

Circle of Concern

For Joys:

Food Pantry support from Island Harvest.

For Bereavement:

The Rogers family for the passing of Don.

For Guidance and Healing:

Joan & Mike Welsh, Cynthia Holmes, Jackie Poccia, Helen Melissakis, Marge Kassner.

These at Home:

Greg Wehner.

These who are in Rehab or Nursing Care Facilities:

Leona Kreamer in Brookhaven Memorial Hospital, Brookhaven, NY.

Alice Zahnd in Affinity Skilled Living, 305 Locust Ave. Oakdale, NY.

Esther Davies in Brookhaven Health Facility, 801 Gazzolla Drive, E. Patchogue, NY.

Ed Dew in Sunrise Assisted Living, Holbrook, NY.

Pray for our church and her future directions!

Lent: A Time to Fast and Pray

Lent is the time of year when many Christians seek the truth behind the paradox of subtraction equals addition.

Fasting, practiced faithfully by biblical figures, is coming back into vogue. More and more Christians find the spiritual discipline brings enlightenment and enrichment to their lives.

"I'm not skipping a meal because in place of that meal I'm actually dining with God," says the Rev. Jacqui King,

pastor of Nu Faith Community United Methodist Church in Houston.

Fasting has long roots in many Christian traditions, including Methodism. John Wesley fasted twice a week when he was young and called fasting one of the "acts of piety," along with praying and studying the Bible.

Wesley's example inspired the Rev. Holly Boardman, a retired United Methodist minister now living in Orlando, Fla. In the traditional vows taken at her ordination, she promised to practice fasting and to recommend it to others.

"There have been times I'd be wrestling with some issue in a church," Boardman said, "and when I fasted and prayed about it, I felt like I heard an answer from God," Boardman said.

"God speaks sometimes when you're open, when you're listening. Fasting sets the stage for hearing God."

King says preparation is all-important to conducting a fast. She prepares her house "by removing those things from which I'm fasting" She also prepares her family. Her children are grown now, but when they were young the Kings had a family meeting to talk about what each would give up for a fast. The children were athletes and could not eliminate meals, but they had other options, she said, such as removing certain foods from their diet.

Registered dietitian Jamie Pope, who teaches nutrition at Vanderbilt University's School of Nursing in Nashville, Tenn., warns people to

consult their physicians when contemplating a fast of more than 24 hours. The body begins to dip into its reserves after that time, she said. A fast could be particularly dangerous for a person with an eating disorder, she said.

King understands. "Some people can't fast from food, because of medical conditions. I encourage them to think about other things that distract their attention and may keep them from praying. Turn the TV off; turn the stereo equipment off. I even encourage people to fast from their cell phones."

King further prepares by putting notepads in places where "I read my Bible. When God begins to speak to

Continued on Page 8

March Birthdays

- Mar. 2** Dawn Young
- Mar. 2** Debbie Young
- Mar. 7** Courtney Shadbolt
- Mar. 8** Suzanne Dodge
- Mar. 10** Valerie Frederick
- Mar. 11** Leanna Stone
- Mar. 12** Justin Hubbard
- Mar. 12** Isabel Chae
- Mar. 14** James Hingle
- Mar. 14** Laura Ann Feldman
- Mar. 18** Matthew Strong
- Mar. 19** Marguerite Abate
- Mar. 22** Diane Artus
- Mar. 22** Anne Shrimpton
- Mar. 27** Matthew Zotos

The deadline for the April issue of **The Link** is **Mar. 20**. Please email your copy to gbhoag@optonline.net.

