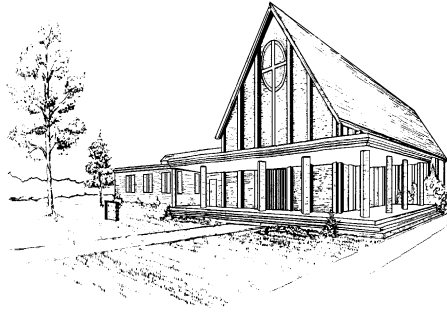


STEEPLE CHIMES



First Presbyterian Church 497 Pulaski Road, Greenlawn, NY 11740

Phone: (631) 261-2150

Fax: (631) 261-0348

Email: fpcgreenlawn@optonline.net

December 2011

ISSUE: One Hundred Forty—Two

Message from the Pastor

On November 27th, the church enters the season of Advent. In a culture in which Christmas promotions hit our stores long before Thanksgiving, even well-meaning Christians are tempted to leapfrog past the four Sundays of Advent in search of the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke. It's not only that we are impatient for the good news of the Incarnation. It's also that the prophecies we begin to read in Advent of a darkened sun and stars falling from the heaven, coupled with repeated warnings to keep awake (Mark 13:24-37), do not make very good bedtime stories.

Recently someone suggested the season of Advent has the feel of a "bait and switch." In the classic "bait and switch" scheme, slick advertising "baits" customers to come into the store for a great deal on a product or service. Once there, the customers discover that the advertised goods are not available, at which point those customers are "switched" to products or services that cost more.

Although there is nothing fraudulent, of course, about Advent, Christians are sometimes both surprised and taken aback that the scripture lessons associated with Advent concern not the coming of Jesus as a little baby, but his coming at the End of the Age to judge the world.

The reason for the "switch" is that the Advent lens was expressly designed to be bifocal. As we journey through Advent, we anticipate the One who is to come and, at the same time, we anticipate the Day of the Lord when the One who *has come shall come again* to judge the world in righteousness. We do that because the kingdom or reign of God is both already and not yet.

But bifocals are sometimes dizzying and judgment often frightens us. And so it is helpful at the start of Advent to remember that God's judgment, unlike human judgment, always expresses and serves the purpose of God's mercy and grace. For at the root of God's judgment is God's intention to make the world right again. That God so loved the world not only to create it, but also redeem it (and us) from everything that obstructs its (and our) purpose, is not something to fear, but something to celebrate.

But since God seeks to redeem everything that is wrong and false not only in our world, but also in us- including our false gods, false securities, false fears and false dreams- Advent invites us not only to watchfulness, but also to repentance, an invitation not meant to curse, but to bless.

So put on your Advent bifocals and come worship with us as we await the coming of the one called Immanuel, *God with us*.

See you in church,
Pastor Fred

Session Update

- There will be a brief Session meeting following worship December 4th for the purpose of interviewing the newly elected officers.
- Installation of newly elected officers will be on December 11th.
- The December meeting of Session will be on Wednesday, December 14th.
- Treasurer Jim Dean is retiring and a candidate is being sought to become the next church treasurer.
- Christmas Eve worship will be at 7:00pm and 11:00pm.
- Christmas Day worship will be on Sunday, December 25th at 12 noon.
- New Year's Day worship will be held at 11:00am on Sunday, January 1, 2012 at Bethany Presbyterian Church. Also worshipping at Bethany that day will be the congregation from Sweet Hollow Church.
- The Deacon's Yard Sale made \$1,075 for the Deacon's Fund. Another Yard Sale is planned for the spring.
- Operation Christmas Child collected approximately 38 shoeboxes for distribution around the world.
- ◆ A Church Officers Retreat is being planned for all elders and deacons. This will be held at the Presbytery Center in Commack, most likely 21st of 2012.

Election of Officers

At the November 13th Congregational Meeting, the following persons were elected as church officers. All are for the class of 2014.

