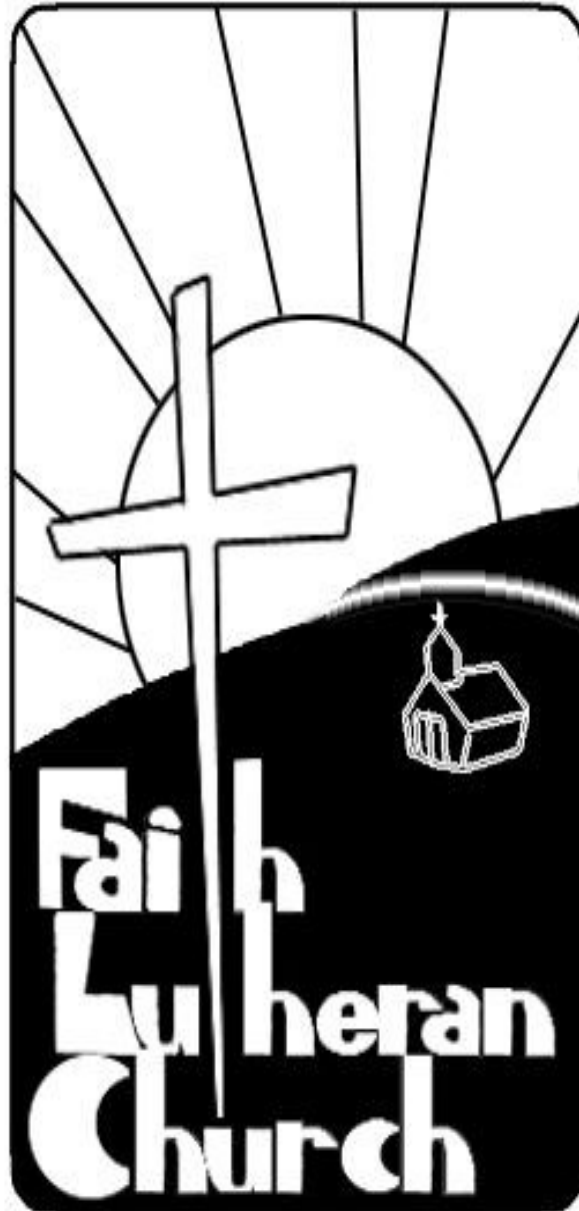


The Grapevine

March 2019

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Clippings from the Vinedresser



Is not this the fast I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed to free and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Isaiah 58:6-7

"The fast that God wants isn't giving up desserts for Lent. Rather, it is living each and every day caring about...those in need..."

Fasting and Lent go together like hand and glove. There are rules for fasting in some traditions, while other churches encourage fasting but let folks choose their own way of doing it. What is similar across the board is that fasting is not to be an attention gatherer but is for spiritual growth. Thus money saved on food not eaten is given to charity; time saved in not watching TV is devoted to prayer and Bible reading, and so on. Another thing is also clear: one does not fast on Sunday. Sunday is always observed as a little Easter, and as one noted theologian, St. Augustine once said, "It is an abomination to fast on the Lord's Day."

A modern take on fasting is to take something on for Lent, such as donating time to various charitable organizations, or even taking time to spend with the family, if one normally is overly busy at work.

I really don't think God cares what we do or don't do in regard to fasting when it comes to not eating meat or chocolate. But God does expect us to fast in another way: taking care of those who need our support.

The people of Isaiah's time (this is the third Isaiah, prophesying after the return from Babylon) were so like our modern western world that it is uncanny. Their big concern was accumulating wealth, be

it materially or wealth of fame or power. If going to Temple, fasting, and keeping other religious customs furthered their cause, they were in whole hog. All in, that is, except for their heart. And that was the rub.

You see, God wants the heart—all of it. We saw in our look at Luke 6 several weeks ago, that Jesus knocked the props out from under us, leaving only one,—Jesus. And when our hearts are wholly after Jesus, our lives will follow suit. And what will that look like?

Well, there will be prayer, scripture study, and worship, that is a given. But surprisingly, that won't take up all that much time (we are to pray without ceasing, says St. Paul, which implies our lives become living prayers). What will take up our time and our concerns will be—wait for it—the needs of others, especially those who are poor, disadvantaged, voiceless, powerless. Over and over and over again, God thunders through the prophets, this message: care for the lowly.

Jesus came to turn the world upside down, according to Luke's two works. To raise up the lowly, give sight to the blind, free the bound, feed the hungry, while at the same time bringing down the powerful. If that was Jesus' work, what do you suppose ours should be?

When our hearts and lives are given over wholly to God, we will naturally begin to think about the powerless and work on their behalf. It, like Lent and fasting, goes hand and glove.

The fast that God wants isn't giving up desserts for Lent. Rather, it is living each and every day caring about, loving, and serving those in need, regardless who, what, when, where, or why.



Lent/Easter Schedule

Here is the Lent and Easter Schedule in a nutshell. We hope that you can join us for some or all of the events.

