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Something to think about ...

My niece recently posted a cartoon by Brian Gordon to Facebook in which a character is caught between the traditional angelic voice on one shoulder and voice of temptation on the other. In this case, the angel whispers into the character's right ear, "Since we can't eat out, now's the perfect time to eat better, get fit, and stay healthy," while into his left ear, the devil is shouting, "We're quarantined! Who the heck are we trying to impress? We have snacks — we have sweatpants! By God, I say we use them!"

This month, the Christian church enters the liturgical period known as Lent. Lent is traditionally a time of abstinence in which Christians are called to fast regularly, refrain from festivities, sacrifice favorite foods or activities, and even put aside the use of the word "Alleluia" in worship to adopt instead more somber tones. The church's assumption has been that clearing our lives of distractions will make us more attuned to the spiritual and enable us to better spend our time in quiet contemplation and prayer. The pandemic, however, has certainly challenged that assumption as the cartoon so aptly illustrates. We've had ten months of restricted activities and have been forced to give up all kinds of favorite distractions but my guess is that most of us haven't spent that time in quiet contemplation seeking greater spiritual enlightenment. Any plans we had for self-improvement were quickly drowned in the tedium and frustration of the shut-down, and we had little appetite for ascetic denials of the flesh when everything else was already being denied us. If anything, we used the many restrictions we were enduring as an excuse to indulge in anything that would make us feel better for even just a moment like Kettle Krinkle Cut potato chips and any praying we did was of the "God, help me to not lose my mind," sort of prayer. If I asked you, "What spiritual enlightenment have you gained from these months of pandemic?" you might respond, "I've realized I don't make a very good hermit."

If I were to suggest, then, that we use Lent in a traditional way, practicing fasting and sacrifice, it feels as if I would be piling on to an already bleak winter. What can Lent mean to people who have already given up so much and who are feeling, not spiritually uplifted by those sacrifices, but exhausted and sulky?

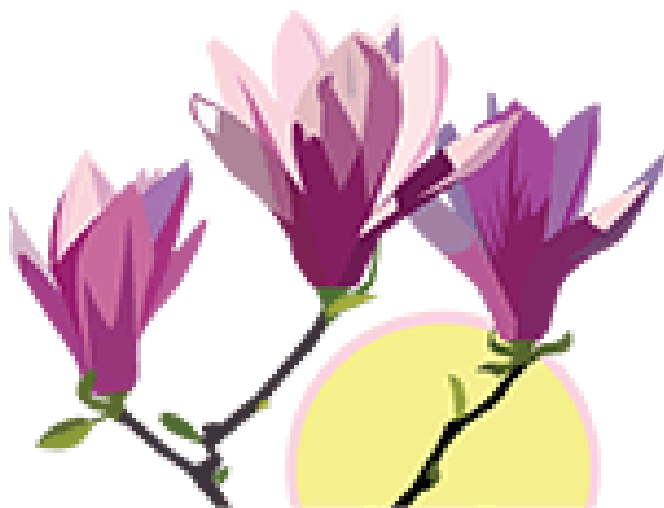
I'm going to offer then, an alternative extremely simple Lenten devotional plan. I have chosen inspirational scriptures that are short and uplifting, chosen for their ability to remind us of the comfort and hope we have in God, and I have listed them in the table below. There are 40 passages, one for each day of Lent. (Sundays aren't counted because the church fathers assumed you got enough devotion from church and didn't want you to over-do it.) Sometime between now and Ash Wednesday, February 17th, cut the table into its squares (with one

scripture reference on each square) and put the squares into a jar. If you receive this newsletter electronically and can't print it off, copy the references by hand onto slips of paper.

Beginning on Ash Wednesday, draw one of the slips of paper each day, look it up in a Bible, and read it. I have only given you the references so you will need to do the work of looking them up yourself; consider that part of your Lenten devotion. What you do with the scripture, however, after that is up to you:

- You might spend a few moments in prayer considering the passage and its application to your life.
- You could copy it out, put it in your pocket, and carry it around with you during the day, pulling it out occasionally to read it again.
- If you are in a family, you could have everyone try to memorize it as “the scripture of the day,” or talk about what it means over dinner.
- You might copy it out and stick it on your cupboard to read it every time you grab some more Kettle Krinkle Cut chips
- You could make a Lenten scrapbook, copying the scripture onto each page, and drawing illustrations or writing reflections inspired by the passage
- Or you can just read it.

Instead of “giving something up” this Lent, I think we are all more in need of receiving something, something that can fill our empty spirits and feed our souls. I hope this simple exercise can bring you comfort and inspiration during the weeks of Lent.