Elders

Robert Arelt
Betty Chatfield
Roger Kaufmann

Deacons

Arlissa Dean
Rebecca Dodge
Kathleen Gerlach
Susan Perrotta

Installation of officers will be on Sunday, December 11th.



Just one little angel and one bright star led the three wisemen with gifts from afar.
The poorest shepherds and the richest king heard the good news and came worshipping just
one lowly manger, one bed of hay, and a young mother's arms where the Christ Child lay.

Anonymous
submitted by Maria Hottinger

The Deacons wish everyone a very blessed Christmas and a blessed New-Year

Communion Supper

The monthly Saturday evening communion supper will be held on December 3rd at 6:30 pm.

Jackets For Jesus

The Youth Group Annual Coat Drive Please donate any old, clean, gently worn coats or jackets. Check the back of your closets for any you no longer wear! All sizes welcome - Infant through Adult, male & female. Get a warm fuzzy feeling by donating a coat and helping to keep someone warm this winter! Thank You !

The Living Nativity

We will be holding The Living Nativity again this year on December 18th at 5:00 pm. A sign-up sheet will be posted for as many persons as possible to join in. There are no speaking parts, but we need people to be shepherds, towns people, kings, as well a Joseph, Mary, Herod, and soldiers. The more people we have the better it will be. We will also be looking for people who will be able to bake cookies or cakes to be served to the audience after the performance. Gary Prentiss will also be preparing a community dinner for all the people who show up. Please help us by signing up. Thank you.

Praise Him Coffee House

A meeting place for Christians to fellowship
and praise God through music and song

Friday December 9, 2011 7:30PM

First Presbyterian Church
497 Pulaski Road
Greenlawn, NY 11740
631-261-2150

Featuring Christian Musicians ~

Servants of the Shepherd
Performing their Christmas Cantata

“Behold the Child”

Admission is \$5.00

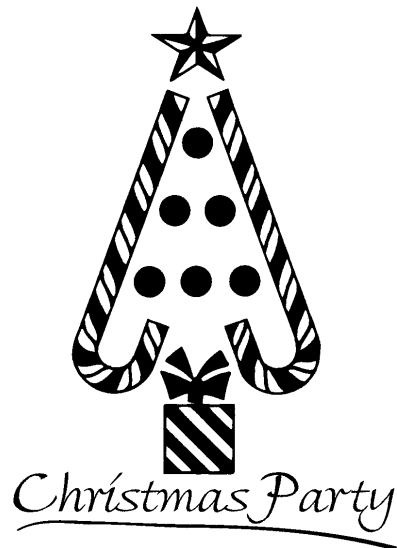
A Love Offering will be taken

Refreshments will be served

The



The Tree will be set up November 20th to December 18th. Let us bring joy to the residents at Carillon Nursing Home and others in the community, by showing them they're not forgotten – GOD LOVES THEM AND SO DO WE!



JOY AND GRACE CIRCLES' CHRISTMAS PARTY

**All women of the Greenlawn Presbyterian Church are cordially invited to the annual Christmas Party and luncheon Thursday, December 15th, 1:00 pm
At the Greenlawn Presbyterian Church Please R.S.V.P. by December 1st,
631-421-5380**



Order Your **Poinsettias**

It's that time of year again.

Orders are now being taken for the Christmas Flower Memorials. If you wish to place an order, please fill in the order form below.

In Memory Of Loved Ones By:

Or

In Loving Memory Of:

Note: Please check one of the following:

- Pick up after Christmas Eve Service
 Donate to a shut-in member

Cost: \$TBD -Please call the church office for update, 631-261-2150

Deadline: Tuesday, December 13th, 9:00 AM

Make checks payable to the Church and specify for "Flower Fund." Please give to Becky Dodge or leave in the office. Thank You!

Christmas Week Worship Scheduling

Our church will celebrate Christmas Eve worship services at our usual time, 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. But as most of you all know by now, Christmas Day falls this year on a Sunday. So what's a church to do? Cancel worship on Christmas Sunday? Heaven forbid!