- March 5:** Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, 5:00 p.m.
- March 6:** Ash Wednesday Joint Service, 7:00 p.m.
- March 13-April 17:** Lenten Lunches, Northminster United, noon
- April 14:** Palm Sunday, 10:30 a.m.
- April 18:** Seder and Potluck, 6:00 p.m.
- April 19:** Good Friday Service, 10:30 p.m.
- April 21:** Easter Sunrise Service, 8:00 a.m.
- April 21:** Easter Sunrise Breakfast, 9:00 a.m.
- April 21:** Easter Traditional Service, 10:30 a.m.



Shrove Tuesday

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper will be on Tuesday, March 5 beginning at 5:00 p.m. Enjoy pancakes, sausages, dessert, and great conversation.

If you would like to contribute cooked sausages or desserts please bring them to the church Sunday, March 3, or have them to the kitchen on Tuesday by 4:00 p.m.

Any offers to help in the kitchen or for setup and cleanup would greatly be appreciated.



Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent with a service of confession and absolution. It is a somber service in which we fully acknowledge our sin and need for God's mercy, which is abundantly poured out upon us.

We are joined in this service by our friends from Knox, St. Paul's, St. Luke's/ St. James Presbyterian and Northminster United Churches.

Join us for this important start of Lent.



Pastor's Holiday

Pastor Dennis will be on holiday from March 25 through March 31. He is off to Saskatchewan for his mother's 95th birth-

day. In his absence, Pastor Lowell will be taking the service.

Lenten Challenge



During Lent we usually focus on fasting—giving up something we really enjoy for Lent. But sometimes we can fast by adding something to our schedule, like taking time to help at St. Vincent’s Kitchen, or volunteering our time at Simcoe Hall Settlement House.

How about this for a challenge? Why don’t we fast by donating a food item or a pair of socks for each day of Lent? Put the items into a bag and bring them each week to church or bring them Easter Sunday.

The food and socks we collect will then be delivered to Gate 3:16. They always need

socks and food. A list of food items the Gate needs is listed below:

- Coffee, tea,
- Sugar, whitener, milk
- Ketchup, mayo
- soup
- styrofoam plates, bowls and 7 oz cups
- plastic forks, spoons and knives
- paper towels, toilet paper, napkins, Kleenex
- tin foil
- dish and laundry soap
- XL heavy duty garbage bags.

Lenten Lunches: The History



One of the great inter-church activities that we participate in is the Lenten Lunches. We have been doing these lunches for well over ten years.

Some history: The pastors who meet for weekly Lectionary study, of whom I am one, wanted to reach out into the community. Our idea was to serve a warm supper once a week to local children who we knew could use the meal. The turnout was very poor, so the idea was abandoned. But the volunteers who had gath-

ered from each church still wanted to do something. So we hit on the idea of Lenten Lunch. Originally, we held the lunches at Knox and publicized it in downtown businesses. Take an hour break, have lunch a short worship and return to work recharged physically and spiritually. We did get a few business folks but mostly seniors from our churches. So we decided to focus on our seniors. We moved to Northminster where parking is better and the auditorium bigger. We now regularly serve 100 folks per lunch.

Lenten Lunch: Faith’s Role

Now that you know the history, what is Faith’s role in all this?

Well, we take a turn providing the soup, buns, desserts that make up the lunch. As well, we help set up and clean up so that the staff and members of Northminster, who graciously host us, don’t have to.

Our turn this year is March 13. We will be needing soup and desserts for about 100 people. There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board, please help us out. Bring your soup to the church no later than 11:15.

As we always have a great response, Thank You in advance.



Chili Dinner

This month's Fellowship Hour (March 3) is special. It is our Chili Dinner Fellowship Hour. Bring a pot of your famous chili and let's share. If you are not a fan of chili, bring soup, sandwiches, buns, dessert, hotdogs, whatever. Just come and join us.

It is a highlight on our Fellowship Hour calendar!

Coffee and Tea is supplied; bibs are not!



Spring Cookie Walk

Spring Cookie walk? For sure! On Sunday March 31 immediately following worship we'll have a Spring Cookie Walk in Cana Hall. The proceeds from our cookie walks go to support our two foster children. The cost of sponsoring the children is approximately \$500 a year per child. At our Christmas Cookie walk we raised \$520.

The cost of cookies and squares is \$7.00 per dozen. We will need lots of cookies,

squares, or tarts of any kind. (Easter cookies would be lovely) So break open your cook book, turn on your ovens, and start baking. Please bring your cookies anytime, we can freeze them, or bring them on March 31st. No need to package or price them.

Once again, the Sunday School thanks you for your continued generous support.



Soup 'N Buns

We are going to do a repeat of last October's service Sunday, partly. Remember? We served Soup and Buns to the residents of Faith Place after worship among other things. Well, the response from our residents was so positive that we are going to do it again.

On Sunday, April 7, we will again be invit-

ing the residents of Faith Place to come and join us for a bowl of hot and delicious soup and a fresh bun.

We will be needing soup for a potential 200 plus people. Get out your biggest pot and boil up some soup for us and help us let our senior residents just how special they are.



March 31

For some unknown reason, March 31 was skipped on the Worship Leader calendar: there is NO ONE scheduled for that day. So, we need volunteers to read, usher, pre-

pare and serve coffee.

Any takers? (Especially important as we are having Pastor Lowell take the service.)

