

## Smudges on the Soul: A Meditation for Ash Wednesday

*Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. (Joel 2:12-13, NRSV)*

I would rather wear the smudge on my forehead than to admit its residence upon my soul. In a place where self-confidence is rewarded and any sign of weakness or emotional predisposition is held suspect, it is difficult to consider actually following the advice of the prophet to return to the Lord with fasting, with weeping and with mourning. It is, however, acceptable maybe even fashionable to appear in public with a dirty forehead as a sign that **I have religion**. It is amazing how the symbols of piety, sackcloth and ashes, have been transformed into mask that hides me from myself and circumvents the intent of Ash Wednesday.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, the prophet said. Not the trumpet that signals advance to war, or the trumpet that celebrates victory, but the one that warns trembling penitents that the day of the Lord is coming. Blow the trumpet that warns a penitent like me to wear the smudge of ashes long after her face has been washed and to admit the smudge on the one place that matters to God, her heart.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, the prophet said, and sanctify a fast (Joel 2:15). Hear the sounds of grumbling need in a world where few are filled and where we are overfilled. Today I am called to push away from the voracious consumption of everything in my path, for at least a little while, in hopes that I might realize something about the equitable distribution of the world's resources before the fast is over.

Rend your hearts and not your garments, the prophet said (Joel 2:13). The gift of the day is personal reflection, a season of confession, and change. Start the arduous journey from shadow to substance, from ritual to reality, from facade to faith. Today, choose the harder course. It is easier to buy new clothing than to mend a soul.

*Prayer:* Lord, as I begin this year's Lenten Journey, turn my attention to the things that matter most to you. Amen.

Yours in Christ.

Rev. Dr. Ricardo Ramos-Diaz

LECTIONARY FOR MARCH

March 7

Isaiah 55:1-9; Psalm 63:1-8  
I Corinthians 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9

March 14

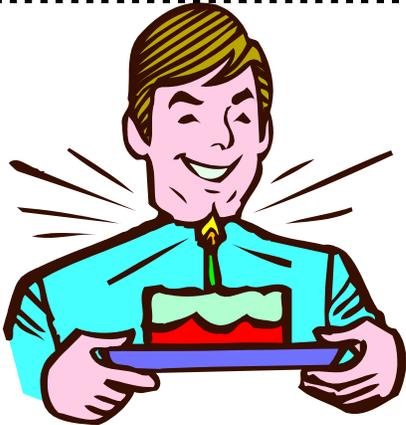
Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 32  
2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

March 21

Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126  
Philippians 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8

March 28

Luke 19:28-40; Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29  
Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16  
Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 22:14-23;56



*HAPPY MARCH BIRTHDAY TO:*

<i>Jeffrey T. Scott, Jr.</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Steven Curtin</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Andrew Moore</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Lois Burns</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Joseph Cocco</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Virginia Chavan</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Leona Parker</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Eleanor Butler</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>NancyJane Baldwin</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Kenneth Long</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Laura Schickel</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Cynthia Mannino</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Christopher Beyer</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Leonard Parker</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Christopher Cocco</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Keith Burns</i>	<i>27</i>

*.....and many, many more!!!*

**RELIEF FOR HAITI**

*On January 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> special collections were taken during our worship services, to help the people of Haiti after the terrible earthquake that hit their country and killed so many people. So far, we turned over \$860. to the United Methodist Committee on Relief from our church and there may be more coming. UMCOR does not use any of the money for expenses, but rather, all received is used for the specific project that is being helped. We thank all our members who donated to help the people of Haiti. We know that this will be a long-time need to rebuild their country and feed so many people that have lost everything. If you have not donated and would like to, just send a check made out to the United Methodist Church, (321 N. Wood Avenue, Linden, N. J. 07036) and mark it "FOR HAITI" and we will see that it is sent to UMCOR.*

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY

For a number of years, the Interfaith Council has been sponsoring Lenten Bible Study classes. This year it will be held at the Reformed Church, 600 North Wood Avenue, Linden with the following schedule:

SUNDAY AFTERNOONS - 3 TO 4:30 PM

- FEBRUARY 21
- FEBRUARY 28
- MARCH 7
- MARCH 14
- MARCH 21
- MARCH 28

Please mark these dates on your calendar. The discussion leader will be a different minister or priest. each Sunday, from the member churches of the Interfaith Council. These classes have always been well attended and a wonderful way to approach the Easter season. Light refreshments will be served by the host church.