Since many of our church families will be out late on Saturday night to attend our Christmas Eve service, and will be sharing gifts on Christmas morning, your Session thought it best to change our Sunday worship hour from 10:30 to 12:00 noon, and we hope to see you there.

New Year's Day also falls on a Sunday. So what's a church to do? Cancel worship? Heaven forbid!

Your Session decided instead to broaden the conversation about New Year's Day worship to include other nearby churches who also expect light attendance that day. As a result of those conversations, three area Presbyterian Churches have decided to start a new tradition of shared worship on New Year's Day. Those churches are the First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn, Bethany Presbyterian Church, and the Presbyterian Church of Sweet Hollow.

This year, nearby Bethany Presbyterian Church, located at the corner of Park Avenue and Maplewood Road, will host our joint New Year's Day worship at 11:00 a.m. Pastor Fred Woodward will preach, and communion will be served by intinction.

So come out to worship at Bethany on New Year's Day, and start out the New Year right.

Submitted by Pastor Fred

A Note Regarding Child Care at the Living Nativity and Christmas Eve Services

We welcome families in and outside our congregation to our Living Nativity(12-18-2011) and, of course, to our Christmas Eve Services (7 p.m. and 11 p.m.). The Living Nativity and the early Christmas Eve services have been specifically designed for the young and old alike, and children of all ages are especially welcome.

Since these are designed as family events, and because we wish to honor the worship needs of our own families, the Christian Education Committee has decided not to provide child care or nursery care at any of the above services.

Pastor Fred will make an announcement to that effect during these services of worship, and will invite parents with small children to use their best discretion should their little ones grow loud or over-fidgety.

Thank you for your understanding.



The Congregational Christmas Card is now in the Narthex. Send your greetings to your friends at church this way and save on postage. Instead, help to feed the hungry in our own town by putting the postage money saved into the box and it will go to the Huntington Food Council to help feed families who are hurting.

A Church in Need of a Church Treasurer

Our current church treasurer, Jim Dean, has signaled his intention to stand down at the end of the year. He has faithfully served the church over these last years, and really deserves “a break.”

At the time of this writing, our church has not yet identified a church treasurer to succeed Jim in 2012. On top of that, our current finance chair, Elder Flavio Gominho, completes his second term of service at the end of December. Because of attrition on that (and other) committee(s), we approach 2012 not only without a Treasurer, but also with a very reduced Finance Committee. At present, that committee shall consist only of Elder Betty Chatfield, our Financial Secretary, and a new member who has just joined the committee in November, and whose experience lies in budgeting, not accounting. If I were that new member, I might be wondering, “where is everybody, and what exactly am I getting myself into?”

While fully trusting that God shall provide, I write to alert you to the seriousness of this developing situation within the life of our church. I invite your prayers that other leaders might soon be identified to fill the gap. For a church without a Treasurer or a fully-functioning Finance Committee shall be hard-pressed to properly attend to its institutional life, not to mention faithfully execute its mission in the world.

Submitted by Pastor Fred



December Happenings

*Friday Dec. 9 Praise Him Coffee House Featuring Servants of the Shepherd performing their Christmas Cantata - "Behold the Child" 7:30PM, \$5 Admission ~ Love offering & Refreshments

*Friday Dec. 16 Christmas Caroling & Party Meet at the church at 6 PM for caroling. Hot cocoa and holiday party to follow in Youth group Room.

Sunday Dec. 18 22nd Annual Living Nativity - 5 PM Help us re-enact the Nativity. All Youth encouraged to be a part of our yearly outreach to the community. FREE Community Dinner in CE hall to follow.

Saturday Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Services

Special Family Service 7:00 PM

Candlelight Service 11:00 PM

Sunday Dec. 25 Christmas Day!

The day of our Lord and Savior's birth!

~ MERRY CHRISTMAS! ~

FNL - Friday Night Live—Meets Dec 2, * 9 & *16

PLEASE JOIN US.....
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GREENLAWN
PROUDLY PRESENTS.....

