

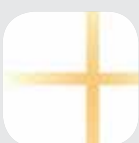
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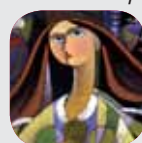
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The VOICE

Fifth Avenue
Presbyterian
Church



January/February 2011

One God, Many Faiths



***"It is a good thing, a very good thing,
that we are getting together tonight."***

Senior Pastor Scott Black Johnston's opening words at Temple Shaaray Tefila last October were more than a pleasantry, more than a polite thank you from a Christian minister for the opportunity to preach to a Jewish congregation.

The senior pastor went on to say that it is not only a good thing, all by itself, for people of different faiths to get to know one another. But that it is through the conversations, the familiarization, the getting to know, that seeds of peace take root.

"In this volatile world, flash points between the major religious faiths seem to pop up at least once a week," Dr. Black Johnston said. "Interfaith conversations and experiences lay the foundation for respect and trust—two things that are absolutely crucial for those moments when we do not see eye to eye."

This year, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church is creating more opportunities for interfaith conversations and

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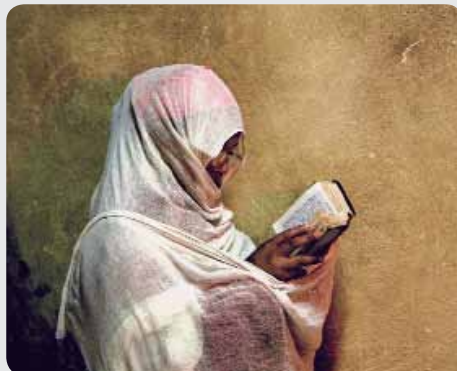
VEIL(S) ON FIFTH AVENUE



Fellah woman and child, Cairo, 1870. Right, a young Afghan woman waits to receive food from a U.N. World Food Program distribution. Kabul, 2001.



An Ethiopian woman reads from her Bible. Holy Sepulcher Church, Jerusalem, 2004.



By Ron Cruikshank

Beginning Jan. 23, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church showcases differing depictions (and perceptions) of veiled women with its display of *Veil(s): A Photographic Overview*.

The photo collection is the work of Lebanese American University's Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, which has been at the heart of the university's mission since the 1970s. The exhibit features veiled women from the Middle East from the 19th century to the present.

"There is no singular definition of the veil," explained Mona Chemali Khalaf, the Institute's director when *Veil(s)* was first assembled in 2005. "Veiling was, in fact, practiced widely in ancient Mesopotamia, Greco-Roman, Assyrian and Byzantine empires, where it was considered a mark of prestige and a symbol of status."

The women depicted in *Veil(s)* are Christian, Jewish and Muslim, challenging the notion that only Muslim women veil themselves. The women come from all walks of life; some are veiled for religious reasons, while others consider their veils part of a fashionable identity. Veils are not limited to one economic class; the wealthy, middle class and poor are all shown wearing some form of covering, just as they did in antiquity.

The exhibit also examines the reasons women use the veil. Some say they feel liberated or closer to their beliefs for donning their veils. Others criticize what they say is excessive exposure of women in the West.

"I am the only woman in my family who is veiled," says K.B., a young businesswoman in Beirut and one of the women whose testimonies are included in the companion guide to the exhibit. "I feel completely transformed. I am in a way liberated, protected, more mature; and definitely, more serene."

"Young Muslim women are reclaiming the hijab," says N.M., a Canadian-born Muslim woman, "reinterpreting it in light of its original purpose—to give back to women ultimate control of their own bodies."

This positive view of veiling is also challenged in *Veil(s)*, however; many women recount the experiences of their mothers and grandmothers, whose lives were heavily restricted by their veils. Cultural tradition demanded these women to be almost completely covered.

Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church and Lebanese American University have had a long relationship before their collaboration on *Veil(s)*. The church has provided

benevolence grants to the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World as part of its efforts to improve the lives and prospects of women in Lebanese prisons.

The university's roots also extend to the wider Presbyterian Church. Sarah Lanman Huntington Smith, the wife of a Presbyterian missionary, founded the school that became LAU in the 19th century, during Ottoman rule, giving girls in what is now Lebanon a chance to improve their prospects through education. That legacy exists in the mission of the university to this day.

