

# The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

March 2021

## Drawing Closer to God During Lent

I suspect one year after we were all stricken with this horrific COVID pandemic, one could start off the month of March with a little lighthearted humor. Is that okay without making light of the seriousness of this dreadful virus? Well, here we go—March 1st is National Peanut Butter Lovers Day. How's that for a celebration? Who doesn't love peanut butter? Perhaps with the exception of individuals who unfortunately have peanut allergies—which can be very serious.

On a more serious note --we are now well into the season of Lent. Do people even know what the word Lent means? Some mistaken it as lint—little particles that stick to your clothing or accumulate in the screen of your clothes

dryer. Lent is shortened from the old English word, "lencten". This early Anglo-Saxon word's original meaning was related to "Springtime." Later, it would be adopted by the early church as being rather than just a season in the year to a season in the church's calendar.

The selected forty days between Ash Wednesday and Easter morning, not including the Sundays, symbolizes the forty days Jesus fasted and prayed in the wilderness. And, in this biblical account, how he resisted temptation and was able to ward off the devil. Thus, the church established this season for Christians to be self-reflective while practicing some fundamental disciplines of the church like fasting, praying and reading scripture—to be intentional about doing regular daily devotions.

One could say that it is a season of preparation and drawing closer to God as we journey closer to the cross and resurrection.

We can become so busy with our schedules or more dormant due to COVID lockdowns that we become distracted from the importance of communing with God.

Lent helps redirect our attention to this most important faith discipline.

**Continued on Page 2**

## WORSHIP IN MARCH

**Mar. 7**— Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, John 2:13-22

**Mar. 14**—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, John 3:14-21

**Mar. 21**—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, John 12:20-23

**Mar. 28**—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Mark 15:1-39

Because of COVID-19 restrictions there are, until further notice, no congregated services or other activities with the exception of Food Pantry. A live service is streamed each Sunday 10:00 AM at [PatchogueUMC.org](http://PatchogueUMC.org).



## Circle of Concern

### Grieving

The family of **Leonard Catalano**. He was only in his 40's. (Kathy Halliwell)

The family of **Joseph Bagnato**, a victim of Covid 19. (Kathy Halliwell)

### Healing

**Mary Rieder** who is at home recovering from surgery. (Jerry & Janet Alt)

**Fred Rieder** who was Mary's caretaker during her recovery, but fell on the ice and broke a bone in his neck. He should heal but is suffering with movement and severe headaches. (Jerry & Janet Alt)

**Bob Mayrose** who is at home, but recovering from a recent stroke. (Jerry & Janet Alt)

**Ed Rose** fell and broke his tibia and is recovering from partial hip surgery. (Jerry & Janet Alt)

**Debbie Merrell** had kidney surgery. Prayers for healing and that it isn't cancerous. (Jerry & Janet Alt)

**Brenda Klingel** who is still recovering from her carotid surgeries, and in addition recovering from a vocal chord which was damaged during anesthesia. (Ed Klingel)

**Anita Helfst**, a dear friend, who had carotid surgery in August and is now being diagnosed with dementia. She just turned 70. (Kathy Halliwell)

**Maryelle Camacho** completed chemotherapy for ovarian cancer but was told that more areas showed on her most recent scan. (Kathy Halliwell)

**Suzanne Dalton** who has had several cancer recurrences is praying for

good results on her next scan. (Kathy Halliwell)

### Concerns

**Justin Zimmerman** has passed his tests for EMT, and is moving through the steps of his interview process which were slowed down due to the weather. Prayers that the process continues to go well. (Diane Zimmerman)

Healing for **our nation**, prayers that all levels of government can work together and people can come together and live by the values that our nation was founded on, bringing back peace to our land. May God's wisdom increase cooperation in spite of differences. (Pastor Chuck)

### Joys

Congratulations to Pam Queen on her new job. (Pastor Chuck)

Congratulations to the **Queen family** on the birth of Conrad's granddaughter Cory. (Pastor Chuck)

### Continued Prayers

Anita Helfst, Maryellen Comacho, Suzanne Dalton, Arlene Hurre-Schwergerling, Kurt Watkins, Travis Gentile, Kimberly Helfst, John Rocco, Megan Coonery, Nancy Schaff, William Schaff, Suzanne Tierney, Richard Rubino, Felicia Fuentes, Liz Smith, Bruce Kirschner, Joyce Gabrinowitz, Pastor Dwight Wolther, Linda Coleman, Kenneth Krygier, Travis Gentile, Tom King, Kevin Kearns

—Compiled by Kathy Halliwell

*Please email Kathy—  
keats1002@gmail.com with any  
additions or deletions.*

### These in Rehab or Nursing Care

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

## Lent (From Page 1)

I pray that you will take the awesome opportunity of the Lenten Season to go deeper and more intimate with our Lord.