Preparing for Easter

Lenten

DEVOTIONALS



I Peter 5:7	I Corinthians 15:58	Isaiah 41:10	II Corinthians 4:18
Deuteronomy 31:6	I Corinthians 16:13-14	James 1:2-4	John 14:27
Ecclesiastes 9:7	Isaiah 12:2	Mark 10:27	Isaiah 40:31
Exodus 15:2	Joshua 1:9	Psalms 145:9	Psalms 30:5
I Corinthians 13:13	Proverbs 8:34-35	Philippians 4:13	Psalms 125:5-6
Psalms 1:1-3	Romans 15:13	Matthew 5:8	Psalms 34:4
Romans 8:31	Isaiah 43:2	Psalms 28:7	Romans 8:38-39
Psalms 62:6-7	Psalms 16:11	Psalms 46:1-2	Isaiah 46:3-4
Psalms 30:11-12	Romans 14:17	Psalms 31:24	Romans 5:3-5
John 15:11	II Corinthians 4:8-10	Psalms 46:10-11	Psalms 23:1

Church News & Events



Mission of the Month

January Mission of the Month Report

During the month of January members of the UUC congregation were asked to give to charities or organizations of particular interest to them and report back on their choices. These are the organizations we have received to date:

UNICEF
Promise for Haiti
NAACP
Compassion (child sponsorship)
World Vision (child sponsorship)
Amnesty International
Meserete Kristos College (Ethiopia)
Eastern Mennonite Missions coffee cooperative (Guatemala)
St. Jude's Hospital for Children
Legal Defense Fund
Union University Church
Black Lives Matter
Code.org (supporting computer science education around the world)
American Museum of Natural History
Salvation Army
Wikimedia
ACLU
Southern Tier Library System
Haiti Outreach
PBS
Catskill & Adirondack Parks
Christian Sojourners
Corning Community College
Alfred University
Environmental Defense Fund
Tanglewood Nature Center
American Friends Service Committee
Baker's Bridge Historical
Equal Justice Initiative
Alfred-Alfred Station Community Chest
Matthew 25 Ministries
Lutheran World Relief
Guiding Eyes for the Blind
Operation Smile
Greenpeace
Allegany County SPCA
TNR (Trap, Neuter & Release)

February: Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)

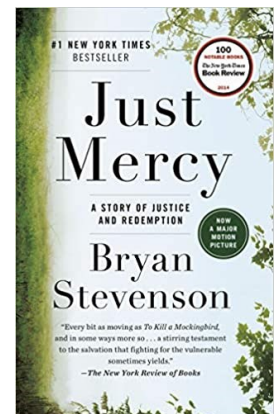
The Equal Justice Initiative is committed to ending mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the United States, to challenging racial and economic injustice, and to protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society.

From the EJI website:

"Founded in 1989 by [Bryan Stevenson](#), a widely acclaimed public interest lawyer and bestselling author of *Just Mercy*, EJI is a private, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides legal representation to people who have been illegally convicted, unfairly sentenced, or abused in state jails and prisons. We challenge the death penalty and excessive punishment and we provide re-entry assistance to formerly incarcerated people.

"Bryan Stevenson is the author of the critically acclaimed New York Times bestseller, *Just Mercy*, which was named by Time Magazine as one of the 10 Best Books of Nonfiction for 2014 and has been awarded several honors, including the American Library Association's Carnegie Medal for best

nonfiction book of 2015 and a 2015 NAACP Image Award. *Just Mercy* was adapted as a major



Church News & Events, cont.

Search Committee Update

Church Council Chair John Buckwalter called the Zoom meeting to order at 7:31 pm.

In attendance from the various boards were:

Trustee: Laurel Buckwalter, Denise Grandusky, Brad Bowden, Jerry Jusaniec, Walter Schulze

Elder: Larry Casey, Jen Smith, Eliza Ordway, John Buckwalter

Diaconate: Jan Casey, Karrie Edwards, Mary Ann Whittemore

Fellowship: Catherine Chambers, Tricia Debertolis, Cathy Rees, Joan Bowden, Cindy Tucker

Christian Education: Sophie Luo, Lyle Slack, Melissa Jusaniec, Jan Porter

Treasurer: Mary Stearns

John explained the reason for the meeting—the formation of a search committee for a transitional pastor, as required by the church bylaws. John spoke about the rationale for a transitional pastor, as recommended by the Strategic Planning Committee. Our pastor Laurie DeMott plans to retire at the end of December 2021, so the transitional pastor needs to be in place by January 1, 2022 and would serve approximately one year. There was a time of questions and discussion.

