



Carbon Fast

In contrast to our 2009 Lenten Theme, Many Paths, One Journey, where we invited you to travel quite a bit (back and forth to church and on a number of field trips) to engage in learning about other faith traditions and our own - even providing a passport for your journey, this year we are asking you to travel a little less as a part of making a Carbon Fast a part of your Lenten spiritual discipline. Last year the Bishop of London and the Bishop of Liverpool launched the Carbon Fast in response to an urgent need to cut carbon emissions to protect poor communities around the world “already suffering from the ravages of climate change.”

The over-all theme for our Lenten worship series is “Friends”, and we will be reflecting on Jesus’ friends (disciples) and the qualities of their relationships, and our own relationship with Jesus, one another, and the world. Our commitment to reducing our energy consumption is a concrete manifestation of our friendship with one another around the world and with creation itself. Here are some simple steps you might consider as a part of your carbon fast:

1. Change your light bulbs to CFLs
2. Avoid meat for one day each week
3. Carpool
4. Power down: turn off TVs, computers and other electronics instead of going to standby
5. Recycle everything possible
6. Turn the thermostat down one degree
7. Go to the farmer’s market (eat local one meal each day or one day each week)
8. Take reusable bags to the grocery store
9. Check your tire pressure
10. Reuse an item you would have thrown away

This year we will be offering a daily email devotion. If you would like to receive the Lenten devotion reflections (on friendship), prayers, and inspiration and ideas for your carbon fast, please sign-up on the office window with your email address or send me an email. If you would like to write one of the reflections on friendship, please start emailing those or bring them to the office on Sunday, or send them snail mail (the old fashion way). There are 40 days in Lent, so those who love to write can contribute several.

Finally, there are a few things we hope you *will* gather for during Lent. Please join your church family for worship each Sunday. Wednesday, February 17th is the first day of Lent and there will be a come and go Communion and Ashes in the Parlor from 11:30-1:00. The Social Awareness and Action Team invites you to a discussion of Greg Mortenson’s *Three Cups of Tea* and a soup and bread supper on Sunday, March 28th (Palm Sunday) from 4-6. Of course there is the administration, and worship planning, and music making... please come, but try and offset the carbon cost!

Grace and Peace, Pastor Nina

C ontents	Finance	3	February Anniversaries	5
	Person in the pew - Bloms	2	Adult Forum.....	6
	Parables	2	Food pantry	6
	SAAT trip	3	New Faces.....	6
	Devotion.....	3	New office hours.....	6
	Finance	3	Spire Deadline.....	6
	What would it take?	4		
	Joseph’s House.....	4		
	Flowers.....	5		
	February Birthdays.....	5		
February Calendar.....	5			

God intends the church to be a community that embodies love, grace, and justice for all people. As a Reconciling Congregation, we therefore affirm the sacred worth of and welcome persons of any sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, age, marital status, race, ethnic background, economic condition, and physical or mental ability as full participants in our community of faith. God’s love includes everyone, as does Christ Church United Methodist.

The Person in the Pew: the Bloms

In a way, it was Christ Church that brought Marilyn and Lowell Blom together.

Lowell, who had grown up in what was then called Fifth Avenue State Street Methodist Church, was a golfing buddy of pastor Reverend Frederick Vogel. Rev. Vogel, in turn, knew Marilyn, who had grown up in the capital region and was a member of Third Avenue Methodist Church in Watervliet, from various church activities.

He introduced them, and voilá! They've been married for 42 years.

Marilyn and Lowell raised their three children in what became Christ Church. Karen and her husband, William Kim, live in Pleasantville with their son and daughter, while Linda, husband Heath Johnson, and their two daughters are nearby in West Sand Lake. Son Bill is not too far from his folks, in North Greenbush.



Church activities were an important part of the life of the family. Marilyn, who essentially retired from her nursing career after having the children, has long been a member of the choir and has more recently joined the bell choir. She “kind of inherited” tending the garden from Dorothy Large, and has been in charge of the church flowers for more than 20 years, which includes taking the flowers to nearby nursing homes. Meanwhile, Lowell taught Sunday School, was lay leader, head usher, was a Boy Scout Master, chaired the Finance Committee, and served in various positions on the Board of Trustees, including being Treasurer for 30 years.

