

LENT – A JOURNEY TO EASTER

The Rev. Dr. Sam Hobson

Originating in the fourth century of the church, the season of **Lent** spans 40 weekdays beginning on Ash Wednesday and climaxing during Holy Week with Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and concluding Saturday before Easter. Originally, Lent was the time of preparation for those who were to be baptized, a time of concentrated study and prayer before their baptism at the Easter Vigil, the celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord early on Easter Sunday. But since these new members were to be received into a living community of Faith, the entire community was called to preparation. Also, this was the time when those who had been separated from the Church would prepare to rejoin the community.

Today, Lent is marked by a time of prayer and preparation to celebrate Easter. Since Sundays celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, the six Sundays that occur during Lent are not counted as part of the 40 days of Lent, and are referred to as the Sundays **in** Lent. The number 40 is connected with many biblical events, but especially with the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness preparing for His ministry by facing the temptations that could lead him to abandon his mission and calling. Christians today use this period of time for introspection, self-examination, and repentance

Lent has traditionally been marked by penitential prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Some churches today still observe a rigid schedule of fasting on certain days during Lent, especially the giving up of meat, alcohol, sweets, and other types of food. Other traditions do not place as great an emphasis on fasting, but focus on charitable deeds, especially helping those in physical need with food and clothing, or simply the giving of money to charities. Most Christian churches that observe Lent at all focus on it as a time of prayer, especially penance, repenting for failures and sin as a way to focus on the need for God's grace. It is really a preparation to celebrate God's marvelous redemption at Easter, and the resurrected life that we live, and hope for, as Christians.

The color used in the sanctuary for most of Lent is purple, red violet, or dark violet. These colors symbolize both the pain and suffering leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus as well as the suffering of humanity and the world under sin. But purple is also the color of royalty, and so anticipates through the suffering and death of Jesus the coming resurrection and hope of newness that will be celebrated in the Resurrection on Easter Sunday. The sanctuary colors are changed to red for Maundy Thursday, a symbol of the disciples and through them the community of the church. Since Eucharist or communion is often observed on Maundy Thursday in the context of Passover, the emphasis is on the gathered community in the presence of Jesus the Christ.

We enjoy celebrating Palm Sunday. We wave the palm branches and celebrate. And we all love Easter Sunday! It is a happy time, with flowers, new clothes, and the expectation of spring in the air.

But it is too easy and promotes too cheap a grace to focus only on the high points of Palm Sunday and Easter without walking with Jesus through the darkness of Good Friday, a journey that begins on Ash Wednesday. Lent is a way to place ourselves before God humbled. It is a way to confess our total inadequacy before God, to strip ourselves bare of all pretenses to righteousness, to come before God in dust and ashes. It is a way to empty ourselves of our false pride, of our rationalizations that prevent us from seeing ourselves as needy creatures, of our perfectionist tendencies that blind us to the log in our own eyes.

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Through prayer that gives up self, we seek to open ourselves up before God, and to hear anew the call "Come unto me!" We seek to recognize and respond afresh to God's presence in our lives and in our world. We seek to place our needs, our fears, our failures, our hopes, our very lives in God's hands, again. And we seek by abandoning ourselves in Jesus' death to recognize again who God is, to allow His transforming grace to work in us once more, and to come to worship him on Easter Sunday with a fresh victory and hope that goes beyond the new clothes, the spring flowers, the happy music.

Lent begins in ashes and journeys through darkness. It is a spiritual pilgrimage that I am convinced we must make one way or the other for genuine spiritual renewal to come. We must be willing to face our own mortality and the suffering of this life. We are not called to offer intercessory prayer for *others*; it is penitential prayer for the faith community, for **us**. It is not to call for others to repent; it is a call for **us**, God's people, to repent. It is **our** land that needs healed, it is our wicked ways from which we need to turn, **we** are the ones who need to seek God's face.

Perhaps during the Lenten season we should stop praying for others as if we were virtuous enough to do so. Perhaps we should take off our righteous robes just long enough during these 40 days to put ashes on our own heads, to come before God with a new humility that is willing to confess, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." Maybe we should be willing to fall down before God and plead, "Lord, in my hand no price I bring; simply to the cross I cling." That might put us in a position to hear God in ways that we have not heard Him in a long time. And it may be the beginning of a healing for which we have so longed.



There is so much to do... Catch the excitement!

MPC has several adult groups that have plans in the works for the month of March. The following is a rundown of what is going on. There is a separate sheet for you to print off to sign up for these many opportunities!

