

# The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

February 2020

## Taking Inventory Where We Stand With Christ

I don't know about you, but it seems like we just took down the Christmas decorations and Bing Crosby sang the last verse of "I'm dreaming of a White Christmas". And here we are entering the month of February, and by the way, my favorite season of Lent. Yes, we will celebrate the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday, February 26.

One kid in my youth group once asked me, "Why would we celebrate Lent?"—thinking it was the stuff that attaches to our clothes. No, Lent is a season where more of God should attach to us. So, what is Lent anyway?

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting the Sundays, which I already mentioned begins on Ash Wednesday. Lent comes

## Timeline For A UMC Split

**May**—UMC General Conference considers separation proposal. If approved, a new denomination would be set up at a separate conference to be held immediately. Another immediate conference of the remaining church would eliminate existing LGBTQ restrictions. Because this is a broadly negotiated proposal, it's favored for passage.

**June**—The New York Annual Conference, and other conferences meet. A conference would remain affiliated with the UMC unless 57% of the delegates vote to leave. The New York Conference is likely to stay.

**Through 2024**—Local churches that disagree with their conference decision can vote to go their own way, keeping their assets and liabilities. Local church leaders would decide whether their own church separation would require a majority or two-thirds vote. **More inside**

## WORSHIP IN FEBRUARY

**Feb. 2**—The Rev. Dr.

Charles Ferrara,  
Matthew 5:1-12

**Feb. 9**—The Rev. Dr. Charles  
Ferrara,

Matthew 5:15-20

**Feb. 16**—The Rev. Dr.

Charles Ferrara,  
Matthew 5:21-37

**Feb. 23**—The Rev. Dr.

Charles Ferrara  
Matthew 17:1-9

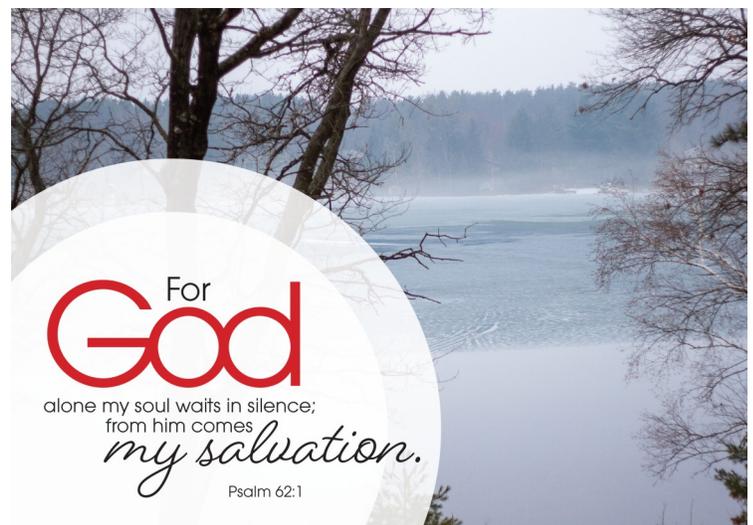
**Feb. 26**—Ash Wednesday,  
Bayport UMC, 7:00 PM.

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

from the Anglo-Saxon word "Lenten", which means "spring." Really it is a season that prepares us for the celebration of Easter or Resurrection Sunday.

Originally it was a period of fasting and reflection on the Christian faith for persons preparing for baptism as converts to the faith.

**Continued on Page 2**



## Circle of Concern

### Joys:

Eddie Leddin family, new baby boy

### For Guidance and Healing:

Bruce Kirschner, Aleesa, Denise Engels, Susan Delgrasso, James, Jerry, Phyllis, Jamie Loris, Kane family, Bobby, Australia, Alice Tilas, Gary, Eileen Bryant, Rick Laffanzio, Gail Hoag, Diane Dain, Lola Swartz, Ed Forsyth, Maureen, George Hoag

### 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

## February Birthdays

**Feb. 10** Jonathan Alvarado

**Feb. 14** Geri Sheridan

**Feb. 15** John Yarschuck

**Feb. 18** Robbie Pearson

**Feb. 20** Lilianna Angelina Mangano

**Feb. 21** Valerie Ward

**Feb. 24** Lili Rogers

## Lent (From Page 1)

The period from sunset Holy Thursday through the sunset of Easter Day is the climax of Lent. These days symbolize the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It is a wonderful time when we journey with Jesus from the upper room to the Garden of Gethsemane, from the trial to his suffering on the cross, to the tomb and on the third day His resurrection and victory over sin and death.

Lent is a season when we confront our own mortality and reflect on where we truly stand with God.

