

On the mind of the Rev. Adrian Dannhauser...

Last week, I joined a small group of Christian clergy at a synagogue on the Upper West Side. We were there to hear from Rachel Goldberg, mother of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who is one of the 133 hostages still held by Hamas.

Hersh is a 23-year-old dual Israeli-American citizen. There are 8 total hostages from the U.S., with several other countries represented. The youngest is 14 months and the oldest is 86. They are Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim.

Rachel is at the forefront of advocacy to bring the hostages home. She's met with the Pope. She's been to the U.N. and the White House multiple times. She's been interviewed by Anderson Cooper and other high-profile journalists. And she has met with countless faith communities, both big and small, working to get her story out.

As Rachel spoke about the day her son was captured, she gave a play-by-play. Details included hearing a warning siren in Jerusalem the morning of October 7, which prompted her to hide in the bomb shelter in her apartment with her two daughters. (All apartments in the newer buildings in Jerusalem have their own bomb shelters.) She then turned on her cell phone, as it had been off in observance of the Sabbath, and saw two texts from Hersh: "I love you" and "I'm sorry".

When Hamas descended on the music festival, Hersh tried to escape by car. But he soon discovered a 50-car pile-up of dead bodies as he headed toward Jerusalem. So, he retreated to a 5'x 8' roadside bomb shelter, where he huddled with 28 other people. Rachel learned from those who survived that Hersh lost the bottom half of his left arm when Hamas fighters attacked them with grenades and machine guns. These survivors were able to hide undetected under dead bodies. Hersh wasn't so lucky. He was marched out and onto a truck with three other young men.

Rachel has not put on make-up or worn her hair down since October 7. She has not exercised or eaten sugar. She explained for us Christian clergy that it feels like Lent all the time. Putting on clothes for the day is like wearing a costume because all she wants to do is cry in bed. But when you're going through hell, you have to keep walking. Rachel sticks a strip of masking tape to her shirt every day. On it, she's written the number of days her son has been held hostage – the number of days she's kept walking.

Rachel is a woman of deep faith. She referred to the Psalms as a "self-help book" and reads two a day. She had started reading them in order on the day Hersh was stolen. (That's the word she uses – "stolen" – because he was stolen from her, and his life was stolen from him.) When she got to Psalm 150, she started over with Psalm 1 but also kept praying 150 because it is a psalm of praise. I have joined her in this ritual. Today is Psalm 150 and Psalm 139.

I got to have a private word with Rachel and told her she reminded me of Rachel weeping for her children in the Bible. Jeremiah 31:15 describes Rachel (the wife of Jacob in Genesis) as weeping over the Israelites taken into Babylonian captivity. She finished my thought by paraphrasing Jeremiah 31:16-17. The Lord says they will come back from the enemy to the land of their own country.

It is always a testament to the mercy and compassion of God when a person actively experiencing trauma speaks to the power of their faith. This includes faith in humanity. Rachel said she can still have faith in humanity because terrorism is the *absence* of humanity. Rachel is the embodiment of hope and invites us all to join her in helping #bring_hersh_home. For example, learn more on her social media sites and take one minute a day to contact your elected officials. (Go to oneminaday.com.) And of course, join Rachel in prayer.

As I left the synagogue, I walked through Central Park listening to Pergolesi's Stabat Mater, a 13th-century hymn that portrays Mary's suffering during the crucifixion of Jesus. The hymn takes its name from the first line. Stabat mater dolorosa: "*The sorrowful mother was standing.*"

May this mother's sorrow, strength, and advocacy rooted in faith bring us to a place of solidarity with all who suffer in this tragic war, and bring her child home.

Adrian+

TODAY AFTER CHURCH

Visitors are invited to pick up a welcome bag at the back of the church following the service. All are welcome to Coffee Hour in the Parish House at 12:15 p.m.

12:30 to 1:15 p.m. Join us in the Parish Living Room for a “sermon talkback” with today’s preacher, the Rev. Dr. Nate Lee. This will be a time when you can ask questions, give feedback, and help us all to deepen the conversation that the sermon has only just begun. Talkbacks will continue through the season of Easter.

12:30 to 1:15 p.m. Come to the Parish House Dining Room to help make sandwiches and pack lunches for Ecclesia Ministries of New York, which serves those who are food and housing insecure. The Rev. Deacon Denise LaVetty serves an Ecclesia congregation that currently worships at Church of the Transfiguration (29th Street, between 5th and Madison) every Sunday from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Parishioners are also invited to attend this 2:00 p.m. service of Holy Eucharist and then distribute the lunches.

COMMON CHORD CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Pledges keep climbing for the Common Chord capital campaign for restoration of the organ. As of today, the total is **\$649,350!**

We’re well on our way to meeting our campaign goal of \$800,000 – and possibly our “stretch” goal of \$900,000! Will you help us reach it with a pledge to the campaign? Pledges are payable over three years. Pick up a campaign brochure and pledge card in the Narthex or go to givingsites.com/commonchord to learn more.

EASTERTIDE DANCE PARTY

Thursday, April 25, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. This Easter season, our monthly “Third Thursday” gathering—which follows Candlelight Communion—will be a dance party! Scripture often talks about dancing as a way of showing our joy before the Lord. So, join us in the Assembly Hall for a night to remember. We’ll have some food, some music, and lots of time to mingle. This will be a totally “no judgment” space, so no matter what your skill level, we invite you to let loose and be free! (Note the date change from April 18.)

MOTHERS OF BEDFORD – REGISTER TODAY!

Wednesday, May 1, 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Join us for an exclusive evening of cinema and discussion with the screening of the powerful documentary *Mothers of Bedford*, followed by a Q&A session with the director, Jenifer McShane, an alumna of Incarnation Camp.

This event not only showcases an important social issue—motherhood in prison—but also supports a meaningful cause. All proceeds will support Incarnation Camp scholarships, including for children of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women through Hour Children, a faith-based nonprofit organization and partner in mission of Church of the Incarnation. The cost is \$50 per person, and you can register at incarnationcenter.org/mothers-of-bedford.

A catered reception begins at 6:00 p.m. in the Parish House. The film screening begins at 6:30 p.m. in the Assembly Hall.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL AND AFTERNOON TEA

Saturday, May 4, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. All are invited to the Parish House for a time of fellowship and an update on Incarnation's Common Chord capital campaign for restoration of the organ. We’ll have tea party classics, from scones to sandwiches, and all the fixings for ice cream sundaes. We hope everyone who loves Incarnation will participate in the campaign and join us for the festivities!

20s/30s MIDTOWN ROOFTOP GATHERING

Sunday, May 5, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. A member of Incarnation’s 20s/30s Group has offered the rooftop of their apartment building – The Oriana, 420 E 54th Street – for young adults to gather for some springtime fellowship. There will be food and some themed activities. RSVP to the Rev. Dr. Nate Lee (nlee@churchoftheincarnation.org). We look forward to seeing you then!