

The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

March 2020

Lent Gets Us Ready For Easter

As I prepare this newsletter article for the month of March, I could not help but notice that the very first day is the first Sunday in Season of Lent—which happens to be my favorite season of the year.

Of course, we know that the season begins on Ash Wednesday which we celebrated just the week before. But what is Lent anyway? Some people think it is fuzz that sticks to our clothing or what we put in our soup.

Anyone with a limited amount of knowledge of the Church knows that those definitions are both hilarious and sad.

One definition describes Lent as follows: “The period preceding Easter that in the Christian Church is devoted to fasting, abstinence, and

penitence in commemoration of Christ’s fast in the wilderness. In the Western Church it runs from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday and so includes forty weekdays.”

That pretty much sums it up—but it is not enough to just have a definition. What is important is what we do with that understanding.

For me, Lent is a reminder to take the time out to step up with our reading and study of God’s Word, prayer and devotion—which can include fasting (if medically cleared) and Christian service.

I know lots of people who say they are giving something up for Lent, like chocolate or fast food.

That may be good to improve your diet—but is it really preparing oneself to receive the risen Christ anew on Easter Sunday?

However, on a light side, I read an interesting article that provided ideas for people who DO want to give up something for Lent.

This list contained ten ideas, and I thought I would paraphrase them and share them with you. I think they could possibly make our Christian witness better.

Continued on Page 2

WORSHIP IN MARCH

Mar. 1—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Matthew 4:1-11

Mar. 8—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, John 3:1-17

Mar. 15—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, John 4:5-42

Mar. 22—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, John 9:1-49

Mar. 29—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, John 11:1-45



Circle of Concern

For Guidance and Healing:

Bruce Kirschner, Aleesa, Denise Engels, Susan Delgrasso, James, Jerry, Phyllis, Jamie Loris, Kane family, Bobby, Alice Tiitus, Gary, Eileen Bryant, Rick Laffanzio, Gail Hoag, Diane Dain, Lola Schwartz, Ed Forsyth, Maureen, Suzey, Jeff, Laura Clifford, Travis Gentile, John D'Areangelis, Dennis Farrall, Brian Lauhe, Michael, Smith family, Rebecca Werner, Regina, Rice family, Greg, Lizzie

These in Rehab or Nursing Care:

Geri Sheridan, Robert Krawzak in Brookhaven Health Care Facility, 801 Gazzola Dr., East Patchogue, NY

Alice Zahnd in Gurwin Jewish Nursing Facility, 68 Hauppauge Rd., Commack, NY

Norene (Rogers) Caputo in Legacy House, 6310 N. Durango Dr., Las Vegas, NV, 89149, Apt. 210

Pray for our church and her future directions!

Prayer cards are located at the usher's station at the rear of the sanctuary.

Make a prayer request at
PatchogueUMC.com



Mar. 6 Jace Rogers

Mar. 14 Jack Ryan

Lent (From Page 1)

Don't Buy Anything That You Don't Need.

Put money you would have spent in a jar. At the end of forty days put some in savings and donate the rest.

Throw Away 40 things for 40 days.

Every day look around the house and collect 40 things to donate or throw away. (My wife likes this one)

Do 40 days of Home Organization.

Yes, this involves decluttering. (Again, my wife is nodding her head). Again, this should provide us with more stuff to donate that will benefit others.

No Gossiping.

Hmmm. This means if someone says something negative about another person, either say something nice or don't say anything at all. It may sound easier than one thinks.

No eating after dinner.

This means no ice cream while watching a Turner Channel movie.

Give up Soda for Lent.

This one is easy for me, because I usually don't drink soda.

Say Three Nice Things to your spouse and kids daily.

If you are not married and don't have kids, or if it is not possible, then say 3 nice things to someone each day.

Don't eat out for 40 days.

Now, this is a challenge while living in the Patchogue area. I personally don't want to hurt the restaurant businesses who need our support. Remember, you don't have to do all ten. We're not Pharisees, you know?

Replace 30 minutes of TV time with 30 extra minutes of devotion/prayer time.

Read a devotional or Bible story with your family and discuss what you read.

Do not complain.

(Yep, my wife likes this one too). Is this even possible? I know we can often get in the habit of whining about things. Being mindful of not complaining during Lent should lead us to be more positive during the rest of the year.

So, have a great Lenten season. Whether you are taking something on or giving something up for Lent, make the season meaningful.

Be creative. I promise that by the time Easter rolls around—you will be even more ready to celebrate our Lord's resurrection.

In His Grip,

—Pastor Chuck

SOS Campaign Update

Here's a brief summary of activities associated with the Save Our Sanctuary campaign and related improvements.

We awarded a contract to install new larger copper gutters at the northwest stair projection, commonly called the cold room, to Sandstorm Construction. That should keep the rain water from getting into the building. Those gutters were too small when the building was built back in 1889.

