



Journeys

This is a phrase you won't often hear from a pastor anticipating the season of Lent: I am so excited! If you have been around the office the past few weeks you have seen the materials coming together for the Passports to be distributed on Ash Wednesday and over the next several weeks. Pastor Janet was checking out the stamps that will be available at "stops" along the way as we explore our faith in contrast and comparison with other world religious traditions through readings, activities, field trips, and conversations (many around food, which is something that is both common and unique from place to place and faith to faith). I have just seen the list of some of the major sites on our upcoming journey all on one flier for sharing in and around the community and we are in for quite an adventure.

It is not just the world in which we live that is diverse, it is the neighborhood where we live, the school we attend, the office where we work. If you have ever wondered what Christians believe compared to your Muslim friend or your Hindu colleague or your Jewish sister-in-law, then our Lenten exploration will offer some basics for reflection and, I hope, conversation. Recognizing a range of beliefs and understandings among the people in our local church even about "the basics", the conversations our exploration inspires are to always be understood as a starting point from which we can learn more about others and, if we are lucky, ourselves and, if we are truly paying attention, the Holy for whom we all search.

There are many ways but we choose to follow in Jesus' Way. Lent is an important time for exploring what that does, and does not mean. Human history teaches how dangerous these choices can be depending on who you are and where you are. In an age when religious intolerance and strife have led to so much hatred and bloodshed, I believe there is value in asking what Jesus means when he commands us to love our neighbor in this pluralistic world. What does it mean to love one another in this religiously diverse global community? Is there still the possibility that the world can look to the major religions, and particularly the Christian tradition that claims to follow the Prince of Peace, as not the cause of division and strife, but bringers of healing and comfort and hope? I am looking forward to this journey with you.

Peace, Shalom, Salem...Pastor Nina

Extravagant Generosity Revisited

The first 2 months of the year have again shown the generosity of our congregation. We are operating with a rather large deficit this year but February ended with enough money to cover all expenses thanks to all of you.

When Church Council met, one of the goals was to brainstorm about fundraisers to make up the gap in the budget. Some of my favorites – the Talent Auction and Harvest Sale – to name a couple - will be done again. There were also some new exciting ideas put forth that you'll be hearing more about as the year goes on.

The fundraisers discussed at Church Council all had one thing in common. They really do take a lot of work. They're fun, but it's still work! However, fundraising doesn't always need to be a lot of work. Sometimes it can be extravagant generosity. Many of us were generous with our tax rebate we received last year. If you are receiving a refund on your income tax this year, consider putting some of that money toward God's work through our mission budget. If you choose to demonstrate God's abundance in your life through this fundraiser, please mark your check or envelope "Extravagant Generosity."

"Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above...James 1:17a, NRSV

Thanks from your Finance and Stewardship Team

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Music Notes

Rumor has it that there are several members of the congregation who are musicians which may be interested in presenting musical offerings on Sunday morning. This is to be encouraged since such offerings will serve to provide a varied dimension to the worship service and will be an inspiration to those who will be listening.



Looking ahead, Music Sunday, which occurs a few months down the road, will provide an opportunity for congregants who normally do not provide musical offerings on Sunday to do so.

To aid in coordinating those who may be interested in performing, please see anyone on the worship planning committee or drop me an e-mail (RAcosta224@AOL.com). You may also leave a phone message at my home (462-1991).

Lets see if between now and the next Spire edition we can report an up-tick in interest in this program. Bob Acosta

Devotional

Nancy Burgin

It was a cowardly and disgusting thing to do. At the end of January, thieves broke into the locked shed at the Mohawk & Hudson River Humane Society and stole the redeemable bottles and cans stored there. The shelter had planned to use that money for food, medicine and vaccines for the animals in their care. But when the media reported the story, a heartwarming thing happened. Not just one, but two donation events were held. Thousands of dollars in both returnables and monetary donations came in. Local businesses also helped out. All the money raised will go toward the feeding, veterinary care and placement of the homeless animals, the shelter's executive director said.

I found myself thinking of Joseph's story. His brothers sold him into slavery, which was also a cowardly and disgusting thing to do. But because God was with him, he was later able to tell his brothers, "You plotted evil against me, but God turned it into good." (Genesis 50:20) I think those at the Mohawk & Hudson River Humane Society would agree.

PS If you would like to make a donation to the shelter, the address is 3 Oakland Ave., Menands, NY 12204.

Spaghetti Dinner – April 4th

Mark your calendars. Plan to come! Bring your appetite, your family and your friends! Our big event to wrap up March Mission Madness and raise funds for agencies which help those in need in our community will be on Saturday, April 4th from 4:30 to 8:00. This historically successful, effective, fun fundraiser will once again be co-sponsored by the Robert C. Parker School; their 7th graders have adopted it and will be on hand to help serve and clean-up. We will need volunteers and dessert bakers. Please talk with Debbie Byers, 273-6005, or sign-up on the sheets that will be posted on the office window.

Italian Cooking Class

Chef Paul Marano will once again share the secrets of great Italian meatballs and homemade sauce as we prepare for the Spaghetti Dinner. Watch for more details.

March Mission Madness

Spring is coming and its time to celebrate with MARCH MISSION MADNESS!!! This is an opportunity to learn about and support 5 local organizations which provide excellent services to people facing difficult circumstances in our community. During March and early April we will address homelessness, marginalized populations, and poverty in our community and encourage contributions to Joseph's House and Shelter, Bethany Center, Unity House, TAUM, and the YWCA as a way of helping them to help those in need.

