

# PATHWAYS FOR PASTORS

WINTER 2006

Brook Lane's quarterly newsletter for pastors • Deryl Fleming, Editor

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## Annual Seminar for Pastors January 25-26, 2007

The 2007 edition of Brook Lane's Annual Seminar for Pastors will feature Peter Steinke as guest presenter on Thursday. He is a nationwide church consultant who has completed 175 interventions with troubled churches and has developed a training program for such. He has been a pastor, has taught in several seminaries and is a licensed counselor. The author of 10 books, his latest, *Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*, has just been published by Alban. His earlier books include *How Your Church Family Works* and *Healthy Congregations*. Steinke's theme for the seminar will be self definition and pastoral pain.

Ben Jones, Presbyterian minister, will preach in the opening worship on Thursday. He is an artist with the canvas and in the pulpit.

We will begin each day in the chapel with a continental breakfast at 8:30 a.m. and worship at 9:00 a.m. Thursday we conclude at 3:30 p.m. and Friday's session will conclude with lunch. The \$45 fee for the seminar includes breakfast and lunch both days. The low cost/high value seminar is supported in part by the Sylvia A. and William B. Hunsberger Fund.

One CEU is given to those who participate in the entire event. A registration form is found on page five.

## Day of Conversation for Pastors April 19, 2007

The Spring Day of Conversation for Pastors is Thursday, April 19, 2007. It is designed to be a Sabbath, a day away for reflecting among caring colleagues. The agenda is conversation about our lives and ministries against the backdrop of a book. For the sake of conversation, the group is limited to 12 participants.

*Who Are You to Say? Establishing Pastoral Authority in Matters of Faith* by Dale Rosenberger, a pastor and author, is the book for the day. The author says that the church has never been to a place like this before and goes on to describe the authority crisis we have all experienced. He offers directives as to how to speak as one with authority regarding Christ, the church, the Bible, sacraments and ministry. This is an important book for our postmodern context.

The fee of \$25 includes breakfast (8:30 a.m.), lunch and a copy of the book. A registration form is found on page five.

### Our Mission Statement

As an expression of our Christian heritage, we are committed to utilizing our resources carefully and creatively to provide quality behavioral health services.

## Travel Tips

The concerns and complaints I hear from both pastors and parishioners suggest to me a gap between their expectations of the pastor's role. Nothing new there. We have all seen polls of the different expectations of the laity adding up to 80 hour weeks for pastors.

One of the realities is that the parishioners differ among themselves as to what they expect from the pastor. Some people expect at home pastoral visits. Others do not want them. Some people do not even want hospital visits. Some people do not know what they want, saying one thing and meaning another. What a challenge for the pastor, even to learn what people expect.

For some people, the quality of the preaching is most important. For others, it is not. Moreover, tastes vary so much that what is good preaching for one person may not be for another. At a church where I have recently preached several times, I heard the complaint that some of the supply preachers were dependent on their notes. I soon took the opportunity to say to the congregation that they had been spoiled by an outstanding preacher who for years has not used notes. He was, however, exceedingly well prepared. I have heard a lot of preachers, but very few who did not use notes and were worth hearing.

Pastors necessarily work by triage, trying to stop the bleeding and prioritizing the needs and tasks. The challenge is that my need for pastoral attention is a priority to me, though it may not be a priority in the pastor's larger scheme of things. Sometimes it seems that the pastor has time only for ER work. One of the complaints I hear from laity is regarding ongoing care. When the crisis with a child, an older parent, or a death is over, the pastor moves on to other members' crises. One way to deal with that is notes or calls on anniversaries of crises, which are sometimes as important as wedding anniversaries.

A pastor recently talked with me about

the challenge of choosing between face to face pastoral care and pastoral care by telecommunications. My response is, live the question. That is a dilemma with which you live, not a problem which you solve.

Deciding what is urgent but not important, what is important but not urgent, and what is both urgent and important is always a dilemma. It might help to get some clergy consultation on this one.

When I was a pastor, I thought it important to communicate and educate the congregation on my job as I saw it. So I developed occasional opportunities beyond the pastor-parish relations committee to do so.

As I have said before, pastors are always going to disappoint someone. The work is never finished. You are one person with a call and gifts for ministry. You are not the Messiah. Not even the Messiah won them all.

Carlyle Marney was guest preacher at the First Baptist Church of Greenville, S.C., during an interim. Their search committee met with him in the afternoon to receive his counsel. That evening he said to the congregation, "My guess is that you are going to be a long time without a pastor. The problem, as I see it, is that there are not many 30 year old confederate generals left."

During this season of too much to do, God rest you merry, gentlefolk.

### **Brook Lane**

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## Maps for the Journey

Peter Rollins, *How (Not) to Speak of God*. Paraclete Press, 2006, \$20. 1557255059.

