

THE TALE

A WORD FROM OUR PASTOR

The season of Lent is a time to grow in our faith and our understanding of our relationship with God. The first step in this process is always admitting what we don't know so that we can discover what we have to learn and how we can grow. Here is a test I give to the confirmation class and their parents at the beginning of our confirmation program. I encourage you to take the test and see how much you know (or remember). The answers will be listed elsewhere in this newsletter.

The day Jesus was born is called:

How many commandments are there? Can you name them?

The commandments can be found in these books in the Bible:

What is the name of our denomination?

When was it founded?

Where did it begin?

What is Lent? Why do we celebrate it?

The first book of the Bible is called:

The first Gospel written was:

The story of Jesus' life can be found in these books:

How many disciples did Jesus have?

The disciple who betrayed Jesus was called:

Name the days in Holy Week - explain what happened on them:

What do we do in church to help us remember Jesus?

How did Jesus die?

When did Jesus die?

If you did not get 100% then why don't you come join me during Lent to learn about your faith and your church and the basics of our Christian Faith and church history. Beginning on March 2nd I am going to offer a Christian Education refresher. Consider it "Confirmation for adults" without having to be confirmed again. This program will run on Tuesday nights from 7:30 - 9:00. It will cover a variety topics. You will be asked to purchase, and read, My Confirmation (call the office and we will order you one) and The Shack (available everywhere). Why just give up chocolate when you can come and really deepen your faith?

If you have any questions please contact me.

Peace,

Greg





OUTREACH

Mission Family

We will be celebrating Gabe's birthday on March 16th. There is a display being created to help gather in the gifts. Unfortunately, at press time, the plan is still in the works. Please consult your bulletin insert in the next few weeks. Unwrapped gifts will be due at the church on March 8.

Thank you to all who have donated non-perishables to our family. Please continue to drop food donations in the basket. It takes a lot of food to feed a family of 6 and Desiree is thankful for our help. The Missions Committee augments your donation with a monthly grocery store gift card, but keep those donations coming!

Walk for Hunger/Loaves and Fishes

Come join the Walk on April 10! We have ordered up some good walking weather and we invite you to come and participate in this special community walk to help those in need. The non-denominational walk leaves from our church and makes a scenic 5-mile loop. Register any time from 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and walk as far as would like, as long as you finish before 4 p.m.

The more money raised, the more you will be helping others. Once again, 2/3 of the proceeds from the walk will benefit Loaves & Fishes, providing groceries and other aid to your neighbors in Ayer, Shirley, Littleton, Devens, Groton and Harvard. (The other 1/3 goes to Sharing, Inc.). You really can make a difference in people's lives by participating in this walk. And it's easy! Just pick up a Sponsor Sheet at the church or library (note— at press time we have not received sheets), and collect as many donations as you can. (Checks should be made payable to *the Good Friday Walk*, and all donations are tax deductible.) Ask your friends, your employer and fellow employees, your children, and your neighbors to walk with you or to sponsor you—the more the merrier!

On April 10, total your Sponsor Sheet and bring it with your donations to the Registration Desk to receive a Walk paper and map. Children under 18 need the signature of parent or guardian, and walkers under 12 must have adult supervision. For safety reasons, no bicycles, roller blades, scooters or skateboards are allowed. The route is hilly, so get your muscles ready with practice walks.

And walking is good for you! If you can't do the walk, you can contribute in many other ways. We need volunteers to **prepare sandwiches** in the Church kitchen the day of the Walk, to bring us **baked goods**, to work at the **Registration Desk**, to "man" the rest stop half-way through the route, and to drive the loop slowly in the "**Toe Truck**" (the car used to check on walker's safety). Let us know what you would like to do—just contact one of our Walk Co-Chairs, Ruth Broughton at 978-486-8557 (e-mail rebroughton@verizon.net) or Laurie Heron at 978-621-6545, or contact the church office. Join our Good Friday Walk team, and make a real difference in your community.

OUTREACH (CONTINUED)



One Great Hour of Sharing—March 22

We're going on a treasure hunt!