The bylaws require two members from each of the five church boards for a search committee, with members at large allowed if desired. The group decided to move ahead and volunteer or nominate. A job description for the search committee was made up by the Strategic Planning Committee and was read to the group.

After discussion, phone calls, texts, and emails, the following people have agreed to serve on the search committee:

- Jerry Jusaniec and Linell Soule from the trustees.
- Larry Casey and Jen Smith from the elders.
- Mary Ann Whittemore and Sharon Burdick from the diaconate.
- Cindy Tucker and Joan Bowden from the fellowship board.
- Lyle Slack and Melissa Jusaniec from the BOCE.
- Dave Porter and Lana Meissner, members at large.

The first meeting will be held via Zoom on Tuesday, February 2, 2021.

Do You Need a Brick to Get Your Attention?

A young and successful executive was traveling down a neighborhood street, going a bit too fast in his new Jaguar. He was watching for kids darting out from between parked cars and slowed down when he thought he saw something. As his car passed, no children appeared. Instead, a brick smashed into the Jag's side door!

He slammed on the brakes and drove the Jag back to the spot where the brick had been thrown. The angry driver then jumped out of the car, grabbed the nearest kid and pushed him up against a parked car, shouting, "What was that all about and who are you? Just what the heck are you doing? That's a new car and that brick you threw is going to cost me a lot of money. Why did you do it?"

The young boy was apologetic. "Please mister... please, I'm sorry. I didn't know what else to do," he pleaded. "I threw the brick because no one else would stop."

With tears dripping down his face and off his chin, the youth pointed to a spot just around a parked car. "It's my brother," he said. "He rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up." Now sobbing, the boy asked the stunned executive, "Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me." Moved beyond words, the driver tried to swallow the rapidly swelling lump in his throat. He hurriedly lifted the handicapped boy back into the wheelchair, then took out his fancy handkerchief and dabbed at the fresh scrapes and cuts. A quick look told him the boy was going to be okay.

"Thank you and may God bless you," the grateful child told the stranger.

Too shook up for words, the man simply watched the little boy push his wheelchair-bound brother down the sidewalk toward their home.

It was a long, slow walk back to the Jaguar. The damage was very noticeable, but the driver never bothered to repair the dented side door. He kept the dent there to remind him of this message:

Don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention!

Church News & Events, cont.

February 17, 2021



Lenten History

From the Newsletter Newsletter, used with permission

Though the date of Easter varies, the majority of the Lenten season occurs during March. In fact, the word *Lent* comes from the Anglo-Saxon words *lenctentid* (meaning “March”) and *lencten* (meaning “spring”).

The first reference to Lent dates back to 325 AD, in one of the 20 canons decreed at the council of Nicaea. By the eighth century, Christians started observing Lent, and a 10th-century monk named Aelfric connected the use of ashes and “the Lenten fast” to the pre-Easter period.

Lent lasts 40 days to represent Jesus’ time in the wilderness, when he was tempted by the devil. The six Sundays that occur between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday aren’t counted as part of Lent; instead, as the traditional day of worship, they’re considered “mini-Easters.”

A Prayer for Ash Wednesday

*Lord of the winds,
I cry to thee,
I that am dust,
and blown about
by every gust
I fly to thee.*

*Lord of the waters,
unto thee I call.
I that am weed
upon the waters borne,
and by the waters torn,
tossed by the waters,
at thy feet I fall.*

—Mary Coleridge (1861-1907)

Lament

From the Newsletter Newsletter, Feb. 2021 used with permission

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic struck America during the middle of Lent, a season associated with deprivation. Some people made light of the shutdowns, joking, “I didn’t mean to give up *this* much for Lent!” Others asked why the suffering was occurring in the first place.

Professor N.T. Wright, in an essay for *Time*, explains that asking “why?” but receiving no answer is key to biblical lamenting. Adding to the mystery, he says, is that God also laments — grieving at the wickedness of humans, despairing over Israel’s unfaithfulness. Jesus cries at a friend’s tomb; the Holy Spirit groans in anguish.

“Part of the Christian vocation,” Wright concludes, is not being able to explain why but lamenting instead. “As the Spirit laments within us,” he says, “so we become, even in our self-isolation, small shrines where the presence and healing love of God can dwell. And out of that there can emerge new possibilities ... new hope.”