Brian McLaren is a “raving fan” of this excellent introduction to the “emerging church” movement. The first half of the book is theory, theological underpinnings, and the second half is practice, description of 10 liturgical events. The author calls for a new orthodoxy, not right belief, but believing in the right way. And for gathering in a different way.

Jacobsen, Douglas and Sawatsky, Rodney, *Gracious Christianity*. Baker, 2006, \$13. 0801031397.

This is an excellent and readable introduction to Christian faith, only 131 pages and without jargon. The authors were friends and colleagues at Messiah College until Sawatsky died with brain cancer just before the book was published. While dealing with the classic themes of systematic theology, they do it in a lively way. The reflection questions in each chapter are worth the price of the book.

Anna Quindlen, *Rise and Shine*. Random House, 2006, \$25. 0375502246.

This is a New York story, a family story and story about fame. Megan is a household name due to her hosting the top rated morning talk show on TV. Her sister Bridget is a social worker in the Bronx, and has always lived in Megan’s shadow. So different, yet they have a transcending connection forged in their complex childhood. Megan’s vocational crisis becomes a life changing experience for her and for everyone in her life, as does the personal crisis of son Leo. This is a good read, especially for Quindlen fans who read her biweekly columns for *Newsweek* and for New York aficionados.

Terry Wise, *Waking Up*. Pathfinder, 2003, \$19. 0934793085.

This is the author’s stirring story of her young husband’s death, her descent into the hell of depression and her ascent, through therapy, into the light. Reading it was for me like taking courses in ALS, childhood sexual abuse, depression, and grief therapy, all at the same time.

Jane Pauley, *Skywriting: A Life Out of the Blue*. Random House, 2004, \$6. 140006192X

This memoir of family and vocation features a bipolar episode triggered by treatment for HIV. The episode was a classic one, and this is a book to hand to anyone who is affected by the disorder. Speaking the truth in love, the beloved broadcast journalist tells a strong family story. Her sister Ann is a sister anyone would want. The vocation story reveals Jane rediscovering herself with each chapter in her career. The appendix is a brief description of bipolar disorder by a medical doctor. The low cost is available in the Barnes & Nobel bargain section.

Alice McDermott, *After This*. Farrar Straus, 2006, \$24. 0374168096

This novel is like a tapestry created by a master weaver. It is the story of the Keane family, Irish Catholics, set in the 1960s and ‘70s. All the stories that take place in the lifetime of a family are here: war, love, marriage and birth. Each of these stories is woven throughout the larger story. McDermott, a person of faith, is always attentive to the deeper meanings, the holy hidden in the commonplace.

## **Adam's Rib** by Tom Brunkow, recently retired United Methodist pastor.

The magnificent bells of the Foundry Church were pealing joyously this Sunday morning, as if rousing the neighborhood dwellers from sleep and sloth and calling them to worship God. It seemed to be working. Sixteenth and P Streets were filled with people, and some were actually heading for the doors of this historic stone fortress of a church. Searching for a parking space, I circled the block several times but found nothing. I spotted cars heading into the Colonial Parking Garage across from the church and followed them down into the bowels of the lot located under a massive apartment building. At the attendant's little booth I noted the sign "Free Parking on Sundays," my first glimmer of Sabbath beneficence.

Spiraling down several levels, I finally found a place. I looked for the elevator, not wanting to retrace my path up the long ramp. I saw only a stairwell. Up and up I climbed. Words to the old hymn urged me on: "Time is now fleeting, the moments are passing." By now the service had begun, and I was late. "How does one get out of here?" I mused. Finally I came upon a door. "Emergency Exit" the sign said. "This is an emergency," I reasoned to myself. "I've got to get to church!"

An alarm sounded as I opened the door. Instantly, an old voice scolded, "Bad boy, Tommy." Stepping through the door, I found myself in the lovely, landscaped garden of the apartment complex. "What a beautiful place," I thought as I scanned the area on this gorgeous, sunny, September morning. I discovered that the courtyard was enclosed on all sides by an elegant ten-foot high fence of iron bars and the building itself. The gate to the street, I noticed, was locked for security purposes. I supposed it was to keep intruders from getting in. But now the sickening thought came: the security plan was also preventing me from getting out! I hurried back to the emergency door which had spit me out into this predicament, but it was locked tight and had no handle on the outside. Across the manicured lawn I saw the glass doors of the main entrance to the lobby. Not a soul in sight. My pounding on the glass roused no one, nor had the alarm bell. This once, I wished my reverse trespass had been discovered by someone. No such luck.

I laughed out loud at the absurdity of my predicament, but only for a moment. Worry began filling my soul as water fills a sinking ship. Not only was I late for worship, but I was trapped inside a luxuriant cage like a Bengal tiger at the zoo! How am I going to get out of here?