Work also includes some slate roofing and fascia board replacement. However work has not yet commenced and the Trustees are seeking alternative bids if necessary to award to a different contractor.

The repointing of exterior brick walls in needed areas was postponed until the weather improves. The

Continued on Page 4

United Methodist Church of Patchogue

March 2020

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|--|---|--|-----------|--|--|----------------------------|
| 1 9:15 a.m.—Choir 10:00 a.m.— Communion Worship 11:00 a.m.— Trustees 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF | 2 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA | 3 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon —Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:00 p.m.—AA | 4 | 5 | 6 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF | 7 |
| 8 9:15 a.m.—Choir 10:00 a.m.— Worship/Sunday School 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF | 9 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA | 10 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon —Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:00 p.m.—AA | 11 | 12 | 13 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF | 14 |
| 15 9:15 a.m.—Choir 10 a.m.— Worship/Sunday School 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF | 16 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA | 17 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon —Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:00 p.m.—AA | 18 | 19 | 20 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF | 21 9:30 a.m.—UMW |
| 22 9:15 a.m.—Choir 10 a.m.— Worship/Sunday School 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF | 23 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA | 24 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon —Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:00 p.m.—AA | 25 | 26 5:00 p.m.— Wesley Dinner | 27 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF | 28 |
| 29 9:15 a.m.—Choir 10 a.m.— Worship/Sunday School 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF | 30 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA | 31 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon —Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:00 p.m.—AA | | | | |

SOS Update (From Page 2)

contractor will cut and point selected areas and complete crack repairs as shown on drawings provided by the church. The Trustees recently amended the contract to also include pressure washing of the exterior building facade and applying a clear coat.

When the large circular windows and crown moldings on the outside of the building were scraped, glazed and painted, the workers reported that the east window moved when worked upon.

This is a concern since the possibility of a northeast storm or hurricane could compromise the window's stability. The Trustees recently awarded a contract to remedy that situation which includes the installation of 18 stainless steel straps which will pin the window frame to the adjacent brick walls, replace brick pieces surrounding the window and spot point deteriorated mortar joints as necessary. That work is underway.

Related to maintaining and securing the church property, we are considering installing a security gate on the rear driveway between the church and the Head Start building.

Please remember your SOS pledges to help keep the campaign going. New pledges are needed and always gratefully welcomed.

Thanks to all for their contributions and hard work.

—Jim Graham

I'll Stick With Love

As most of you are aware, the United Methodist Church is in the midst of a major schism.

After years of conflict over the statement on page 111 of the Book of Discipline that, "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching", the world wide church has come to the point of divorce over "irreconcilable differences".

I view this with a certain sadness, recognizing that in our religious lives as in our societal existence, we have become hardened in our beliefs and principles, more determined than ever to be right, to show our superiority over those who disagree, rather than to work at living together in harmony with God and each other.

Many people say, "But it's in the Bible!" And so it is, in Leviticus 18 and 20 and in Romans 1, prohibitions condemning homosexuality.

But if you feel that everything written in the Bible is the express word of God, then you must also agree with Deuteronomy 13:6-10, which says if anyone entices you to worship other gods, even your child, sibling or spouse, you have to stone them to death.

So, I suppose in modern terms, this would translate that anyone who turns to a different version of Christianity, say Quaker or Unitarian, deserves to die.

Sadly, throughout thousands of years, believing differently was in fact

the rationalization for repression, brutality, and religious persecution.

Or what about Deuteronomy 21: 18-21, which says if your son is rebellious, eats and drinks too much, he needs to be stoned to death. Or Leviticus 21: 16 which says that someone who is blind, lame, has a mutilated face, or too long limbs, a dwarf, a hunchback, or someone with an itching disease, may not approach the altar to offer food to God. Could this be extrapolated to mean anyone who is not physically perfect could not participate in communion?

I do not point these things out to mock the Bible, but to say that perhaps not everything written in the Bible is the word of God, but some things are more reflective of human societal and cultural values and agendas.

To quote the Rev. Robin Myers, "Human fingerprints are all over the Bible."

I do believe that it is our responsibility to try and discern what is the word of God, through prayer, study, including reading widely, even on viewpoints different from our own, and through mutually respectful discussion.

So, I don't believe that homosexuality is a sin, but an example of God's infinite diversity of creation. Modern genetic science supports that homosexuality is not a choice, a practice, but a genetic reality.

So, where do we as a faith community go from here? When General Conference meets in May this year, the split will probably be approved.

At Annual Conference in June, the NY Annual Conference will probably vote to stay as part of the United Methodist Church and not to go with the Traditionalist movement. Each local church, as I understand it, has four years to choose if they want to separate from the UMC.

When I look at our Patchogue family of faith, I see a people of widely differing viewpoints and interpretations on issues both religious and secular.