Then, hallelujah, at the end of Holy Week we will be all the more ready and prepared to celebrate our Lord's resurrection.

Journeying together,

—Pastor Chuck



God of infinite love, you shower me with limitless gifts in my life.

In my every thought and action today guide me to the bright and loving light of your kingdom.

Help me to be aware of the many ways you allow me to share in your life so intimately today.

Thank you for the gifts you have placed in my life.

Let me be grateful every moment of this day.

—[onlineministeries.creighton.edu](http://onlineministeries.creighton.edu)

## March Birthdays

**Mar. 6** Jace Rogers

**Mar. 14** Jack Ryan

# United Methodist Church of Patchogue

## March 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 <b>Office Closed</b>	2 <b>10:00 a.m.- Noon—Food Pantry</b>	3	4	5	6
7 <b>10:00 a.m.— Live Stream, YouTube Worship</b>	8 <b>Office Closed</b>	9 <b>10:00 a.m.- Noon—Food Pantry</b>	10	11	12	13
14 <b>10:00 a.m.— Live Stream, YouTube Worship</b>	15 <b>Office Closed</b>	16 <b>10:00 a.m.- Noon—Food Pantry</b>	17	18	19	20
21 <b>10:00 a.m.— Live Stream, YouTube Worship</b>	22 <b>Office Closed</b>	23 <b>10:00 a.m.- Noon—Food Pantry</b>	24	25	26	27
28 <b>Palm Sunday 10:00 a.m.— Live Stream, YouTube Worship</b>	29 <b>Office Closed</b>	30 <b>10:00 a.m.- Noon—Food Pantry</b>	31			

## Churches Serve As Warming Centers, Shelters

United Methodist churches scrambled to open as warming centers and overnight shelters after historic winter storms earlier this week left nearly 3 million homes in Texas without electricity in subfreezing temperatures. As of Feb. 18, more than a half million Texas homes still had no power, and many had either low water pressure or no water due to struggling local water systems. Broken pipes and flooding were making some residences uninhabitable.

We've been saying for the last year, during the pandemic, that the church is not the building, yet the building is what people need in terms of having shelter," said the Rev. Clayton Oliphint, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Richardson, Texas.

His church and others — across Texas as well as Arkansas, Oklahoma and Missouri — offered people a place to warm up, charge devices and get something to eat.

The Family Life Center at First United Methodist Church in Hot Springs, Arkansas, has been hopping this week.

"It was supposed to be an overnight shelter, but conditions have gotten so bad we're open 24/7," said the Rev. Bill Sardin, associate pastor. The church has focused on helping the homeless, averaging about 50 such people

"The police are driving around, and if they see anybody in the cold, they are bringing them to our shelter," Sardin said.

Oak Lawn United Methodist Church in Dallas in recent years has been a leader in finding shelter for homeless people when temperatures fall below freezing. The church would typically open its own doors, drawing volunteers from the congregation and other faith groups.

The Rev. Rachel Baughman said the emergency shelter coalition the church is part of decided this year, because of the pandemic, to raise funds to house people in a local hotel. But the hotel faced operational challenges because of the weather, and the number of people in need grew. So the coalition worked with the city of Dallas to open the downtown Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center.

"At this point, we're up to about 930 people in the convention center, as far as the unsheltered population, which is separate from the part of the center that's open to the general public," Baughman said. "We've been organizing three meals a day, and we have cots for everyone."

Baughman said rapid tests for COVID-19 are part of the intake process.

"The pandemic adds to everything," she said.

Baughman praised the North Texas Conference for financial support of her group's work.

The conference earlier made a \$50,000 matching grant that attracted an equal amount of support. In the current emergency, the conference has made another \$25,000 grant, said the Rev. Andy Lewis, director of missional outreach.

Lewis praised the collaborative effort to shelter homeless people

from the cold as "nothing short of life-saving."

Many clergy, including Baughman, have been without power at home for much of the week even as they've tried to help others.

The shivering ranks include Texas Conference Bishop Scott Jones, whose episcopal residence in Houston lost electricity early Monday morning and has been part of rolling blackouts.

"It just went out again," he said during a Feb. 17 phone interview.

Jones said his conference is beginning to get reports of churches and parsonages with broken pipes, due to freezing temperatures.

