

Covenant Presbyterian Church
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THE NEWSLETTER OF COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Clarion

MARCH 2017

Greetings,

In Christianity, Judaism and Islam, the number 40 is often symbolic in the telling of stories about faith. In Hebrew Scripture (our Old Testament) the flood in Noah's time lasted 40 days and 40 nights. Moses and the Israelites wandered in the Sinai desert for 40 years. Islam teaches that when Moses was on the top of Sinai, he did not return to the Israelites for 40 days. Often in Jewish history, the great kings of Israel were said to have ruled for 40 years.

We are told that Jesus fasted on the Mount of Temptation for 40 days and 40 nights. The count of days between Christ's resurrection to his ascension is 40 days.

And so this brings us to the Lenten Season. This, of course, is a season that was created by the early church and has no biblical precedent, but in a way it does. Quite often, the number 40 in both our Old Testament and New signify some important spiritual understandings. The first understanding is not so spiritual, and quite obvious: The number 40 was used to basically say "a long time." It took a long time for Noah and his family to wait out the flood. It took a long time for the escaped Hebrew slaves to get out of the wilderness. Jesus was up on that mountain for a long time before he began his ministry. For the disciples it seemed like a long time that the risen Christ was with them before he ascended into heaven.

But the other reason the number 40 is significant is because it represents what we are doing in the midst of the "long times" of our lives. Jesus was not just up on the Mount of Temptation for a long time, he was preparing himself for the public ministry he was yet to conduct. We are told that he was up there to pray and meditate, but also to face "Satan" which represents the temptations of the world over and against the calling of God.

Originally, the early church came up with the Season in Lent as the preparation time for new converts to become members of the community of faith. This was a time when it was not popular to be part of the church in a Roman Empire that was not yet sympathetic towards the followers of Jesus. To choose to become part of this body of Christ was potentially lethal, and at best it would be hard. In line with the 40 day periods given to us in the biblical witness, the church determined that there would be a 40 day preparation time for these converts before officially becoming members on Easter Sunday, which included their baptisms. Infants were not yet automatically baptized into the church; this would happen later when the Roman Empire became the Holy Roman Empire and everyone wanted to be Christian now that Caesar was. The 40 days of Lent were a time of serious study and preparation. New converts would know their Bibles and the beliefs of their church very well before their day of baptism and entry into the church on the day of Christ's resurrection.

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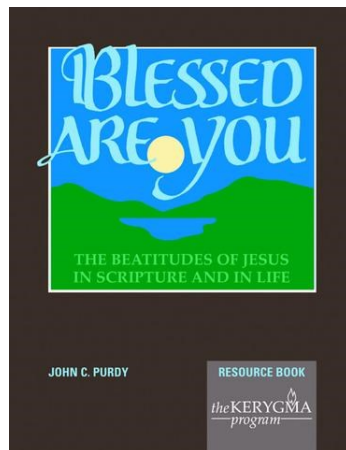
Lent is different for us now. It is still intended to be a season of preparation, but preparation for what? Most of us were baptized quite young, and many of us have been church members for a long time. So what do we prepare for? Many in the early church literally interpreted a passage in the Gospel in which Jesus said that his followers would not die before they saw him return. And so Lent was often a time to think seriously and prepare for Christ's imminent return. Enough generations have now come and gone for us to know we will most likely live out our natural lives before that happens.

So we ask again: For what do we prepare in the Lenten Season? I believe we are constantly called to prepare for what it means for Jesus, by the power of his Holy Spirit, to come into our lives in an ever-changing world. This world moves much more quickly than it used to when I was a kid, a youth, and a young adult. The Internet and social media gets us in touch immediately. We get answers for things we wonder about more quickly, but I often wonder if it has made us any wiser. We no longer have time to process things that have occurred in our world in order to understand them better. It seems that one thing happens right after the next, and we have no opportunity to give any of it quality thought. Studies show us that our children and youth are not intellectually absorbing and critically thinking as well anymore because the distractions of smart phones are pulling them away from substantive thought process. New generations are simply learning how to react.

