



WBPC Messenger

The Small Church with a BIG Heart!

3/2017

West Berlin Presbyterian Church

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From the Pulpit...

By Robert Gustafson

Given Lent starts March 1 this year, this newsletter is a great time to share the follow excerpts for *Presbyterians Today* with you: **The give-and-take of Lent -- Preparing our hearts for resurrection. A Q&A with Michelle Bartel, Coordinator of Theological Education and Seminary Relations for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

We use the season of Lent to prepare our hearts and minds for the mystery of the resurrection. But we all do that differently. Some churches place ashes on the foreheads of worshipers on Ash Wednesday; others don't. Some "lock up" their "Alleluias" until Easter morning, others host a weekly fish fry, and still others hold special midweek justice or outreach programs. We decided to ask one of our theologians about the meaning and practices of Lent.

PT: What is Lent?

MB: Lent is a Christian season of practice, celebrated by some Christians though not all. It's not a prescription for holiness, but an invitation to relationship. Lent has its roots in the very early church, with some of those roots in preparation for baptism. During Lent the Scriptures remind us of God's expectations for Israel, Jesus' temptation in the wilderness and his journey to the cross.

PT: Why do we celebrate/observe Lent?

MB: Lent is a time for us to focus on Jesus and our Christian discipleship. What does it mean to follow the One who lived, died and rose from the dead for our salvation?

Lent is a chance for us to practice, every year, focusing on God in Christ. We remember God as immersed in earthly life with our earthly practices.

One of the most common Lenten practices is fasting. This can mean giving up certain foods or habits like expensive coffee or cigarettes and donating the money to helping others. One of the questions we must ask is: Are we practicing the fast God calls for? Is it a fast that reminds us to love God and love neighbors as **ourselves**? Are we focused on God's work and Jesus' ministry to the poor, vulnerable, oppressed, sick and lonely? Are we practicing love, kindness, justice and mercy? By fasting, we practice denying the self not just for the heck of it or to drop 10 pounds, but for the purpose of shifting our attention to Jesus. It's a question of vision, of focus. Are our hearts curved in upon themselves, or are our hearts open to God?

But Lent is not just about fasting, or giving up something. It can be about taking or adding something. For some, Lent can be a time of adopting a new practice. This can mean engaging in walking prayer, Bible study or some other active habit that trains us in a certain direction and focuses us on Christ.



From the Pulpit (Continued)

PT: How many days is it, anyway?

MB: Lent is 40 days long, from Ash Wednesday to Easter Saturday. But if you count the days on the calendar, that's more than 40. That's because Sundays are excluded. They're considered "mini-Easters," since they're the day of resurrection. So, no fasting on Sundays!

PT: Is Lent biblical?

MB: As with many Christian practices, the fruitful question to ask is: Is it biblically based? Is "Lent" in Scripture as a word or as a church practice? No. But it is biblically based. Our call to justice and mercy, as does the practice of fasting. Jesus teaches what he learned, that to love God is to love neighbor.

PT: Should everyone observe Lent in the same way?

MB: Actually, I don't think "should" is the right word. We are called to do what we do together as a people, a community, a congregation, so we practice Lent together. But even though we practice it together, we do so as individuals. Each person in the group may not be called to do the exact same thing.

For example, someone like a busy mom, who is always giving of themselves for others, might be called to revel in the gifts God has given them, rather than give up even more. Another person who depends on the service of others may be called to reverse that role through the Lent.

PT: Some people give up chocolate or other things. Why?

MB: To be a disciple requires discipline. Discipline is intended to help us practice how to follow a teacher or a teaching. How do we change our habits? By practice. The practice is not learning how to give up chocolate. Instead, giving up chocolate can help us practice channeling our energy and actions toward and for God. I am known for my chocolate habit. So, for me, it might be a good practice to give up chocolate for myself, but to keep it with me for others. That way, I would practice loving my neighbors, as Jesus taught me to do. That may seem trivial. But if one is really committed to it — thinks about it daily, prays about it daily — is it trivial? Or does it help us to open our hearts to God by opening them to others? Some of the most spiritually significant moments in our lives are mundane.

We give things up or take on practices because we need to learn again and again that we live and move and breathe and have our being in God.

PT: One account told about people who drink nothing but beer during Lent. Why?

MB: There are records of monks fasting during Lent, giving up all food. To sustain them — in the times of unhealthy water — they would drink beer, or liquid bread. Beer had nutrients, including carbohydrates, needed for survival.

PT: Should we eat less chocolate or drink more beer? What's a good Presbyterian to do?

MB: The fruitful question to ask is: What am I called to do during Lent, as a faithful Christian? Being a "good Presbyterian" will tend to focus our energies on fitting a measure that doesn't keep us focused on God. That's a temptation for us: Who decides what a good Presbyterian is?

But as Presbyterians we are called to dwell in Scripture, to be immersed in it. To let the words, poetry, images, commands, stories and hymns seep into our hearts and imaginations. During Lent, Presbyterians can deepen their Presbyterian spirituality and Christian discipleship by sitting with Scripture so that we intensify our efforts to focus on the living God in Christ, to whom Christians bear witness.

My suggestion for a Lenten practice is to sit with Scripture every day. Open your minds and hearts, so that Jesus can teach you what it means to be his disciple. It may be that giving something up or taking up a new practice would help that focus.