STEWARDSHIP

In November, we completed our Stewardship Drive. This report is to give you the results. We received 37 pledges with a total of \$40,210 for Current Expense, \$4,419 for the Repair Fund, and \$3,955. for the Building Improvement Fund. We know, also, that some people prefer not to pledge, but give regularly. We, as a congregation, are grateful to all who give generously to keep our church in good condition and debt-free. If you would like copy of the results of the 2009 campaign, just ask Gertrude Baldwin. Thank you all for your cooperation and let's keep up the good work.

Gertrude Baldwin, Chairperson

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BOUNTIFUL BASKETS

It's hard to believe in these times that we have not had many requests for help recently. If you, or anyone you, is in need of food, please contact NancyJane Baldwin, 862-9473. At the present time, one family is receiving assistance and I would like to find other families who will need help for Easter.

We are a small food bank and cannot do too many. I ask you to wait with the canned goods, so it does not go out of date. When I need some, I will let everyone know.

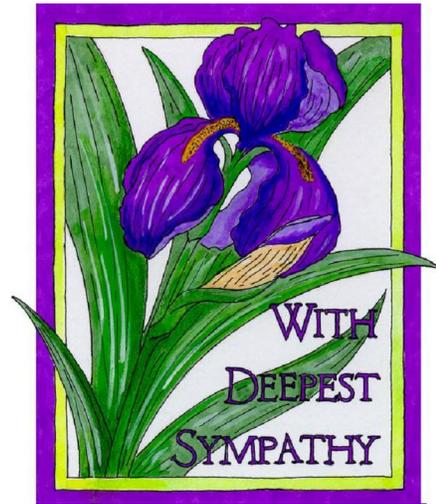
Money donations are also very helpful as I can buy what is needed at the time. I can also purchase food for the freezer, and it will be there when needed.

There may be times when I will have to ask for help shopping and packing because of physical difficulties.

Thank you for any help you can give.

NancyJane Baldwin, Chairperson

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FORBIDDEN FRUIT CAN CREATE  
MANY JAMS!



We were saddened to hear recently of the death of our long-time member, Marion Wright. In reading about the death of Vera Stine's husband, (Vera is Marion's daughter) and talking to Vera on the telephone, she told of her mother's death the end of July, 2009. Marion was 96 years old and both she and her daughter were active members of our congregation a number of years ago. They both taught Sunday School and served as Church School Superintendent. The women of the church served the food at the reception that followed Vera's wedding. Aldersgate Hall was not very old at that time, and we remembered that Marion bought the curtain that still hangs on the stage, so that the room would look really nice for the reception. So many happy memories – they were great times in our church – many weddings, births, celebrations, children and young adults, girl scouts, and boy scouts, youth groups for all ages, and couples clubs.

We remember Marion well, and extend our deepest sympathy to Vera and her family. The last few years have been very difficult for Vera – her son, age 37, also died and then just recently her husband. We pray for her and hope that peace will come into her life and good memories will sustain her.

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“PEOPLE ARE LIKE TEA BAGS - YOU  
HAVE TO PUT THEM IN HOT WATER  
BEFORE YOU KNOW HOW STRONG  
THEY ARE.”

## BITS AND PIECES

Congratulations to Otts Schnellenberger!  
Accompanied by his wife, Jayne, who was a spectator, Otts ran the Rock and Roll Marathon in Phoenix Az, He ran 3 hours, and 57 minutes, which beat his objective of 4 hours. In his age group, that now qualifies him to run in the Boston Marathon in 2011. To qualify for Boston, was an objective of his for the last 20 years. It took awhile, but he made it!!

Good job, Otts!

At this point, Jayne and Otts are spending the month of February at Treasure Island, Florida. Not a bad life!!