**JESUS OFFERED UP PRAYERS AND
SUPPLICATIONS, WITH LOUD
CRIES AND TEARS,
TO THE ONE WHO WAS ABLE TO SAVE
HIM FROM DEATH ...**

HEBREWS 5:7, NRSV

People

A Message from Sophie Luo about Ding Jiaxi

“First meeting with his lawyer! Around 4pm on January 21st, 2021, Lawyer Peng Jian met Ding Jiaxi via video at Linshu Detention Center in Linyi, Shandong Province. Jiaxi has been disconnected with outside world for 392 days! The meeting was supposed to be 70 minutes, but due to computer and internet problems, 40 minutes were lost from the meeting.

“Jiaxi told lawyer Peng Jian that he was tortured during residential surveillance at a designated location (RSDL) in Yantai, Shandong Province and was deprived of sleep constantly. For seven days seven nights, five police officers took shifts one after another interrogating him. For two weeks, he was only given a fourth of a bun at each meal. There was one week where they deprived him of water and only gave him 600ml a day. Jiaxi said he has told the prosecutor that he’s been tortured. The prosecutor has it on file already. 10 written records were made after Jiaxi was badly tortured. Before the formal arrest notice was issued, Jiaxi was tortured everyday also.

“Jiaxi cried after hearing how his daughters are doing. He told Peng Jian to relay this message to his family: I’m willing to continue fighting for my ideals and I am prepared for anything to come. Everything I do is for you to live a better life, and for my people to live a better life. Many thanks to my friends, to the Alfred community, to friends at UUC church, and to

every-
one. I
love
you
all!”



From Lois Stiles: *I am thankful for all the cards, notes of encouragement and most of all the prayers. Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas, rejoice in its blessing and a Happy New Year! Thanks also for the beautiful poinsettia plant.*

From Bev Potter: *Thanks so much for all your cards and prayers. They were badly needed.*



Mindy Smith, Catherine Chambers, Ding Jiaxi & family, Michelle Garcia Escobar, Clayton Stutzman, Hugh Langelier, Lois Stiles, Sharon & Roger Smith, Wes Bentz, Beverly Snyder’s sister (Barbara), 3 yr. old Lowin, Jim Rausch in hospice care, Marnie Johnson (Joan Schulze’s niece), Sharon Burdick, all those whose families are suffering from Covid-19, Joan Schulze family on the death of her sister's son, Mary Smith and Jen Smith and family on the death of Bill Smith, Michele Hluchy’s father (Rev. Stephen Hluchy), Mary Lou Cartledge’s brother Walter Straight (heart surgery), Beth Slack’s brother Will Jacox (Covid)

Merciful God, you called us forth from the dust of the earth; you claimed us for Christ in the waters of baptism. Look upon us as we enter these Forty Days bearing the mark of ashes, and bless our journey through the desert of Lent to the font of rebirth. May our fasting be hunger for justice; our alms, a making of peace; our prayer, the chant of humble and grateful hearts.



February Board Members of the Month

Deacon.....MaryAnn Whittemore (whitteduc@twc.com; 607.587.9449)
 Elder.....Deb Stephens (farmingrl127@yahoo.com; 617.304.9332)
 BOCE.....
 Fellowship.....Tricia Debertolis (debertpa@alfred.edu; 607.382.7996)
 Trustee.....Walt Schulze (schulze@alfred.edu; 607.587.9529)

Who do you call? Flowers or lay leading—call an Elder; greeting or coffee hour—call a Deacon;
 Sunday school—call BOCE; building issues—call a Trustee.

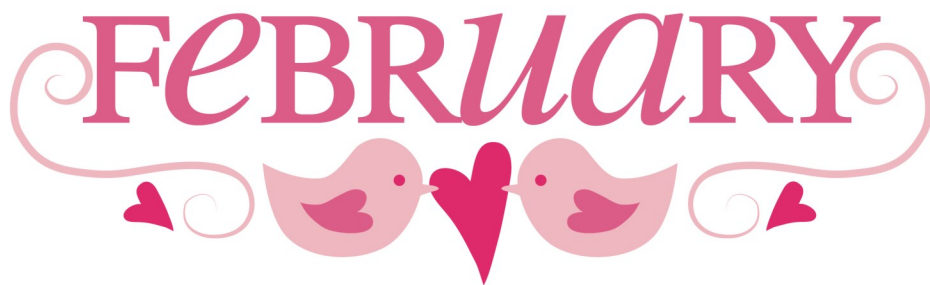
FEBRUARY



Upcoming Sunday Leaders

If you are not able to serve as scheduled, please switch with someone listed on the charts below and notify the Church Office. If you are unable to find someone to switch with you, please contact either the Elder of the Month or the Deacon of the Month.

