

# SP&SA UPDATE

## April 2016

### Appetizers and the Apocalypse

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away... and I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of the skies from God...” Revelation 21

The Revelation of John, surely the most misunderstood, abused and misused book of the Bible, begins appetizingly enough:

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place...” Revelation 1:1

Who can resist a tasty introduction like that? What follows, though, is devastating, violent and confusing, full of blood, destruction and death. Very visual and very visceral.

Still, it's a letter of hope. It's a letter that says a lot about the realities of the present (John's and ours) and not so much about the vagaries of the future. It's a letter written in the First Century and addressed specifically to seven churches in the area that's now Turkey, but it has something to say to our time, our church, and us.

Revelation may not offer much insight about the days to come, but it provides a fantastic lens through which to understand the days we're in. It provides, as Catherine Keller says in her thoughtful book, *Apocalypse Now and Then*, “hope in the face of horror, a hope that recognizes injustice as such and meets its awesome power with confidence in a radical transformation.”

It's a book that says to us, ‘this is the way the world is, but that's not the way God intended it to be; and that's not the way God intends it to stay.’ So it's a message we need to understand and take to heart.

Revelation is the most advanced and only complete example of Biblical apocalyptic literature, a tradition that includes the book of Daniel, some chapters of Isaiah, bits of Joel and Zechariah, the 13th chapter of Mark's gospel and snippets of a couple of Paul's letters. Apocalypse (Greek for ‘uncovering’ or ‘unveiling’) refers to God's disclosure to us of a transcendent reality that, in turn, helps us to understand the reality we face every day.

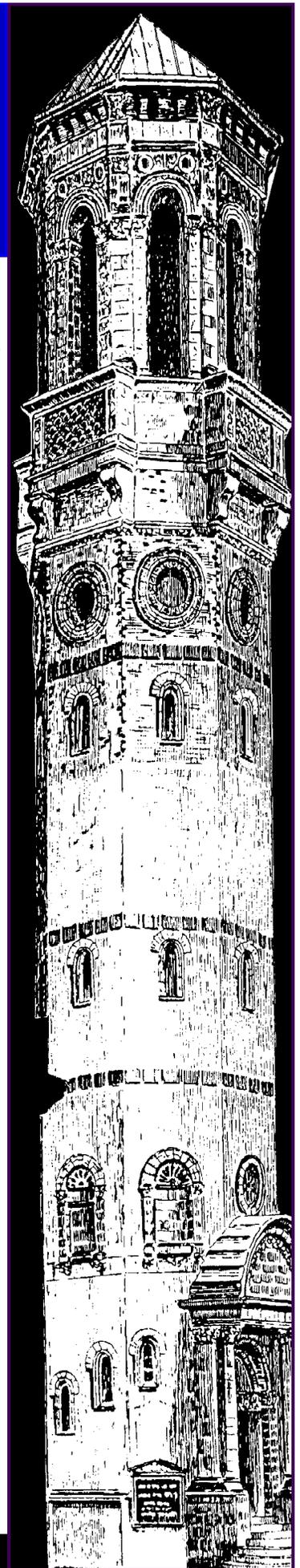
Apocalypse is political, in that it challenges the established structure. It is theological, in that it helps us understand who God is and keeps us from molding God into a deity of our own choosing. It is eschatological (whoops, another Greek work, literally means ‘edgy’) in that it offers a warning about where things are heading. And apocalypse is also anthropological and ecological, in that it helps us understand who we are as human beings on a threatened planet.

Sound appetizing? Join us for a new series of neighborhood House Calls we're calling ‘**Appetizers and the Apocalypse**’. We'll gather in people's homes, share tasty treats and learn together, with an eye to better understanding God's will for our world.

#### Here's when and where they'll be:

Monday, April 11, 7 to 9 pm, Lincoln Center area  
Sunday, April 17, 5 to 7 pm, Riverdale, Bronx  
Saturday, April 23, 5 to 7 pm, Upper West Side  
Sunday, May 1, 5 to 7 pm, Upper West Side  
Monday, May 2, 7 to 9 pm, Greenwich Village

To sign up, contact Lea Matthews:





MISSION, CHURCH & SOCIETY

## Racial Justice

By Jim Melchiorre

Conversations about race in the United States can be difficult, even within the relative safety of a church congregation. Our SPSA Book Study group has learned that truth since we began meeting on All Saints Day to read, discuss, share meals, & prepare worship, as we did on March 13.