The way it works is this: You can make a donation to any or all of the groups any time during the month by putting your contribution in the offering plate or sending it to the church office. Please clearly indicate your intention about which organization(s) should receive your donation. Checks can be made out to Christ Church with MMM and your designated organization(s) on the description line. On April 4th, we will host a spaghetti dinner. Attendees may use their tickets to support one or more organizations. All designated contributions and dinner proceeds will be distributed according to donor wishes; undesignated funds will be distributed to the organizations in the same proportion as funds have been designated.

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|---|---|------------------------------------|---|-----------|
| 1 Labyrinth | 2 Labyrinth 20s&30s dinner | 3 Labyrinth 6pm pot- luck 7.30pm Disciple | 4 9am Wshp planning 10:30 Bible Study | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 Clocks forward. Noon yoga 12.30 meditation | 9 | 10 7pm Chi Gong 7.30pm Disciple | 11 9am Wshp planning 10:30 Bible Study | 12 7pm Trustees | 13 | 14 |
| 15 11.50am Coffee talk | 16 7pm mandalas 7pm Helping hands | 17 7pm Meditation 7.30pm Disciple | 18 9am Wshp planning 10:30 Bible Study | 19 7pm Church Council | 20 | 21 |
| 22 Mission fair 4pm Muslim meal | 23 | 24 | 25 9am Wshp planning 10:30 Bible Study | 26 | 27 12.30 Sing at the Eddy | 28 |
| 29 Spire Deadline | 30 | 31 | Regular Sunday Schedule 9.30am: Church School (All ages) 10:30am: Worship 11:30am Coffee fellowship | | Choirs: Each Wednesday: 7pm Handbells 8pm Adult voice | |

March Birthdays.

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|---|---|---|
| 2nd Zachary Valentine | 6th Rita Bardill | 6th Nick Sopchack Jr. |
| 6th Rick Martucci | 10th Jennifer Pryor | 15th Mike Douglass |
| 23rd Amanda Martucci | 24th Warren Gibson | 25th Kayla Fenimore |
| 29th Arlene Lewis | 30th Nicholas Sopchak Sr. | 31st Cody Martucci |

March Anniversaries.

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| 12th Edward & Janice Changa | 20th Shirley & Chris Greagan | 21st Ed & Doris Mooradian |
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Easter Flowers

Spring really is coming! That means we will have observed Ash Wednesday the last week in February and are getting ready for the return of Daylight Saving Time (EARLY) Sunday, March 8th. That same date we will start to take orders for Easter altar plants. The choices are lilies, tulips, red azaleas and variegated azaleas. This year the price is \$9.50 and the deadline for ordering is Sunday, March 29th. Requests can be given to Marilyn Blom, the church office or with a pew envelope.

February Flowers

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| 8th | Given by Marilyn & Lowell Blom in loving memory of their parents. |
| 15th | Given by Marta Andersen in memory of loved ones. |
| 18th | Given in memory of James W. Smith (1885-1943) & Helen Ewing Smith (1892-1978) by their grandchildren, David H. Smith & Elizabeth Smith-Eisenhauer |
| 25th | Given by the Farrell Family in memory of loved ones. |

Souper Bowl

Thank you to all who participated in our Souper Bowl on Feb.1st. The Youth chose the Roake Center as the recipient of the food items and Joseph's House as the recipient of the monetary gifts. As a congregation, we collected 199 items and \$90. Thank you all for your generosity!

10 Things You Need to Know...

Looking for a little information on personal insurance? Home computer maintenance? Personal finance? Come to a 20-minute "coffee talk," held on the third Sunday of every month in the parlor after Sunday morning worship. Learn more about what you need to know for everyday living. On March 15th Chris Greagan will take the mystery out of your home and auto insurance. Bring your policy and prepared to be enlightened!

20s and 30s...

By the time you are reading this a group of Christ Church members and friends in their 20s and 30s will have joined Pastor Nina for dinner on March 2nd at Plum Blossom. If you are interested in future gatherings or what happened at this one. Please contact the church office.

Getting to Know You

The Nurturing Team wants to know more about you, and what interests you. Please help us by taking a few minutes to complete the Christ Church Interest Survey, available in the church office or by e-mail. Tell us about your favorite activities, especially the ones you'd like to do with other Christ Church folks.

Next Spire

The next Spire deadline is Sunday March 29th

Christ Church United Methodist

35 State Street, Troy, New York 12180

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Activities for March - check your passports.

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| Sunday 1st noon-1pm, Monday, 2nd 7:30-9pm, Tuesday, 3rd 7:30-9pm | Walk the 12-circuit Labyrinth |
| Tuesday, 3rd 6pm | Potluck Dinner & Simplicity Conversation with Rev Dr George Garin |
| Sunday, 8th Noon | Yoga Sampler (30 mins.) led by teachers of the Yoga groups who meet at the church |
| Sunday 8th 12:30pm (see 17th also) | Buddhist Meditation Sampler Rev Dr Richard Johnson, a 40 year practitioner |
| Tuesday, 10th 7pm | 30 minute Chi Gong (Qi-gong) sampler with Ken Rose |
| Monday, 16th 7pm | Come color mandalas (kid friendly) also Helping Hands (all-age knit/ crochet/ sew for others) |
| Tuesday, 17th 7pm | Buddhist Meditation Sampler with Arlen Johnson |

For details of the following events please see the website or call the Office

Sunday March 22nd, 4pm. Interfaith meal & conversation with Troy Muslim Community. Cost of the meal is \$6, children under 10 free. Catered by Ali Baba. Reservations required.

We are planning a visit to the Grafton Peace Pagoda on a Saturday during March.

Looking ahead: worship with Berith Sholom, Friday April 3rd.

We are helping at the regional food bank Saturday April 11th.

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The Rev. C. Joseph Ingraham, Pastor Emeritus