Outside of church, Lowell long enjoyed the game of golf, and still does—but now he does so as a spectator. An amateur coin collector, he is also a member of Apollo King Solomon Masonic Lodge. Retired twenty years ago from his position as Mortgage Officer of the New York State Teachers Retirement System, he kept busy, working for a time for one of his best friends at Lindys Hardware in South Troy. He also retired as First Lieutenant after serving eight years in the National Guard.

Along with lending her voice to our choir, Marilyn has sung in the Festival of Celebration since the late 1970s. This ecumenical group, which began as a one-time, 500-person group for a single performance at SPAC, has weathered the years and survives with smaller numbers and a twice-yearly concert schedule. Highlights of their history, along with performing at the prestigious Saratoga venue, include singing at the tree-lighting ceremony in Albany along with Billy Joel, and being directed by André Kostelanetz.

While Lowell tends to read nonfiction, generally biographies and books about business and finance, Marilyn's enthusiasms run largely to mysteries and historical fiction. She also enjoys working in their garden and solving crosswords and Sudoku.

4 week study of parables

Tuesdays@ 7:30 during February 2010

In recognition that some people have asked for shorter courses on specific themes I am developing a number of 4 week adult discussion opportunities and, because this has also been requested, we will start with a look at 4 parables, 2 being The Good Samaritan and the Parable of the Talents and the other 2 to be chosen by participants.

We will take these 4 parables and look at the different ways they have been interpreted, and even the different ways they are told in the various gospels. We will consider traditional interpretations - the ones we grew up with probably - and we look to see how some scholars today are reappraising their message. You will be encouraged to find the understanding that makes sense for you personally in the light of the various options. Not so much teaching as facilitated discussion of what Jesus' stories means for us today.

Further 4 week studies will include reading the Book of Amos, a surprisingly relevant ancient book.

Invitation to SAAT Field Trip in April

Recently, in one of her many wonderful and inspiring sermons Pastor Nina mentioned Greg Mortenson who in the early 1990s began single handedly building schools for girls in northern Pakistan and later in Afghanistan. Mr. Mortenson's work eventually founded the Central Asia Institute which he now heads. Amazingly he and the Institute have built almost 150 schools in the most remote areas of those poverty-stricken and war-torn countries.

Mortenson's original and continuing objective is to help educate young women (and men as well, but the emphasis is on women), thus helping families emerge from poverty. However, he is also providing an alternative to warfare as a means of fighting terrorism. At some considerable personal risk, he is working with all groups in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, and apparently earning their respect. He has also earned the respect of the U. S. military.

His books, *Three Cups of Tea* and *Stones to Schools*, document his work, and are among the two or three most inspiring books I have ever read. I highly recommend them to you. As we think about the mission of our church, there is no better earthly role model than Greg Mortenson.

On April 29th, 2010, members the Social Awareness and Action Team will travel to Westfield College in Massachusetts to hear Mr. Mortenson speak about his experiences and work in Central Asia. I have seen him interviewed on television, and I can promise--we are in for a treat! The trip is, of course, not limited to SAAT. We would be delighted to have others join us. The event is free (although donations are much appreciated, I'm sure) and open to the public. We will get more details and publish them in the next Spire and in the Church Bulletin. For now, mark your calendars for April 29, if you would like to go. Some additional cars will be needed, depending on the level of interest in the trip. The lecture begins at 7pm, and we will return that evening.

Bob Blackmon, Social Action and Awareness Team

Devotion - Nancy Burgin

Our cat looked at me as if I were insane. The look on her face clearly conveyed the thought, "That is NOT what you are supposed to do with cat litter." I took a deep breath and said, "Look, Zia, I'm trying something new. I'm putting some of the clean cat litter into this container so I can sprinkle it on the ice on the front walk. I'm trying to make it less slippery out there." Needless to say, I was unable to get my reasoning across to Zia.

God also announces He will do a new thing. "'Behold the days are coming', declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah... This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the Lord, 'I will put my law within them and on their heart I will write it, and I will be their God and they shall be my people....They will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.'" Doesn't that sound wonderful? Let's pray that God's new way comes soon,

Compassionate Christian Stewards

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it (1 Corinthians 12:27).

