



ON THE STREET

The Peoples Church of Chicago Newsletter for May, 2009

"A Spiritual Home for People of Conscience"

CALENDAR

Film/Movie Night –

- ? Fourth Friday, May 22, 6-8pm.
George Burns in the 1977 film
"Oh, God!" – with discussion.

Song and Hymn Sing –

- ? Thursday, 5:30 – 6:30pm.

Upcoming Services

- ? Sundays, 10am: Worship Service,
spirit filled, Jesus-centered.

*All services followed by fellowship,
with coffee and light refreshments.*

Other Events

First Friday:

- ? **May 1, 6pm:** How do you eat an
elephant? **Taizé service and
discussion** of the Big Questions,
One bite at a time.

Music at Peoples

- ? **Fri, May 1, 7-9pm: Jazz
Coffeehouse**, with great music
and delicious cake and coffee –
donation requested at the door.
- ? **Sat, May 2, 7pm:** Joseph Bures,
Classical Piano Recital.

2 Li'l Fishes

Each Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday
and Sunday, a free lunch is served
in Molly's Café, on 3 ½ West. All
are welcome.

If you would like to help, phone
Will Pruitt, volunteer coordinator,
773-754-6102.

Minister's Notes:

Looking for Faith

Rev. Jean Siegfried Darling

Lots of us grew up with a faith that later became stale and unsatisfying – for all sorts of reasons. One of my favorite theologians mentioned that we often form a sense of our religious values as children, and like a caterpillar, we outgrow these youthful conceptions as we mature. Sometimes replacing these too simple ideas comes gradually and easily.

But it may not be so easy – and we may find ourselves face to face with a crisis that our childish faith can't meet.

When I served as chaplain in a major hospital, I visited a patient who was wrestling with her faith, after years of living essentially disconnected from it. Being sick brought up old, unfinished business that she had tucked away in the back of her mind.

She remembered the moment she lost her faith – staring out the kitchen window as she washed dishes, watching the little birds dart about, eating seeds in the grass – she suddenly had the thought that God couldn't possibly know about each feather on each bird, could not possibly care for each of the millions of human beings on the earth. It was too big a job. It didn't make sense.

It was like the bottom dropped out of her faith.

The emptiness she felt she simply tucked away, dealing with all the issues of life, raising children and keeping the house, working and nurturing her marriage.

But now, lying sick in bed, afraid and uncertain, she began to revisit this loss, that had left her life feeling on one level empty. It was during this crisis, when she finally had time to reflect on her faith, that she began to mold a mature faith that she could carry with her the rest of her life. The old faith that had been so sweet and comforting to her as a child she was able to finally put away.

I've been reading *My Jesus Year*, by Benjamin Cohen. He's a young guy, a reporter, from a long line of rabbis – he's the only one in his family who didn't become, or marry, a rabbi. His family was so insulated from mainstream culture that he felt insatiably

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Minister's Notes, cont'd

curious and envious of the people across the street who celebrated Christmas and Easter, imagining their religion to be magical and powerful beyond his wildest dreams.

After he grew up and married – the daughter of a minister, by the way, who had converted to Judaism – he decided to deal with his malaise about his own faith by making a grand tour of American Christianity for a year. His book is highly entertaining and gives a well-drawn picture of the incredible variety of worship and cultures out there.

But it also addresses this issue – losing and refinding our faith – in a way that is helpful to anyone struggling with their own sense of uncertainty and loss.

Near the end of his year, he goes to a faith-healing session in a suburban mall, and watches a slick pompadoured pastor declare healed various sick people in the audience, watches a man get up out of his wheelchair and walk, and he feels disgusted that someone would take advantage of these people, take their money and give them false hope.

But then one of his family's close friends suffers a heart attack and is lying in the hospital in a coma. His organs are shutting down, one by one, and the doctors tell the family to prepare for his imminent death.

But then – after everyone has accepted that they are going to lose him, and the family has begun funeral preparations, he suddenly turns around – his organs begin working again and he wakes up, ready to go back to his life, as if nothing had happened. He is not even aware that he has been deathly ill.

Benyamin talks with one of his rabbi friends about the meaning of all this:

I tell the rabbi about the tongue-tied “healings and miracles” revival.

“There’s nothing wrong with that,” he says diplomatically, “but we have no tradition of the rabbi coming in and rubbing your pancreas and – poof – you’re cured.”

“But didn’t God perform overt miracles in times of old?” I ask.

The rabbi tells him that in the Bible miracles occurred within the natural laws of nature. The locusts that are one of the plagues of Egypt are

brought by a strong East wind (Ex. 10:13), for example.

Miracles happen every day, the rabbi says, and we just don’t realize it. Benyamin goes on:

Three times each day Jews around the world recite the Modeem prayer. In it, we thank God “for Your miracles that are with us every day.” Last I checked, plagues of locusts aren’t arriving on any semiregular basis. For which miracles, then, are we thanking God? The fact that we wake up, that the sun rises, that nature works the way it does.

... The rabbi gets up from his chair and walks toward the waiting room exit. He pauses for a moment and then turns around to tell me one more thing. “You don’t need the sun to stand still in order to know God; God is in every sunrise, in each waterfall, in the wind and the rain. You just have to care enough to see Him there.”

Faith takes practice. Making an effort, being willing to care, to trust, to open your heart. My hospital patient mused that if a little piece of God were in each person, then perhaps it would be possible for God to care about all 6 billion of us. Made me smile.

peace, *Jean*

First Fridays in Molly's Café:

“How do you eat an elephant?”

May 1st, 6pm, we begin holding a monthly Taizé-style service and discussion of the really big questions. “One bite at a time” – the answer to the question above – is how we will delve into the meaning of life and the other spiritual biggies, using readings as a jumping off place.

And afterwards, **from 7-9pm**, you’re invited to stay for the **Jazz Coffeehouse**, with special guests jazz duo **The Unit Of Two**, keyboard and guitar, and guests. Sample some of Ludie’s cake and fresh brewed coffee, all without much strain on your wallet.

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Calendar – May 2008

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1 First Friday: 6pm – Taizé Svc 7pm – Jazz Coffeehouse	2 7pm Joseph Bures Classical piano	3 10am Service
4	5	6	7 5:30 – music	8	9	10 10am Service
11	12	13	14 5:30 – music	15	16 Trustees Retreat	17 10am Service
18	19	20	21 5:30 – music	22 6pm: Film night: “Oh, God!”	23	24 10am Service 11:30am Potluck Sacred Conversation on Race continues
25	26 Memorial Day	27	28 5:30 – music	29	30	31