

Lent is Coming

Before another newsletter is printed we will be in the season of Lent. Lent has been identified as a season of penitence and reflection by the wider church for centuries. We continue the traditions developed over the many years by holding special worshipful prayer services during the 40 days (which does not include Sundays) in Lent.

Those services are almost always held on Wednesdays, already a very busy day for us here at St. Luke Union. As Dianne noted recently, "Are you going to try to shoehorn another event into that schedule?" Of course, the answer is yes, and the process will require deft scheduling and inter-team cooperation so we can avoid the need to make choices instead of being able to participate in all the events we want.

Bible study will continue with a special Lenten study, rather than the normal through a book of the Bible method we have been using. This means our just started study of Acts will be suspended through Lent - to be started again on the Wednesday following Easter.

Choir practice and bell choir practice, family Bible study and our Wednesday meals are all continuing. Please mark your Lenten calendar and plan to eat, study, worship, pray and praise God throughout this most holy of seasons in the life of the church.

Grand Bear Lodge

As this newsletter goes to print, our young people will be getting ready to go on this annual pilgrimage, and in fact, before this newsletter arrives, they will have returned; refreshed, renewed and invigorated. Who knows what goes on at these annual trips, only the chaperones and the participants, but it must work because they want to return each year. What a great thing! I hope we have been in prayer for our youth and will continue to pray for them . . . by name.

Two very special worship services are planned for the Lenten season. The first is Ash Wednesday which will include time for reflection and the imposition of ashes on the forehead or the hand. The second service is Maundy Thursday. This is the day we recall several very important aspects of church - Holy Communion and Jesus' proclamation of the great commandment to and for his disciples.

Watch the bulletin for updates and the bulletin boards for signup sheets.

In faith we are praying for:

Laurie Vial
 Judy Norton
 Clarissa Thomas
 Kris Muschel
 Kaitlyn Weber
 Mark Redick
 Craig Hammer
 Brenda Franks
 David Marquardt
 Mary Putnam
 Arlene Simmons Family
 Ginny Baker
 Seanna Moyer
 Sharon Stanford
 Mary Jane Trower
 Marsha Hinthorn
 Tony Philippi
 Teri Hammer
 Bob Thomas
 Mary Desmond

As The Pastor Ponders:

Another inauguration has come and gone, a National Prayer Service has been held at which one friend preached (Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins-General Minister and President of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ), another friend read scripture (Rev. Dr. Cynthia Hale), and my mother's presiding bishop (Rev. Dr. Katherine Jefferts Shori) pronounced the benediction.

Clergy and laypeople everywhere are critiquing many aspects of the events and personalities of the celebration of yet another 'peaceful' transfer of power for the United States. Was the Invocation theological enough or did Rev. Warren let his tradition down? Was Dr. Lowery's benediction appropriate, too judgmental? Did we get what we paid for, or just so much fluff?

What is evident is that the next big thing is upon us. But soon it will be another next big thing. Ministry is like that. Call and Response. Awaiting the call and then recognizing it and responding, effectively. To which Ninevah will God send us next? And what will be our Good News to preach? And perhaps of real importance, will we even answer the call?

In recent days, there have been at least three major investment advisors charged with fraud. Madoff is the most infamous, then there is the one in Indiana who crashed his plane too soon, he was supposed to have died, but the plane let him down by going down on land. And finally, in Tampa, Florida another has disappeared, but his car was left at the airport. He skipped. Each one issued a call, using words to steal from friends, neighbors, even churches and other religious organizations. Can there be yet another 'big' scandal around the corner?

The next big thing the world needs is, ' . . . to love God, love self and love neighbor . . . ' So quoted Sharon Watkins at the National Prayer Service marking day one of President Obama's time in office. Jesus notes the criticality of those few words, just as the oath of office for the President is just a few words (36, I believe). The difference between success and failure is just a few words.

As Robin Mark notes in the song *Revival*, " . . . I feel the brooding of the Spirit . . . " And he concludes with the refrain, " . . . revive us, revive us, revive us with your fire . . . " With these few words, . . . Are we hopeful, St. Luke Union is seeking the next pastor to lead us. . . . Are we fearful, St. Luke Union is seeking the next pastor to lead us . . . What happens when?!

I feel the brooding of the Spirit, I feel the truth of the Medema lyric, "Lord, listen to your people praying . . . " I believe the next big thing for St. Luke is just around the corner, and I can hardly wait. God is truly present and God's Spirit has come upon us.