The old year has ended and a new one has begun. For many of us, this is the time we review our finances. We try to determine if we met our financial goals for the year and assess what changes we need to make in our spending and saving habits for the coming year. The Finance Committee has been going over some of these same things. Did we meet any of our goals? I think we did. We had hoped to take less than the pledged amount from the endowment and that happened. The endowment pledged \$60,000 and we only needed \$57,500. This was because we received pledge amounts from both members who filled out a pledge card and regular contributors at \$7837 over the amount we expected to receive. We paid all our bills and apportionments and ended the year with

a balance of \$2554. We did not just use the money to pay bills. Eleven percent (11%) of all disbursements went to some sort of benevolence – whether connectional or for a special appeal.

As we look forward to 2010, we face many of the same challenges we faced in 2009. We are again looking at a deficit budget. There is no denying that this is scary. However, we met the challenge last year and I have faith we will be able to meet it again this year. We received five new pledges during the pledge campaign. The total amount of pledges is greater than last year. Most of all, we are all part of a wonderful congregation, a family in Christ, made up of compassionate stewards. We care about our church, we care about our community, and we care about our world.

Thank you for all you do.

Lee Kemp, on behalf of the Finance Committee.

So What Would it Take for You? Pastor Janet

In his book about what makes for growing and vibrant congregations, Bishop Schnase says small groups, cell groups, tribes, classes (in the Methodist sense, and as started by Wesley himself) are absolutely vital. In fact, Schnase says a minimum of 50% of worshipers will be involved in some kind of small group in any fruitful, growing church.

At the last Church Council, we reached the chapter on Intentional Faith Development: growing in understanding and knowledge about who we are and what we are - and about one another.

A couple of years ago the staff Parish Relations Committee changed my job description and title to: Assistant Pastor for Spiritual Formation, so that discussion was very important for me. And it was a good discussion. We have some really great opportunities already. We listed them: coffee hour and coffee talks; the choirs - i-Gen, voice and bell groups; studies: 12 people have just committed themselves to studying together for 2010 as they do the full Disciple course; midweek Bible Studies (both done as series and on a drop-in basis) and Sunday School for children and adults; The Social Action and Awareness Team bound by their common desire for social justice; the worship planning teams: the morning group which has been pretty much unchanged for over 4 years and which has gelled into being a group which knows how to think and talk theologically, and a wider group who have shared in the evening planning team bringing multiple different points of views and ideas; the fellowship that happens when we cook together, preparing and serving meals, making, selling (and giving away!) churros (a wonderful side effect of our fundraising last year) and people who gather to make special events and sales happen.....and there is a mix of long and short-term commitment in that list; a mix of daytime and evening, a diversity of age and ability appropriateness but not enough, I guess ... some of you have yet to find a place to plug in.

It is in community we worship and is in community that we grow the community and ourselves.

So...what can we do? For you? What are we missing? That is the conversation we want to encourage throughout the congregation. What would you come to? We have a list from prayer opportunities and a mission trip to Haiti, to a group to create a permanent labyrinth on the floor of

Fellowship Hall. We would love to have your ideas, too. We will continue to dream big at our planning session in April once our 6 months of studying "the Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations" at Church Council is done - but we do have some "in the meantime" ideas: a "slow food" group - making a dish for later in the week and doubling the amounts so we can share one with another family or agency; maybe pairing that with nutrition or even exercise hints; book discussions in homes (let us know what you would like to read and discuss); regular interaction with the Muslim community.

Also, there are some upcoming events where we hope you might "try us out" especially if you have not attended anything other than Sunday mornings: a service opportunity - all are welcome to help prepare for the Spaghetti Dinner in March where all monies are given to 5 local helping agencies; the Social Action team invites people to their "away day" (see their article) as well as a book discussion in preparation for that (see front page); Tuesday evenings in February a small group will look at "Parables: then and now"; the midweek Bible Study is tailored to the group's desires, meets Tuesdays or Thursdays (watch the calendar!) and Sunday School is every Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

Lastly, we know there are plenty of ideas out there. Some would require merely finding a spot on the calendar and leadership, some would be more work to organize: let us know what you have mind and let's see what we can help make happen. Oh! And that 50% figure: I think we are already there but just imagine how much better the community would be if we got that figure to the 85% many new church starts expect and attain! Let's keep Christ Church - questioning, serving - and growing!