OUR 22nd ANNUAL LIVING NATIVITY



Each year we celebrate Jesus Christ, Our Lord, with a
Re-enactment of the miraculous event of his birth.
A live performance filled with the spirit of the season
Bring your family, friends and all loved ones to share in this
wondrous, inspiring event.

Complimentary Dinner will be served immediately following.

DATE: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2011

TIME: 5:00 PM

PLACE: 497 Pulaski Road, Greenlawn, NY 11740

ADMISSION: FREE –

**(Donations of non-perishable goods will be accepted to help families
in need throughout our community)**

Can't Find What You're Looking For?

The song, "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" was made famous by the rock band U2 in 1987. For Christians, the search is not only for a *what* but also a *who*, and a *Who* that is already in search of us.

This is what Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about that *Who*.

When we become a burden to ourselves,

when we don't want to keep on going,

when we are afraid of the mountain lying in front of us,

when guilt feelings weigh heavily on our mind,

when we feel we have been lied to and victimized by the world,

then we need only one thing:

we need a person whom we can fully trust without reservation,

a person who understands everything, hears everything,

a person who bears all things,

believes all things,

hopes all things,

forgives all things.

We need a person to whom we can say, "You are rest,

You are gentle peace,

You are the longing

and the one who stills it"

We need a person under whose eyes our suffering disappears

and our heart opens up in silent love,

a person who gently takes our burden from us and frees us:

from our fits of rage and

from all our fears.

In so doing, this person delivers our soul from the world.

Now the greatest of all miracles is that:

every individual has and can find this person

because this person calls each of us to himself on his own initiative,

offers himself,

invites us.

This person who is our rest,

our peace,

our refreshment,

*our deliverance,
is Jesus Christ alone.
He alone is truly human.
And in this true humanity he is God.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, edited by Geoffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson (San Francisco: Harper-SanFrancisco, 1995), p. 235-236, reformatted from the prose translation by Pastor Fred.



Christmas Eve Services Saturday, December 24, 2011

7:00 pm Family Service

11:00 pm Candlelight Service

Christmas Day Service, Sunday, December 25, 2011

12 Noon Christmas Service

Maria Hottinger, Deacon

Maria Hottinger of Greenlawn has received the Older Adult Ministry Award from Flushing-based United Adult Ministries based on the "good works she does for senior citizens." Hottinger is deacon of First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn, where she serves as its board treasurer and runs the food pantry, and she has served on the Pastor Nominating Committee of First Presbyterian Church of Northport. She is also a volunteer at/with Carillon Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Huntington and Hands on Huntington, a town program that offers health, maintenance and transportation services to senior citizens.

~Newsday, Sunday, November 6, 2011

Following is Maria's award acceptance speech;

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST, TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

I ACCEPT THIS AWARD ON BEHALF OF OUR ALMIGHTY FATHER WHO SHOWS ME THE WAY AND GIVES ME THE STRENGTH TO CARRY ON THIS MUCH NEEDED MISSION.

I DON'T FEEL PARTICULARLY OUTSTANDING. I HAVE A LOT OF PROBLEMS IN MY LIFE, BOTH PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL, AS HAVE WE ALL. BUT, WHEN I VISIT WITH RESIDENTS IN NURSING HOMES AND WITH SHUT-INS (SOME WHO HAVE NO FAMILY OR HAVE BEEN FORGOTTEN BY THEIR FAMILIES) ...THE OBVIOUS JOY IT BRINGS THEM AND THE SMILES I SEE ON THEIR FACES MAKES ME IMMEDIATELY FORGET ALL MY OWN PROBLEMS.

I KNOW GOD COMMANDS US ALL TO DO WHAT WE CAN TO ENCOURAGE AND HELP LIFT THE SPIRITS OF OTHERS.....SO HERE I AM; ONE OF GOD'S EMPLOYEES. HE ALWAYS HAS WORK FOR US TO DO. WITH GOD YOU WILL NEVER BE UNEMPLOYEED OR LAID OFF. SO I CARRY ON.

