

The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

March 2022

What Is Ash Wednesday Anyway?

Have you ever been on the “outs” with another person? You know, you fell out of relationship with someone you once had a good relationship with.

Who knows what may have caused it? Perhaps that other person violated a trusted conversation the two of you had. Maybe the other person said something offensive and an argument ensued. For whatever reason, you find yourself on the “outs” with that individual.

Why am I using “on the outs” illustration for this newsletter commentary? Let me explain.

On March 2, we will celebrate what the Church has come to know as Ash Wednesday. This tradition dates all the way back to the 11th Century.

Some will say, “Show me where it mentions Ash Wednesday in the Bible?”

That is an excellent question, and after an exhaustive review myself—I discovered it can’t be found.

In the Book of Daniel, however, it connects ashes with fasting and it is believed by scholars that it originates out of that understanding. But why Ash Wednesday? Why celebrate something that is referenced back in 5th Century B.C. when Daniel lived or when the tradition was established in the 11th Century A.D.? Let’s look a little further to hopefully answer this question.

Do you remember when I asked if you have ever been on the “outs” with another person? Well, if we know that sin separates us from God and we are on the “outs” with Him—then how do

we reconcile that broken relationship?

In the Methodist Book of Services when a minister conducts the burial of a departed person, he or she will quote, in part, “*The body we commit to its resting place, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Henceforth, says the Spirit, they rest from their labors and their works do follow them.*”

Continued on Page 2

WORSHIP IN MARCH

- Mar. 2**—Ash Wednesday Service, 7:00 PM, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
- Mar. 6**—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Luke 4:1-13
- Mar. 13**—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Luke 13:31-35
- Mar. 20**—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Luke 13:1-9
- Mar. 27**—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Worship is still with some Covid restrictions. Masks are required.



Circle of Concern

Bereavement

The family of **Al Bonfe**.

Bob Liebolt and his family as they continue to grieve the loss of Bob's wife. (Pastor Chuck)

The children of **Richard Nelson**. (Rhonda Nelson)

Healing

Maryellen Camacho who is battling cancer and praying to qualify for a treatment trial. (Kathy Halliwell)

Harry Higbie and his girls as they navigate through their father's health issues. (Jennifer Higbie)

Anthony Palladini who was recently admitted into hospice as well as his family. (Diane Zimmerman)

Christine Tortorice, a young mother who was recently diagnosed with ocular melanoma. (Trudy Mansfield)

TJ Ryan who has had an onset of severe and sudden headaches. Prayers that this is not something serious. (Michelle Ryan)

Joy

Baby **Hudson Reid**, is still in the neonatal unit at Stony Brook, but is now 3 lbs. and he is off oxygen and being bottle fed. (Kathy Halliwell)

Flowers

Special remembrance for **Maritza Cruz** who is celebrating a birthday and healing from surgery.

Continued Prayers

Rob Conforti, Tim Hollowell, Richard Pryor, Ulla Ziegler Pereira, Nancy Schaff, Suzanne Tierny, Ronald Lyons, Kimberly Helfst, Paul Halayko

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

In Nursing Care

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

Birthdays In March

Mar. 6 Jace Rogers

Mar. 14 Jack Ryan

Ash Wednesday (From Page 1)

Why mention ashes and dust at a graveside committal? Well, it signifies that humans are of the earth and will one day return to the earth upon one's death. But does it end there?

For those old enough, I can hear Peggy Lee singing, "Is that all there is?" The answer is an emphatic "NO"—that is not all there is because after death we spiritually continue to live on. Ashes are just a reminder of our mortality and that we will not all live in these human vessels forever.

So back to Ash Wednesday and being on the "outs" with someone. Ash Wednesday serves as a reminder of not only our mortality—but also a reminder of our "outs" with God and the need for reconciliation. It is a day of repentance. Meaning, our turning from things that are not of God's will and turning back to Him. Isn't that how human relationships are reconciled? Someone realizes what he or she did to offend another and asks for forgiveness and that relationship is redeemed and reconciled.

Well, that is what Ash Wednesday represents. The ashes symbolize both death to the old nature, repent-

ance (a change of direction) and a reunion with God. Isn't that a beautiful image? It is for me, anyway.

