

The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

March 2019

Preparing for Resurrection Sunday

Somebody tell me that it isn't the month of March already. What happened to February?

Well, to be honest, half of February my wife and I were on vacation—so perhaps that's why for me it feels as if there wasn't a month of February in 2019.

Be that as it may—I hope March doesn't come in like a lion—but more like a kitty cat. One of the things I can tell you is that on March 10 we will lose one hour of sleep due to Daylight Saving Time (*which I think is ridiculous and should be discontinued—but let me continue to be pastoral*).

Liturgically, March 6, Ash Wednesday, begins the wonderful season of Lent. My absolute favorite time of the year.

Methodists Strengthen LGBT Ban Church may split

See Page 4

But what is Lent? Is it something that you brush off of your jacket—oh no, that's lint, not Lent? Well, the season of Lent lasts forty days, not counting the Sundays in between.

As already mentioned, it begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday.

The word Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, which means "spring."

The forty days represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his earthly ministry.

Now, where do we as Christians fit in all of this?

Let me try to explain exactly where we fit in.

For one, it is a time of repentance. In other words, to consider turning our lives around by some changes in our thinking and actions. It can also include a period of fasting. Most will fast from food for a certain period of time. For example, fasting lunch on certain days. I once fasted from television for forty days—and boy, did I get a lot done and spent some great quality time with people and other activities.

And, of course, using such time to engage the scriptures and prayer. All of this helps us to lead up to the glorious celebration of Easter morning.

Continued on Page 2

WORSHIP IN MARCH

Mar. 3—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara,
Luke 9:28-36

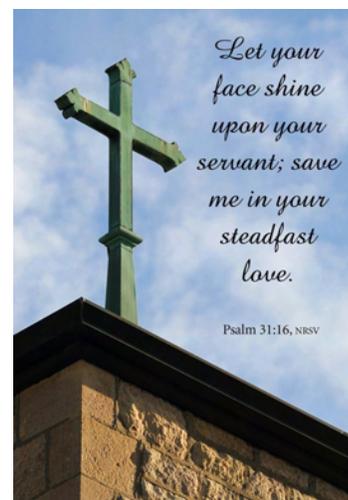
Mar. 6—Ash Wednesday, joint service at Bayport UMC, 7:00 PM

Mar. 10—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara,
Luke 4:1-13

Mar. 17—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara,
Luke 13:31-36

Mar. 24—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara,
Luke 13:1-9

Mar. 31—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara,
Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32



Circle of Concern

For Bereavement:

Jolly family, Simonsen family, Bloom family, Hawkins family

For Guidance and Healing:

Bruce Kirshner, Katie, Preto family, Roseann, Millie, Ann, Dillon, Kevin Raynor, Delarosa family, Anthony, Jim Davis, Louise Ruso Ellis, Jerry, Lorena McClure, Tara, Justin, Tom Scheldrick, Kenny, Christine Swezey, Luca, Mike Iarocci, Marge, Dawn Belvadre, Robert Gonzalez, Eve, Richard, Carroll Family, Kenny, Juanita, Maura, Fran, Ashley & Baby, Henry Ohlsen, Frank Carroll, Aven family, Igel family, Susan, Laura Clifford, Tony Palermo, Barbara Widera, Eva, Cathy, Lisa, Ernie & Alice Titus, Peter & Lorriane Brenner

These at Home:

Lee Hollowell

These in Rehab or Nursing Care:

Geri Sheridan, Robert Krawzak in Brookhaven Health Care Facility, 801 Gazzola Dr., East Patchogue
Alice Zahnd in Gurwin Jewish Nursing Facility, 68 Hauppauge Rd., Commack, NY

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

March Birthdays

March 6 Jace Rogers

March 14 Jack Ryan

March 26 Philip Capobianco

Lent (From Page 1)

In ancient times, Lent was a season of preparation for new converts getting ready for baptism. Imagine that? People actually spending 40 days to prepare for their baptisms. We may not practice that today—but we should practice a genuine focus on a deeper relationship with God.

So, Lent is a great time to increase our spiritual disciplines. Fasting, yes, when we give up something. But I would like to suggest for us to consider taking on something new that will assist the church and honor God.

If you are not already engaged in one of our church's ministries—perhaps now is the time to jump on board and serve. Service is also a much-needed spiritual discipline. Perhaps it could be a time to consider increasing your financial giving to our church's ministry.

I know most folks are giving generously—but I also know that our church is in need of additional funds to run our church and support its ministries.