We won't be digging holes around the church searching for buried gold, though. Instead, we're searching for God's treasure.

Scripture provides the map. For God, we are treasure: "You are children of the Lord your God. ... It is you the Lord has chosen ... to be his people, his treasured possession" (Deuteronomy 14:1-2). Although those words were spoken long ago to people in another part of the world, Galatians 3:26 assures us that we are included, too: "For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith." "Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight" goes the children's song, voicing the truth that God treasures all people, throughout the world.

One of the gifts of being God's children is that sometimes we are called to be "treasure tenders" for God. We tend God's treasure here in our congregation with the love and care we show each other through special meals, visiting the sick and shut-in, teaching Christian discipleship, and praying for each other. We are also invited to tend God's treasures beyond our congregation by participating in One Great Hour of Sharing.

Life can be tough at times. Hurricanes, earthquakes, cyclones, and tsunamis smash communities to bits. Wars and ethnic conflicts shatter the very foundations of life, shoving people out of their homes and transforming them into frightened refugees. Persistent hunger, drought, poverty, lack of education, and ill health shrivel the life and dry the spirit, leaving individuals to crumble from the inside out.

Through One Great Hour of Sharing, we gently, persistently, and strongly care for God's treasures. By sharing some of our earthly treasure—our money, our time, our energy—decisive aid can be sent when disaster strikes. Refugees receive help in the long term as they rebuild their lives. We help people help themselves through education, health care, tools, seeds, and resources to improve community infrastructure.

And the sharing is mutual. When we care for people, we can be transformed by experiencing the presence of God. Seeing what others have lost, we are reminded what matters most in life. Seeing what others live through, we are inspired to live courageously. Seeing that new life is possible, our hope rises. Working with others, we realize that God reaches out to all of us. Relying on God for the outcome, our faith increases.

First Timothy 6:18-19a exhorts us "to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up ... the treasure of a good foundation for the future." Our treasure is doing God's will, loving God, and loving God's treasured people, so we all "may take hold of the life that really is life" (1 Timothy 6:19b). Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). May you find your treasure, and your heart, by sharing resources and changing lives with a generous gift to One Great Hour of Sharing. We will receive this special offering on March 22. Special envelopes will be provided.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Season of Lent

Lent is a time of preparation for the celebration of Easter. Lent is 40 days (and six Sundays) from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday. Our English word "Lent" is derived from the word "lengthen" because, in the Northern Hemisphere, Lent takes place as the days lengthen in Spring. Lent ends with our Easter celebration, the focal point of the Christian faith.

Of all the seasons of the church year, Lent has probably been the most abused. It has, in certain times and places, become a period of excessive introspection, empty abstinence from tidbits of affluence, and the enjoyment of the gloom of self-denial. We need to rediscover Lent's rich tradition. The purpose of a fast is not just to do without something as an end in itself. Its purpose is to free up time, energy, and money etc. which can be put towards fresh use for a new purpose. Lent is a time for taking stock, both of ourselves and our society. It is a time to reflect about how we implement the values of peace, community, and equality of all before God. Are we in solidarity with the Crucified One who was faithful to God's Way even when the cost was as high as death on a cross? Or are we more identified with the institutional structures and authorities, which crucified him—and the principalities and powers, which continue to "crucify" innocent people in our own day. On Ash Wednesday we are asked to turn around and take a new perspective on our relationship with God in a world that was created. Take a step forward on your journey through Lent.

During the season of Lent, the Christian Education Committee will be hosting two Pot Luck Suppers; Friday, March 6th and Sunday, March 22nd at 6:30 pm.

Join us for fellowship and bring your favorite Soup & Salad.

Booklet of Graces and Prayers

Sunday School Children are creating a *Booklet of Graces and Prayers*. If you have a favorite prayer or grace you would like to share, please send a copy via e-mail to Pam Cochrane at pccochrane@gmail.com or drop off a hard copy in the CE Mailbox located in the Church Office.

Movie Discussion:

The next gathering will be Monday, March 2, 7:30 pm, in room 3. Please watch *Ground Hog Day*. Synopsis: A romantic fantasy about a wacky weatherman forced to relive one strange day over and over again, until he gets it right. Please view the movie before the discussion.