February 2009 Lectionary

Date	First Reading	Psalm	Second Reading	Gospel
February 1	Deuteronomy	Psalm 111	1 Corinthians 8:1-13	Mark 1:21-28
February 8	Isaiah 40:21-31	Psalm 147 1-11, 20c	1 Corinthians 9:16-23	Mark 1:29-39
February 15	11 Kings 5:1-14	Psalm 30	1 Corinthians 9:24-	Mark 1:40-45
February 22	11 Kings 2:1-12	Psalm 50:1-6	11 Corinthians 4:3-6	Mark 9:2-9
February 25	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17	Psalm 51:1-17	11 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10	Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Help Us Welcome

Are you willing to be a greeter, fareweller or welcome desk assistant but aren't quite sure you know what to do? We're here to help you! We recognize that some of you might be a little hesitant to sign up to be one of these because you're afraid you "might not do it right." Instead of having a class about how to be one of these volunteers, we will have you "shadow" one of us. You can sign up for one of these duties and someone from the Outreach Task Force will assist you or you can watch and learn. The next time you sign up, you'll feel more confident and be able to do it on your own. We'd like to get more people involved in volunteering for these duties; you won't be "left out in the cold" because we will be greeting and farewelling from inside fellowship hall. If you're interested, please contact Karen Walters at 452-6955 or e-mail kwalttrn@aol.com, or contact Pastor Bob. (Or we might do what Pastor Bob does and volunteer you!) Thank you from the Outreach Task Force.

Birthdays

Heather Burns - 1
 Ruth Shinn - 1
 Stuart Tabor - 3
 Robert Little - 8
 Dick Rice - 8
 Charles McLean - 9
 Kyle Strong - 10
 Michael Verplaetse - 10
 Gretchen Shelly - 11
 Jan Weyhrich - 11
 Doris KupperSmith - 13
 Ryan Tarter - 1
 John Otto - 16
 Dick Swanson - 16
 Seth Baker - 19
 Jessie Cavitt - 19
 Olivia Hamilton - 19
 Pauline Justin - 23
 Carol Auyeung - 24
 Arnold Hering - 24
 Miles Keeton - 24
 Marcia Nagy - 24
 David Woodford - 25
 Ian Simmons - 26
 Ellen Marquardt - 28
 Carson Schaefer - 28

Save the Dates!

The Spring Group Sale will be here soon! Mark your calendars for Friday, April 17th and Saturday, April 18th. Start cleaning your closets and start a Group Sale box.

Valentines' Day Dinner

As you know, our Youth always host a dinner on Valentine's Day. Ok, so this year it will be the next week. But that just means we can celebrate longer.

Mark February 21st on your calendars, and ask one of our youth for details. Remember your presence at this youth sponsored event will make it very special.

Christian Education

Hello all! Despite the chilly weather outside, the children and youth have been staying busy in all that we do. The children blessed the congregation with their voices in a wonderful anthem "Open My Eyes Lord" in January. They are continuing their studies with the One Room School House curriculum. After a wonderful Advent season preparing for the birth of Jesus Christ, we have been learning about Jesus' life as a young boy. Our youth group has been getting back into full swing after a holiday break. The high school students have been continuing our Nooma series, a DVD series of sermons by pastor Rob Bell. The confirmation class is continuing with the Grapple curriculum. The weekend of January 23-25, 18 youth and leaders from SNAC took a weekend trip to Grand Bear Lodge, a water park resort to simply relax, unwind, and enjoy each others company. The adult Sunday school class is now working through a study of the book *Paul and the Romans: The Life and Letters of Paul*. As we all continue to blossom and grow in our faith, let's hope Spring hurries around the corner so the earth can blossom, too!

Pastor Search/Nominating Committee

The Committee continues to receive dossiers/profiles from prospective candidates for our called pastor. As of January 20th, we had received 108 dossiers/profiles. The committee continues to read over them, take notes and discuss the candidates. We have also sent requests to several prospective candidates for audio/visual materials so that we may hear/see them and discuss these as well.

Our first meeting for 2009 was on January 5th. We discussed audio/visual materials as well as dossiers/profiles that we received during our brief holiday hiatus. We will also continue to read and review our newest dossiers/profiles.

Please keep the Pastor Search/Nominating Committee in your prayers as we continue in our search for a called pastor.

Charlene A. Beringer,
 Chairperson

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Church Women United

World Day of Prayer is a worldwide ecumenical movement of women of many faith traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer each day on the first Friday of March. Church Women United will celebrate this special day on Friday, March 6th at 9:00 a.m. with a continental breakfast at First Presbyterian Church, 2000 College Ave in Normal. Women from Calvary United Methodist Church and Wesley United Methodist Church are planning the program. Please join us; tickets are \$2.00 and can be purchased from Karin Hunt until Sunday, March 1st.