So, we may give up a meal or television during Lent—but we can also take on additional prayer, studying the scriptures, serving in the ministry or consider possibly increasing our financial support. But whatever you do—approach this beautiful season as a time of spiritual preparation for commemorating and celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our own resurrection one day when we leave this life for the next.

Wishing you the very best Lenten Season ever.

In His Grip,

—Pastor Chuck

A Prayer For Lent

Forty days alone,
a wilderness of thoughts,
tempting and inviting thoughts,
which could so easily have distracted you from your task, your mission, your vision.

Yet you emerged, stronger and more attuned to all that had to be done, despite a time constraint that to our eyes would have seemed hopeless.

We too live in stressful times. Demands are made of our time, that leave so little for the important things of life.

We are easily distracted in the wilderness of our lives, by every call to go this way or that, to turn stone to bread leap from mountains, and do all that would keep us from the truth.

We listen to the voices of this world, and ignore the one who endured all this and so much more, and emerged triumphant, that we might not have to suffer so. Forgive us, Father, when we get distracted from our task.

Forgive us those times when we try to be all things to all men, and fail to be anything to anyone.

—faithandworship.com

A Parking Request

The Trustees are making a special request of those attending church services to restrict use of the church parking lot to those who are handicapped.

Access is needed to the handicapped ramp There is ample parking in the lot across the street.

United Methodist Church of Patchogue

March 2019

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

United Methodists Vote to Keep Traditional Marriage Stance

After days of passionate debate, deliberation, and prayer—and years of tension within the denomination—The United Methodist Church (UMC) voted Feb. 26 to maintain its traditional stance against same-sex marriage and non-celibate gay clergy, bolstered by a growing conservative contingent from Africa.

The plan passed, with 438 votes in favor and 384 against (53% to 47%), in the final hours of a special UMC conference held in St. Louis to address the issue of human sexuality.

The decision leaves a sizable, vocal opposition, ensuring the exit of many progressive pastors and churches in the largest mainline Protestant body in the US.

After the final vote, protesters began chanting “no” and “stop the harm” through the rest of the session until the conference ended over an hour later.

The “Traditional Plan” preserves existing UMC positions and adds further accountability measures for those who violate them by performing same-sex ceremonies or ordaining gay clergy.

It was not the outcome many Americans, including most bishops, had been praying for.

New York Annual Conference Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton called the outcome “very confusing” and noted parts of the plan may ultimately be ruled unconstitutional under church

law. He said, “There are no clear pathways for those who want to stay or those who want to leave.” He said, “there are people who are very, very sad” and others who are “angry or confused” but said “we’ll continue the struggle.”

Before the final vote, Long Island delegate Fred Brewington asked the delegates, “Do we dwell on worst case scenarios or do we pray?” He said, “We can have faith.”

In the States, a large portion of Methodists wanted to see the church accommodate LGBT ceremonies and clergy, as other mainline denominations have done in recent years. One poll through Mainstream UMC reported at least two-thirds of US delegates supported the inclusive “One Church Plan” instead.

But the growing global presence among the 12 million-member denomination held more sway. Methodists from outside the US, who favor more traditional positions on sexuality, made up 41 percent of the general conference’s 864 delegates. A full 30 percent were from Africa.

Horatio Vilanculo, a delegate from Mozambique, said that the Traditional Plan “keeps the church in the way of God” and “is what God wants in the church in this world.”

Though the Traditional Plan was ultimately approved, some amendments were rushed through the process to be able to vote before the conference’s 6:30 p.m. deadline. Certain details may be later overturned upon judicial review within the denomination.

Many leaders who favored alternate options that would sanction greater LGBT inclusion pledged to leave if the denomination did not change its stance. The “One Church Plan,” backed by the bishops, would have allowed individual pastors, churches, and regional bodies to follow their own conscience on the issues of homosexual marriage and ordination.

The UMC also voted to pass a disaffiliation petition, often called a “gracious exit” plan, to help the transition for those who felt they could not remain part of the denomination.

Though all UMC church property is deeded to the regional body, under the new legislation, churches with a two-thirds vote among professing members would be allowed to leave with their property after paying any pension liabilities and outstanding financial obligations. Some are concerned that these accommodations will facilitate a larger number of churches leaving.

Rob Renfroe, a pastor at The Woodlands UMC in the Houston area, said he believes the exodus of churches under the Traditional Plan will ultimately be smaller than those that would have left under the One Church Plan.