Ron Cruikshank is a longtime member of FAPC and a member of the Arts and Our Faith Committee, which is sponsoring the Veil(s) exhibit. He is a trustee of the Lebanese American University and a member of the advisory board for the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World.



Continued from page 1

experiences—building on our history with Central Synagogue and our emerging partnership with Temple Shaaray Tefila, and exploring new relationships with the Islamic Cultural Center, the Islamic Society of Mid-Manhattan and other communities of faith.

Through film, photography, historical exhibits, classes and panels, the coming weeks will be a rich time for members and friends of FAPC to learn more about the nearly 3 million Jewish and Muslim New Yorkers who share the city with us.

See the calendar below for details on the full slate of interfaith events.

INTERFAITH EVENTS

Three Faiths: An Exhibit, Engagement and Encounter.

In conjunction with the New York Public Library exhibition, *Three Faiths*, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church welcomes Imam Shamsi Ali, Rabbi Jonathan Stein and congregants from the Islamic Cultural Center and Temple Shaaray Tefila for an afternoon of conversation and a panel discussion of the exhibit.

WHEN: 4 pm Sunday, Jan. 23 • **WHERE:** Bonnell Hall

Veil(s): A Photographic Overview.

Veiled women (and children) across a range of cultures and religious traditions are the focal points of this provocative exhibit, sponsored by the Arts and Our Faith Committee. *Read more about Veil(s) on page 2.*

WHEN: Jan. 23 through March 13 • **WHERE:** The Gallery

We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting For: A Multifaith Film Series.

Three faiths, three films ... dozens of questions. Starting Feb. 3, this monthly series features recent documentaries that raise tough questions about Christians, Jews and Muslims, and our misconceptions about (and conflicts with) one another. Jointly sponsored by FAPC, Auburn Seminary, Central Synagogue, First Presbyterian Church and the Muslim Consultative Network. *Read more about the film series on page 4.*

WHEN: 7 pm Thursday, Feb. 3, March 3 & April 7 • **WHERE:** *Jesus Camp*, in the Christian Education Center (Feb. 3). March and April venues to be announced.

The Power of Dialogue: Raising Children of Faith in a Multifaith World.

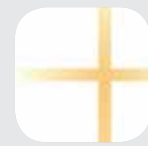
Manar Fawakhry, director of Auburn Seminary's youth leadership program, Face to Face|Faith to Faith, talks about how the program prepares teens to negotiate a multifaith world. *Read the interview with Manar Fawakhry on page 5.*

WHEN: 9:30 am Sunday, Feb. 6 • **WHERE:** Boardroom

Dialogue: An Interfaith Conversation.

Three religious leaders—Rev. Dr. Scott Black Johnston, Imam Achmad Dewidar and Rabbi Peter Rubinstein—tackle the issues. Which issues? An Islamic center in lower Manhattan ... the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? We'll see what's in the headlines that day.

WHEN: 6:30 pm Thursday, March 24 • **WHERE:** Central Synagogue, 123 E. 55th St.



WE ARE THE ONES

jesus camp

America is Being Born Again.



Fundamentalism. Creationism. Speaking in tongues.

The film *Jesus Camp* brandishes a Christianity that, to many east coast Christians, may seem like a different religion entirely.

But for Charlene Han Powell, it brought back memories.

While in college, Powell—now the interim director of Christian education at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church—was briefly involved with the evangelical Campus Crusade for Christ. “The fellowship was fierce,” she says. “The evangelical church becomes your family and your friends. They have a genuine desire to be faithful to Scripture. They take it literally.”

Jesus Camp, which earned an Academy Award nomination for best documentary feature in 2007, follows a group of children to “Kids on Fire,” a summer camp in North Dakota that mixes revival-style preaching with conservative politics in training a new generation of culture warriors. It showcases a side of the faith that Christians of a different ideology would just as soon ignore.

Which is precisely why *Jesus Camp* leads off the upcoming multifaith film series, “We Are the Ones We’ve Been Waiting For,” a joint project of FAPC, Auburn Seminary and a collection of other faith groups.

Beginning on Feb. 3, the monthly series will feature three recent documentaries—one each on Christianity, Islam and Judaism—with discussion to follow. A speaker from each faith tradition will share a personal reflection on the film.