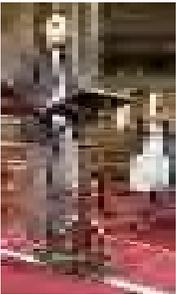
Now, we'd like to invite you to take the next step with us.

On Sunday April 24, we'll watch and discuss two short documentaries prepared

by Trinity Church Wall Street for the recent theological conference called "Listen for a Change: Sacred Conversations for Racial Justice."

One segment features five professors who discuss the construction of the concept of "whiteness" as a foundational principle of the United States, and how and why this injustice can be subverted. The second looks at the history of our city of New York and its deep connection to chattel slavery. We will watch both short documentaries and then discuss our impressions in what we hope will be the start of broader and deeper "sacred conversations."

We'll begin at 1:00 p.m. in the chapel. There will be food. Please join us.



MISSION, CHURCH & SOCIETY

## Shelter Volunteering

By Jim Melchiorre

Our congregation operates a shelter for ten temporarily homeless women, in partnership with Congregation B'nai Jeshurun. Ours is a five-day per week, year-round commitment, staffed entirely by volunteers.

Dava Schub of BJ, like me a co-chair of the shelter, recently wrote an article I'd like to share. Please note the photo of Dava and the volunteer who accompanied her on a February sleepover, her four-year-old daughter Benna.

If this story encourages you to consider volunteering as a once-a-month sleepover volunteer, or even an occasional "pinch-hitter," please let me know.

Jim Melchiorre  
646 872 7945

### The Only Mitzvah You Can Do In Your Sleep!

Do you wish there were more hours in the day so that you could make the time to

give back to our community in ways that are so deeply needed? Well, we can do the next best thing—the [BJ/SPSA Shelter](#) is in serious need of reliable volunteers to do a

once-a-month sleepover shift at the shelter. And, as the title suggests, this is really the only mitzvah you can literally do in your sleep! Benna (left) is proud to volunteer with her mom Dava (right) for the first time.



**Here's How It Happens:** Our amazing set up volunteers come in from 7:00-9:00PM to set out the beds, the linens and to greet our guests when they arrive from the Oliveri Drop-In Center at around 7:30PM. The guests and volunteers come to the dinner table together to enjoy a meal (often home cooked by community volunteers) and then at 9:00PM two sleepover volunteers come in and tag them out (*and here is where you come in...*)

At 9:00PM many of our guests (we host between 5-10 each evening) are already in their beds—reading a book or getting ready for bed. Some stay a little longer at the table chatting with a volunteer or another guest and others take the time to go for a shower (at SPSA). The volunteers might clean up the table and be sure the guests have whatever they need from the closet (an extra pillow, a sample size of shampoo, etc). Volunteers set their alarms for 5:00AM and then hop into their own cozy cot and call it a night (some volunteers say it is the best night of sleep they get all month—no televisions, no bills to pay, no interruptions!). When the alarm rings you help to rouse the crowd, guests drop their linens into laundry bags, get dressed and the bus comes to pick them up around 6:00AM.

After that, you are done. Go home, shower, and start your day knowing you have made a tremendous difference in the life of a fellow New Yorker in need.

**The tasks are simple.**

**The impact is huge.**

**The need is real.**

**Spring Retreat, May 6-8, Quinipet, Shelter Island, NY** info: Charlene Floyd



# UMW: The Faces of Peace

The Face of Peace will be the April 10th program, following church and coffee hour, led by SPSA's own Rev. David Wildman. David is the executive secretary for Human Rights & Racial Justice with the United Methodist Church's General Board of Global Ministries. He also relates on behalf of GBGM with grassroots partners in the Middle East and Afghanistan. He visits Afghanistan and the Middle East regularly.

He serves on the board of the National Farm Worker Ministry and is active in corporate accountability work with the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility. From 1989-2001 he facilitated justice & peace seminars at the Church Center for the UN. David helped found United For Peace & Justice in October 2002 and served on the Steering Committee of US Campaign to End Israeli Occupation in 2001-2012. He serves on the World Council of Churches Palestine-Israel Ecumenical Forum Core Group. David holds both an MDiv and MPhil (for doctoral work) in Social Ethics from Union Theological Seminary (NY).