Book Group

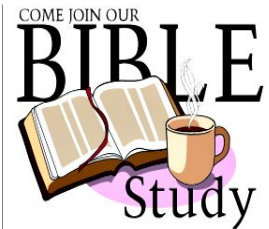
The group will meet in room 3, on March 16, at noon and again at 7:30 pm to discuss *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible* (A.J. Jacobs). This book is an insightful and hilarious journey for readers of all faiths. Though no fatted calves were harmed in the making of this book, Jacobs chronicles 12 months living a remarkably strict Biblical life.

Bible Study

The Bible Study group meets on Wednesday mornings at 9:30 am. You are invited to join in the discussion any time you are able.

Readings for March (from the lectionary)

Mar. 4: Neh 6:1-19	Luke 4:22-30	Gal 3:2-9
Mar. 11 Neh 13:4-12	Matt 6:7-15	Heb 11:13-19
Mar. 18 Jer 24:1-10	Luke 12:11-21	Col 3:2-9
Mar. 25 Lam 2:1-6	John 9:1-7	1 Peter 3:13-22



Wednesdays
9:30—11 :00

Sunday, March 1, at 2:00 pm
It's the annual
MUSICALE

Featuring

The Congregational Church House Band
(Rob Authier, Dave Kilkenney, Andy Peterson
Phil Robinson & Greg Schmidt)

With church auction American Idol "winners"

Michael Lauer
Pam Cochrane

Also appearing
Thomas Dawkins
Phyllis Konop
Melissa Marteney
Amanda Robinson
Sharon Schmidt

The Congregational Church Quartet
(Alice von Loeseke, Sharon Schmidt, Rob Authier & Michael Lauer)

And More

ANSWERS TO TEST

The day Jesus was born is called: CHRISTMAS

How many commandments are there? 10

Can you name them?

1. HAVE NO OTHER GODS
2. MAKE NO GRAVEN IMAGES
3. DON'T TAKE THE NAME OF GOD IN VAIN
4. REMEMBER THE SABBATH
5. HONOR YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER
6. DON'T MURDER
7. DON'T COMMIT ADULTERY
8. DON'T STEAL
9. DON'T BEAR FALSE WITNESS
10. DON'T COVET ANYTHING OF YOUR NEIGHBORS

The commandments can be found in these books in the Bible: EXODUS & DEUTERONOMY

What is the name of our denomination? UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

When was it founded? 1957

Where did it begin? PLIMOUTH MASS (THE PILGRIMS)

What is Lent? THE 40 DAYS BEFORE EASTER

Why do we celebrate it? TO REMIND US OF JESUS 40 DAYS IN THE WILDERNESS

The first book of the Bible is called: GENESIS

The first Gospel written was: MARK

The story of Jesus' life can be found in these books: MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, JOHN

How many disciples did Jesus have? 12

The disciple who betrayed Jesus was called: JUDAS

Name the days in Holy Week - explain what happened on them:

PALM SUNDAY - JESUS RODE INTO JERUSALEM

MAUNDY THURSDAY - THE LAST SUPPER

GOOD FRIDAY - JESUS WAS KILLED

EASTER - THE RESURRECTION

What do we do in church to help us remember Jesus? COMMUNION

How did Jesus die? CRUCIFIXION

When did Jesus die? GOOD FRIDAY

PRAYER LIST



Our prayers are with:

The Clawson & Audibert families on the death of Chrissy Clawson Audibert.

Peter Boehm (Gretchen Henry's brother)

Jim Wallace George Mayo

Nancy Schmalz Dick Reed

Edward Culverhouse Richard Wells

Dauida Crabtree Sue Hildreth

Clayton Guyett Gary Newman

Claire & Bob L'Heureaux

All those serving in the armed forces and their families

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*No matter who you are or where you are
on life's journey, you are welcome here.*

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**Lenten Season
Potluck Suppers**

**March 6 & March 22
6:30 pm**

**Sponsored by
The Christian Education Committee**