

# NATIONAL X PRESS

THE NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER

MARCH/APRIL 2009 | VOL. 9

## LENTEN WEDNESDAYS

*A Week Like No Other*

**February 25**

**Ash Wednesday Communion Service in Sanctuary at 7 p.m.**  
"Eve of Palm Sunday"

Rev. Earl Palmer

**Teaching at 7 p.m.**

**Stone Hall**

**Dinner, 5:30 to 6:45 p.m.**

**March 4**

"Entry into Jerusalem"

Rev. Eunice McGarrahan

**March 11**

"Controversy and the Gathering Storm"

Rev. Eunice McGarrahan

**March 18**

"In the Garden"

Rev. Earl Palmer

**March 25**

"High Priest's Prayer and Arrest"

Rev. Earl Palmer

**April 1**

"Jesus and Pilate on Trial"

Rev. Earl Palmer

*To learn more about our worship, classes, and opportunities to serve, visit:*  
[www.NationalPres.org](http://www.NationalPres.org)

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### DEADLINES

**May/June:** April 1

**July/August:** June 1

**September/October:** August 1

**March/April:** February 1

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## Serving the Lord Onboard Africa Mercy Following a Call to a Medical Ship Off the Coast of Africa

*by Amanda West, NPC Member*

The journey began long before my trip from Washington to Tema Harbor in Ghana. You could say that it started two years before when I decided to apply as a volunteer with Mercy Ships. You could also say it began when I felt called by God to do something with my life other than my job, which I had enjoyed for over a decade.

The journey also had roots in mission trips that exposed me to people at work for God, building up lives through the hope and compassion of his love. It's hard to say, but I knew when I stepped over that threshold from the gangway onto the ship, I was entering a new phase in my life.



Mercy Ships is a nonprofit Christian organization that provides free medical care on the Africa Mercy, a converted rail ferry with crew quarters, work areas, dining room, five surgical theaters and an 80-

*Continued on page 2*

## Meditation and Celebration in Lent

*National's Music Guides Us through the Season*

*by Michael Denham, Director of Music Ministries*

We enter the Lenten season reflecting on our Lord's words and works, and on unfolding events that led to the very crux of history and the victory of Christ's resurrection. Music of the season will be woven into our worship to heighten the expression of God's Word proclaimed from the pulpit, celebrated in The Lord's Supper, and meditated upon in each of our lives.

To mark the beginning of Holy Week, NPC's Chancel Choir will sing a 5 PM Palm Sunday concert, "No Sweeter Comfort Nigh," featuring music of Felix Mendelssohn, Samuel Barber, John Rutter, and Mack Wilberg. The concert title is drawn from words of

"Jesus, the Very Thought Is Sweet," a Bernard of Clairvaux poem set as one of the anthems to be sung. Beautiful renditions of Psalm 42, "As the Hart Pants," and Psalm 121, "I Will Lift up Mine Eyes," will join Rutter's serene and poignant *Requiem* to call our attention to the sacrifice that lay before Jesus after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem amid hallelujahs and blessings.

We should note that the events of Holy Week didn't take Jesus by surprise. When the Apostle Peter preached in the Temple on the following Day of Pentecost, he clearly affirmed that our Lord's work of salvation on Calvary happened as part of God's "definite purpose and foreknowledge." We want our concert to convey this

*Continued on page 5*

# NPC Member Works on Mercy Ship in West Africa

*Continued from page 1*

bed hospital ward. The ship sails to a country, such as Liberia, puts into port and stays there delivering services for eight or nine months.

All onboard, from doctors to dish-washers, are volunteers. The medical staff performs specialized surgeries, including reconstruction, orthopedics, removing tumors and cataracts, reconstructing cleft palates, dental care, and a difficult gynecological surgery called vesico vaginal fistula. Patients are screened and selected at off-ship clinics. They board the ship for surgery and remain until healed.



I went to work in the Communications Department as a media liaison. I ended up doing a lot more, working with a team of writers and photographers who became good

friends. That job allowed me to go anywhere on the ship, from engine room to surgical ward, and off ship to visit clinics and community development projects in villages. I felt privileged to see the wide scope of what Mercy Ships did.

I watched many people come to the ship broken and return home healed. I saw boys with club feet; women desperate to get their babies' cleft lip fixed so they would look "normal," and people would stop saying they were cursed; and men and women who covered their faces and heads with cloths to hide disfiguring tumors. But it was not hard to look at these people, because beneath the disfigurements, you could see a real person. You could look into their eyes, see their hurt and shame, and say a few words of encouragement. Many patients said



their trip to the ship was the first time they were treated like a person in a long time. And in the recovery wards, many would stare in amazement at their reconstructed faces in the mirror, then leave the ship with hope for a different life.

Most memorable was seeing vision restored to patients blind

with cataracts. There was one man, about 30 years old, who we called the Blind Fisherman. He had lost his livelihood when cataracts took his sight. He arrived leaning on a relative for guidance. The day after the 20-minute operation, when he returned to have the bandage removed from his eyes, he studied his face in the mirror, then was able to walk out on his own, back erect and head high. There were many who came that we couldn't help, but for those we could, it meant all the difference in the world.

