

The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

March 2017

Lent

There is an old saying that March comes in like a lion and departs as a lamb, making reference to the uncertainty of the weather during this transitional month connecting winter with spring.

Rather than focusing on weather concerning this brand new month of March, I would like to concentrate on the first

day of the month ushering in the beautiful season of Lent celebrated in the Church.

Lent is a Latin word that simply means fortieth, symbolizing the forty days between Ash Wednesday and Easter morning, not counting the Sundays in between.

The whole purpose of the season is to prepare the Christian to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior on that

glorious morning of Easter when we jubilantly sing, Christ the Lord is Risen Today!

The Season of Lent may mean several different things to many people. For me it is a time when I can focus on fine-tuning my faith.

It provides me a forty day window when I can do some introspective searching of where I came from, where I am in my faith, and where I want to journey in my faith walk. There is no particular formula for this because I believe it should be between the believer and the Lord.

Obviously some of the common practices includes prayer, repentance of sins, increased generosity and fasting. We often hear persons say, "I'm going to give up chocolate for Lent" or "I'm going to give up eating meat for Lent," etc.

I would rather say instead of giving something up for Lent (which, by the way, I am not against), why don't we take something on for Lent?

Why not be more sacrificial of our time, prayers, presence, gifts and service? Why not increase instead of decreasing?

WORSHIP IN MARCH

Mar. 5—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, *Overcoming Temptation When Temptation Is So Tempting*, Matthew 4:1-11

Mar. 12—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, *No Greater Love*, John 3:1-17

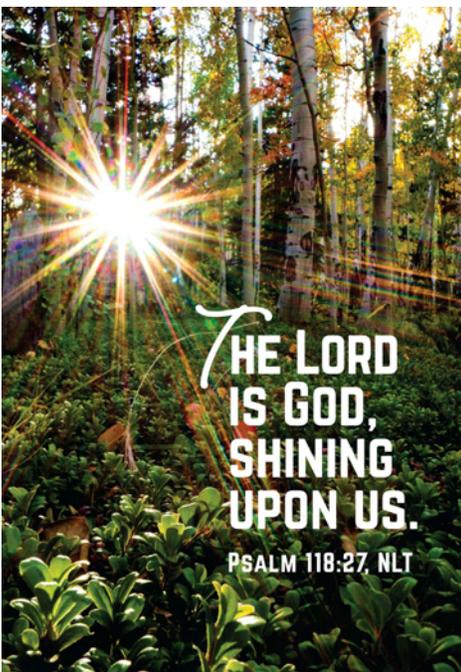
Mar. 19—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, *It's Time To Put Feet To The Gospel*, John 4:1-22

Mar. 26—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, *Seeing Your Life Through New Eyes*, John 9:1-41

Increase our time in the Word each day.

You may remember I recommended *The One Year Bible* at the beginning of the year where you can read the entire Bible in one year. I humbly confess that thus far I have kept up with these daily readings—even on vacation.

Continued on Page 2



Circle of Concern

For Guidance and Healing:

Steve Rea, Ron Jones, Bruce Kirschner, Kathy Maier, Adrian Murphy's mother, Theresa Lindsay, Sean Abrams, Joy Kala, Eileen Austin, George Werner. Mamie White, Frankie Scott Jr., Lee Hollowell, Henry Prince, Patricia Puk, Luke Gonzalez, Elenor, Deb, Kayla Donovan, Bruce Koffman, Josh Jansson, Edward Collins, Marjorie Bates, Diane Peterson, Luke Sotis, Matthew, Joanne, Fran Edwards, Tom Vogel, Tim Hollowell, Liz, Jessica Deck, John Puk, Barbara Widera

These Who are Hospitalized:

Frances Breen, Anthony Marmos, Martin, Michele Conrad, Juliana, Marge Prince

These who are in Rehab or Nursing Care Facilities:

Geri Sheridan in Brookhaven Health Care Facility, 801 Gazzolla Drive, E. Patchogue, NY.

John Vander Zalm in Brookhaven Health Care Facility, 801 Gazzolla Drive, E. Patchogue, NY.