ONE DOESN'T HAVE TO HAVE A BIG COMMITMENT. SOMETIMES JUST MENTIONING A PROJECT WITH OTHERS CAN START THE BALL ROLLING. COMPASSION, HOWEVER, SHOULD ALWAYS BE ACTIVE. JUST VISITING FOR A WHILE IS SO VERY APPRECIATED; REMEMBERING THEM ON THEIR BIRTHDAY AND HOLIDAYS; PLAYING GAMES WITH THEM AND WRITING NOTES FOR THEM.

I ALSO FEEL WE ALL NEED TO ENCOURAGE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE TO COME; VISIT; SING AND PERFORM AT VARIOUS TIMES DURING THE YEAR. IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH TIME OUT OF THEIR YOUNG LIVES BUT THEIR VISITS BUILD LASTING MEMORIES FOR SO MANY.

ONE OF THE BIGGEST THINGS I FEEL I DO IS ALSO ONE OF THE EASIEST: SIMPLY LISTENING. AND SOMETIMES, QUIETLY HOLDING THEIR HANDS. AT TIMES, SOMETHING IS SHARED THAT CAN LEAD TO CONNECTING THEM WITH ANOTHER PERSON OR AGENCY WHO CAN ACTUALLY HELP ALLEVIATE SOME OF THEIR PROBLEMS OR CONCERNS.

WE SHOULD ALWAYS PUT OUR PASSION FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS FIRST. THESE VISITS LET THEM KNOW THEY ARE NOT ALONE AND NOT FORGOTTEN. ASSURING THEM THAT GOD IS ALWAYS WITH THEM.

TO ME GREATER THAN RECEIVING ANY AWARD IS SPREADING GOD'S LOVE. IN CLOSING, I'D LIKE TO THANK PASTOR FRED WOODWARD AND FRIENDS THAT ARE HERE WITH ME CELEBRATING THIS JOYFUL OCCASION.

Maria Hottinger 11-3-2011

From 10-A to G-2.0104b (Uh?)

“Standards for ordained service reflect the church’s desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Christ in all aspects of life (F-1.02). The council responsible for ordination and/or installation (G-2.0402; G.2.0607; G-3.0306) shall examine each candidate’s calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate’s ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates” (Book of Order, 2011/2013, G-2.0104b)

Taken at face value, these words from our current church constitution provoke neither objection nor controversy. They acknowledge high standards for ordained service in the church and situate them in the context of “joyful submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life.” They mandate that councils (sessions and presbyteries) shall be guided in such examinations by Scripture and the confessions.

What makes these words difficult, of course, is that they replace other words:

“Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life of obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of Word and Sacrament” (Book of Order, 2009/2011, G-6..0106b).

This change of wording is clearly a significant change in the governance of Presbyterian Church (USA), but exactly what kind of change is it?

For some thirty years, the PC(USA) has sought to prohibit the ordination of persons in same-gender relationships. That prohibition was based on an interpretation of Scripture with which many in our denomination (and in other denominations) increasingly could not agree. But it is important to note that our current constitution does not replace this interpretation with a contrary interpretation, but simply acknowledges that as a body, there remains an

insufficient consensus to permit one interpretation to prevail over the other.

Or to put it in other words, all Presbyterians act out of the central affirmation that Jesus Christ is Lord, but not all agree about what the Lordship of Jesus requires. All Presbyterians uphold the authority of Scripture, but not all agree as to how Holy Scripture is to be interpreted. All Presbyterians are united in the conviction that we are called to honor Jesus Christ with both our minds and our bodies, indeed, with all our being, but not all agree as to how we do that in this day and age.

A great deal has changed for the PC(USA). As some of you may have read back in October, a presbytery in Wisconsin ordained a gay man whose prior ordination had been previously set aside in the early 1990s. But it not true now that “anything goes.” For in very important respects, not as much has changed as some might make out. Ordination is still not a right, but a spiritual calling (a) discerned by individuals; (b) subject to the approval of a community of God’s people; (c) with the concurring judgment of the appropriate governing bodies. Ordination continues to be act of the entire church, and responsibility for approving candidates for ordination continues to lodge with sessions (in the case of deacons and elders) and presbyteries (in the case of teaching elders, previously known as Ministers of Word and Sacrament). No congregation or presbytery can be forced to elect or approve candidates who are not found qualified for the ministry to which they may believe themselves called. That remains true even if those candidates were previously or elsewhere ordained.