Wednesday Lenten Study:

Beginning Wednesday, March 3, there will be a light dinner and Lenten Bible Study taught by Sam Hobson. The study is called "Living with the Mind of Christ." Topics we'll cover: Love, Servanthood, Faithful Suffering, Surrender, Humility, and Obedience. There also will be activities for the children. Dinner will be served from 5:30 – 6:00 pm and the study will be from 6:00 – 7:00 pm. Please make reservations for the dinner by completing reservation form and returning it to the church office or placing it in the offering plate.

Men of the Church

The Men of the Church will hold it's next meeting on **Tuesday, March 24, 7:00 pm**. There will be dinner, fellowship, Bible Study, and planning. The dinner will be prepared by Ron Vlcek. Invite a friend to join with you. Reservations are necessary. Please complete the necessary reservation form and return it to the church office or place it in the offering plate on Sunday. You may also call the church office to make a reservation.

(see page 5 for more great activities!)



Easter Egg Hunt

There will be an Easter Egg hunt at the church on **Saturday, April 3, 1:00 pm**, for all toddlers through elementary school. Donations of individually wrapped candies are needed for this event. If you would like to contribute candy, please place it in the big basket in the narthex by Sunday, March 28. Be sure to bring your grandchildren and neighbors!

Junior and Seniors Highs are asked to come at noon to hide eggs, etc. and devour some pizza!

Confirmation Classes to begin

Confirmation Class will begin the first Sunday after Easter, April 11, following the 10:30 worship service in Fellowship Hall. It will continue each Sunday through May 16 and the class will be received into the confirmed membership of the church on Pentecost Sunday, May 23. The class is open to all who want to be confirmed into the church. In order to prepare for the class, it is important that you register. Please complete the form on the last page and return it to the church office or place it in the offering plate.

Celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion

Beginning this month, on **Sunday, March 7th**, we will be celebrating the Sacrament of Holy Communion on the *first Sunday of each month*. "All the baptized able are invited to come to the table." That is according to the Book of Order of the PCUSA.

Especially during this Lenten season why don't you have a conversation with your children, in words they can understand, about the significance and solemnity of celebrating this sacrament? It could make an impact on how they view worship and the sacrifice of our Lord.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS:

2	Barb Mackin
4	Sam Hobson Elaine Mack
8	Brandon Hagans
11	Maggie Diez Ted Lesiakt
12	Katherine Bender
14	Julia Dodds
19	Arianna Dodds
21	Frank Pientka
23	Austin Olsavsky
24	Dave Thomas
25	Kate Thomas Vee Jarvis
27	Janet Carter
28	Barb Leuchtag
31	Denny Fruth

Taking care of our four-legged friends

The Elementary Youth Group has taken on a service project this month. We are collecting donations to help animals in need. *Save Ohio Strays* provides veterinarian care and foster homes to animals in need until a permanent home is found. They take in pets that have been abandoned or from families who can no longer care for their beloved pet.

The kids are asking your help. They are asking for donations of pet food, toys, cleaning supplies, and other items necessary for foster families to care for these animals until a permanent home is found. A complete list appears in the Sunday bulletin. A collection box is in the narthex. Items need to be at the church by March 14.

The next meeting for Elementary Youth Group is March 14th, 6:00 – 7:30 in Fellowship Hall! Kids in grades 2 – 5 are welcome to bring a friend!



Reflecting on the 1970's

The Junior High Youth Group met recently and compared notes with their leaders on what it was like to be in junior high in the 1970's compared to now. Well...

Both groups like movies, but we dressed differently. We did similar activities like tobogganing or bowling, but the music is not the same. No Disco in 2010! Jeans are still in style, but the cost is way different! The 70's had Atari and now the game to play is Wii and Playstation 3. We did agree that no matter *when* we were in junior high, we all belonged to Christ!

After a ton of pizza and getting to know each other a bit better we discussed what we would like to accomplish in the future.

At our next meeting on **March 21** we plan to make Easter baskets for the Medina County Battered Women's Shelter. Our goal is 25 baskets. We are asking for donations of items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, coloring books, crayons, small toys, or small stuffed animals, and any other items that a child might need in that situation. (Candy doesn't hurt either.) If you have some new Easter baskets, wrap, or ribbon to help us out, that would be great too! We welcome your donations!



Summer Camp opportunities

Brochures for summer camps for elementary and older youth at Joseph Badger Meadows Camp are available. This is a camp of Eastminster Presbytery located in Burghill OH.

If you have a child that is interested in a summer camp experience, pick up a brochure in the narthex. Several of the churches in the presbytery have been sending their children and youth and indicate that it is a great experience.