“But again, some are so frustrated by what has happened that they just want to be done,” he said, citing cases where individual churches and leaders may have felt in conflict with their regional bodies after years of disagreement. “Every congregation will have to think and pray and go

through a period of holy conference to discern what God is calling them to do.”

A faction of evangelical leaders backing the UMC’s current stances were poised to create a new denomination had the One Church Plan passed. “Some evangelical churches are frustrated with the dysfunction in the church and may still elect to leave, but we don’t anticipate that this will be in any coordinated fashion,” said Keith Boyette, president of the Wesleyan Covenant Association.

Many prominent US Methodist leaders walked out with a heavy heart disappointed with what transpired over the four-day legislative meeting.

Clara Esther, delegate, civil rights activist, and vice president of United Methodist Women said that the denomination has spent millions of dollars on the tagline “open hearts, open minds, open doors,” but “we are not living it out.”

“Many of us have members that will leave and have already notified us to tell us,” said Virginia pastor Tom Berlin, before the One Church Plan was brought before the delegation for a second vote. “After watching yesterday’s proceedings ... they feel their church is exhibiting itself as being against gay people.”

Now that the gathering has concluded, many are turning their eyes toward how they move forward together.

“I pray we, as a denomination can now move forward, working with each other in the spirit of Christian love and joining together as one,” said Bishop Scott J. Jones of the Texas Annual Conference. “We are stronger

together in serving God’s mission as a diverse body of Christ.”

At a press conference Tuesday, fellow bishops discussed the factions of the denomination whose petitions did not get passed. “My heroes are the people who have been harmed by the church and yet stay at the table,” said Bishop Ken Carter of the Florida Annual Conference.

Clergy and lay delegates of the New York Annual Conference will meet in special session on March 16 to consider a way forward for the local conference.

Sights now turn to the denomination’s next global legislative gathering in 2020 in Minneapolis, where the UMC will consider legislation for all of its normal business—with an additional 18 delegates from Africa present.

—Jeremy Steele, *Christianity Today*

SOS Campaign Update

Recently Pastor Chuck and Ken Schultz attended a meeting at The Congregational Church of Patchogue hosted by the Suffolk County Police Department.

The purpose of the meeting was to present security measures that would improve safety in our churches. Based on what was learned at that meeting and with the assistance of Conrad Queen, Pastor Chuck presented a number of security enhancement recommendations at the last Church Council meeting.

The measures are wide ranging and include upgrading our video camera system, panic buttons at strategic locations, emergency locks to secure

safe areas within the church, 2 AED units, trauma kits, CPR training, upgraded exterior lighting and supplementary exit signs mounted at low levels for improved visibility during smoky conditions.

Working with our historic preservation consultant and restoration contractor, we are commencing work on the exterior brick walls as the weather begins to improve. Work will focus on the east, north and south walls.

The scope of work includes repairs to broken or loosened bricks, re-pointing the mortar joints, cleaning the bricks and finally sealing the bricks.

Several different brick-cleaning agents may be necessary to address the varying conditions encountered at different locations. The contractor will perform tests to determine which agents will be needed.

Work is still to be completed in the belfry, the bell tower housing our church bell, to address structural concerns. Cracks had developed in the beams installed during the original church construction 130 years ago.

These timbers are to be left in place and wrapped with plywood panels to prevent further cracking and to restore the structural integrity to the beams.

Additional work remaining to be done includes reglazing and sealing of the windows; replacing the exterior Plexiglas covering the Rose Window and reconstruction of Pastor’s office damaged by water infiltration last fall.

Please remember your SOS pledges to help keep the campaign going. Thanks to all for their contributions and hard work.

—Jim Graham

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Don't Forget Your Pledge

"I'm going into all the world to make disciples of all nations. So I might be a little late for dinner."

The deadline for the February issue of **The Link** is Mar. 22
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.

Be Careful Using The Bible

One must be careful in using the Bible as a source of moral standards. Throughout history, the Bible has too often been used to justify one's own moral preferences rather than to seek God's will about human behavior. The Bible has been quoted to support slavery and segregation. The Bible continues to be used to oppose women's work outside the home and female ordination.

Others quote the same Bible to oppose slavery and segregation and to affirm women's rights as equal to men's.

In studying the Bible, it is necessary to realize that often God is cited as supporting whatever values are normative at that time in history. Those are "timely" standards — standards valued for a time — but not necessarily "timeless" standards that are applicable for all time and all circumstances.

