

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21

After both services today Parish Nurse Sue Cox will provide us with Ten Healthy Minutes. She'll enlighten us about a health topic in just 10 minutes.

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23

Seniors in Motion meets at 10:00 a.m.  
See January 5.

Young Adult Bible Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

Crossroads Intergenerational Bible Study meets at 6:30 p.m.

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

Senior Book Group meets at 12:15 p.m.

Choir rehearsal at 7:15 p.m.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Senior Movie Matinee at 12:30 p.m.

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Cafe Pride meets from 8:00 p.m. to midnight. See February 5.†

Samantha Caldwell joined LVPC in 2005. She teaches Sunday school as well as chairs the Buildings and Grounds Committee and sits on the Finance Committee as a member of Session.

## WHO YOU KNOW



BY ERIC DIEKHANS

SAMANTHA CALDWELL

### *Tell us about adopting a child from Haiti.*

In Haiti, the referral of the child occurs before the family's file is reviewed by national agencies. I have received my referral (an adorable baby boy). It will take from 10 to 15 months before our file goes through a bunch of Haitian and US agencies and he gets to come home.

The most difficult part of the process is the unknown ... or my inability to exert control (hmmm). I don't know when I will get to meet him or how many teeth he has now. I don't know how long our file will be with the various agencies or if new laws or officials' whims will make things move faster or slower. And there is nothing I can do to speed things up. "Hopefully" and "not yet" are all-too-frequent utterances. I do get regular photos and updates, so I can keep track of his progress and personality, which makes the wait both easier and harder.

**Editor's note:** The orphanage where Samantha's child current lives was not damaged in the recent earthquake and he was not harmed. Please keep Samantha and her child in your prayers as the destruction in Haiti may impact the process of completing adoptions and affect the timing of when she will be able to bring him home.

### *What part of motherhood are you most looking forward to?*

It is hard to parcel it out and say "this part." I look at parenthood as the sum of all of its parts. Maybe it is sharing the little things with my son, with the hope that the sum is a happy childhood. I see parents with their children on the El, on the sidewalk, at the park, and of course at church, talking all the while. I look forward to being able to do that with my children.

### *What's your greatest hope for the new decade? Where would you like to see LVPC and the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 10 years?*

I hope that in 10 years LVPC has a new fellowship building that is constantly bustling. I hope that LVPC continues to grow in its membership and financial strength to enable us to offer activities that fulfill the needs of its members and the community. I hope that the Presbyterian Church will treat all of its ministers, elders and members as children of God, and not based on genetics.

### *Describe your perfect Valentine's Day.*

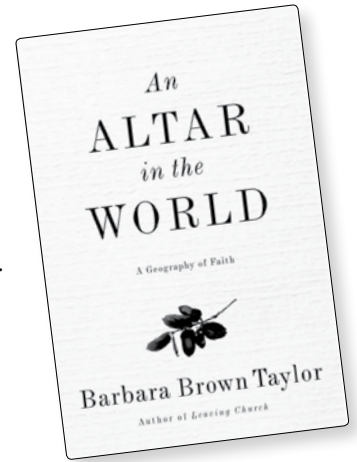
Too bad the Sox don't play in February. Alternatively, box seats at a Hawks game.☯

## LENTEN STUDY: AN ALTAR IN THE WORLD

BY JOY DOUGLAS STROME

*"No one longs for what he or she already has, and yet the accumulated insight of those wise about the spiritual life suggests that the reason so many of us cannot see the red X that marks the spot is because we are standing on it. The treasure we*

*seek requires no lengthy expedition, no expensive equipment, no superior aptitude or special company. All we lack is the willingness to imagine that we already have everything we need. The only thing missing is our consent to be where we are."* (p. xv)



*"What is saving my life now is becoming more fully human, trusting that there is no way to God apart from real life in the real world."* (p. xv)

*"Earth is so thick with divine possibility that it is a wonder we can walk anywhere without cracking our shins on altars."* (p.15)

These excerpts from Barbara Brown Taylor's *An Altar in the World* give a sampling of the rich writing and deep insights from this favorite author. Barbara Brown Taylor has given us years of good insights through dozens of books. Her latest book is no exception. As the pick for this year's Lenten Study, we will mark this special season of reflection and study with Brown Taylor as she reflects on the ordinary practices that she engages in every day that bring her a new sense of the sacred.

As we have done in past years, we will offer a variety of time slots for you to gather with others reading this book and share insights or doubts, ask questions or give an opinion, just listen and learn. Please mark your calendars now as we prepare for Lent which will begin on Ash Wednesday, February 17th. Give yourself the gift of time and read with your LVPC family members these words of insight and inspiration from Barbara Brown Taylor. Be ready to celebrate Easter having observed Lent and observe Lent with purpose this year.

Watch for more details to come on Sunday morning and the website.☯

# OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP IN HAITI

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is responding in Haiti through Presbyterian Disaster. Go to [www.pcusa.org/pda](http://www.pcusa.org/pda) or call (800) 872-3283. Checks can also be mailed to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, P.O. Box 643700, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700.

Samantha Caldwell is adopting from God's Littlest Angels Orphanage in Haiti. (See page 5.) GLA is an independent, non-denominational ministry founded in the United States to care for premature, malnourished, and abandoned children in Haiti. You can help them provide earthquake relief by donating at [www.glahaiti.org](http://www.glahaiti.org) or mailing a check to God's Littlest Angels, 2085 Crystal River Dr., Colorado Springs, CO 80915.

Submission deadline for the March issue is February 15. Send articles, calendar listings, rants, and raves to Eric Diekhans at [ericdiekhans@ameritech.net](mailto:ericdiekhans@ameritech.net).<sup>†</sup>



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