I also see a people of loving and generous hearts, who, in spite of differences, joyfully work together to reflect God's love as Jesus taught, who cherish and support each other through good times and bad.

I see a people who don't need so much to be right, as to be righteous. Who exhibit a generous spirit towards each other and all they meet. Who strive to be real Christians in thought, word, and deed.

In Luke 6:37-38, Jesus said, "Judge not that you not be judged; do not condemn that you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven; give and it will be given you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

What a vivid image of the immense and unfathomable generosity of God, of the love of God for us and all creation. And a lesson that we not allow differences to separate us, but that we keep our eyes on what is eternally important—loving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

I pray that we commit ourselves as Dr. Martin Luther King said, "I have decided to stick with Love."

—Barbara Becker

Loss Always Comes With Separation, Divorce

For well over four decades, we as United Methodists have permitted a lesser and non-salvation social agenda item to overshadow our primary calling, which is that of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

We are therefore guilty of idolatry. For we, no matter the camp or the stance, have made idols out of our social issue position. The result? Missing the mark. Majoring on minors.

As of this writing, United Methodists find ourselves on the threshold of a General Conference in which we likely face a division— a divorce — as a denomination. This faith family chaos and impasse is painful and sinful. We must confess before God our brokenness and unfaithfulness and failure.

As with any separation and divorce there will be loss. There will be regret. Remorse will raise its head. And, as with divorce, if we choose the road of renewal and the pathway of both inner and interpersonal peace there will be required of us confession of our failures, civility in dialog and deep respect for one another as children of God created in the divine imago dei.

As much as I grieve any division and separation in the church, I am reminded divorce can be a lesser of two evils. At times when marriage

partners are abusive toward, instead of nurturing, one another, it is better for them to go their separate ways. Hopefully, the divorcing parties will move forward and build a healthier and stronger life, learning from rather than wasting their past mistakes and missteps.

If honest, we United Methodists have been abusive toward one another concerning our attitudes, actions and angry words. For more than 40 years we have put one another down, forming rigid camps and divisive tribes. At times, we have derided and demeaned one another because the other does not share our personal conviction or interpretation of Scripture.

Perhaps our parting is the lesser of two evils. Maybe we United Methodists will convey a mature and gracious example to the culture and to ourselves through seeking and finding an amicable separation.

Let us admit that there is no such thing as a "no fault" divorce. What if all involved would confess our own fault and failure, instead of pointing an accusatory finger at others, projecting our painful failures upon another? What if, by God's grace, the United Methodists incarnate and demonstrate that good and right and oft-quoted, yet too-seldom lived, statement, "Agree to disagree agreeably"? Could we make a winning and winsome witness to the world as one part of God's people, or what?

I believe we can. I affirm that through our division and divorce we can become stronger and better. In the midst of weakness and brokenness,

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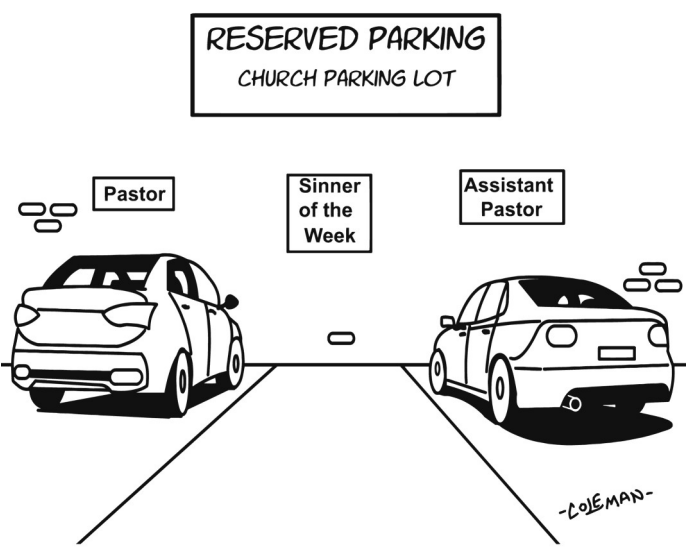
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Don't Forget Your Pledge

The deadline for the April issue of **The Link** is March 27.
 Please email your copy to gbhoag@optonline.net.

For security purposes, the Church St. entrance is now locked as soon as Sunday services begin. If you are running late, be sure to use the Sanctuary entrances.

Divorce (from Page 5)

we find our renewed strength and guidance in God's power and grace. As we yield our human hubris to divinity's design for us, we discover and demonstrate genuine humility and loving kindness. As we treat one another, no matter differing convictions and interpretations, with respect and dignity, we walk the Gospel way.

As a people directed by Christ, may we avoid litigation — the painful and demoralizing path our culture so often selects (That which Scripture exhorts believers to avoid in I Corinthians 6:1,6). And, as a people of grace, let us affirm the other, respecting rather than denigrating their different convictions.