From David: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Matt. 5:9

The beatitude on peacemakers is immediately followed by "blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Today, few people are more persecuted or demonized across the globe than refugees and migrants. They are

fleeing hardship, violence and abuse, and often find their way to safety is blocked or they are blamed for the violence they suffer.

What if refugees and migrant people are the very faces of peace today? As peacemakers how can we



United Methodists stand with, and accompany, our sisters and brothers in the middle east, in central America, and elsewhere and together embody faces of peace in our hurting, violent world? How can we stand up and resist violent hate speech that demonizes and blames refugees and migrants here in the US, in Europe and elsewhere?

Come for a discussion on the faces of peace in the midst of violence and displacement. We will watch a short seven-minute video made last fall by Ginghamburg church in cooperation with Global Ministries and others entitled, "Beyond Bethlehem," that shares stories of refugees in Lebanon.

I was privileged to be part of the film team in Lebanon that visited and met with Palestinian, Iraqi and Syrian refugees and with church-supported efforts to address their needs. On Easter I'll again visit Lebanon for updates on the situation there.

Bring your questions, bring your passion for peace as we seek together the ways to be faces and voices and feet of peace in the midst of both violence and hateful language today.



## On The Mystery

WORKSHOPS CATHERINE KELLER, *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process.*

Catherine Keller is the Professor of Constructive Theology at The Theological School at Drew University. In her teaching, lecturing and writing, she develops the relational potential of a theology of becoming. Her books reconfigure ancient symbols of divinity for the sake of a planetary conviviality—a life together, across vast webs of difference.

She has written many books, lectures internationally, and is considered to be "our most creative and profound

theologian today." She is also a member of SPSA!

**April 27th** and **May 4th**, 7:15 pm, Dr. Keller will hold two workshops on theological thinking, using her book, *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process*. A look at the chapter titles reveals the text's aim to redeem theology from conventional categories and get at the heart of personal search and engagement with the mystery.

SPSA is blessed to have Dr. Keller in our community, and these workshops will give us a chance to learn from her wisdom and connect to a spiritual resource sitting right next to us in the pew. Mark your calendars, and pick up a copy of her book at Coffee Hour.

By Lea Matthews

**20s/30s** In preparation for the church-wide workshops in theological thinking led by Dr. Keller, the 20s/30s community will spend our April sessions of Bible and Brew tackling "God Talk." We will meet three times during the month, on April 4, 13, and the 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:15pm at the Parlour, across from the church. We will eat,

drink, and discuss what God Talk is and how it matters to us. The 4<sup>th</sup>, I'll lead an introduction to theology. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, K will lead an intro to process theology. And the last week, we will dig into Keller's text.

God is talking. It's a joy to start listening. ~ Lea



House Calls: Wine & Wisdom. Gatherings at Emily Stropp's, Lea Matthews & Rachel Black's and Tom Reidy & Vicki Clark's homes.



Don Struchen at WSCAH; Racial Justice worship; Palm Sunday Potluck at the Parsonage drew 60 of us together for food and joy.



Holy Thursday: Dinner/Worship with friends from Broadway UCC;

Good Friday: Crosswalk through the streets of Manhattan...



...and Central Park. The cross arrived at SPSA just in time for a moving Good Friday worship service featuring reflections by members of SPSA and Broadway UCC: Jo Tiedeman, Jorge Domingues, Jessica Tulloch, Don Kirby, James Campbell, Jared Gilbert & Jessie Floyd

**Politics as (un)Usual:** What is going on in the political realm and how should we as the church, as people of faith respond? We will all make our own choices, of course, but we're going to start talking through the issues, the candidates & how this crazy system of ours works. Join us for what we hope will be the first of several conversations. **Sunday, April 3. 1pm.**

## Children & Families: **Donkey Day!**



## **WOMEN'S RETREAT**

**APRIL 15-16-17**

**Hurray for Spring! Crocuses, Daffodils, Green shoots, Birdsong** and the annual SPSA Women's Retreat. What more could you want? Come on the retreat at The Grail and find out.