Sometimes patients leaving would thank us, and we'd think, "I didn't have anything to do with that person's operation." But then we realized that all our jobs supported the mission and made their surgery possible, and it was a privilege to smile and say, "You're welcome." You knew then why you were there.

People ask me how I could quit my job and do this work for 18 months, and sometimes I still can't believe I did. But I was there because I took a chance on God's leading, wanted to serve him, wanted something different and, honestly, just plain liked the idea of working with Mercy Ships in Africa.

Maybe you have different interests or skills. But there are so many ways to serve, and so many organizations out there, that one is right for you. If you feel a calling—even an inkling—ask God what you can do for him. He can open doors you never thought possible, but he needs your willing heart first. He may lead you to Africa or to the person next door, taking you on your own great, life-changing adventure.

*Amanda West is an NPC member who served with Mercy Ships in Ghana and Liberia. She's now living and working in Washington, DC.*

# MEETING JESUS OF NAZARETH

SUNDAYS N LENT

Rev. Earl Palmer

Worship at 9:15 and 11 a.m.

March 8

*A Woman by a Well*

Rev. Eunice McGarrahan

March 15

*A Lawyer Came at Night:*

*Nicodemus*

Dr. Douglas Learned

March 22

*The Man at the Bethesda*

*Pool*

Rev. Earl Palmer

March 29

*Mary and Martha Were*

*His Friends*

Rev. Earl Palmer

April 5, Palm Sunday

*A Pharisee Asks the Right*

*Question*

Rev. Earl Palmer

April 12, Easter

8:30, 10, and 11:30 a.m.

*Early in the Morning*

Rev. Earl Palmer



## Come to the Youth Dinner Theatre

Saturday, March 14, and  
Sunday, March 15

5 p.m. in Stone Hall



Make your reservations by contacting  
Mitch Gore, MGore@NationalPres.org or  
202.537.0800. A free will offering will be  
received to benefit missions.

## Music at National for Lent and Easter

*Continued from page 1*

sense of God's providence, Christ's obedience,  
and our dependence on this surprising grace  
and provision.

On the other end of Holy Week we join in  
the great Easter celebration of God's purpose  
and power in raising Jesus from the dead. Our  
sanctuary will reverberate with joyful sounds of  
brass, and organ, of congregation and choir, in  
grateful wonder at Christ's risen glory.

Rev. Earl Palmer will preach on the early  
morning events of that first Easter, as Mary  
Magdalene and other disciples discovered  
the empty tomb. Our choir and brass will re-  
spond "He is not here, he is risen!" in Andrea  
Gabrieli's great Easter motet, *Maria Magdalena*,  
and "Hallelujah" from Handel's great oratorio,  
*Messiah*.

To learn more about our Music at National  
concerts, visit [www.NationalPres.org](http://www.NationalPres.org) and click  
on "calendar." If you'd like to lend your voice  
to one of our choirs, contact Carolann Haley,  
202.537.7553 or [CHaley@NationalPres.org](mailto:CHaley@NationalPres.org).

## SUMMER 2009

### Youth Events and Mission Trips

July 6 – 10

VBS /Passport2missions  
at NPC

July 13 – 18

Son Servants  
Dunngannon, Virginia

July 22 – 31

Foundation4Peace  
Dominican Republic / Haiti

July 27 – Aug 1

The Great Escape  
Johnstown, Pennsylvania

August 1 – 8

The ROCK  
Ute Trail Ranch, Colorado

To learn more, contact  
Mitch Gore, 202.537.7520 or  
[MGore@NationalPres.org](mailto:MGore@NationalPres.org)

# Our Congregation's History

by Eleanor Elson Heginbotham

*As we look ahead toward newness: the search for a new senior pastor, the adjustments to a new administration, it is good to look from whence we've come. This column on our mutual past focuses on spring:*

## April 14, 1932

*New York Times:*

Dr. Albert Joseph McCartney, chairman of the National Capital Presbyterian Commission (and pastor of our foundational Covenant-First Presbyterian Church) took part as 700 Presbyterians from sixteen states "joined tonight in paying tribute to the pioneers of their faith at a dinner in connection with the Washington bicentennial [of Presbyterians in Washington, D.C.]

## April 1, 1940

*The Washington Post:*

Church Dedicates New Doors To Man Who Opened Old Ones," was the head-

line when Dr. McCartney led dedication of "great iron grillwork doors" (at Covenant-First on Connecticut Avenue and N Streets) to the Collier family, three generations of which served as sextons.

## April 4, 1953

*The Washington Post:*

"Holy Land Flowers Sent in Honor of Ike." The article explained that flowers "were picked by many friends in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jerico, the Mount of Olives, and elsewhere in Palestine in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. They were received by the minister of the church, the Rev. Dr. Edward L.R. Elson..." The flowers were presented in appreciation of the President's Christian witness and his devotion to the cause of freedom,' Dr. Elson said.

Thousands of articles document the faith of our fathers and the presence of NPC in the nation's capital. We will share snippets in future issues.



John Collier, sexton, with his granddaughter and Dr. Joseph A. McCartney, Senior Pastor of Covenant-First Presbyterian Church (Covenant-First's congregation became National Presbyterian Church) at the Collier Gates.

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