Ash Wednesday begins one of my favorite seasons in the Church—the season of LENT. Succinctly, it is a season, lasting 40 days, that encourages us to focus on going deeper in our discipleship in preparation for Easter when we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord.

Remember, even Jesus prepared for his ministry when he entered the wilderness for 40 days. There are so many ways we can enhance our spiritual lives during this wonderful season. We can devote a portion of time each day to reading God's Word and prayer. We can fast a meal or two and during that mealtime, pray. Rather than giving up something for Lent, perhaps we can take something on by doing something kind for someone else in Christian love.

Well, I can certainly go on a little longer with this article—but for the sake of time and retention—I believe I spelled out a fairly comprehensible explanation of what Ash Wednesday is all about. I look forward to seeing each of you Ash Wednesday in church when we remember such things.

Looking forward to traveling with you on this wonderful Lenten journey as I remain, In His Grip,

—Pastor Chuck



United Methodist Church of Patchogue

March 2022

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

United Methodists Respond To Invasion of Ukraine

Russia's invasion of Ukraine brought calls for prayer and statements of deep concern from United Methodists, as well as a first-hand account from a denomination member in harm's way.

"We were awakened from deep morning sleep by the sound of explosions and many phone calls from friends," said the Rev. Oleg Starodubets, a district superintendent who messaged UM News from Kyiv on Feb. 24. "People took their beloved and tried to leave the cities." Starodubets said United Methodists in Ukraine are opening churches as shelters. He asked for prayers for peace and a Russian withdrawal from Ukraine.

"Please pray that our people will be able to reach the shelters as many roads are blocked," he added.

Starodubets posted on Facebook on Feb. 23, as the full-scale attack was imminent.

"A huge tension is felt in our air," he wrote. "We all pray for peace, but there is a real threat of full-scale war and disunity."

The Rev. Üllas Tankler, United Methodist Board of Global Ministries representative for Europe, Eurasia and North Africa, said he had been in touch with Starodubets as well as another on-the-ground United Methodist pastor, the Rev. Volodymyr Prokip in Lviv, in western Ukraine. "(Prokip) says they are keeping vigil in their church, just to be available for

any support for people in need," Tankler said.

Soon after the invasion began, Nordic-Baltic Area Bishop Christian Alsted issued a pastoral letter about the reality suddenly gripping his continent.

"There is war in Europe. Russia has invaded Ukraine, which is a free independent democracy," Alsted wrote. "War and violence are evil and always entail considerable human costs. The Christian message points to the path of reconciliation and never to war and violence, as a solution to conflicts."

Alsted directly addressed the denomination's presence in the country experiencing invasion.

"We stand with the United Methodists in Ukraine in prayer for protection, reconciliation and peace," he said. "We pray for pastors, leaders and congregations in the United Methodist Church in Ukraine; may God grant that their witness of reconciliation and peace will bring strength and hope to the Ukrainian people."

Alsted also called for prayers for Eurasia Area Bishop Eduard Khegay, who oversees the denomination's churches in both Russia and Ukraine and is based in Moscow.

After the invasion began, Khegay shared on Facebook his distress at the invasion. The post says in part:

"I am ashamed of my country and hurt for the loss of human lives. This is a disgrace. How many corpses of war should appear in Russia and Ukraine in order for this nightmare to end?"

In 2017, Khegay hosted a peace dialogue for United Methodists from Russia and Ukraine, held in Lithuania.

Germany Area Bishop Harold Rückert joined Alsted in an appeal for prayers for Khegay, who he noted "is at the center of the parties to the conflict." Rückert also called on United Methodists to work for peace.

"Even if it seems naïve in the face of weapons, tanks and massive power plays, 'peacemakers' (Matthew 5:9) and bridge builders are needed more than ever," Rückert wrote in a statement.

Roland Fernandes is the top executive of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, and he issued a statement on behalf of the denomination's mission agency.

"We join many Christian leaders and organizations worldwide in deploring the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, and we ardently pray for a redirection of military action toward diplomatic measures to resolve grievances," he said.