United Methodist Church of Patchogue

March 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9 a.m.—Bible Study 10 a.m.—Communion Worship/Kids/Breakfast Club 2:30 p.m.—Pentecostal MF	2 7 p.m.—Prayer Ministry 7:00 p.m.—AA	3 9 a.m.—Al Anon 10 a.m.—Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	4	5 7:30 p.m.—Choir	6 9:30 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—N/A	7
8 9 a.m.—Bible Study 10 a.m.—Worship/Kids/Breakfast Club 11:30 a.m.—Finance 2:30 p.m.—Pentecostal MF	9 7 p.m.—Prayer Ministry 7:00 p.m.—AA	10 9 a.m.—Al Anon 10 a.m.—Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	11 7 p.m.—PUMY Group meeting	12 7:30 p.m.—Choir	13 9:30 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—N/A	14 UMW meeting
15 9 a.m.—Bible Study 10 a.m.—Worship/Kids/Breakfast Club \UMCOR collection 2:30 p.m.—Pentecostal MF	16 7 p.m.—Prayer Ministry 7:00 p.m.—AA	17 9 a.m.—Al Anon 10 a.m.—Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	18	19 7:30 p.m.—Choir	20 9:30 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—N/A	21
22 9 a.m.—Bible Study 10 a.m.—Worship/Kids/Breakfast Club/Heat Offering 11:30 a.m.—Trustees 2:30 p.m.—Pentecostal MF	23 7 p.m.—Prayer Ministry 7:00 p.m.—AA	24 9 a.m.—Al Anon 10 a.m.—Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	25	26 5 p.m.—Wesley Dinner 7:30 p.m.—Choir	27 9:30 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—N/A	28 PUMY Group—Animal Shelter Mission
29 8 a.m.—Palm Sunday Breakfast 9 a.m.—Bible Study 10 a.m.—Worship/Kids/Breakfast Club 2:30 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 4 p.m.—BAFFA concert	30 7 p.m.—Prayer Ministry 7:00 p.m.—AA	31 9 a.m.—Al Anon 10 a.m.—Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA				

the Way

May God's peace be with you!

S **seek: to search for; to try to find; to ask for; to try to get or achieve.**

Seeking has been on my mind quite a bit lately, for a number of reasons. As I continue to ponder this "seeking", two things have occurred to me: 1) that it is a word that involves committed and continuous action, and 2) that Jesus Christ used it quite a bit. Being a curious—and OCD—type of guy, I went to Strong's Concordance, and found that Jesus used the word (in some form) 37 times in the Gospels.

I came away from this little foray with the impression that, with a few exceptions, Jesus generally used the term "seek" in three ways: our seeking of the true path, our seeking of everything BUT the true path, and God (through Jesus Christ) seeking to gather close those who love Him. There are a few other contexts, but when you dig into the "red letter" stuff on a mission of discovery it's really amazing what you can find.

You all know by now that God didn't put me on this earth to be a professor, especially of the Bible. Actually, there are a lot of times when I feel absolutely clueless as to why I am even here, especially since I didn't expect to live to see 2007. Or 2011. And so I, too, am a seeker. The irony, of course, is that when I am willing to take the time to "Be still, and know that [He] is God", it turns out that God is right there with me, carrying me,

loving me, and helping me to be of use to someone else, if I only let Him. Every moment of every day. He is a GREAT seeker, and what He seeks, He always finds.

So what am I seeking? Indeed, why am I seeking? If God has provided everything you and I need to be at peace in this world and the next (see my favorite Bible passage, Philippians 4:6-7), and if we are those whom God has called, what's left for us to do? I'm guessing you all know me well enough by now to realize that those questions are rhetorical.

I certainly have an answer to that last one; in fact, the answer applies to all those questions. You'll find it right there in Micah 6:8, possibly the best and most straightforward Q&A session in the Bible. Okay, you don't have to do the homework on this one, I'll give you a freebie: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God". Simple as can be, right? Uh-huh. Sure. I find that it's hard enough to do any one of those during the day with any consistency; if I tried to practice all three, I'd probably break out in hives.

And yet, impossibly, that's what I seek to do. Some deliciously hopeful ember deep inside says, "yes, God will always give you the strength, the support, and the will to reach out to others in His service". The interesting thing for me is that the ember is still there – since moving down here, it would seem that I have allowed myself to be drawn into a sort of spiritual stasis, rather than trusting

that God knows what He's doing, and making myself open and available to whatever plans He has for me.

Perhaps just writing these last two paragraphs was cathartic for me. I'm SO glad that God has a gentle sense of humor.

And so, I don't know where this journey will take me next – I just know that it has been given new life, breathed in by the Spirit (this column started out to be something entirely different than the way it ended, go figure). I have no concept as to what the mission will look like, except that it will be in God's hands. And now I have a mission statement for my seeking. Acting justly for me is to treat others with respect and compassion, without judgment. Loving mercy means actions based on forgiveness, and learning to forgive as Jesus forgave—by that I mean completely, and without reservation. Walking humbly with my God? Gulp. Maybe if I pray and work real hard on the first two, I'll start to get a handle on that last one.