“Each of the films touches on aspects of the faiths that are the most sensitive, the most controversial,” says Powell, who will lead the discussion on *Jesus Camp*. “We chose these films because

we wanted to put those questions, those stereotypes out there, so we could begin to address them.”

Another offering in the series, *New Muslim Cool*, follows the spiritual journey of Hamza Perez, a rap artist in Pittsburgh who abandoned drugs and dealing when he became a Muslim. It’s a decision that still confounds his Roman Catholic family. Worse than the doubts expressed by his family are Perez’ encounters with the fears and suspicions of a post-9/11 America.

“As a convert to Islam, I am thankful that my parents are understanding and respect my decision to be a Muslim,” says Megan Putney, program director of the Muslim Consultative Network and a co-coordinator of the film series. “However, like in the movie, there have been moments when my parents outwardly admitted frustration with my choice. It’s comforting for me to watch the film and see that other converts have similar situations.”

The politics of interfaith conflict also play strongly in *Defamation*, the third film in the series. Israeli filmmaker Yoav Shamir’s examination of modern-day anti-Semitism takes him inside the Anti-Defamation League and to Jewish communities in Brooklyn and Russia that have felt its impact.

But Shamir gives equal time to the controversial historian Norman Finkelstein, himself the son of Holocaust survivors, who argues that anti-Semitism is a tool being used by the Israeli state for political gain. Elizabeth Sacks, a cantor at Central Synagogue, will offer the commentary on *Defamation*.

DETAILS

Screening and discussion of *Jesus Camp* will begin at 7 pm Thursday, Feb. 3, in the Christian Education Center. The film series continues on Thursday, March 3, and concludes on Thursday, April 7; times and locations will be announced.



Scenes from *Defamation* (2009), top, and *New Muslim Cool* (2009).



MANAR FAWAKHRY INTERVIEW

Manar Fawakhry leads Auburn Seminary’s *Face to Face|Faith to Faith*, a youth leadership program that has brought together hundreds of Christian, Jewish and Muslim teenagers from Northern Ireland, the Middle East, South Africa and the U.S. since 2001. The objective: to develop a new generation of leaders capable of shepherding a multifaith global society. On Feb. 6, she will discuss her experience with members and friends of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church.

How does *Face to Face|Faith to Faith* work?

The program is structured in three phases. For the first five months, teens remain in their home countries or meet regionally for dialogue, education and service projects. After that, we bring in the participants from around the world for a summer intensive in upstate New York. They live together for two weeks, and we take them through a curriculum that encourages conversation, so that they can learn about each other’s faith. Finally, the participants return to their home countries. The program becomes more action-oriented at this point.

In what sense?

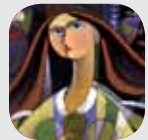
We still engage in dialogue, but the emphasis moves to doing something meaningful for the community. One year a group of teens created an art exhibit on sacred spaces in Jerusalem. A group of our youth in Northern Ireland created a documentary on prejudice and segregation that won an international film award last year.

What effect does such an intense program have on a teenager?

I am doing research now on re-entry, which is a common problem in dialogue processes. Dialogue encounter breaks down preconceptions, ideas we were raised with that may be true, may be false. It can be difficult for young people, for any of us, to unlearn what we thought we knew. We encourage them to reflect, to process, to use empathetic listening to understand what does it mean to be in the shoes of another? People transform. Then the challenge becomes, how do I go back to my reality with this new perception?

DETAILS

Manar Fawakhry’s Adult Education class, “The Power of Dialogue: Raising Children of Faith in a Multifaith World,” is at 9:30 am on Sunday, Feb. 6, in the Boardroom. *Face to Face|Faith to Faith* is now accepting applications from youth 16-18 years old for its 2011 program. For information, go to www.auburnseminary.org/faceface.



JESUS AND HIS MARYS



Mary.

It is among the most common names in Scripture, and the most revered woman's name in Christian tradition. As the New Testament scholar Amy-Jill Levine has observed, Marys "frame the life of Jesus: they are present in his genealogy and the story of his birth, and they are the primary witnesses to his death and resurrection."*

Mary of Nazareth, of course, is the woman who bears Jesus and among the women who stand at his cross. Then, depending on which gospel you read, there are other Marys present at the cross and tomb—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and a woman Matthew identifies only as "the other Mary."