Fernandes added that the United Methodist Committee on Relief is in communication with partners in the region, exploring the coordination of humanitarian response in Ukraine.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine was noted by New York Conference Bishop Thomas Bickerton as the Commission on the General Conference met on Feb. 24 to consider whether the legislative assembly can go forward.

"We gather to discern about a meeting, but in a part of the globe today, there are people who are discerning about their very lives," Bickerton said, going on to call for prayers for peace.

Reaction came as well from United Methodist Women.

“United Methodist Women is watching this Russian aggression against Ukraine in horror and in fervent prayer,” the group said in a statement. “We have worked for years with women’s peace networks in Eastern Europe and we stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian women and people against this unjustified invasion and war.”

Some local church pastors offered statements, among them the Rev. Adam Hamilton, who leads the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, in Leawood, Kansas — the denomination’s largest in weekly worship attendance.

“Launching unprovoked attacks on a sovereign nation without any evidence of an impending threat is immoral and unethical,” Hamilton said on Facebook. “It is immoral regardless of who does this. ... I am praying for wisdom for the diplomats and heads of states working to address the situation.”

Fernandes, in his statement, noted that broken ties between Methodist communities in the Soviet bloc and The United Methodist Church were reestablished in the 1990s by various mission initiatives related to Global Ministries.

“We have placed numerous missionaries and young adult Global Mission Fellows in the region over the years and accept applications for missionary and mission volunteer service from both countries,” he said. “We currently have no mission personnel in Ukraine.”

The United Methodist Church’s finance and administrative agency puts the membership of the Ukraine-

Moldova Provisional Annual Conference at 351, but that statistic dates to 2017.

Conflict in 2014, particularly in eastern Ukraine, caused United Methodists to join others in fleeing their homes and resulted in the disbanding of one United Methodist congregation, Khegay reported in 2017.

—Sam Hodges, UMNS

Raising My Children To Be Anti-Racist

Some of the best advice I’ve ever gotten came from Maya Angelou. “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

This timeless wisdom has gotten me through many difficult times but has been especially invaluable to me as a parent.

As a child of the ’70s, I was raised by loving parents to be colorblind: to not see race, to treat everyone as simply “human,” to see everyone as a child of God. When I became a parent, this attitude stuck with me. My spouse and I worked to be sure our children were in diverse communities and knew people of many backgrounds, but we didn’t fully grasp the disservice and harm we were doing by continuing colorblindness as a stance toward race.

When my sons were in elementary school, I read an article that challenged what I thought I knew about talking about race with my white children. It told how historic inequities continue to impact people of color, especially Black people, in the United States. It detailed the ways enslave-

ment, Jim Crow and structural acts of violence have impacted family systems for generations.

That was when I realized that I knew better and needed to do better. That was when I discovered the idea of not just being non-racist (read: colorblind), but being anti-racist (read: active in recognizing and dismantling systems of oppression).

As a Christian parent, we taught our children to treat others with lovingkindness and used that as a barometer to measure our behavior. Hitting your brother with a truck, for example, is not an act of lovingkindness. This worked well for small children, and I see this reflected still in my teenagers’ behavior.

However, lovingkindness is not the only Christian value needed to become anti-racist. In fact, one of the guiding principles I have used to work toward anti-racism has been John Wesley’s maxim of doing no harm. I realized that when I made declarations to our children about everyone being equal and loved in God’s eyes but did not identify the ways in which we are still unequal in terms of rights, access and safety, I was doing harm.

As I have worked to become anti-racist and share those values with my family, I realize more and more the lifelong nature of this work. This is not something that can be done with reading one book or attending one workshop. I feel it is crucial that white Christians do this work and commit to keep doing it.

If we truly hope to bring God’s kingdom to this earth, if that is the focus

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of **The Link** is March 25.

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What's Critical Race Theory?

There's been a lot of hoopla lately about Critical Race Theory. Some states and school boards want to ban it from being taught in elementary and secondary schools. There are loud accusations that it is racist against white Americans. And so on.

So really, what is it?

In a nutshell, it is a systematic way of examining the intersection of race and law in American culture. The word "critical" refers to the analytical study of a subject, in this case, racism, racial equality, and the law.