An educational experience for all ages

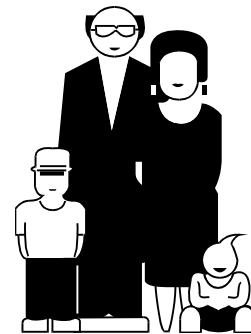
The Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage in Beachwood OH is offering Christian congregations the opportunity to take part in their Shabbat or Sabbath dinner; a rich tradition Jewish families partake in week-to-week.

The evening will start with a short tour of the Temple Gallery where you will learn about some of the ritual objects historically used in the Shabbat service. From there, you will be seated for the traditional prayers and a complete dinner. Questions and comments will be welcome throughout the dinner. The dinner will end approximately at 7:30. You will be able to tour the entire museum through 9:00 pm. The date is **Friday, April 16th**.

The buffet dinner will consist of roasted brisket, farfel, matzo ball soup and a green salad. Cost is:

Adults 18 and over	\$15
Children 12-17	\$12
Children under 12	\$ 5

We would like to have a group of at least 20 people going. Invite your friends. Let us know your interest. Call the church office for reservations. Money needs to be in our hands by *March 31*.



Hunger Has To Wait

Our high school youth have still been focusing on those who wake up hungry each day, but their personal 30 Hour Famine gave way to the latest snow blast.

The good news is that they have an additional two weeks to raise awareness and financial support for World Vision's efforts. *Every dollar raised feeds a hungry child in the US and around the planet for an entire day.*

The new Famine dates, March 12-13, will include guest speakers Ted Roos and Laura VanDale, Presbytery members who served as mission personnel in Ethiopia. Also included in our shared time of hunger will be a bit of ice-skating, a movie or two, time of personal reflection, and a scavenger hunt through our neighborhoods to collect much-needed kitchen items for immigrants just arriving in the Cleveland area.

You, too, can be part of our famine:

- Sponsor one of our participants, or make a general contribution
- Pray for our young people and adults as they focus on others in need
- Fill our sink in the narthex with pots, pans and utensils
- (see related article for more details)

Congratulations to our famine participants for 10 years of selfless giving!



Everything But...

...the kitchen sink!

Yes, that's what people just arriving from around the world often need as they settle their new home and land. Many times these brothers and sisters have lived up to seven years in refugee camps before arriving, and most come only with what they are able to carry.

As a service project to complement their 30 Hour Famine, our youth are partnering with Cleveland Catholic Charities' Migration and Refugee Services to help those facing this transition. One of the most critical needs is for cooking utensils.

In the narthex you will find a kitchen sink. Please scour your kitchen and rid it of any duplicates you may have. Special needs are:

- Pots and pans, with or without lids
- Serving Spoons
- Spatulas
- Mixing Spoons
- Mixing Bowls

These items will be collected throughout March. This will be the one time we can celebrate when the sink is full!

And the excitement continues...

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Prime Timers

The Prime Timers will meet at the church on **Wednesday, March 24**, to go to Das Dutch Kitchen in Dalton OH. Das Dutch Kitchen provides Amish home cooking. Lehman's Hardware is close by for those who'd like to make the stop. Please make reservations by using the included form and returning it to the church office or placing it in the offering plate.

Ones and Twos Fellowship

Ones and Twos Fellowship will meet on **Friday, March 26, 7:00 pm** for a pot luck dinner. Bring your favorite foods to share with others. We will meet in Fellowship Hall. Plans will be made for other events for the group. Mark this date as a special time to join with others in good fellowship and food.

SIGN-UP, RESERVATION, & REGISTRATION SHEET

Wednesday Lenten Study and meal:

Please make me/us _____ reservation(s) for the Lenten Study on:

___ March 3 ___ March 10 ___ March 17 ___ March 24 ___ March 31

Signed _____

Prime Timers Go to Das Dutch Kitchen: Wednesday, March 24

Please make ___ reservation(s) for me/us for the Prime Timers.

_____ Willing to drive _____ Need a ride

Signed _____

Men of the Church Fellowship: Tuesday, March 23

Please reserve _____ for me/us at the Men of the Church dinner.

Signed _____

Confirmation Class: begins Sunday, April 11

Name _____ Date of birth _____

Baptized: ___ yes ___ no

Signed _____

MALTZ MUSEUM SHABBAT DINNER: Friday, April 16, 6:00 pm

Make reservations for ___ # of adults (\$15)

 ___ # of Children 12-17 (\$12)

 ___ # of children under 12 (\$12)

Total accompanying my reservation \$ _____

Signed _____

Make checks payable to Medina Presbyterian Church.

You can return any forms in the offering plate or send to the church office.

Questions??? Call the church office.