When we search our inner selves to see what areas require change in order to align with the will of God. We know in some traditions and many United Methodist Churches the imposition of ashes starts off the season. These ashes are derived from burning the palms from the previous Palm Sunday.

As people come forward the pastor makes the sign of the cross with the ashes that are mixed with oil or water. At each imposition, the minister says: "Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Wow! That is a powerful image.

When we consider how short our time is in our body and life compared to eternity—it really strikes home, doesn't it? For most of us there is less time before us than behind us.

But no matter what stage one finds him or herself in this span of human life—this is a season to spend quality time studying the scriptures, engage in prayer, health permitting to fast, and consider areas in our lives requiring change to be more aligned with our Lord.

Some companies conduct inventories of their stock to better run their businesses. I see the Season of Lent as a time of taking inventory of our lives to better serve Christ and be his witness to the world. Something each of us should seriously consider. We'll be better for it.

Wishing you all a blessed Lenten Season as I remain In His Grip,

—Pastor Chuck

## An Ash Wednesday Prayer

Lord, Holy One, have mercy on us. We confess our sins to you. We have fallen short of your glory and without your mercy and grace, we would be dust. We repent now. Lord, as we enter into this Lenten season, be near to us. Help us, by your Holy Spirit, to feel right conviction and repentance for our sin. Help us, by your Spirit, to have the strength to overcome the enemy.

Thank you, Lord, that Easter is coming! Death has no sting, no victory, because of Jesus! Glory and honor and praise to His name! Thank you for rescuing us. Help us keep both the weight and the joy of this season in our hearts as we move through the next several weeks. Help us bear the good fruit of your Spirit.

Thank you that the ashes on our forehead do not symbolize our ultimate reality. From dust we might have been formed, but our bodies, our spirits, ourselves, await beautiful redemption and the restoration of all things. Help us long and look forward to that day, and let it come quickly, Lord Jesus. Amen.

—Excerpted from *What Is Ash Wednesday?* by Kelly Givens

# United Methodist Church of Patchogue

## February 2020

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

## Proposal Would Split Methodist Church

A diverse, 16-member group of United Methodist bishops and other leaders has offered a proposal that would preserve The United Methodist Church while allowing traditionalist-minded congregations to form a new denomination. The separating group would get \$25 million in United Methodist funds and would keep its local church properties.

Details are in a nine-page “Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation,” released Jan. 3.

The proposal — reached with the help of famed mediator Kenneth Feinberg, who worked on the federal September 11th Victim Compensation Fund — requires approval by the 2020 General Conference. Drafting of legislation is still underway for the legislative assembly, which is the only body that speaks for the 13 million global denomination.

But given the broad, influential coalition involved — including bishops from around the global connection and advocacy group leaders often sharply at odds — the potential seems strong that the separation proposal can end or at least greatly reduce the denomination’s decades-long struggle over how accepting to be of homosexuality.

New York Conference Bishop Thomas Bickerton, part of the group, said the contentious 2019 special called General Conference in St. Louis underscored intensifying divisions and the need for amicable separation.

“It became clear that the line in the sand had turned into a canyon,” Bickerton said. “The impasse is such that we have come to the realization that we just can’t stay that way any longer.

“This protocol provides a pathway that acknowledges our differences, respects everyone in the process and graciously allows us to continue to live out the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, albeit in different expressions.”

The plan looks toward a restructuring of the remaining global United Methodist Church into regions, with flexibility to adapt church policies, including on LGBTQ inclusion.

Meanwhile, traditionalists forming a new denomination could continue what they see as Bible-supported restrictions on same-sex marriage and ordination of gay persons as clergy.

The traditionalist Wesleyan Covenant Association already has taken steps toward forming a new denomination, such as drafting a book of policies and doctrines. Bickerton and the Rev. Keith Boyette, WCA president, said the negotiating team’s assumption is that the new church would emerge out of the WCA.

Boyette was part of the group developing the proposal. He said traditionalists have long felt that divisions in The United Methodist Church were irreparable, and that an amicable separation was the best way forward.

“I believe this is a fair and equitable solution that puts decades of conflict behind us and gives us a hopeful future,” he said.

Also negotiating and signing onto the agreement was Jan Lawrence, executive director of Reconciling Ministries Network, which has long sought to remove restrictions against LGBTQ participation in the denomination.

“As a United Methodist who is LGBTQ, my priority at the table was to make sure we addressed the full participation of LGBTQ people in the life of the church, making sure the answer was not ‘ask us again in 2024,’” she said. “The language needs to be removed now. I am pleased that there is opportunity here for that to happen in 2020.”