Date	Lay Leader	Flowers
Feb 7	Deb Stephens	Communion
Feb 14	Mary Lou Cartledge	Melissa Jusianiec
Feb 21 Lent 1	Caiti Dewey	None
Feb 28 Lent 2	Jen Smith	None
Mar 7 Lent 3	Larry Casey	None
Mar 14 Lent 4	Tiersa Watson	None
Mar 21 Lent 5	Dave Porter	None
Mar 28 Palm Sun	Lana Meissner	Palms (Meissner)
Apr 4 Easter	John Buckwalter	Lana Meissner



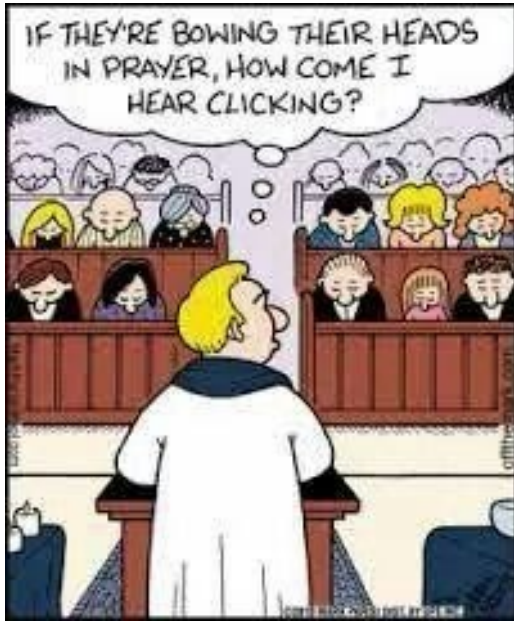
Mission of the Month

Equal Justice Initiative

“There is always in February some one day, at least, when one smells the yet distant, but surely coming summer.” – Gertrude Jekyll

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 10:30 Worship; Communion	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 10:30 Worship	15	16	17 Ash Wednesday	18	19	20
21 10:30 Worship Lent 1	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 10:30 Worship Lent 2						

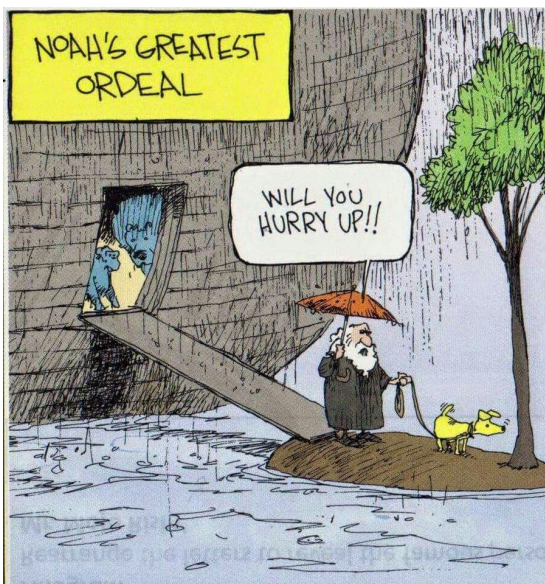
Just for Fun



Two Old Guys at Dinner

An elderly couple has dinner at another couple's house, and after eating, the wives leave the table and go into the kitchen. The two gentlemen were talking, and one says, "Last night we went out to a new restaurant and it was really great. I would recommend it very highly." The other man asks, "What is the name of the restaurant?" The first man thinks and thinks and finally asks, "What is the name of that flower you give to someone you love? You know... The one that's red and has thorns." "Do you mean a rose?"

"Yes, that's the one," replied the man. He then turns towards the kitchen and yells, "Rose, what's the name of that restaurant we went to last night?"



Old Goats

A group of Canadians was traveling by tour bus through Holland. As they stopped at a cheese farm, a young guide led them through a process of cheese making, explaining that goat's milk was used. She showed the group a lovely hillside where many goats were grazing. These, she explained, were the older goats put out to pasture when they no longer produced. She then asked, "What do you do in Canada with your old goats that aren't producing?" A spry old gentleman answered, "They send us on bus tours."



Elderly Man Thinks Fast

An elderly farmer in Florida had a large pond down by his fruit orchard. One evening he decided to go down to the pond and took a five gallon bucket to pick some fruit. As he neared the pond, he heard female voices shouting and laughing with glee. As he came closer he saw a bunch of young women skinny-dipping in the pond. He made the women aware of his presence and they all went to the deep end. One of the women shouted to him, "We're not coming out until you leave!" The old man thought for a second and said, "I didn't come down here to watch you ladies swim or to make you get out of the pond naked." Holding the bucket up he said, "I'm here to feed the alligator!"

Moral: Old men can still think fast.



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February, 2021 Newsletter