Alice Zahnd in Gurwin Jewish Nursing Facility, Commack, NY.

Ed Dew in Sunrise Assisted Living, Waverly Avenue, Holbrook, NY.

Pray for our church and her future directions!

Prayer cards are located at the usher's station in the rear of the sanctuary. Your joys and concerns are important to us; let us pray for you! Please put completed prayer cards in the offering plate. Or use the Prayer Request Form on our web page at www.PatchogueUMC.org.

Lent (From Page 1)

Why not increase our time in prayer each day? Why not begin a prayer journal for Lent, writing down our thoughts and reflections after reading scripture and prayer? Why not consider increasing our financial giving to our church—this would help our ministry immensely? Why not consider increasing our service in our church's ministry? Maybe think about helping out at our Wesley Dinners once a month, helping with the Food Pantry, sing in the choir, help clean the church? The needs of our ministry are enormous.

One thing is for certain, Lent is supposed to draw us closer to God. My role model for Lent is Jesus Himself. You may remember the forty days He spent fasting in the desert before beginning his public ministry. He set the example for all of us of what it means to be a follower of His.

Daily taking up our cross as a disciple of His requires sacrifice and service. May this new Season of Lent be an opportunity for us to increase and strengthen our faith and discover new ways to express that faith through service and practicing good spiritual disciplines.

Wishing you a glorious and meaningful Lenten Season, I remain In His Grip,

—Pastor Chuck

Shepherd's Singers Are Back

On Sunday, March 12, at 4:00 p.m., we will again welcome the wonderful music ministry of the Shepherd's Singers. Their repertoire blends



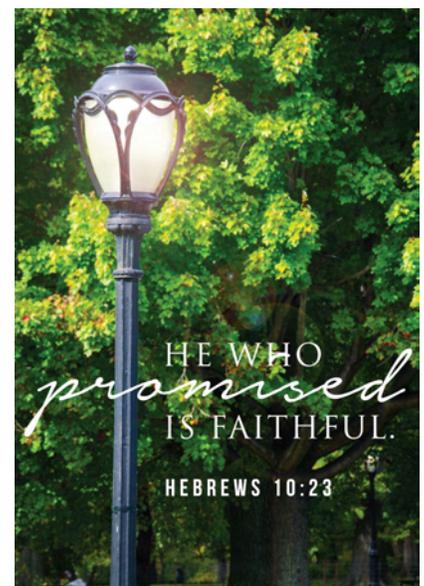
traditional gospel music with contemporary gospel and jazz.

At their performance in our church last February, the spirit was so vibrant, most people found it hard to stay in their seats!

Directed by Fred Brewington, noted civil liberties attorney, the Singers dedicate their music to the glory of God.

Following the concert, there will be a reception in Wesley Hall. The performance and reception are jointly sponsored by our church and Grace AME Zion church. A free will offering will be taken. Come and rejoice together.

—Barbara Becker



United Methodist Church of Patchogue

March 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 7:00 p.m.—Ash Wednesday Service 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	2	3 9:30 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	4 7:30 p.m.—AME Service
5 10:00 a.m.— Communion Wor- ship 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 5:00 p.m.—AME Service	6 7:00 p.m.—AA	7 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10 a.m.—Noon— Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	8 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	9	10 9:30 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	11 7:30 p.m.—AME Service
12 10 a.m.—Worship/ Sunday School 11:30 a.m.—Finance 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 4:00 p.m.— Shepherd's Singers 5:00 p.m.—AME Service	13 7:00 p.m.—AA	14 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10 a.m.—Noon— Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	15 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	16	17 9:30 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	18 7:30 p.m.—AME Service
19 10 a.m.— Wor- ship/Sunday School 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 5:00 p.m.—AME Service	20 7:00 p.m.—AA	21 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10 a.m.—Noon— Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	22 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	23 5:00 p.m.—Wesley Dinner	24 9:30 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	25 7:30 p.m.—AME Service
26 10 a.m.— Worship 11:30 a.m.— Trustees 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 5:00 p.m.—AME Service	27 7:00 p.m.—AA	28 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10 a.m.—Noon— Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	29 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	30	31 9:30 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	

New Sunday Morning Bible Study

with Pastor Chuck: A Study on the Life and Ministry of Jesus

11:30 a.m.—12:45 p.m.