The new proposal would allow other United Methodist churches to form their own denominations, while foreseeing ecumenical agreements and cooperation on some fronts.

Representatives of traditionalist, centrist and progressive advocacy groups joined with a handful of bishops from the U.S., Africa, Europe and the Philippines to reach the agreement. They promised to support it and no other.

“We humbly offer to the delegates of the 2020 General Conference the work which we have accomplished in the hopes that it will help heal the harms and conflicts within the body of Christ and free us to be more effective witnesses to God’s Kingdom,” said Bishop John Yambasu of Sierra Leone, who last summer began the private talks that led to the proposal.

The group had the help of Feinberg, who oversaw the victims’ compensation funds after 9/11 and the

BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster.

Feinberg donated his time, as did other lawyers who helped the group. “(Feinberg) has a deep interest in religion and the preservation of the public witness of religion, and this is what intrigued him and enabled him to say ‘yes’ to us,” Bickerton said. “We are extremely indebted.”

Feinberg called it “an honor and a privilege” to be part of the negotiations.

A clear catalyst for the negotiations was the 2019 General Conference, which saw passage of the Traditional Plan reinforcing restrictions on same-sex weddings and ordination of LGBTQ persons — but also igniting passionate, ongoing resistance in the U.S. by full inclusion supporters.

The tougher enforcement provided by the Traditional Plan went into effect Jan. 1, but the new proposal calls for holding “in abeyance” any administrative or judicial processes related to same-sex weddings or ordination of gay clergy.

“You cannot stop someone from filing a complaint. Neither can you stop someone from requesting a trial,” Bickerton said. “You can hold a complaint in abeyance. That’s our request.”

**Key elements of the group’s proposal include:**

The General Council on Finance and Administration of The United Methodist Church would provide \$25 million, over four years, “to the traditionalist Methodist denomination established pursuant to this protocol.” The new denomination would give up further claims to United

Methodist assets, including those of general boards and agencies.

GCFA would escrow \$2 million to help other potential new denominations.

To support communities historically marginalized by racism, GCFA would allocate \$39 million over eight years to strengthen Asian, Black, Hispanic-Latino, Native American and Pacific Islander ministries, as well as Africa University. Of that total, \$13 million would come from funds the separating traditionalist denomination chose to forgo.

After the 2020 General Conference, set for May 5-15 in Minneapolis, there would be a special General Conference for the remaining denomination. “The protocol also references a plan which calls for a special general conference of the post-separation United Methodist Church. The purpose of the Special Session would be to create regional conferences, remove the current prohibitions against LGBTQ persons, and to repeal the Traditional Plan,” said a press release from the negotiating group.

A (non-U.S.) central conference would be able to choose with a two-thirds vote to affiliate with a new Methodist denomination. The vote deadline would be December 31, 2021, and if no vote is taken the conference remains in The United Methodist Church.

An annual conference, whether in a central conference or U.S. jurisdictional conference, also could vote to affiliate with a new Methodist denomination. A vote of 20 percent or more at an annual conference session would be needed to have the disaffili-

ation vote, and a disaffiliation vote would have to pass by 57 percent. The disaffiliation vote deadline is July 1, 2021.

The leadership body of a local church considering disaffiliation could determine a threshold of a simple majority or two-thirds for the vote on whether to separate. Decisions about disaffiliation must be made by December 31, 2024.

A local church affiliating with another Methodist denomination “pursuant to the protocol” would keep its assets and liabilities.

The pension plans of The United Methodist Church would remain in place for all current clergy and lay employees, even if they affiliate with another Methodist denomination under the protocol.

“The fact that we were able to come together from across the world, from across theological spectrums and define an opportunity to collaborate for the sake of the church we all love is a monumental thing,” Bickerton said.

He added: “My hope would be that the delegates to the General Conference would be able to employ that same spirit as they undertake their work in Minneapolis.”

—UMNS, Sam Hedges

## Proposal Reaction

United Methodists of various perspectives are reacting to a major new plan for getting past the denomination’s long struggle over how inclusive to be of LGBTQ persons — one that calls for traditionalists separating and forming their own church group.

Continued on Page 7

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# Don't Forget Your Pledge

The deadline for the March issue  
of **The Link** is February 21.

Please email your copy to [gbhoag@optonline.net](mailto: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.

## Reaction (From Page 5)

Support, criticism, heartbreak. All were all voiced and sometimes in combination. So was concern, including from Africa, about who wasn't represented well enough at the negotiating table.

Many church leaders stressed that the plan is just that — a plan — and delegates to the 2020 General Conference, set for May 5-15 in Minneapolis, will have the final say.