All miracles gratefully accepted!
Yours in Christ,

—Tom Bracken

BAFFA Concert

On Palm Sunday, Mar. 29, Bay Area Friends of the Fine Arts will hold its Spring Concert in our sanctuary at 4:00 PM.

The Bay Area Chorus is directed by our own Martha Campanile.

There will be no admission but donations are accepted.

Who We Are

Each Sunday, we go to church and greet each other in friendship and fellowship. We chat during coffee hour. We share ideas in Bible study and work together on mission projects and fund raisers.

But, what do we actually know about each other?

For all our shared experiences, each of us is unique; a special combination of nature and nurture. We have been shaped by a combination of genetics, the influence of family, community, education, society, religion, geography, and our experiences as children and adults.

Not long ago, I asked one of our congregation members, Ernest Ikpe, who had knee surgery last year, how he was doing. "Fine," he said, and went on to mention that his knee problems probably originated from playing soccer. I must have looked surprised (Ernest is very dignified and I hadn't envisioned him as the athletic type), so he smiled and said he would bring in something to show me.

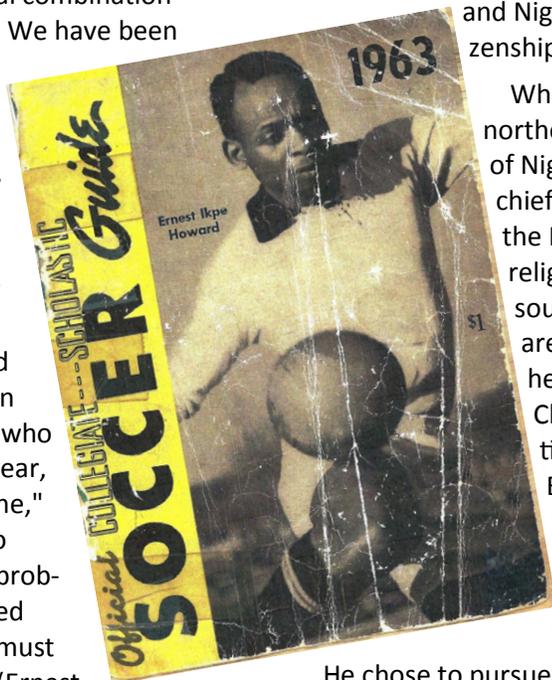
A few weeks later, he handed me a copy of the 1963 official Collegiate Scholastic Soccer Guide, published by the NCAA. Front and center on that cover was a lithe 24 year old Ernest (Iron-Man) Ikpe, All-American soccer star at Howard University in Washington, DC.

Who knew?

That started me thinking. Wouldn't it be interesting to learn something about each other beyond the context of churchly interaction. So, starting with this March issue, "Who We Are" will feature an article about one of our

congregation members. Of course, this very first one will highlight Ernest Ikpe.

A native of Nigeria, Ernest comes from a prominent and large family in Akwa Ibom state, in the southern part of the country. His father was an educator, tribal chief and family patriarch. He was recognized by the British government with the prestigious Member of the British Empire award. (MBE). Ernest now fills the role of family patriarch. (He holds both American and Nigerian citizenship)



While the northern part of Nigeria chiefly follows the Islamic religion, the southern areas are heavily Christian. Thus, Ernest is a life long United Methodist.

He chose to pursue his college education at Howard primarily because the first president of Nigeria, Dr. Azikiwe, had graduated from there. Originally, an Electrical engineering major, Ernest later switched to Business Management and received his undergraduate degree in that field.

It should be noted that, academic and athletic accomplishments aside, one of the most significant aspects of attendance at Howard is that he met his witty and elegant wife Madge there. Madge is also well educated, having an advanced degree in her chosen field. Married for more than 40 years, they have three children and four grandchildren.

In 1976, Ernest was sent by the Nigerian government to Manchester Polytechnic in England, where he re-

ceived an advanced degree in hotels and tourism. Ernest's business career includes a position as general manager of the Hotel and Tourism Board of Nigeria (1977-1984) and 26.6 years as a contract manager for the City of New York. (Ironically, for a time, we both worked for the same agency, but since we were in different buildings, we never knew each other until we met here at Patchogue UMC.)

Ernest and Madge joined this church in 1999 and have been faithful members ever since. Some of you know them as the couple who collects eyeglasses, which they then take to Nigeria and give to those who are in need of them.

Some years ago, as part of the Missions and Outreach Committee, they helped to organize and implement a wonderful event at church, featuring Nigerian music, dancers, food and art. What a lively and informative evening!