March 5: “In the Shadow of Herod”

It took great faith for the Jewish people to believe that Jesus, who began His life on earth as a baby in Bethlehem, was truly the Lord of heaven and earth. The contrast between Jesus and Herod could not have been greater. Jesus was humble—Herod proud and powerful. This lesson will help the believer not only survive the culture and its powers—but also be victorious knowing that Jesus the King of kings is all powerful.

March 12: “My Rock and My Fortress”

God is our fortress. We are to trust in Him, not in our own efforts, for protection and strength. In Psalm 18:1-3, David used the Hebrew word that is transliterated in English as masada to describe God as his rock and fortress. If we are to know God as our rock and fortress, we must open our eyes and hearts to the protection, strength, and freedom Jesus offers.

March 19: “The Time Had Fully Come”

God’s work in history is rarely sudden and dramatic. Rather, God works through the process of history, through the lives of people, to unfold His plan of redemption. Just as He used the Romans and others to prepare a culture and a setting in which the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus could be understood and received, He continues to use people today to bring about His redemptive plans.

March 26: “No Greater Love”

In order to communicate His deep love for us, Jesus described His love in terms of a family community—terms that His audience clearly understood. He compared Himself to a bridegroom who chose a bride (the church—US); who paid a steep price for her (His life on the cross); who has gone to prepare a place for her in his father’s house (heaven); and who will come again to take her home. This study will help us make sense of these metaphors that may have been understood then—but perhaps not with today’s culture.

April 2: “The Rabbi”

Jesus came to earth to minister amidst a cauldron of conflicting ideas and tumultuous politics. Much like today. He was surrounded by a diverse array of belief systems and assumed the role of a Jewish rabbi and taught a simple message that directed people toward fellowship with God. In this lesson we’ll meet the Rabbi and how his teachings still apply today.

April 9: “Language of Culture”

We need to discover and understand what shapes our culture. Jesus participated in the culture of His world and learned its politics, concerns, trends, and passions. He interacted with many different kinds of men, women and children: powerful leaders and impoverished peasants, religious teachers and lepers, farmers and fishermen, laborers and prostitutes, children of the rich and poor. We, too, cannot be His follower and remain isolated from our culture.

How do we do it without having the culture rule us rather than God?

April 16: NO BIBLE STUDY—EASTER

April 23: “Misguided Faith”

When we present Jesus to other people using methods other than those that He used and taught, we send the wrong message and defame Jesus’ reputation. There are many periods in history that exemplify this: The Crusades, Inquisition and prosperity preachers who become millionaires using the Gospel message to grow their own wealth rather than the Kingdom. There is much that is done in the Name of Jesus that runs contrary to His message and damages the reputation of the Church, His bride. Jesus wants us to confront and live in our culture—but as He did it and not as the world suggests.

April 30: “Living Water”

Just as David and his men needed the life-giving, living water of En Gedi in order to survive their time in the wilderness—God’s people today need God’s pure, refreshing, living water in order to serve him in the wilderness of life. This lesson will show what it means to be nourished and filled with His living water—and how that water will overflow and influence those around us.

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As Deportations Expand, Dreamers Have Hope

United Methodist leaders are strongly supporting a bipartisan bill in Congress that would extend protection from deportation for young people brought into the United States illegally as children. Nearly 750,000 young people, known as “Dreamers,” are part of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or DACA program, created by the Obama administration.

President Trump has moved quickly toward much more aggressive enforcement of immigration laws, fulfilling a campaign promise to secure the country’s borders and crack down on people who came to the United States illegally.

So far, the Trump administration has left DACA alone. Trump has spoken sympathetically of the Dreamers.

“We’re gonna show great heart,” he said last week. “DACA is a very, very difficult subject for me, I will tell you.”