In this way, we are freed to recognize and celebrate and participate in the powerful work God can do in and through us — reaching more persons in more venues through our separate pathways and differing interpretations. In our parting, may we find ourselves blessing one another, instead of “devouring one another” (Galatians 5:15), and in the process destroying ourselves and our witness for Christ.

May we pray and work for a “United Methodist” peaceful, God-honoring path forward. Although we may go different ways, we all remain on the same Christendom tree and the same Wesleyan branch. As we divide to prayerfully reach more persons for God's Kingdom, let us give each other the benediction of a mutually hoped for grace-filled and fruitful future for the sake of Christ.

Lastly, I share my conviction because I readily recognize that mine is

only one Christian conviction, and there are other faith-based convictions expressed. I have family and friends, church members and valued clergy colleagues, who differ with me on this topic. They are just as Christian as I am. I love them, value them and, respect their opinion. I will always do so. I am not their judge, nor are they judge of me.

As stated earlier, I do not perceive the social issue before us as a salvation matter. That is, I do not believe this topic to be a matter of justification or salvation. But I do view it as a matter of sanctification — seeking to be more and more like Jesus. Therefore, I am convinced the issue matters.

Because of my Scriptural interpretation and personal conviction, I am unable to preside at a gay union ceremony. My conviction will not permit me to participate in a community of faith that sanctions or endorsed homosexual unions.

Having said this, I will respect, care for and pastor to all persons. As pastor of this United Methodist congregation, as long as I am pastor I will welcome all. No matter one's background, demographics, sexual orientation, etc., I want all to know they have a place of safety, and all will be treated with dignity and acceptance within our church family. I will offer the God-given and grace-filled sacraments to all who wish to receive — for the sacraments belong to God and are given for all who open and accept. I will receive persons into church membership and serve as their pastor and spiritual shepherd, if so desired.

I do not share my position with a vindictive spirit or as a pontificating edict. I am one person with one opinion among many. I affirm a defining marker of Christian grace and maturity manifests in, for example, two parties honestly, and at times radically, disagreeing, yet remaining connected and continuing in civil communication. Actively, not passively, listening — and sharing assertively, not aggressively.

I would want others to share their honest convictions with me. I respect and honor and even desire straightforwardness from another, rather than complicit compromise or false overtures for the sake of pseudo peace.

We lose respect for ourselves and for others when we do not maintain our self-differentiation. The key to integrity and genuine unity is to stay connected with one another even, and perhaps especially, in going different directions and in sharing opposing opinions. Even with the prospect of possible polarizing positions we carefully listen to the other person while at the same time respectfully expressing our honest convictions.

May we remember and celebrate our United Methodist past. Let us look to the future with renewed hope. And, as God leads us forward may we treat one another with respect and dignity as we look to a new day of fresh expressions, perhaps taking different paths; yet, affirming our connectedness through one Lord, one faith, one baptism for the sake of God's kingdom.

—Rev. Michael Kurtz, pastor, Francis Asbury UMC, Chandler, N.C. (UMNS)

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Sunday Worship and Sunday School—10 AM
 Fellowship Coffee Hour—11 AM
 Hearing assistance provided



A Prayer For Lent

Thank you for the gift of this season. Thank you for knowing our hearts and our need for rhythms in our lives, and for drawing us into a deeper communion with you throughout the coming 40 days. Lord, it can be disheartening to read on Ash Wednesday that all come from dust, and to dust all return (Ecclesiastes 3:20), yet we know that there is more to our stories. We know that you created man and woman from the dust at the very beginning of time (Genesis 2:7) and that you breathed life into them to transform them into living creatures. We know that you are in the business of resurrection-- your very Son went to the cross to show us that no death is final and that ultimate transformation

comes through your gift of salvation. Though we were made from dust, and our bodies will return to dust again, we can live in eternal glory with you through the blood of your Son.

May these weeks leading up to the tragedy of Good Friday and the glory of Resurrection Sunday remind us of who you are, how you love us, and who you have created us to be as your followers.

May we walk through this season intentionally, removing distractions that take our gaze away from your glory. May we quiet the noise that pulls us from adoration of you and puts our attention on lesser things. May we simplify where we have been stressed, may we surrender what has

been burdensome, may we repent of what has been sinful, Lord Jesus.

May we see your goodness and your glory in new ways throughout this season of Lent. May we know the depths of your love for us more fully. May we feel the pain you endured for our sake, Jesus, and may we rejoice that you conquered every bit of evil when you rose to life again.

Draw us closer to your heart, that we might know you better and understand you more completely. We pray that we would not only give things up for Lent, but that we would give you glory through Lent, Lord. May our actions reflect our hearts, and may we worship you through all that we say and do throughout the weeks to come.