There is probably no end of controversy in sight as regards ordination practices within our denomination, or as regards the nuanced issues of Biblical authority and interpretation. But controversy is, of course, nothing new to the Christian faith or to the Presbyterian Church. Christian communities since the time of Paul have struggled with what is and is not essential to the faith, and opposing sides have argued their respective positions on the basis of the authority and interpretation of Scripture as well as on their view of what it means to be the Church of Jesus Christ.

In such times as these, it is especially important that we listen to one another with pastoral attentiveness because our beliefs about Biblical authority and interpretation and what it means to be the church often have a life below the surface of our creeds and confessional statements, especially when they are rooted in pain, anger or anxiety.

While we in the Presbyterian Church (USA) will no doubt continue to experience strain as regards our unity, it is important to remember that the church’s unity is not something that we have to work up on our own, but is the gift of our triune God. Our unity lies not in the constitutional documents that guide us or in the “essential beliefs” that we might seek to declare in an age of unbelief, but in our participation in the unity of the Father and Son, bound together in love by the Holy Spirit.

May we live together in that unity, even when we disagree, and may we do so in the continuing confidence that the love of our triune God continues to flow even as far as to us.

Submitted by Pastor Fred

A Christmas Prayer

Loving Father, help us remember the birth of JESUS, that we may share in the song of angels, the gladness of the shepherds and the wisdom of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting.

Deliver us from evil by the blessing which CHRIST brings, and teach us to be merry with clean hearts.

May the CHRISTmas morning make us happy to be THY children, and the CHRISTmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for JESUS' sake. AMEN

Robert Louis Stevenson

Submitted by Maria Hottinger

A CHRISTMAS GREETING

~Fra Giovanni

I salute you:

There is nothing I can give you which you have not;

But there is much that, while I cannot give you, you can take.

No heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in it today.

Take heaven.

No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in the present.

Take peace.

The gloom of the world is but a shadow; behind it, yet within our reach, is joy.

Take joy.

And so, at this Christmastime, I greet you,

With the prayer that for you, now and forever,

The day breaks and the shadows flee away.

submitted by Betty Chatfield

PRAYER CORNER

December 2011

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

~Kathryn Thorne Bowsher

Christ Eternal, hear our prayer,
Bless our friends everywhere,
Bless each home and fireside hearth,
Bless the children's fun and mirth,
Bless the carols that are sung
As the holly greens are hung;
May all earth this Christmastide
In Thy joy and peace abide.

Christ Eternal, shed Thy love
From Thy throne in Heav'n above,
Fill with peace the hearts of men
As Thou didst at Bethlehem;
May Thy glory fill this day
'Til all men shall know the way
To Thy great salvation free,
Blood-bought Gift of Calvary.

Christ Eternal, may all men
Look anew to Bethlehem,
May they see the guiding star,
May they hear the angel choir,
May their faith grow deep and strong,
Trusting Thee, God's only Son;
May all earth its homage pay,
Christ, to Thee this Christmas Day.

Christmas is a golden chain that binds a family in faith, hope, and love
...drawing each to the open hearth of togetherness.

~Juanita Johnson

INHERITANCE

~Rufus M. Jones

I am most of all thankful for my birthplace and early nurture in the warm atmosphere of a spiritually-minded home, with a manifest touch of saintliness in it; thankful indeed that from the cradle I was saturated with the Bible and immersed in an environment of religion of experience and reality. It was a peculiar grace that I was born into that great inheritance of spiritual wisdom and faith, accumulated through generations of devotion and sacrificial love. I can never be grateful enough for what was done for me by my progenitors before I came on the scene. They produced the spiritual atmosphere of my youth. I became heir of a vast invisible inheritance. There is nothing I would exchange for that.

submitted by Betty Chatfield