Perhaps Lent can be a time for us to think about what this all means. To put away the phone and Internet and consider what it means to be a child of God, a member of the body of Jesus Christ, in a faster paced world that now teaches us that speed is everything. Remember when you wrote a letter, and save a rare long-distance telephone response, you waited a week or two before getting something back in the mail? Now we are impatient if someone does not answer our email within an hour or two. Sometimes we even think it is rude.

There is nothing we can do about how our world has changed and where progress takes us. But we still have the freedom and capability to willfully slow it all down for the sake of listening anew to God and the ways God has communicated with believers throughout many centuries. For the Season in Lent 2017 I will pray that you can slow down so you may better hear what God is saying, and I ask that you pray I can do the same.

Peace and Grace, *JEFF*



Lenten Study begins on Sunday, March 5th

This year's Lenten Study led by Pastor DeYoe is a study of the Beatitudes entitled: *Blessed are You: The Beatitudes of Jesus in Scripture and Life*. Class will meet every Sunday afternoon of Lent & the afternoon of Palm Sunday (March 5-April 9) at 3 p.m. in F-207. If you are interested, resource books will be available in class for \$13. You can make the check out to Covenant Presbyterian Church.

Our annual Easter tradition will be held on Palm Sunday, April 9th after our 10 a.m. worship service. Each year we use this event to reach out to friends and family in our community as an introduction into our church. Once again we have reached out the foster and adoptive families in Lee County and have gotten a tremendous response. We are thrilled to be able to provide these children with a fun-filled day here at our church and continuing this tradition. With over 300 in attendance at Eggstravaganza, we will need to have every volunteer on hand. Volunteer opportunities include but are not limited to: donating candy or trinkets for Easter bags; putting together candy bags for distribution; donating stuffed Easter baskets; setting up tables; assisting with parking and traffic control; supervising games and waterslide activities; preparing and servicing lunch; donating baked goods for the cake walk; face painting; setting up egg hunts and scavenger hunts; and cleaning up.

This will be a great outreach for our church and a fun-filled day for all! Please contact Dawn Castner or sign-up at the Connection Station if you are attending and/or volunteering. WE NEED YOU!!!



Lenten Devotionals are available in the front office.

Compliments of the Christian Education

Please pray for our friends who are unable to attend service:
Maureen Bashaw, Doris Flaitz,
Gloria Gibbs and Sue Loman.
God Bless You!



Covenant Presbyterian Church hosts a full calendar of events for all youth in 6th through 12th grade! Sunday school and confirmation classes are held every Sunday morning at 9 am before worship. Youth "Fellowships" take place every month on Sunday evenings and include meals, games, activities, music and discussions! A variety of trips, retreats and outreach opportunities are available as well. Youth do not need to be members of Covenant to participate in activities and are always welcome to invite friends!

For specific information regarding dates and times of youth activities please contact Eric Nanz at nanzet@gmail.com or visit Covenant's "Youth Ministry" page at www.covpcfm.com.

Youth Activities for March:

- 3/4 Saturday "InAsMuch" Mission Day
- 3/5 Sunday School
- 3/10-12 Weekend Retreat at Cedarkirk
- 3/17 Friday afternoon trip to Mision Peniel
- 3/19 Sunday School and Confirmation Component #6 (11:30 am - 1:30 pm)
- 3/22 Wednesday Youth Band Rehearsal (7:00 - 8:15 pm)
- 3/26 Sunday School, Confirmation celebration & lunch (9:00 am – 1:00 pm)



Join us Sunday mornings in March for this poignant Lenten Series in F207 from 9-9:45 am: **"The Ridiculous Journey: Following A Nobody From Nowhere"**

This series on Jesus' invitation to follow him includes short videos with Nadia Bolz-Weber, Greg Boyle, Brene Brown, Rachel Held Evans, Richard Rohr, and Rowan Williams.

Weekly Focus Topics:

- The Ridiculous Journey
- The Revolutionary
- The Lover
- The Sage
- The Presence
- Following Jesus

Discussion guides provided for each topic.