For anyone interested in Bill Martin's address in Maine, we now have it thanks to his brother, Glenn and his mother, Gail Martin Giuffrida.

234 State Street

Portland, Maine, 04101

Bill is enjoying the cold weather of Maine. His brother, Glenn lives about an hour and a half away in Derry, New Hampshire. Bill is working and feeling good. He expects to be back here in the spring and will be putting his house/office up for sale.

A little news about Glenn Martin – He is the food service director for five Massachusetts schools just over the border, that work with high school young people who are unable to be mainstreamed into public high school. He has a dietician on staff and provides breakfast and lunch. He loves his work and the year-round school schedule that allows him time to ski.

In case you didn't know it – Glenn donated a kidney to his father, Bill, Sr. and it has made all the difference in the world for Bill. How wonderful!!

And some news about Jeff Martin – he, his wife, Bette, and children, Devon, 12 and Tess 9 were living in Micronesia for 2 ½ years, Bette with the Peace Corps and Jeff the house Daddy. They had both been working in Washington, D. C. and wanted an overseas assignment before the girls got to high school. They loved it in that third world country, but the schools left something to be desired. Although they were culturally interesting they were not at the same level as our public schools. They asked for a transfer and are now

assigned to St. Lucia in the Caribbean where there is an international school with all certified Canadian teachers. The State Department gives them a furnished house and Jeff says it is huge and only two blocks from the beach. Jeff hopes to write a book about their Micronesia experience and has researched a lot of interesting stories and facts. They have traveled all over Southeast Asia, Thailand, Cambodia and most recently Australia. What a life!

And as for Gail, she and her husband are now in Vero Beach, staying at their home in the same community as Caroline and Tom Long, and Mary Barnes and Ruth Schulte. Most of the time they live in the Washington, D. C. area.

Gail recently had an aortic valve replaced and is feeling fine! She is having fun visiting with old friends and taking it easy. Sounds like fun to me!

We recently heard that Ellie Butler is living permanently at Genesis (Westfield Nursing Home) the same place that Gertrude Lamont spent her last years. Also Anne Ogier, Carolyn Franz' aunt is residing there. When in the area, stop and see them both – they love company!

Kerry Abbot recently retired from the Public Works Department in Linden. Her health has improved and she is feeling much better – in fact, she is looking for another job. It's good to see you smiling and happy again, Kerry!

Joyce Carhart, Norman's wife, retired as of the end of January. Like many organizations, her company decided they could do with a few less employees. However, it wasn't long before they called her back to work a few days a week during this busy time for their company.

Rachel Hanns recently finished college and is looking for a teaching position. We are sure she is well qualified and just a matter of time before she finds that "perfect" job. Good luck, Rachel!

Doris Henel will be flying to Denver, Colorado this spring to join son, John, and his family to attend the graduation of their daughter, Tessa from the University of Denver. Four years have gone by so fast - or is it age that makes it seem to fly?

AWARD PRESENTED TO MAYOR



The Libraries of Union County Consortium honored Linden Mayor Richard Gerbounka as the elected Official of the Year. The award goes to an official who is a dedicated Library advocate. Trustee Doris Henel accepted the award, in the absence of the Mayor, and presented it to him at the Library Board of Trustee meeting  
Pictured: Library President, Marilyn Coplan, Trustee Doris Henel, Mayor Richard Gerbounka, Library Director, Dennis Purvis.  
Both Doris Henel and Richard Gerbounka are members of our church.

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THOSE ON OUR PRAYER LIST THE LAST MONTH

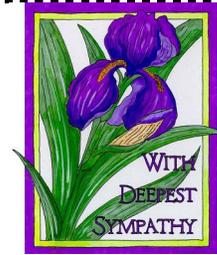
- |                |                      |
|----------------|----------------------|
| Janet Pavlinic | Howard Martinson     |
| Leona Parker   | Robert Moore         |
| Steve Lutz     | Ellie Butler         |
| Anne Ogier     | Mary Barnes          |
| Richard LeDuc  | Eleanor Porambo      |
| Mary Dalziel   | Rachel Hanns         |
| John Markus    | Debbie Chavan        |
| Susan Fibik    | Family of Vera Stine |
| Bill Martin    | Pauline Agumba       |

Please keep all of those listed in your prayers.