"We're still in crisis mode, so we don't quite know what the damage is," he said.

Congregation members throughout the Texas Conference are suffering because of no electricity and frozen pipes.

"In Texas, we don't insulate our homes so well, so pipes bursting is a phenomenon we've been experiencing," Jones said.

The Rev. Paul Escamilla is pastor of Laurel Heights United Methodist Church in San Antonio, and he estimated that at least two-thirds of his congregation is without electricity. His church opened Feb. 17 as a warming station for those in need, including pets.

"You can't leave pets out of the equation," said Escamilla.

First United Methodist Church of Wharton, Texas, 50 miles south of Houston, worked with other local churches and the nonprofit Hesus House of Wharton on a strategy for helping in the emergency.

Because of COVID-19-related safety challenges, the decision was to steer clear of opening shelters but identify people in need and get them to more private kinds of warm spaces.

A family of seven, one in a wheelchair and another on oxygen, came to the group's attention. The family was without electricity and couldn't find a hotel or motel room.

First United Methodist Church of Wharton has become their temporary home because it has a wheelchair ramp and power for the oxygen machine.

"It's been a communal effort," said the Rev. Steven Blackmon, pastor, noting that First Presbyterian of Wharton has been providing food. The Dallas area, like much of Texas, got double wallops of snow and ice, with temperatures in the single digits on Feb. 16.

The emergency had the Rev. Craig Hill, dean of United Methodist Perkins School of Theology, using his four-wheel-drive truck to pick up two students who had no electricity. He took them to a church shelter, said the Rev. Connie Nelson, the seminary's executive director of public affairs. The weather emergency has coincided with Ash Wednesday and kept some churches from having drive-thru events where clergy administer ashes. Other churches had planned to have an in-person Ash Wednesday service — with limited, spaced seating because of the pandemic — but had to go to online only.

Though temperatures rose on Feb. 17, they were still below freezing in many places, including East Texas.

"It's sleeting right now and coming down pretty hard," said the Rev. Aaron Laird, associate pastor of Dayspring United Methodist Church in Tyler, Texas, on the morning of Feb. 17. "We have about five inches of standing ice and snow with a layer of sleet coming down on top of it."

Dayspring opened its doors and took in some area residents, but the church's septic system froze. The church found safe places for those it had been sheltering and has since arranged for some portable toilets.

The church also made a Facebook appeal for bottled water because a boil-water order is under effect, due to power outage-related problems with the city water system.

"We're open," Laird said. "We've been limited (in numbers) simply because people can't get here. Driving conditions are horrendous."

—Sam Hodges, UMNS

## Reaping a Whirlwind: We Ignore Truth at Our Peril

“For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.” — Hosea 8:7

Over the years, the United Methodist baptismal covenant has been invoked to confront injustices throughout our world: “Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?”

Lately I have observed calls to “resist evil” in pastoral blogs, commentaries and organizational statements.

Yet, those who now invoke the liturgy to confront evil in others

sometimes forget the preceding question: “Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world and repent of your sin?”

Our baptism is no call to pretentious judgment. Repentance is required of us all. The liturgy was never intended to be weaponized as an indictment of others. We are all drowning in the terrifying sickness of sin, both personal and systemic.

The shameful events of violent insurrection within our nation are merely the latest installment of disregard for God's authority in our lives. Years of ideological unwillingness to hold ourselves accountable have come home to roost. Moreover, it is intellectual laziness that relies on the inconsistency of enemies to bolster our positions. Let's be clear: someone else's hypocrisy does not exonerate me or those who share my opinions. The truth is a much harder school.

Jesus had a lot to say about truth, perhaps most famously in John 8:32: “... and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” This text offers great hope. The truth of the gospel is found in a light that exposes our sin and then heals. Perhaps we should all commit to confessing ways we have allowed our preconceived notions to cloud our reception of God's truth.

God's truth stands in contrast to our truth. In our broken world, truth has become a tool of power. Those who rule try to dictate truth. My agenda, whether admirable or nefarious, sanctifies my assertions. And when one is wedded to an ideology, it

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The deadline for the April issue of **The Link** is March 26.  
 Please email your copy to [gbhoag@optonline.net](mailto:gbhoag@optonline.net).

## Truth (From Page 5)

becomes easy to spread unfounded conclusions. Note how quickly violence at the U.S. Capitol was blamed on forces that were not there.

This pernicious practice of distorting truth to fit our own beliefs is a temptation for us all, not just those who so brazenly perpetrated violence this year.