Covenant's Concert Series continues the tradition of glorifying God through music. Our concerts are designed to enrich listeners and to affect a greater awareness of God's power so that He may be glorified as we creatively use the gifts He has given us. Please invite your friends and neighbors to any or all of these wonderful concerts.

March 3, 2017

Coast Guard Academy—Idlers

March 17, 2017

Messiah College Choir

March 31, 2017



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING OFFERING

will be received and dedicated on Palm Sunday, April 9th

God unites our gifts to create a big impact. On Palm Sunday you are invited to bring your gift for the One Great Hour of Sharing special offering. Fish Banks are available in the church office. Gifts received will be used for ministries that provide food and safe water to people in need, hope to those overcoming a catastrophe or conflict, and resources for disadvantaged and oppressed communities striving to better their lives. Your gift, combined with the talents of those who receive it, will serve to create a more just, resilient, and sustainable future. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People are all supported through this special offering. Please give generously. Checks should be made out to Covenant Presbyterian Church (memo: One Great Hour of Sharing). For additional information, visit: presbyterianmission.org/give-oghs This special offering of the PCUSA continues to make a HUGE difference in the lives of many!



PW BIBLE STUDY—Presbyterian Women are studying *"Who is Jesus? What a Difference a Lens Makes"* by Judy Yates Siker. Pastor DeYoe conducts a monthly Bible study the first Monday at 10:45 a.m. in room F205. Everyone is welcome to attend.

PW CIRCLES—We invite you to come and visit one of the circles which meet at the following times:

- Naomi Circle - 2nd Monday at 6:30 pm
- Deborah Circle and Ruth Circle - 2nd Tuesday at 10 a.m.
- Elizabeth Circle - 2nd Thursday at 9:30 a.m.

For more information about Circles or PW, please call Nora Harmon at 645-1125

APRIL 9 AT 10 A.M.
PALM SUNDAY SERVICE
APRIL 13 AT 7 P.M.
MAUNDY THURSDAY
APRIL 14 AT 12
GOOD FRIDAY PRAYER SERVICE
APRIL 16 AT 8 AND 10 A.M.
EASTER SERVICES



Join us for the
Celebrate the Gifts of Women Luncheon

March 5th at 11:30 a.m.
Presentation and theme:
Mina Edison & Clara Ford
from The Edison Home
\$10 Panera lunch

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS FOR FEBRUARY

The Session met on Tuesday, February 21, 2017 with Rev. Jeff DeYoe moderating the meeting and eleven elders in attendance. Others present: Jack Mutzabaugh, Deacon; Gary Brothers, Facilities Manager; and Barbara Heflin, Clerk of Session.

- Approved a boat outing for the acolytes on March 25, 2017.
- Approved the New Generation Singers to present a concert, Sunday evening, July 23 in the sanctuary.
- Approved playground improvement at an approximate cost of \$550 with funds from the Memorial Fund.
- The Presbyterian Women will host a luncheon on March 5 in Fellowship Hall to Celebrate the Gifts of Women Sunday. The program will feature appearances by Mina Edison and Clara Ford in appropriate costumes from the Edison/Ford Estates. Everyone is invited - men included!
- Pastor DeYoe will lead a Lenten Study of the Beatitudes entitled Blessed are You: The Beatitude of Jesus in Scripture and in Life beginning March 5, concluding on Palm Sunday.

Wanted: Covenant Members and Friends to Attend LIFE Nehemiah Action on March 28

Covenant is a member of the LIFE (Lee Interfaith for Empowerment) justice coalition consisting of 13 Lee County church congregations working for justice within the county in several areas of people's lives. LIFE has been a very successful justice ministry in Lee County. LIFE is currently working to reduce the number of unsolved murders in Ft. Myers.