FLOWERS FOR THE SANCTUARY



*Reminder – Flowers can be ordered in memory or honor of a loved one for any Sunday. There is a flower chart in the church office and you can pick a Sunday that is not already taken, and list the person giving the flowers, and the one you are honoring. The cost is \$20.00 for two urns that will be on the altar the Sunday you chose with the listing in the church bulletin. You may take the flowers home after the service or give them to a shut-in. The money can be given to Mildred Ebert, and you can call her if you have any questions, 862-2929*



Rev. Frederick Boyle was called to California after his father had a serious fall and was listed in critical condition. We were saddened to hear that his father passed away after Frederick had arrived. We extend our deepest sympathy to Frederick and Rose and his family. If you would like to send a card his address is as follows:  
207 Locust Avenue  
West Long Branch, N. J. 07764

HOW SAD IT WAS – AND HOW PROUD  
THEY SHOULD BE!

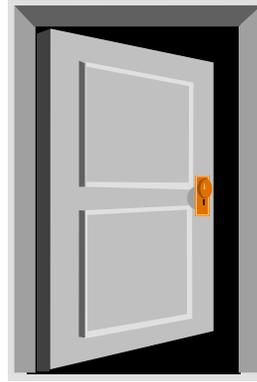
On Sunday, January 31, 2010 at 4:00 p.m. some of the members of our church joined many others at the St. Paul's Lutheran Church in their sanctuary. It was the last service to be held by St. Paul's. The church was closing and the buildings will be put up for sale. They are hoping that someone will want to purchase the church itself and still continue to hold services there.

They also own a parsonage and large building with a social hall and Sunday School rooms, across the street from the church. It is a lovely church complex and there were many tears as communion was served to all attending the service and a history of the church was read.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church was a vital part of Linden and many of its citizens were active members of the church. They contributed to the growth of Linden. and many served as volunteers at city events.

The first services of the Lutheran Church were held in the Craftsmen's Club on East Elizabeth Avenue. After a number of years, they purchased the present property and built the church, later purchasing property across the street and building the parsonage and social hall. There were a number of churches already in Linden when the Lutheran Church was organized, but all churches were growing and so did St. Paul's. The church and Sunday School was filled every Sunday, and the church became an important part of the member's life, taking on the feeling of one large family. St. Paul's served the people and community of Linden for many years. They have much to be proud of.

But in recent years, their membership has dropped for many reasons – death, retirement, moving to other areas, children marrying and leaving the area, and the very high cost of living in N. J. It was no longer practical to try and continue and so they reached this day – Sunday, January 31, 2010. when they said goodbye to friends and neighbors, and to their beloved church. This is never easy to do especially those generations of people who watched the church grow and prosper. Linden will miss St. Paul's Lutheran Church and the remaining churches of Linden will never forget the contribution they made and the strong faith their people had and shared with others.



**COME ON IN !!!!**

**WEIGHT WATCHERS MEET IN OUR CHURCH!**

*Starting Tuesday, March 2, 2010, and every Tuesday after that from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., Weight Watchers will be meeting in Aldersgate Hall at our church.*

*A number of years ago, they met in the same hall for over 10 years, but because of the heat in the summer, they eventually moved where there was air-conditioning in the hot weather.*

*Of course, now we also have a nice cool room in the summer, and the women attending classes will find it very comfortable.*

*If you have need for their services, and would like to lose some weight, come join them – they seem to have a very successful program.*

*We welcome Weight Watchers to our church and look forward to a pleasant relationship over the next years.*



Our Organist (Jane McCarthy) and her husband help us celebrate Christmas with Santa Claus.

FREE OFFER FROM WEIGHT WATCHERS

JOIN WEIGHT WATCHERS UNTIL MARCH 13<sup>TH</sup> AND REGISTRATION FEE IS WAIVED. WEEKLY COST IS \$13.00 BUT THE BEST OFFER IS THE MONTHLY PASS AT \$39.95 (FREE REGISTRATION, FREE E-TOOLS INTERNET WEIGHT LOSS COMPANION AND UNLIMITED MEETINGS EACH MONTH.) VISIT WEIGHTWATCHERS.OM FOR MORE INFORMATION.