In Communist-era Poland, a joke often circulated in which a party boss asked, "How much is 2 + 2?" and a Polish worker responded, "How much would you like it to be?" Later, when the Solidarity movement stood for openness and human dignity, a poster read: "For Poland to be Poland, 2 + 2 must always = 4." Free, fresh and open consideration of truth — admittedly, from many perspectives — is critical.

Almost eight centuries before Jesus, the prophet Hosea spoke to the Northern kingdom of Israel as it faced external threat from the Assyrian Empire. The people had lost sight of God's truth, and by substituting secondary realities for God's ultimate reality, they had weakened their ability to resist. Hosea declared that Israel had broken covenant with God and had committed perhaps humanity's most popular sin: idolatry.

Hosea 8:7 includes the legendary phrase, "For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." We trivialize such wisdom when we conclude that this means, "What goes around comes around." The illness is more profound. By worshiping their own self-interested ideas instead of Almighty God, the people turned from

truth and rejected the only source strong enough to sustain them in times of trial.

Idolatry has been a recurrent ill throughout history. Today, it is reinforced by echo chambers that produce delusions of grandeur. When wide swaths of society elevate a person to the status of God and unleash their passions, the unthinkable happens. Mobs convinced of their own infallibility become dangerous. We witnessed that recently, and we must remember that substituting one self-righteous mass of people for another is not the answer.

How are we to respond as a church? Our denomination needs to do some deep and sustained soul-searching. Our witness is strongest when we remain faithful to our identity and see in that identity an embrace of others.

What ails us and our world will not be fixed by training workshops, mind-numbing webinars or leadership gimmicks. We must immerse ourselves in a theologically centered conversation about sin and grace and a commitment to authentic truth and reconciliation.

We must stand under the whole baptismal liturgy and repent of our sin, even as we commit to resist evil.

—Rev. Christopher P. Momany ,  
UMNS

## What Would Jesus Tell The US Capitol Rioters?

According to published reports, when Jacob Anthony Chansley (aka Jake Angeli, aka the man wearing fur and horns)

occupied the president's desk in the U.S. Senate chamber during the insurrection at the United States Capitol on the Feast of the Epiphany, he and three others offered a prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, they thanked God that they could "be where we are today."

For at least one church member, that provoked questions. Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, "where two or three are gathered in my name, I'm there with them." (Common English Bible). Did that mean Jesus was there, with the rioters and insurrectionists, as they trashed the Capitol and left six people dead? Was their invocation of Jesus' name enough to ensure that he was on their side? Did their flags that bore the name of Jesus make the insurrectionists his disciples?

One of the choices we make when we read a passage of Scripture is whether we will take notice of the context. Matthew 18:20 is an excellent example. In its context, Jesus addresses a question about dealing with someone who "sins against you," as Matthew 18:15 states. The passage outlines steps to be used in dealing with an offender who is a church member.

- First, speak privately with the offender and have a conversation just between the two of you. "If they listen to you, then you've won over your brother or sister," Jesus said.

- Second, if that fails, take one or two others with you to talk with the perceived offender, so that the others can function as witnesses to the

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## Jesus (From Page 7)

conversation and "so that every word may be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses."

- Third, if that step also fails, tell the church about the offense committed by the offender. In effect, this step involves going public within the faith community and asking the community to assess the offense. If the community agrees that an offense has occurred, and if the offender does not listen to the church, then the member should be treated as one now outside of the community of faith, who can no longer speak in Jesus' name.

In summary, Jesus' words about "two or three" who assemble in his name applied to a process of discernment and judgment, leading to reconciliation or rejection, with regard to

an offense that has been committed (or is believed to have been committed) against the community of faith.

It is not a reference to some sort of magical blessing just because any two or three people claim to gather in Jesus' name. It does not mean that a few individuals can just utter Jesus' name and thereby claim his authority for what they say or do. It actually is about the authority of the church, or of two or three representatives of the church, to reach a judgment about an offense that has been committed against the faith of God's people.

There is something further to be noted regarding the insurrectionists' claim. When they said that their actions at the Senate president's desk had Scriptural authority — based on

the fact that they were praying in Jesus' name — they were inviting Jesus' condemnation of them.

Jesus says in Matthew 7:21, "Not everybody who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will get into the kingdom of heaven. Only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter." The context warns that, on judgment day, there will be plenty of people who insist that they prophesied in the Lord's name, cast out demons in the Lord's name, and performed powerful actions in the Lord's name.

But such self-aggrandizement and self-adulation will not impress the Lord. In fact, Jesus will tell them, "Get away from me, you people who do wrong."

—Rev. William B. Lawrence UMNS