At The Grail in Cornwall-on-Hudson ([www.thegrailatCornwall.org](http://www.thegrailatCornwall.org)) you can enjoy 45 acres of woods and meadows with long walks, interesting hikes and bird watching (including bluebirds, last year!) If that doesn't



appeal to you how about a nice Adirondack chair in a sunny spot on the second floor roof deck to watch it all unfold around you? Not a nature lover...no worries. You can find your space indoors, too, in the cozy living room, the serene meditation room or a stairwell window seat with view of the Hudson River.

This is also an opportunity to get to know others better through conversations shared over morning coffees, dinners (meal prep and clean up, too), guided discussions, campfire singing and s'mores and Sunday morning service.

The cost is \$150 /person and scholarship is available if needed. Please see Siobhan for more details and to sign up.

The Grail is 2 hours and a million restful, rejuvenating, rewarding miles from NYC. Please come!



Our new directory is finally here, thanks to all the hard work of Don Kirby, Marie Moser and Siobhan Sargent. Pick one up at church or contact Zulie if you would like to receive it by email. (And now you will have no excuse for not knowing the name of the person next to you in the pew.)

## YOUTH: God's Ohana

One of my favorite Disney movies is Lilo and Stich. Not much else is cuter than a blue little alien who, against all odds, comes to understand what it means to truly be a part of an ohana, a family. It's a lesson for all of us as we hope to learn what it means to be not only an Easter people but more specifically an Easter family.



On the heels of Easter and the miracle of the resurrection, the youth ministry will spend April answering how we can better welcome the risen Christ into our lives. We hope to engage around what it means to be a better family of God. Recognizing Jesus is not only our rabbi and friend but also



Elise and LJ present their Bolivia report

activities and bible study will take on this lens of welcoming the 'other' through radical hospitality as we engage in some of the most pressing issues facing society today.

divine 'other,' we will focus this month on living and embodying a spirit of hospitality to all those who are considered alien and 'other' in our world. Our

First up, on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, the youth are encouraged to join Charlene Floyd and Elizabeth Jensen as they lead a discussion on Politics as (Un)usual. After taking a stab at how hospitality gets played out in the political sphere or more often not, on April 10<sup>th</sup> we'll attend the United Methodist Women's study on the refugee crisis led by David Wildman. April 17<sup>th</sup> Lea Matthews will lead a Community Class on the Texts of Terror so that we can more fully understand and debunk those scripture passages that have been used to terrorize those 'others' in society that identify as Queer. And finally, on April 24<sup>th</sup> the youth and young adults will come together after church to watch two short films on the challenges of racial justice and white privilege.

It's sure to be a full month but one I hope we walk away from knowing more intimately how to live as God's true Ohana.

### Remaining Youth Group Dates

April 3, 2016 (Politics as Unusual)  
April 10, 2016  
April 17, 2016  
April 24, 2016  
May 15, 2016  
May 22, 2016  
May 29, 2016  
June 5, 2016

### Upcoming Activities & Events

April 9<sup>th</sup>, Youth Game Night, 6:30 pm  
May 14<sup>th</sup>, Youth Coffee House, 7 pm



## CAMPUS MINISTRIES:

### LaMP Retreat to the Catskills

By Joshua Foster

As the LaMP community is continuing to thrive this spring semester, we are encouraged by how *The Upper Room* has grown and become a great safe, diverse, and life-giving space for discussion and fellowship on and around Columbia University's campus. We understand that the Body of Christ is much larger than our denominational affiliations and we look to offer an opportunity for students to come and receive physical, as well as spiritual, sustenance.

We had some great events last semester as we reached up to 15 students from Columbia, the Manhattan School of Music, and Union Seminary joining us regularly on Monday nights for good food, good company, and good conversation. As we've returned from our week off for spring break, we look forward to this upcoming month, so please keep the following dates in mind for April: On **Friday, April 8th** LaMP will be heading out for a retreat in the Catskill Mountains at the Koinonia Outdoor Retreat Center where we will be gathering around campfires, hiking, playing board games, meditating, and worshipping



together all in the great outdoors. We will be returning to campus on that *Sunday, April 10th* refreshed, rejuvenated, revived, and ready to tackle the remainder of the semester!

Also, looking a bit further ahead to the **first week in May**, we will be having our semesterly Finals Midnight Pancake Breakfast at Broadway Presbyterian Church. As well as joining us for delicious food, we are looking for help to flip some pancakes and set up that night, so if you can, please contact Rev. Siobhan Sargent .