But there’s been no explicit commitment to preserving DACA, and a Trump spokesman, Sean Spicer, said: “Everyone who is here illegally is subject to removal at any time.”

That’s why, said Jeania Ree V. Moore, director of Human and Civil Rights for the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, Congress needs to pass the Bar Removal of Individuals who Dream and Grow our Economy Act.

The legislation, also known as the BRIDGE Act, would provide relief from deportation for up to three years.

“In protecting DACA recipients, the BRIDGE Act seeks to protect these individuals and the immense contributions they bring to the American public,” said Moore. “They are university students, veterans of our military, leaders of our faith communities (including United Methodist churches), and valued workers. They are cherished members of society.” Moore added that DACA recipients often provide vital financial support for their families.

“If you assume each recipient has at least two family members, that is almost 1.5 million people immediately affected in concrete financial ways,” she pointed out.

The United Methodist Church is part of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, which issued a letter arguing that ending DACA without passing the BRIDGE Act would damage the U.S. economy.

According to Moore, the BRIDGE Act aligns with the denomination’s witness on immigration as people of faith. At the 2016 United Methodist Church General Conference in Portland, Oregon, the body amended and readopted Resolution #3281, “Welcoming the Migrant to the US.”

“In this resolution, the church affirmed hospitality, a welcome, and love for the sojourner as biblically mandated—as God’s call on the people of God to welcome the sojourner in our midst,” said Moore.

“Theologically, the church recognizes that ‘Jesus fully identifies with the sojourner to the point that to welcome the sojourner is to welcome Jesus himself.’”

The BRIDGE Act is co-sponsored by Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Republican from South Carolina, and Sen. Dick Durbin, a Democrat from Illinois. “It’s my firm belief most Americans want to fix a broken immigration system in a humane manner,” Graham said in a statement. “In my view, the DACA Executive Order issued by President Obama was unconstitutional ... However, I do not believe we should pull the rug out and push these young men and women—who came out of the shadows and registered with the federal government—back into the darkness.”

Durbin touted the accomplishments of the young people in question.

“Since the establishment of DACA, we’ve witnessed them realize their full potential—by opening businesses, becoming doctors and teachers, and serving our country in uniform,” Durbin said. “We cannot squander that talent and dedication and send them back to countries they barely know.”

Moore hopes individual United Methodists will phone or write their members of Congress, expressing support for the BRIDGE Act.

Evangelical groups also are among those supporting the legislation.

In an interview with Time magazine before taking office, Trump promised his administration would “work something out” for the Dreamers, but did not give details.

—the Rev. Gustavo Vasquez, UMNS

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The deadline for the April issue
 of **The Link** is **March 24**.
 Please email your copy to gbhoag@optonline.net.

Don't Forget Your Pledge

A Note About Restoring Hope

Our Restoring Hope capital campaign was completed several years ago but funds may continue to be contributed. All Restoring Hope contributions go to the Trustees who have continuing building expenses but no other revenue source. \$500 a month in Trustee funds go to pay off our boiler loan. Contributions can be made to either "Restoring Hope" or "Trustees".

For Methodists In Cuba: “These Are Good Times”

The small house in Placetas, bought by the Methodist Church in Cuba to start a mission, had fallen even further into disrepair.

Luckily, before he became a pastor, 30-year-old Ricardo Rivero worked as an assistant mason.

Those construction skills helped prepare Rivero and his wife, Ana Maria Torres, 38, for the endless tasks and hard physical labor involved in creating a habitable worship space and living area. There is no money to pay workers, but his father has assisted when he can.

Torres showed a series of photos on her laptop—part of the sound system for worship—that document the house’s previous condition, including damage from flooding after a rain. In three months, they have filled in the ground to prevent such runoff, removed a false ceiling, fixed the roof, repaired walls and installed a fence. There is no plumbing yet in the bathroom or kitchen. “There is no sink to wash in,” she says. “We are here by faith.”

Still, aided by their son Ricardo David, a lively toddler, the couple is drawing nearly 30 people to worship in this small house.