Altogether, there are at least seven distinct Marys identified in the New Testament. This assemblage of Marys can be confusing—which is one reason the Rev. Kate Dunn chose to focus on just three in her Adult Education course, "Mary Mary Mary," which begins Feb. 6.

Rev. Dunn's course will explore the three most prominent Marys in the gospels—Mary of Nazareth, Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. This third Mary is the woman who listens at Jesus' feet while her sister attends to the household, who laments that Jesus did not arrive in time to heal her brother, and who (according to John) anoints Jesus' feet with precious oil and wipes them with her hair (John 12).

"We will look at the Scriptural texts and focus on the key stories," Rev. Dunn says. "Once we begin to understand the character as she appears in Scripture, we'll look at some of the art, literature and even the music she has inspired."

Modern scholars have challenged historical depictions of Mary Magdalene as a prostitute and repentant sinner, restoring her among the most respected of Jesus' disciples. The gospels record that Jesus healed Mary Magdalene of possession by seven demons, an episode that Rev. Dunn's class will explore through historical fiction. Beatrice Gormley's young adult novel, *Poisoned Honey: A Story of Mary Magdalene* (2010), is recommended pre-reading.

"It is an incredible story of possession and healing," Rev. Dunn says. "Her portrayal of Jesus is very moving."



Top left: *Basilica de Guadalupe, Our Lady of Guadalupe, 1536.* Top right: *He Qi, Mary Magdalene, 2001.* Above: *Johannes Vermeer, Christ in the House of Martha and Mary, 1655.*

DETAILS

"Mary Mary Mary" meets on three successive Sundays, Feb. 6, 13 and 20, at 12:30 pm in the Boardroom.

* *Women's Bible Commentary: Expanded Edition* (1998), p. 349.

ECHOES *Updates of recent articles in The VOICE*



◀ *The Search Continues*

The Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC) has completed the initial phase of its work and is ready to receive applications. FAPC's two Associate Pastor positions will be advertised in upcoming issues of *Christian Century* magazine and *Presbyterian Outlook*. Prospective applicants will find information on our homepage, www.fapc.org. (APNC Chair Holly Hendrix outlined the search process in the December VOICE).

Off to a Great Start ▶

Shortly after the new year, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church edged past \$2 million in pledges for the 2011 Commitment Campaign. To put that milestone in perspective: In 2010 the church did not receive \$2 million in pledges until late March. (We are now less than \$500,000 from our \$2.5 million campaign goal, announced in October.)



◀ *From Haiti to Tucson*

A year after an earthquake devastated Haiti, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance continues to work through the ACT Alliance in providing basic humanitarian assistance. Funds from PDA helped to provide hygiene kits to prevent the spread of cholera in the wake of Hurricane Tomas, which struck the island in November. In 2011, the disaster relief program will transition from the emergency to the rehabilitation phase, with the construction of cisterns and new plantings to revive agriculture, among other projects. PDA also is engaged in the ongoing response of faith communities to the shootings in Tucson this month. The Department of Homeland Security enlisted PDA to provide emotional and spiritual care during the funerals of some of the victims. (As reported in October, FAPC contributed \$32,000 of the nearly \$11 million that Presbyterian churches collected for Haitian disaster relief.)

New Hope in Africa ▶

With a new constitution and the prospect of parliamentary elections soon, the tense political climate caused by the military-backed government in Madagascar has quieted down for the time being. Concerned Presbyterians hope that a gradual return to democracy will help lift the world embargo on much-needed assistance to this impoverished island country. Meanwhile, as *The VOICE* went to print, votes were still being tabulated in southern Sudan's referendum on independence, with supporters hopeful that the creation of a new nation might establish peace among the warring Christian and Muslim populations. (Madagascar and Sudan are two focus areas of the Presbyterian Ministry at the U.N. The denomination's Madagascar Mission Network had issued an Action Alert on the Malagasy situation in December.)



◀ *Make that REV. Jacob*

After five years at FAPC—as a seminarian, and ultimately as director of Family Ministries—Jacob Bolton now has a new title. The Rev. G. Jacob Bolton V was ordained into the ministry of the Presbyterian Church (USA) on Sunday, Jan. 16, at Huguenot Memorial Church in Pelham, NY. (Jacob answered a call to Huguenot in November, when his parting words to FAPC were published.)