Neighbors collecting for Joseph's House

Our neighbors on 4th St, Artcentric Gift Gallery owner, Debra Lockrow, and Xs to Os Vegan baker, Sarah Preston, are collecting non-food items for Joseph's House and the Lansing Inn. These items are those things everyone needs but which cannot be purchased with food stamps. There is an extensive list on the Office window but basics include: soap; deodorant; tooth brushes, floss and toothpaste; underwear; towels and face cloths; shampoo and razors. Drop off items at the stores Sunday, February 7th through Sunday, February 21st. After church, on February 7th stop by their stores for samples from the bakery and cider at Artcentric.

Next Spire

The next Spire deadline is Sunday February 21st

Adult Forum to Study

Religious Beliefs

Christian beliefs have been summarized in affirmations of faith such as the Apostle's Creed. During the six Sundays of Lent between Ash Wednesday and Easter, the Adult Forum will discuss what we find meaningful as statements of faith using the historic affirmations found in the back of the Methodist Hymnal (Numbers 880-889) as a guide. The adult forum meets on Sunday at 9:30 am in the parlor.

Food pantry donations wanted!

The Sunday School will continue their canned food drive through February 7th, Superbowl Sunday.

New faces around the building

Troy City Council Meetings, Girl Scouts & Pioneer Food Co-op

A few years ago the Church Council decided that, in gratitude for our location and wonderful building, they wanted Christ Church to be more available to the community. Use of the our building has grown significantly. After being a temporary sanctuary for the Sanctuary for Independent Media, and the space for 2 congregations until they could buy their own churches, we now have many more new friends with an ongoing relationship to the Church.

As you may have seen in the newspaper, Christ Church has donated the use of the sanctuary and media opportunities to the Troy City Council for the next 2 years, as the move out of City Hall has meant they will not have a suitable public space until they have new accommodations. A Girl Scout troop began meeting Thursdays last fall, and the troy community food co-op has its temporary base in our building as they have begun renovations for the much-anticipated opening of the Pioneer Food Co-op in the Summer. We hope you get to see some of these new friends and can welcome them to our premises!

Other groups you may see in and around the place are:

Christ Church United Methodist
35 State Street, Troy, New York 12180
Return Service Requested

Non-profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Troy, NY 12180
Permit #496

Rensselaer County Habitat for Humanity, who moved their office into the basement just one year ago; Troy Yoga which holds 3 classes weekly; AA continue to meet 3 times per week as they have for many years; the Tri-City English Dance Music Jam and the Aids Council/ Roots Work Preparation group each meet monthly. In addition, Narcotics Anonymous holds their annual dance and The Capital District Magicians' group meet 2 or 3 times a year in Fellowship Hall and, for 6 years there has been a Community Inclusion Craft class meeting weekly.

New Office hours - Pastors' Sabbaths - Bulletin Deadline

There are some weekday scheduling changes for the New Year. The Church Office will now be open Monday through Friday, 9a.m. until Noon and Pastor Nina will be taking Friday as her day off. Pastor Janet will take Wednesday. This has meant a number of changes to the regular schedule. The Bulletin will now be printed on Thursday and Georgia Holland will be working on that: your announcements need to be in the Office by 9a.m. each Thursday. Worship planning sessions are each moved back one day, so the evening planning team will meet Mondays and the daytime team on Tuesdays. The Mid-week Bible Study will now alternate between Tuesdays when the morning worship planners are working and Thursday, when they are not: please check the Spire calendar or call the office if you want to stop by and are not sure on which day we will meet.

Office phone 272-8392, Fax 273-8042, URL <http://www.ChristChurchTroy.org>

The Rev. Nina Nichols Senior Pastor email pastornina@christchurchtroy.org Urgent phone: 588-6405

Janet Douglass, Assistant Pastor email janetd@nycap.rr.com Urgent phone: 273-3713

The Rev. C. Joseph Ingraham, Pastor Emeritus