Ernest has been a lay speaker for a number of years and always delivers a meaningful message. He also helped to facilitate a recent study on Mary Magdalene.

When asked what he would like to see happen at our church, he stressed the following: 1. That the United Methodist Men become revitalized and meet and function on a consistent basis. 2. That our current and future outreach programs motivate more of the community around us to become part of our church community. 3. That more members become lay speakers.

Finally, when asked what one thing he would like people to know about him, after thinking carefully, Ernest replied that he believes strongly in a society of laws; in structure and organization based on a foundation of mutual respect.

Thank you Ernest.

—Barbara Becker

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Note: Payment must accompany order

Please enter our (my) order for the following plants:

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|----------------------------|------------------------------|
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| ___ Pink Tulips @ \$9.00 | ___ Pink Hyacinths @ \$9.00 |
| ___ White Lilies @ \$10.00 | |

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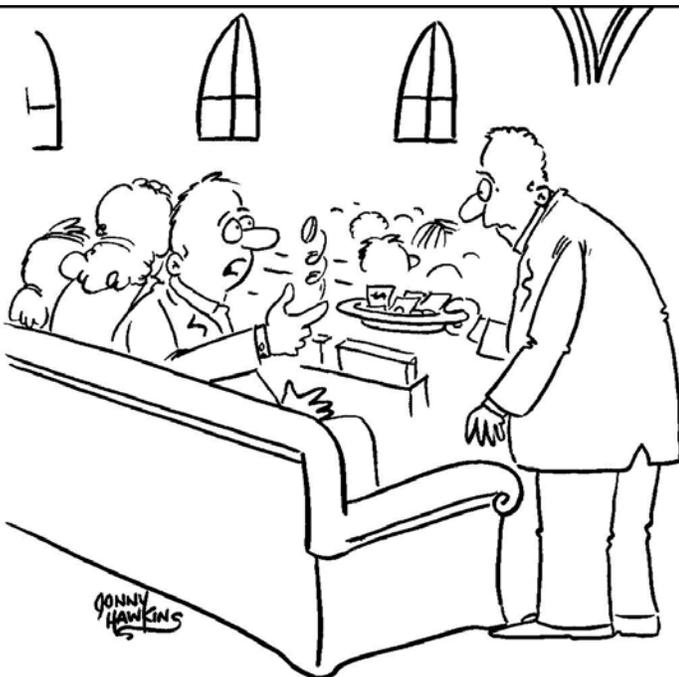
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Thank you for your order(s).

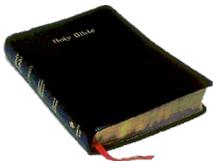


"Just a minute. I'm flipping a coin to see if I should tithe this or not."

JOHNNY HAWKINS

Sunday 9 AM Study Group for Lent

Our Lenten study group is meeting at 9:00 a.m. in the Cloud Room. The title of our study is "Seeing Ourselves in Those Confronted by Jesus" which looks at groups from Jesus' time, including the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots.



The study will also look at who in the twenty-first-century church is like the members of these groups. There is no study book to purchase but please let group leader Debbie Kolacki know if you're interested in participating to ensure we have enough handouts for everyone.

You may contact her at debbiekolacki88@gmail.com or 363-6499. The study will continue on March 1, March 8, March 15, and March 22. You do not have to attend every study to participate.

—Debbi Kolacki

Remembering Selma

This piece is taken from a series of interviews with Rev. Kent Millard, retired United Methodist Clergy, who went to Selma, Alabama as a Boston University School of Theology student, after hearing Dr. King call for seminary students to come to Selma to support the voting rights marches.

RETHINK CHURCH: Dr. Millard, thank you for spending some time with me today to share your experiences at Selma. What brought you to Selma in the first place?

DR. KENT MILLARD: It was in March 1965 that Dr. King called Dr. Harold DeWolf, his major professor, to enroll some seminary students to come to Selma to support the voting rights marches. A total of 80 students from Boston University School of Theology (22 students) Harvard Divinity School, and Andover Newton Seminary went to Selma to march for voting rights.

Segregation laws all over the south effectively prevented African Americans from voting, and some places required people to be literate before they could vote. But it wasn't the same requirement for everyone. If a white person came to register to vote they were given a first graders book to read. If a Black person came to register they were given something written in German, French, Italian or some other foreign language, and if they couldn't read it, were declared illiterate and disqualified from registering to vote.

