

SPIRIT SONG

From the Pastor's Desk

“Lent and Coming Back to the Faith”

Lent is coming. It is coming not as fast as it could be, but it is coming. Lent starts this week with Ash Wednesday, and will continue until Easter.

We will be having some members of the Federated Church attending our Ash Wednesday Service as Rev. Chase will be away. That means that we will be doing five services ecumenically this year. In addition to Ash Wednesday, we will have Maundy Thursday, Cross Walk, Good Friday, and Easter Sunrise Services together. It should be a glorious time together with our brothers and sisters from the Federated Church.

As you will recall, Lent is the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness preparing for his ministry, during which time he was tempted by the devil. Sundays are not counted in Lent. This year, during Lent, the youth group will be having some programs on Lent each Sunday evening. They will be starting this coming Sunday by having a pancake supper, which will remind them of Shrove Tuesday, which is the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday during which time people took one more opportunity to pig out before settling into Lent and observing the Lenten Fast, which might include giving something up.

This year, we may all find ourselves going deeper into the Christian Faith and looking for spiritual support as we are hearing so many bad things about the economy. Some writers believe that this year people may be looking to seminaries and churches for additional spiritual support and direction. They predict that attendance may even increase a little bit.

We all know that some people drift away from the church. They may marry outside their faith, and stop going. Or they may be turned off by the words. The writer Kathleen Norris left the church when some well-meaning adults who taught Sunday school and confirmation started putting God in little boxes of their own devising. It seemed like it was just another folly that she had to set aside when she became an adult. But in her mid-thirties, she found that it was necessary to go back to the church and claim the faith for herself, even if it seemed a little scary.

In her book, *Amazing Grace*, she recalls someone asking her a question on one of her speaking tours. The questioner asked her how she got so much comfort from a religion whose language does so much harm. The questioner didn't mean to be offensive even though it might sound like she was. Norris then goes on to pick up on the word comfort that the questioner used. She said that she didn't think it was so much comfort that she was seeking so much as salvation. Her religion saved her life, her husband's life and their marriage. So, she was really not taking about comfort so much as salvation.

I was visiting with someone recently who had been away from the church for fifty years and has recently come back. We can all come back. We can all realize that we can just do so much in the land that we think has so much milk and honey. But then when we run out of money and the economy gets so bad, when we are at our wits' end, when we have no place to go but up, then we can always come back to church and the Lord. The ceiling won't fall in, and the walls won't come tumbling down. One did once, as the building was being built. That was pretty scary. But then it was put back up, and hasn't fallen since.

If and when you come back, you may just find a cure for your ills. You may receive the spiritual strength to deal with issues with yourself or a family member. And you may just find that peace which passes all understanding which keeps your heart open to the ways of God.

See you in Church!

Sincerely in Christ, The Rev. Dr. (Pastor) Paul E. Samuelson

Three Simple Rules A Wesleyan Way of Living

"Three Simple Rules" by Rueben Job, is a conversation with Rueben P. Job, based on the book by the same name. It is based on John Wesley's General Rules, and invites us all into a more faithful way of loving as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Each week, there will be a video presentation, and then a discussion of the material in the video and in the book.

Classes will be held on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. beginning on March 4th, and on Thursday mornings at 10:00 a.m., beginning on March 5th.

An excerpt from the preface states, "We live in such a fast-paced, frenzied, and complex world that it is easy to believe we are all trapped into being someone we do not wish to be and living a life we do not desire to live. We long for some way to cut through the complexities and turbulence of everyday life." I think that sounds like most of us today, but our ancestors also had their own set of problems. How did they manage to get through them? God's plan for our lives has never changed, perhaps we need to do the changing. There's still time to sign up for this

study on the sign up sheet in the narthex. Books are \$5.00, and you are encouraged to sign up in the Narthex. See Pastor Paul if you have any questions.

Scripture Lessons for March Services

- March 1, 2009: First Sunday in Lent.**
Genesis 9: 8-17, Psalm 25: 1-10, I Peter 3: 18- 22, and Mark 1: 9-15. Communion.
- March 8, 2009: Second Sunday in Lent.**
Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16. Psalm 22: 23-31. Romans 4: 13-25. Baptisms.
- March 15, 2009: Third Sunday of Lent.**
Exodus 20: 1-17. Psalm 19. I Corinthians 1: 18-25. John 2: 13-22.
- March 22, 2009: Fourth Sunday in Lent,**
One Great Hour of Sharing. Number 21:4-9, Psalm 107: 1-3, 17-22. Ephesians 2: 1-10. John 3: 14-21.

Worship

Pastor Paul and I recently attended a seminar on Creative Worship in Byfield, Ma. I can't say we would be dancing in the aisles here in Charlton City, like we did in Byfield, but we certainly were exposed to many new ways to present the gospel message. A church can only be and do what the members of that church are willing to support and become involved with. We will be seeking ways to make our worship service speak to you about the problems you face in today's world, but also to bring you into a closer relationship with God. God has created you to worship and thank Him for all things He has given you. One way you can thank Him is to use the gifts He gave you in Sunday worship.