LIFE's "Big Event" is the annual Nehemiah Action Assembly where we present our research and recommendations for action on the current issue and "ask" the appropriate Lee County officials and decision makers to agree to the "ask". The 2017 Nehemiah Assembly will be on Tuesday, March 28 at 7 pm at St. Columbkille Catholic Church, 12171 Iona Road in South Ft. Myers (*This is a change in venue from previous Nehemiah Actions which have been held at Harborside Event Center in Downtown Ft. Myers.*)

The Covenant LIFE Team is hoping for a big turnout of Covenant members and friends to support them at this important event. Admission and parking are free. Thank you for your attendance.



PEACEMAKING COMMITMENT

Part of why it is necessary for us to form worshipping communities is that it is hard for us to love our neighbors. We have to practice loving week after week on the unsuspecting others God has gathered around us. Church is one place where we get the opportunity to learn and craft love into an art form.

Some people are gifted at looking out for others, highly skilled at refraining from judging others, virtuoso performers in the art of graciousness and seeing the best in people. Being in their company is a great joy. We need the training! We need these mentors!

In the church, everyone is in school, learning the fine art of loving others by not passing judgement, by forgiving misdeeds, by refraining from gossip, and always looking for the best in other people. By practicing our love on one another we can become better at loving where it matters the most- in our families and in our communities.

Martin Stewart, Presbyterian Minister, Christchurch, New Zealand



How many of us have sat in a doctor's office or lab awaiting a blood draw? Have you been worried about what the draw will find or are you bored sitting and waiting? The other day I was sitting in just such a room and observed people reading but not reading magazines; people staring at the TV (home improvement shows seem to predominate); parents looking worriedly at their child or loved one; many going through iPhones; all trying to keep "busy" to avoid what is to come next. For some it might be an eventual sigh of relief; for others less welcome reports. Have you ever been in this situation? Would it help for you to be able to talk to someone, pray with someone, or know that there is someone outside that office who cares about you? A Stephen Minister could be there for you so just ask. That's what the Stephen Ministers do: offer compassionate, Christian caring with complete confidence.

Call a Stephen Minister today:

Pat Arner 997-9108 Sarah Jane Essebagger 616-502-7806 Barb Sheets 995-8881

Lyn Sisti –Sommer 656-1595 Rev. Jeff DeYoe 334-8937

January 2017 Financial Report

Income for January	\$52,775
Income Year-to-date	\$52,775
Expenses for January	\$52,199
Expenses Year-to-date	\$52,199
Year-to-date overage	\$575
Current Balance on Loan	\$249,780
Principal & Interest Paid in January	\$3,938

**A complete finance report is available in the church office each month.*



Volunteer Opportunity

ECHO is hosting their annual Global Food and Farm Festival on Saturday, March 18, 2017 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Volunteers are needed to help with parking, registration, moving plants in the nursery, children's crafts, giving out food samples and other various activities. Contact Ruth May (rmay@echonet.org) for more information or go to www.echonet.org/volunteer.



Spark Imagination With Faith-Building Fun!

Imagine a world where curious kids become hands-on inventors who discover they're lovingly crafted by God. Spark creativity with interactive decoration and experiences. Maker Fun Factory Vacation Bible School transforms your church into a place buzzing with excitement! Mark your calendars...

June 19-23 * 9 a.m. to 12 noon

Covenant's Book Club

Brown Bag 'n' Books meets on the third Thursday of each month at 11am in Room F205. Bring your lunch or cup of tea and join us! Book selections are available for lending in CPC Library. For more information, stop by our CPC library or email Jo Ann Leasure tcup166@embarqmail.com or Beverly Campbell campbell.beverly@gmail.com

Here are the upcoming selections:

Thursday, March 16, 2017 at 9:30 am Book Club Road Trip to the Koreshan State Historic Site, the utopian community that is now a 305 acre park in Estero. Meet at the church parking lot at 9:30AM for car pool to 3800 Corkscrew Road, Estero, FL 33928. The guided tour is 1.2 hours and we will lunch afterwards. This road trip is a follow up to our February book selection (and the 2/15 Wednesday Morning Live topic), *The Allure of Immortality: An American Cult, a Florida Swamp, and a Renegade Prophet*, by FGCU Professor Lyn Millner.

Thursday, April 20, 2017 *The Power of One* by Bryce Courtenay