Remember that the Bible affirms Abraham having sexual relations with Hagar, Sarah's maid, in order to produce his first son, Ishmael. Only later did Sarah produce Isaac, through whom Jews trace their ancestry. Remember King Solomon's legendary 1,000 wives and concubines. Today we would call Abraham's and Solomon's sexual actions adultery, and not condone such actions for the behavior of others. Remember that, in ancient Israel, eating shellfish and wearing clothing of two different fabrics at the same time were called "abominations." Walking too many paces on the Sabbath was considered sinful. And, it was permissible to

make slaves of captured enemies. So much of what was considered sinful or acceptable was simply the norms or standards that were practiced by the majority of the people, but condemned today.

Sadly, that practice has not changed. As a child, I was not allowed to have playing cards in our house. Dancing and even going to the movies were frowned upon, and drinking alcoholic beverages was not allowed. I was told that Jesus and his disciples drank only grape juice!

Today, all of those things are permissible even by religious people, showing that moral standards do evolve. I remember the insightful words of James Russell Lowell: "New occasions teach new duties; time makes ancient good uncouth. They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of truth."

That brings us to a question sharply dividing the Christian community in our time: How are we to think about and act toward the LGBTQ community? We know that the majority of Americans do not oppose homosexual relations, yet others believe that while every person is a child of God, homosexual behavior is a choice and is sinful, and marriage is only to be affirmed when between a man and a woman. A key question for me is: Is that position simply an expression of ancient and current cultural norms, or is that the timeless moral position, sanctioned by God?

Think about this: The writers of the Bible did not know about germs. That's why some thought that when a person became sick, they were possessed by demons. Today, almost all

people of faith understand germs and infections, and they treat such conditions with antibiotics such as penicillin.

The writers of the Bible also did not know about genetics, but we do. We understand that we do not choose the color of our eyes, the texture of our hair or the pigment of our skin. Likewise, most scientists and psychologists of today believe that same-gender orientation is not a matter of choice.

Let's go a bit deeper into the issue of morality. How do we distinguish between values that are "timely" — those that are affirmed as norms by the majority of people at one time in history, but are changed or updated in another generation because of new understandings, and the values that are "timeless" and applicable in all situations and at all times in history? What is an eternal value? Here is where the Bible, taken as a whole and seen in its depths, can guide us.

At creation, it is clear that human beings were the ultimate purpose of creation: "Created a little less than God, and crowned with glory and honor" (Psalms 8). We have been created in the image of God, called into being by God breathing His Spirit into us. All of the Bible is about how we are to be in a right relationship with God, and that relationship with God being expressed in a right relationship with ourselves and with others.

Second only to God, humans are the most important entities in existence. Therefore, what is moral in a timeless sense is whatever is helpful

Continued on Page 8

10 Church St., Patchogue, NY 11772

The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Pastoral Minister
 Camille Flynn, Administrative Assistant
 Office Phone: 631-475-0381 | Fax: 631-475-3132
 Email: PatchogueUMC@Yahoo.com
 Office Hours: 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM., Closed Monday
Worship Video Live Streaming at PatchogueUMC.Org

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



Using Bible (From Page 7)

to human beings, and what is immoral is whatever is hurtful to human beings. That is a timeless value. It cuts across all times and circumstances. It helps us separate temporary customs from values that are lasting.

Why oppose slavery and segregation? Because they are hurtful. Why do the Ten Commandments forbid murder, stealing, lying, adultery and coveting? Because they are hurtful. On the other hand, what is hurtful about playing cards, dancing or having a glass of wine with a meal?

If a person is born with a same-gender orientation, why must they be prohibited from having an intimate relationship with another person, forced into isolation and loneliness,

just because many people unfairly oppose that? The fact that some Christians do not approve does not make such a relationship hurtful.

Almost everyone affirms close, caring relationships between men and between women. We become concerned only when the sexual component is added. Why? All close relationships are much more than sexual. Even heterosexual marriage is about friendship, mutuality and caring. We should wrestle with the reality that close, same-sex friendships are applauded; it is only when the sexual component is added that we become concerned. Again, why? Why not have the same moral standards for same-gender relationships as for heterosexual relationships: no promiscui-

ty, no coercion, no insensitivity. Instead, seek commitment, faithfulness, mutual sensitivity, caring and support. Who does that hurt? Instead, it treats all people as persons of equal worth, as children of God, and encouraged to enjoy mutually affirming, intimate, helpful relationships with others.

To “love your neighbor” is to do the helpful thing and to avoid doing the hurtful thing, even when cultural conditioning makes that uncomfortable. Helping, not hurting, looks and sounds like Jesus to me.

—the Rev. James R. McCormick,
 UMNS