"To be clear, nothing will happen immediately, and much work remains as legislation currently is being developed for delegates to potentially act on," said North Texas Conference Bishop Michael McKee in a letter to his conference.

Legislation laying out the full plan is still in the works, but the story of traditionalist, centrists and progressive leaders coming together to propose amicable separation made national news, including the front page of *The New York Times*.

United Methodists began at once to digest the plan and share initial thoughts.

Jim Allen, treasurer of the Tennessee Conference and the conference's first elected lay delegate for the 2020 General Conference, joined McKee in welcoming the plan but recognizing the challenges it faces.

"This one is getting all of the publicity, and yet it's late," Allen said. "It's questionable if they're even going to be able to slip it under the door. There is no legislation to go with it, and the devil is always in the details."

Many others said the proposal gives them new hope.

The Revs. Don Underwood and Chris Dowd of Christ United Methodist Church in Plano, Texas, penned a letter to their congregation, calling the plan the "best possible outcome given United Methodist disagreements on human sexuality."

But the general coordinator of the Africa Initiative, the Rev. Jerry Kulah of Liberia, was unhappy that the team arriving at the protocol included only one African, Bishop John Yambasu, who last summer began the private talks that led to the proposal.

The Africa Initiative, an unofficial caucus in the denomination, has worked closely with the Wesleyan Covenant Association, Good News and other U.S.-based traditionalist groups.

The WCA has already taken steps toward forming a denomination. The traditionalist denomination separating from The United Methodist Church under the new plan would evolve from the WCA, according to members of the negotiating team. The Rev. Keith Boyette, WCA president, was on the team and joined other members in promising to support the new plan only.

But Kulah, while saying he's still evaluating, didn't seem inclined to go along with a key element — who goes and who stays. He noted that the special called 2019 General Conference passed the Traditional Plan, reinforcing restrictions on same-sex marriage and ordination of gay clergy.

"In my opinion, the protocol should have required the liberals, who are not happy with the global traditionalist understanding, teaching and ecclesial practices of the church,

to leave the denomination," Kulah said.

The Rev. Tim McClendon, pastor of St. John's United Methodist Church in Aiken, South Carolina, said he has been hearing the same sentiment. He strongly backed the Traditional Plan at the 2019 General Conference but thinks the protocol may be the way to go now, given what he sees as a lack of commitment to enforcing the Book of Discipline by most U.S. bishops.

The progressive UM-Forward caucus wrote a three-page response to the protocol, calling it a "back-room political negotiation" that failed to be inclusive in its negotiating team.

The UM-Forward statement criticizes the idea of giving \$25 million in United Methodist funds to departing traditionalists, and especially when compared to the \$2 million proposed for other groups that might want to depart.

The statement notes that "separation is inevitable" and calls on the 2020 General Conference to support its own New Expressions Worldwide plan.

JJ Warren, a seminary student whose speech in favor of LGBTQ inclusion brought a rousing ovation at the 2019 General Conference, lamented what he called the "clandestine and hierarchical negotiations" leading to the protocol but offered hope for the results.

"If adopted by General Conference delegates from around the world in May 2020, the protocol has the potential to unshackle the church from our decades of infighting and allow us

**Continued on Page 8**

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## UMC Split (From Page 7)

to seek justice for queer people, people of color and to correct our neocolonial U.S.-centric governance structure," he said.

Audun Westad, who will again be a Norway Conference lay delegate in Minneapolis, was generally upbeat about the new plan.

"The protocol has been rather well received by all the different (United Methodist) groups in Norway," he said. "From The United Methodist Church in other countries nearby we see much of the same feedback."

However, he said concern had surfaced about the lack of young people and "gender balance" in the negotiating team.

Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball of the West Virginia Conference previously

served as a moderator of the bishop-appointed Commission on a Way Forward that sought to find ways for the denomination to stay together. In a letter to her conference, she wrote that it grieves her heart that the church would give up on finding a way to move together.

Yet, she added, "I realize that we have forgotten or maybe never learned how to speak and work with one another in the midst of disagreement without attacking or putting down the neighbor who is different from ourselves — and that has resulted in great harm and damage to many of God's children."

The Rev. Duane Anders, pastor of the Cathedral of the Rockies (United Methodist) Church in Boise, Idaho, offered his full support for the proto-

col. But he embraced realism just as much.

"We need to put off holding hands and singing 'Kumbaya' until all of the provisions of the deal are enacted. Until then, we must be very clear-eyed and strategic as the politics of this deal unfold. Trust but verify!"

—Sam Hodges and Kathy L. Gilbert,  
 UMNS