CHECK YOUR OFFERING ENVELOPE BOX!!

Due to the winter storm on February 10th, the Administrative Council meeting had to be cancelled. A short Council meeting was held following the worship service on Sunday, February 14<sup>th</sup>.

After a motion brought in from the Finance Committee, it was seconded and carried that all money received in the Lenten and Ash Wednesday envelopes would be earmarked for the long-time member who is having serious health problems.

These extra envelopes are in the 2010 box of envelopes you received the end of 2009 for this year. Please make use of the Lenten and Ash Wednesday envelopes and put them in the offering plate within the next few weeks or mail it to the church. We thank you for your consideration and caring of our church members.

WE FIX THE PARSONAGE BACK PORCH

The Board of Trustees announced that they have awarded a contract to the lowest bid received to improve and repair the back porch of the parsonage. This is work that has been put off for a few years, and it is definitely time to fix it now.

The porch will be partially enclosed with aluminum on the outside to match the rest of the house. There will be windows with screens installed and a Pella storm door. Painting will be done, and although the room will not be a year-round one, it will certainly be used much more than just a screened in porch and will also be protected from the bad weather.

We think it will be a great improvement to our parsonage and we look forward to starting work on it as soon as the winter snowstorms let up.

SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE SUPPER

On Tuesday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, the United Methodist Women hosted the pancake supper in Aldersgate Hall.

We thank Lorraine and Bob Carhart and Sharon and Steve Lutz for preparing the food that we all enjoyed so much. Gertrude Baldwin and Leona Parker had some great entertainment, and we were all pleased to congratulate Lorraine and Bob who were our King and Queen for the celebration of the Mardi Gras.

Shown below is the picture of Lorraine and Bob in their royal garments.



With snow on the ground some did not venture out, but we still had a great time celebrating Shrove Tuesday as we approach the Easter season.

March 2010

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 7-Board of Trustees D.Beyer,T.Henel, W.Hanns, J. Stamer, J.Valdez, B.Harty C.Ettel 4:30-9:30=Fenc. Sch.	2 Bible Study –11 or 6 pm 12 Noon – United Meth. Women-bring a sandwich 4:30-9:30- Fencing School 5-Weight Watchers in Aldersgate Hall	3  4:30-9:30- Fenc. Sch.	4  4:30-9:30-Fenc.Sch	5 7:30 - World Day of Prayer in our sanctuary. All invited. Refreshments will be served.	6  9:30-1:30 - Fencing School .
7  8:30 AM-Choir Rehear. 10 – Worship 3-4:30- Lenten Bible Study at Reformed Church .	8  4:30-9:30- Fencing School	9 11 am or 6 pm Bible Study 4:30-9:30- Fencing School 5-Weight Watchers in Aldersgate Hall	10 7 –Administrative Council - All committee chair- persons & members of committees attend 4:30-9:30 Fencing School	11`  4:30-9:30- Fencing School	12``	13  9:30-1:30 – Fencing School
14 8:30-Choir 10-Worship 3-4:30 Lenten Bible Study at Reformed Church	15  4:30-9:30- Fencing School	16  Bible Study – 11 AM Fenc. Sch. 4:30- 9:30	17  4:30-9:30- Fencing School	18  4:30-9:30- Fencing School	19	20  9:30-1:30- Fencing School
21 8:30-Choir 10:00-Worship 3-4:30 Lenten Bible Study at Reformed Ch.	22  4:30 – 9:30 Fencing School	23 11 AM & 6 PM BIBLE STUDY 4:30-9:30 Fencing School	24  4:30-9:30 Fencing School	25  4:30-9:30 Fencing School	26	27  9:30-1:30 Fencing School
28 PALM SUNDAY 8:30-Choir 10-Worship Service 3-4:30-Lenten Bible Study at Reformed Ch.						