And, in any case, keep one another in prayer. The season of Lent draws us to focus on Jesus Christ. Who was born, lived and was crucified — and then raised from the dead — for us and for our salvation.

Pastor Bob



March 2017 Mission & Ministry

Family Promise Mission

Upping Our Game as a Force for Good in the Community

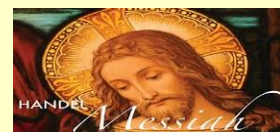
Jayson D. Bradley is a writer and pastor in Bellingham, WA in his blog entitled “Church Growth: 5 Strategies for Thriving in 2017” says: “When you dream about your church’s future, you’re not thinking about having a church that’s simply existing—you imagine a *flourishing* church. You want to see church growth. You want to see people discovering Jesus, maturing, and touching the lives of others.” The first on his list is “Become a force for good in your community.”

Although we as a church have done good in our community, I would draw your attention to two recent changes that are upping our game. First, the Deacon and Mission Board has chosen as one focus for this year is to support Family Promise of Delaware. Family Promise is a temporary shelter for homeless families in our community (<http://www.familypromise-delawareohio.org/>). Its goal is to help them get back on their feet. In the Annex, you will see a list of items needed and a collection bin. Each month (Jan – Nov) we will focus on two specific items on the list. This month it will be paper towels and trash bags. Deacon Bill Hanning is shepherding this project and will make sure the supplies get delivered. During Advent we will continue to focus on Turning Point women’s shelter for Delaware County.

Second, the Alice Cox class has decided to use the next dinner (April 28) as a means to invite the community to help support a local cause. We will be inviting the community to come and share dinner fellowship with us and support a good cause with free-will donations. The class has also chosen Family Promise as recipient for this next dinner. Rev. Ben Powers, Director of Family Promise, will be present to answer questions regarding their work.

How is our Community Serving Those 55+?

A lunch and learn program will be held after church on Sunday, March 19, 2017. Melinda Metz, Source Point Community Relations Coordinator, will highlight resources needed for those 55+ in our community and how Source Point helps meet those needs and help people find resources available. Lunch is at 11:45 AM, program at 12:15 PM. Invite your friends. (Sponsored by the Deacon and Mission Board)



Hallelujah! Biblical Texts from Handel’s Messiah

Lenten Adult Sunday School Program (March 5 through April 9) will focus on the biblical texts behind Handel’s famous musical work the Messiah. While we cannot cover every biblical text quoted in Messiah, the texts for all the major choruses and most popular airs are included. After a brief study of the texts, we will listen to the work performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. Consider making this class your Lenten discipline for this year!

WBPC Recognized at Presbytery Meeting

WBPC was recognized at the February 21st Presbytery meeting for being one of the first churches to complete its contribution of per capita and mission dollars for 2017. Per capita is the way we financially support the connectedness of over 10,000 congregations, worshipping communities and mid-councils of the PC (USA). Mission giving provides financial support for mission ministries locally and across the denomination.



Want to Hear a Sermon You Missed????

Did you know that our weekly sermons are posted on the Church’s website? Go to www.westberlinpc.info, select “Mission and Ministry” go to tab – Sermons. Have problems on navigating the site or on how to even get there??? Contact Lou Ann Shy and she will set up a Sunday after worship to show how to get into and navigate the website.

Not a computer user and still want to listen to missed sermons???? Compact Discs (cd) with recordings of the full worship service are available upon request from Jerry Donovan. Don’t own a cd player??? Let your Deacon know and they will locate one for you or contact Cindy McGraw, Moderator, Deacons, directly.

March Worship and Calendar of Events

Sunday School 9:30 AM, Worship 10:30 AM

Wednesday, March 1, 2017 (7:00 PM)	Ash Wednesday /Communion Service/Lent Begins
Thursday, March 2, 2017 (6:00 PM)	Women’s Society - Secret Sisters Revealed
Sunday, March 5, 2017 (9:30/10:30 AM)	Adult Sunday School/Worship/Holy Communion/Session Meeting
Wednesday, March 8, 2017 (11:00AM)	John Rae Class @ 11:00 AM – 36/37 Bob Evans
Sunday, March 12, 2017 (9:30/10:30 AM) Daylight Savings Time Begins!!!!	Adult Sunday School/ Worship with Guest Speaker Dennis Piermont, Executive Presbyter, Miami Valley Presbytery/Second Sunday Fellowship
Wednesday, March 15, 2017 (6:30 PM)	Ladies Night Out – MacKenzie River Grill (Previously Max & Erma’s – Polaris)
Thursday, March 17, 2017	Happy Saint Patrick’s Day!!!!
Sunday, March 19, 2017 (9:30/10:30 AM)	Adult Sunday School/Worship
Sunday, March 26, 2017 (9:30/10:30 AM)	Adult Sunday School/Worship
LOOKING AHEAD>>>>>>>>	
Sunday, April 9, 2017	Palm Sunday
Sunday, April 14, 2017	Good Friday
Sunday, April 16, 2017	Easter Sunday

March Birthdays:

Birthdays

20-Travis Martindale, 24-Mary Ann Johnson, 29- Colleen Parrish, 30-Paul Martindale