“I know that God is doing new things in Placetas,” the pastor says. In a way, their story reflects the story of the Methodist Church in Cuba—accepting the struggle, doing the hard work and building relationships—while keeping the faith.

Renewing connections

The rekindling of the relationship between Methodists in Cuba and United Methodists in the U.S. over the decades has not only renewed the Cuban church’s historic ties with the Florida Conference but also built a pipeline of practical assistance and spiritual exchange.

Through the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission program, U.S. work teams have been traveling to Cuba since November 1995. Initially, the focus was on Camp Canaan, a large church retreat property outside the city of Santa Clara, says Aldo Gonzalez, national coordinator for UMVIM-Cuba on behalf of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries.

An earlier camp was lost after the revolution. But in the 1990s, the church was able to buy land from a farmer and approached the government about creating a new camp. “The government allowed us, for the first time, to have brand new buildings,” Gonzalez says.

An agreement with the Cuba’s Office of Religious Affairs that allowed in one team of up to 12 members each month was expanded to two teams when renovation began on the building housing a new seminary in Havana. Now, on average, 20 UMVIM teams visit Cuba each year, he reports. The latest project is the construction of six homes for seminary professors.

But Camp Canaan, about 20 minutes from Santa Clara near the town of Miller, remains a favorite destination. In November, a six-person volunteer team was working there, led by Derial L. Ogburn, chair-

person of the South Carolina Conference’s UMVIM program.

This is his eighth visit to Cuba. The first time, Ogburn says, “I came expecting not to be welcomed,” but he had exactly the opposite experience. “I’ve just fallen in love with the place down here, fallen in love with the people.”

He is joined on this trip by five other Methodists from South Carolina, Georgia, and Indiana.

While the men pour concrete for a sidewalk behind a dormitory building, the women, brushes and rollers in hand, are inside learning more about applying Cuban paint and primer to a room.

Among the Cuban staff on hand is Alba Marina Acosta, a former English teacher. For the past nine years, she has served as the church’s translator for volunteer teams. “They ask me many questions about Cuba, the Cuban culture, my family,” she says. “They don’t have any clear idea about Cuba when they are in the States.” Solidarity and service in Cuba.

In Havana neighborhoods, people seem to know everyone and hear everything. “The thing about Cuba is we have learned to help one another—solidarity. Life here is very social.”

Read story

Dormitories are crucial at Camp Canaan because the Methodist church’s most important annual events occur there, says Onel Gómez, the camp’s principal since 2014, who lives on the property with his family. Other denominations also use the camp.

Continued on Page 8

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Methodists In Cuba (From Page 7)

Currently, up to 700 people can stay on the property at one time, which means events that draw more than that number, such as retreats for women and for youth, meet twice a year. Besides the dormitories, facilities include a worship space with 490 fixed seats and the capacity for more. The camp has pastoral houses, a cafeteria and small shop and a pool.

The dream is not quite finished. The church has the support of the government to build three more dormitories and another building that's more like a hotel.

More blessings

The easing of outside restrictions on Cuba also have been a bless-

ing. For many years, because of the U.S. embargo, United Methodist Volunteers in Mission was the only conduit to send funds raised by United Methodists through The Advance to support Cuban churches and projects, Gonzalez says.

But times have changed, he points out. The Board of Global Ministries finally obtained a license to send funds through Canada. Cubans in the U.S. send an estimated \$1.4 to 4 billion dollars annually to family members, helping grow the economy. And Cuban church members are providing support through their tithes.

During a Nov. 13 sermon at the church, Bishop Ricardo Pereira makes a case for the dedication of both the congregation and the church at large.

When Marianao marked an anniversary the previous week, the sanctuary, downstairs and yard were filled with people, he reminds them. The worship team is training more church musicians, seminary extension classes have opened across Cuba and church teams are providing hurricane relief. "When the government says we need the church to be more present in education and in health, we know the church is there," he adds.

More people are coming to Christ. "These are good times," the bishop asserts. "These are the times of salvation in Cuba."

—Linda Bloom, UMNS