Upcoming Events

JAN FEB

JANUARY

- 28 Deadline for Officer Recommendations.** This is the last day to recommend members to serve as Deacons, Elders and Trustees in the officer class of 2014, and to serve as Members-at-Large on the 2012 Officer Nominating Committee. Recommendation forms are available in both entrances and on the homepage, www.fapc.org.
- 29 Don't Walk By.** A campaign by the Rescue Alliance, a partnership of faith-based ministries. Today and next Saturday (Feb. 5), teams of volunteers will walk Manhattan to assist people on the streets. To discuss the campaign with an FAPC member who has participated in this outreach, contact outreach@fapc.org.
NEXT Service: KEEN (Kids Enjoy Exercise Now). KEEN, a nonprofit organization, helps children with mental/physical disabilities gain self-confidence through physical activity. Training provided. Meet at 12:30 pm at FAPC. Contacts: Mary Gazella (mary.gazella@gmail.com) or Lauren Moon (laurenmoon@gmail.com).
- 30 What We Believe.** First session of new members' class. The Rev. Randy Weber, 12:15 pm, Corning Logan Room. This initial class session also will be offered on Tuesday night (Feb. 1) for those unable to attend today.

FEBRUARY

- 1 Employment Advisory.** "How to Reinvent Yourself." Presenter: Richard Miller. 6:30 pm, Christian Education Center.
What We Believe. Alternate time for first session of new members' class. The Rev. Randy Weber, 6:30 pm, Corning Logan Room.

WEEKLY EVENTS

- Sun Worship.** 9:30 am, Kirkland Chapel & 11 am, Sanctuary.
Positive Parents Group. 9:30 am, Christian Education Center.
Focus of NEXT. 12:30 pm, location announced weekly.
- Mon Women's Association Craft Group.** 10:30 am, Boardroom.
- Tue Women's Association Prayer Group.** 11 am, Romeyn Room. **Luncheon.** 12 pm, Bonnell Hall. **Bridge.** 1:30 pm, Bonnell Hall. **Speaking English.** 1:30 pm, Christian Education Center.
Congregational Supper. 5:30 pm, Bonnell Hall.
- Sat Meals on Heels.** 9:30 am, Bonnell Hall.

- 3 Multifaith Film Series: Jesus Camp.** Film and discussion, led by Charlene Han Powell. 7 pm, Christian Education Center.
- 6 Souper Bowl of Caring.** Youth groups across the country (including FAPC) collect food and donations for local food banks. Donations collected before and after each worship service.
The Power of Dialogue: Raising Children of Faith in a Multifaith World. Manar Fawakhry, director of Auburn Seminary's global youth leadership program, Face to Face | Faith to Faith, leads this Adult Education class. 9:30 am, Boardroom.
Mary, Mary, Mary. The Rev. Kate Dunn leads a three-week exploration of the three most prominent Marys in the gospels—Mary of Nazareth, Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene. Through Feb. 20. 12:30 pm, Boardroom.
- 10 Senior Pastor's reception for new members.** 6:30 pm, the Manse.
- 15 Better Than Broadway IX.** The Theatre Fellowship's annual production is dedicated to the late Vivian Cook. Tickets (at the door only) are \$17. Reservations required; contact Betsy Ross (212.288.7514, brosswvu@aol.com).
Employment Advisory. 6:30 pm, Corning Logan Room.
- 19 Parents Night Out.** 3:30 pm, Christian Education Center.
- 21 President's Day.** Building closed.
- 27 Grandmother to Grandmother: New York to Tanzania.** This film introduces projects in the Bronx and in Tanzania where grandmothers are saving at-risk children. Adult Education event featuring John Ankele, co-producer and director, and Rimas Jasin, executive director of Presbyterian Senior Services. 12:30 pm, Jones Auditorium.
NEXT@ the Bowery Mission. Worship service and dinner led by FAPC volunteers. 5:45 pm, 227 Bowery between Prince and Rivington Streets.

The VOICE is published 10 times a year for members and friends of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. Please submit ideas or content for March to Tim Palmer (tpalmer@fapc.org) no later than Feb. 15.

Editor: Tim Palmer • Design: Vasheena Doughy

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