*The Upper Room* meets regularly on **Mondays at 7:30 pm** in the Upper Room of Broadway Presbyterian Church. As part of our ministry we like to prepare and offer students something they don't get very often- a home cooked meal. If you love to cook and can provide a meal for about 15 people for one Monday during the semester, please let us know! To work out the details you can please contact Rev. Siobhan Sargent .

*The Upper Room* meets regularly  
Thank you for your prayers and continued support. Check out our website [lampnyc.com](http://lampnyc.com) to stay updated and we hope to see you there!

# April 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
MARCH 27 Easter! 6:30 Easter Sunrise Service 9 Choir 11 Worship K Preaching	28 7:30 Upper Room on Campus	29 6:30 Pilates 7:30 Knitting Group	30 5:45 Tutoring 7:15 Communication	31	April 1	2 7 Youth Lock-in
3 COMMUNION 9 Confirmation Class 10 Choir 11 Worship K Preaching 12:45 Politics as (Un)Usual 7 Meditation Class	4 6:30 Church Council 7:30 Upper Room	5 5 GEMS Cooking 6:30 Trustees 6:30 Pilates 7:30 Knitting Group	6 5:45 Tutoring 7:15 Tutor Gathering 7:15 Young Adults	7	8 Campus Retreat	9 Campus Retreat 6:30 Youth Game Night
10 10 Choir 11 Worship K Preaching 12:30 Finance Committee 12:45 Children & Family Brunch 1 United Methodist Women 1 Youth (with UMW)	11 7 House Calls: Appetizers & the Apocalypse 7:30 Upper Room	12 6:30 Pilates 7:30 Knitting Group 7:30 Staff-Parish	13 5:45 Tutoring 7:15 Young Adults	14	15 Women's Retreat	16 Women's Retreat
17 10 Choir 11 Worship K Preaching 1 Biblical Terror Texts 5 House Calls: Appetizers & the Apocalypse	18 7:30 Upper Room	19 6:30 Pilates 7:30 Knitting Group	20 5:45 Tutoring 7:15 Young Adults	21 (Update due)	22	23 5 House Calls: Appetizers & the Apocalypse
24 10 Choir 11 Worship Siobhan Preaching 1 Films on Racial Justice	25 7:30 Upper Room	26 6:30 Pilates 7:30 Knitting Group	27 5:45 Tutoring 7:15 Workshop with Dr. Catherine Keller	28	29	30
May 1 COMMUNION 11 Worship, K Preaching 5 House Calls, Appetizers & the Apocalypse	2 7 House Calls, Appetizers & the Apocalypse	3	4 5:45 Tutoring 7:15 Workshop with Dr. Catherine Keller	5 6:30 Trustees	6 Spring Retreat	7 Spring Retreat

Shelter: Sundays, Wednesdays, Thursdays. Pantry: Mon, Wed-Fri. AA: Tuesdays at 7. Al Anon, Fridays at 12. Overeaters, Mon-Fri at 9.



## Good News! For Siobhan & Lea

On July 1st, Siobhan will become Pastor-in-Charge of Memorial UMC, White Plains!

On June 11th, at Annual Conference, Lea Matthews will be commissioned a deacon in the United Methodist Church!



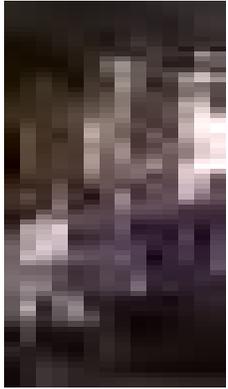
Cook for GEMS, Tuesday, April 5th!



Join Us for  
**House Calls: Appetizers & the Apocalypse**  
 Monday, April 11, 7 to 9 pm, Lincoln Center area  
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 Monday, May 2, 7 to 9 pm, Greenwich Village

**Spring Retreat, May 6-8**  
 Shelter Island, NY

The Church of St. Paul & St. Andrew  
 United Methodist  
 263 West 86th Street  
 New York, NY 10024  
 (212) 362-3179



Christ is Risen! From top: Easter Sunrise in the Park; Vicki Clark singing, Chris Grabenstein & the kids; altar; flag dance to Hallelujah Chorus