It is the result of a number of legal studies, theories on class, economic structure, and the law, some dating back to the 70's and 80's.

Scholar Kiara Bridges calls it "an analytical tool set for interrogating the relationship between law and racial equality. A body of scholarship."

There are some basic tenets of the theory:

1. That race is a social construct, with no biological basis. A view shared by British geneticist, Adam Rutherford, who wrote, "There are no essential genetic elements for any group of people who might be identified as a 'race.' As far as genetics is concerned, race does not exist." (*A Brief History of Everyone Whoever Lived*)

2. That racism and different racial outcomes are the result of complex, changing, often subtle social and institutional dynamics rather than the explicit and intentional prejudices of individuals.

Now, I like to think of myself as pretty smart, (some might disagree) but it took me several readings before I had at least a basic understanding of what CRT is all about. I can't imagine this being taught to elementary, even secondary, school students. And, in fact, it isn't being taught, hasn't been taught, and was not intended to be taught to children.

Those who protest loudly that this is an insidious curriculum to brainwash our children are being deliberately disingenuous. And worse. They are using the furor about CRT as a smokescreen to limit and manipulate the honest and truthful teaching of American history, with all its beauty and ugliness.

The deliberate debasement and dehumanizing of whole groups of human beings has certainly existed throughout human history; it is not exclusive to America. But, it forms a tragic and profoundly important part of our shared American story. We have to learn the facts, understand how the monstrous concept of racial superiority seeped into the fabric of our society, and continue to work toward a society that can fulfill the promises of Liberty, Justice, and Equality for all.

I would like to recommend two books that help to address and make clear the course and impact of racism in this country: The first is *Stony The Road*, by Prof. Henry Lewis Gates, and the other, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, by Isabelle Wilkerson. Truly eye and mind opening books.

—Barbara Becker

Anti-Racist (From Page 5)

of our work and our devotion, then we must have a deeper understanding of the harm oppressive systems have on our siblings in Christ. This will not be easy and it will be uncomfortable. Prepare yourself for the pain that accompanies growth. We must practice holding tension between our belief of the holy dignity of each human life and the racial disparities that still exist around us. It's much easier to gloss over the sins of the past — slavery, Jim Crow, segregation — than it is to name the ways those sins are still impacting our communities. We must go further with our kids than "Jesus loves the little children, red and yellow, black and white." This means naming and identifying the ways in which white supremacy and racism impact our daily lives — where we live, where we go to school, the routes we drive, our opportunities to vote, to work and to worship, to name a few.

So how does one begin and continue the work of anti-racism? As a parent, I work to surround my children with books, people, experiences and media that reflect the many races and cultures of our community. But I too need to read, learn and reflect. And my children need to see me doing this work in daily life, in my professional life and within the church.

As families, we need the courage to tackle difficult conversations, to enter into discomfort and to identify our areas of privilege.

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Anti-Racist (From Page 7)

This is the work of knowing better so that we can do better. This is the work of doing no harm and staying in love with God. This is the work that leads us to doing good.

Wesley's three rules are so apt for anti-racist work. Here are some concrete ways they can be applied. This is by no means a complete list, but can be a starting point for Christians ready to do anti-racism work:

Do no harm: Learn about the history of racism in our country and be aware of the continued impact it has on our daily lives. Get out of our bubbles of privilege by reading, studying and listening to the lived experiences of our Black siblings in Christ. Avoid white "saviorism"; ask for what is needed instead of assuming you have

an answer. Be able to offer sincere apologies when you are wrong.

Do good: Be teachable and willing to learn. Stand in solidarity with Black communities — for example, spend money at Black-owned businesses. Seek out diverse voices in your media consumption, social media platforms and news. Work toward equity and equality for all of God's children in your community. This means engaging with core issues of housing, food security, education, health care access and incarceration.

Stay in love with God: The words of Micah 6:8 tell us how to do this: "And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?" Keep learning more, keep doing better.

As we do this work ourselves and engage in deeper learning about the impacts racism has in our society, we will be equipped to lead our children into more meaningful and real understandings of the world around them. We will dispel the myth of colorblindness by doing better. We will move toward a kin-dom of God for all people.

—Liz Shadbolt, UMNS



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