I prowled the fence line, not unlike that tiger, in search of some narrow space I could squeeze through. Nothing. I came upon the swimming pool area next to the building. The fence around the pool deck was a little lower. But more woe. I could see that once over this obstacle another fence loomed even higher. I had no choice. I jumped, grabbed the top bar of iron, found a foothold, and pulled myself up using my arms. I felt something pop in my chest on the right side. "Oh, no," I winced, "I've pulled a muscle!" Suspended atop the iron barrier, my mind flooded now with paradoxical guilt. Here I am, a retired man-of-the-cloth, simply trying to get to church, but feeling more like a miscreant, a thief of sorts, scaling backyard fences, as if fleeing from the police or at least an angry security guard. What if someone saw me now!

I jumped down to the pool deck and quickly moved to my last and most formidable obstacle – another expanse of iron bars looming ten feet high. It ran from the pool house to the adjacent apartment. My injured, fugitive's heart sank. What now? I was getting more creative in my desperation. I spied a garbage can and a bicycle nearby. From the can, I stepped up to the handlebars. From there I was able to pull myself up and over and jump down to freedom on the other side. Hurrying towards the street that would take me to church, I peeked over my shoulder to see who had noticed this escape. But no one came after me shaking a scolding finger. I was doing a pretty good job of that to myself.

By the time I slipped into my pew sweating, the associate pastor was telling the children's sermon. Being so rattled, I couldn't take it in. But an anthem that followed, the Shaker hymn *More Love*, helped. The a cappella singing was so lovely that all my shame and guilt melted away.

I certainly take no moral from this embarrassing incident, but it did set me to musing. Some days getting to church is as easy as apple pie, but some days getting to church is as hard as bruising a rib while climbing a fence. Truth be told, most of us arrive at church bruised in one way or another. If we will only let the Word enter us, whether sung or read or preached, we can be healed.

## **Excursions**

### **(Ongoing offerings to you)**

1. Support to pastors in crisis (on an occasional basis or as many as five sessions without charge to you).
2. Five sessions without charge to members of a pastor's family.
3. Consultation on matters of church and ministry.
4. Consultation on matters of mental illness or emotional disorders.
5. Referral information regarding Brook Lane or other services you or members of your family, staff, or congregation may need.
6. Assistance with ministering to members of your congregation who may be patients at Brook Lane.
7. Confidentiality in all of the above.
8. Preaching or teaching at your church as time allows.

9. A day of prayer and conversation for church staff.

10. Conflict consultation.

## **Pastors at Brook Lane**

You are welcome here. Patients seem to enjoy saying to us, "My pastor came to visit me."

Visiting hours at the hospital are 6:30-8:30 p.m. daily. If you need to visit at another time, you may, by calling the nurses' station for an appointment. Otherwise, you may have to wait for your parishioner to complete a therapy appointment.

To see a patient in the child and adolescent unit, an appointment is the only way to be sure of the patient's availability. The need for confidentiality is such that we ask for a patient's ID number before we offer any information.

If you need any help on these or other matters regarding Brook Lane, please give us a call.

## **REGISTRATION FORM**

YES, I WILL ATTEND THE ANNUAL SEMINAR FOR PASTORS, JANUARY 25-26, 2007.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Church \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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## **REGISTRATION FORM**

YES, I WILL ATTEND THE DAY OF CONVERSATION FOR PASTORS, APRIL 19, 2007.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Church \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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## Trail Guides

*That which we cannot speak of is the one thing about whom and to whom we must never stop speaking.*

Peter Rollins

*Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding about ourselves.*

Carl Jung

*The central task of ministry is the formation of a community with an alternative, liberated imagination that has the courage and the freedom to act on a different vision and a different perception of reality.*

Walter Brueggemann

*In Judaism, to be without questions is not a sign of faith, but of lack of depth.*

Jonathan Sacks

*There is only one question: how to love this world.*

Mary Oliver

*You can't get impatient with each other. We are all flawed, and you've got to love each other enough so that those flaws aren't taken out of context.*

Paul Newman

*It's not the things we don't know that hurt us. It's the things we know that ain't so.*

Will Rogers

*Evil is never more quietly powerful than in the assumption that it resides elsewhere.*

Joseph Sittler

*There are no passengers on spaceship earth. We are all crew.*

Marshall McLuhan

*You've gotta leave a little space between the notes for God to work through.*

Stevie Wonder

*It's a heartbreaking and devastating world, and I wonder how any of us can get through it alive and sane. All you can do is live with as much grace as you can.*

Mikal Gilmore

*A great book should leave you with many experiences, and slightly exhausted. You should live several lives while reading it.*

William Styron

*I can't deny the research that says optimists live longer, but I think they lack the faith to take life whole, and it comes no other way.*

Jane Pauley

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