I had heard Dr. King speak on television in August, 1963, when he gave his "I have a dream" speech at the Lincoln memorial in Washington DC and was moved in his dream of a time when African Americans "would not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

I followed the Civil Rights movement closely and was inspired by Dr. King's sermons about loving our enemies as a model of what Christ called us to do and by offering "non-violent resistance" to those who oppress others. When Dr. King called and asked for marchers I said "yes" because I thought it was the Christian and moral response to which God called me.

RC: Was going to Selma anything like you had imagined? Did you have any expectations, hopes, or apprehensions?

KM: We knew that Rev. James Reeb, a Unitarian Minister from Boston, had been killed in Selma the previous week for marching for voting rights. We expected that there would be confrontations with the KKK and others but we just prayed that we would survive and hopefully help move the nation towards justice for all people, regardless of race.

We ended up spending about 4-5 days in Selma while Dr. King negotiated with President Johnson. When seminarians arrived, they went through non-violent training led by Jesse Jack-

son and Andy Young. They were pushed and shoved and called names, to simulate what they might experience on these marches and gatherings, and all they were to do was keep singing and marching. If they were hit, they were to get to the ground and cover.

We were given these instructions: pair up and march, so that if law enforcement or anyone pulled you out of line, you'll never go alone. One black woman I was paired with, said: "Sonny, you look scared. You march with me, you'll be alright." There were about 50-70 who marched to courthouse. Klansmen and others were shouting and throwing stones, but they didn't attack because cameras were there.

When we marched to the courthouse in Selma, a black person would try to register to vote and be turned away. Then a Black pastor would offer a prayer praying for all those hateful people shouting ugly things at us that God "would change their hearts of hate to hearts of love, their hearts of stone to hearts of flesh."

Forty years later in 2005 I was invited to speak to a United Methodist pastor's school in Alabama where I told that story. Afterwards, a white pastor came up to me and said "I was in Selma at the same time you were but I was on the other side." I asked him "what changed you?" He said "Jesus Christ. I got so filled with hatred I couldn't stand myself. My wife convinced me to go to a Methodist revival meeting. I went forward and confessed my sins and Christ came and replaced my hatred with love. I decided to go into the Methodist ministry to try to undo some of the bad things I had done to people in my younger years."

I remembered the prayer of the Black pastor 40 years earlier: "turn their hearts of hate to hearts of love" and realized it had been fulfilled in the life of this man.

—UMNS

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Fast and Pray for Lent (From Page 2)

me, I'm not having to look for a piece of paper. It's there, along with a pen," King said. "I'm a journaler. I look at prayer, fasting and journaling alike." She also suggests accompanying a fast with devotional literature to guide prayer and reflection. One might use the long-familiar words of a hymn and see them in a new way. The Internet has an array of devotional materials. In October, the Rev. Clint Ware, associate pastor of First United Methodist Church in Clinton, Miss., challenged his congregation to fast once a week.

"I was surprised to see the emphasis Jesus put on it. He talked about three things in the Sermon on

the Mount, and he put them all under the heading of acts of righteousness. He said, 'When you give to the poor..., when you pray..., when you fast....'

"When you read this, you see that Jesus put all three of these on the same level. He expected that they would be done. We place emphasis on prayer and giving to the poor, but we haven't put the same emphasis on fasting as Jesus did."

Bret Walker in Pitman, N.J., also noticed Christ's emphasis on fasting in Matthew's recounting of the Sermon on the Mount.

He first fasted as an individual, and then he invited other members at Pitman United Methodist Church to join him once a month in a 24-hour fast. Eight people became a core group as the Wesleyan Fasting Society. They time their fasts to coincide with the church's celebration

of Holy Communion on the first Sunday of each month.

"Every mealtime or any time I feel hunger pangs, I use that time to pray," Walker said. He has felt more "committed to God. I bring my physical hunger, put it out of the way, and find my spiritual hunger."

July 2009 was difficult as the fasting day fell on July 4. Walker told the society members they "weren't going to lose their place in heaven," if they skipped the practice that month.

Boardman, too, believes fasting should not be too legalistic. "Fasting doesn't have to be so black and white and all or nothing," she said. "It's a gracious thing, not an imposition. It's a gracious devotion rather than a rigorous one."

—Kathrin Chavez, UMNS