We thank all of you who are now liturgists and ushers. This is a beginning. If we want to grow into a creative worship ministry we need the help of creative people. We need different types of musicians, creative writers, creative crafter's, people who enjoy drama and sacred dance. Many of you enjoy doing these things already, please consider using them to enhance our Sunday morning worship experience. If you are willing to share your gifts please speak to Pastor Paul or Jean Anderson

Jean Anderson

United Methodist Women

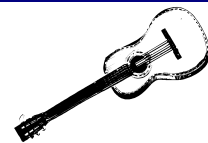
We have overcome! After two snowed out meetings we all had a great time enjoying the warmth of the greenhouse at Tower Hill Botanical Gardens, not to mention the great food at Twigs Cafe. As a group we are always working to help our church family and we needed some chill out time, not in a corner, but in the sisterhood of women. A big thank you to Marilyn Gerrard who came up with the idea, to Claudia Blauvelt and Sandy Dam who managed to come up with eleven free passes. We all agreed we would like to come back in early summer to see the gardens and walk the woodland trails.

The United Methodist Women's **Spring District Meeting** will be held on Saturday, March 28, 2009 at Centralville UMC in Lowell, Ma. We are asked to bring food donations for the Open Pantry of Greater Lowell.

The title of the meeting is "**The Spirituality of Laughter**", sounds like fun to me. We need to register before March 23rd. If you are interested in going please see Marilyn Gerrard.



Dinner and Show *March 14th*



Dinner and a show, what a great idea. Everyone loves corned beef and cabbage for St. Patrick's day, but we're adding more beef with some great Southern Gospel, Folk and Bluegrass music provided by our friends, Shiloh.

Come on down and have dinner in fellowship hall and then gather upstairs at 7:00 for some awesome music. We promise you will not even think of taking a quick cat nap. Shiloh was part of our Grand Opening Celebration of our new church and we are so delighted to welcome them back. There is no charge only a love offering will be taken. See you there.

Coordinators Needed!

The women of CCUMC have always provided a luncheon for church members and their families who have experienced a death in their family. We need your help in continuing this loving tradition. We are in need of two coordinators to take over the responsibility of contacting members for food donations for the funeral collations. If you feel this is a church ministry you would like to do,

Thank You!

We thank Diane Samuelson and Marion Sergel for the beautiful prayer shawls they made. The shawls were dedicated at the 10:30 service on February 15th. These shawls will be donated to anyone who is seriously ill and in need of our special prayers for their return to good health. If you know of anyone who would like one of these shawls please contact Diane or Marion.

Lenten coin folders are available in the Narthex.

Did you buy a church calendar?

Thank you for your support. Now please support our advertisers and let them know you saw their ad in our calendar. This will help with getting their support next year and you may find a great place to shop..

Missions

Youth to Fast for Poorest of the Poor

Calling all youth!! Once again our youth group is holding their **30 Hour Famine**.

Our youth will go without food for 30 hours to raise money for extremely impoverished areas in Africa, Asia, South and Central America where the Christian group World Vision serves. The weekend of Easter you will find 25-30 teenagers starving while doing service work, playing educational games that inspire deeper thinking while working on problem solving strategies and leadership skills. *The youth will be at our church from 11:30 am Good Friday until 7:30 pm Saturday.* The last morsel of food to pass their lips will be at 11:59 Friday am until the next evening at 6:01 when their families bring well deserved sustenance. Cindy Ertsgard and Marilyn Gerrard are looking for adults to pitch in an hour here and there to provide support and diversion. Remember to sponsor a youth who will be going hungry to raise money for food for the poorest of the poor.

Visiting Missionary

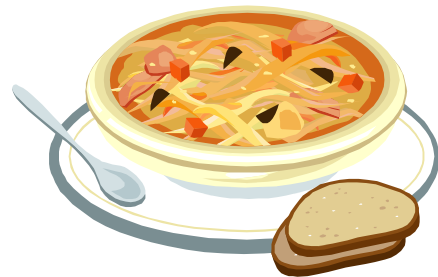
We are privileged to have the Director of The Methodist School of New Horizons located in Paraguay, **Sue Givens**, visiting us on March 2nd at 7:30 p.m. We are a mission oriented church and this is a wonderful opportunity to see what our mission dollars can do. Please make Sue feel welcome by planning to attend this wonderful outreach program.

Sue is responsible for the education of over 700 children. Part of your money given on Sunday morning supports this project. Plan to support Sue and learn about the wonderful school that has just been completed to provide education to the poor in Paraguay.

Sue's education model and techniques for Paraguayan children and families is truly remarkable and I am sure people will be inspired and amazed again at what our Dear Lord has done in Paraguay!

Are you hungry? Others are!

Our **non perishable food donations** have been well received at area food pantries. This is a vital ministry of our church. Remember to mark your calendars for the fourth Sunday of every month and bring in *soups, stews, canned pastas, canned meats, canned fruits and vegetables.* *Every donation can be used right now as unemployment rates rise and people are really starting to hurt around us.*



What is a CROP Hunger Walk?

Neighbors walking together to take a stand against hunger in our world. Together we raise awareness and funds for international relief and development, as well as local hunger-fighting.

Crop Walk

Get your sneakers tuned up for CROP Walk which is March 29, Sunday at 12:30.

Registration is at Central Baptist Church and 1½, 3 mile and six mile walks are available, this is a *great family outing* and the money raised supports local and global food ministries. Walking envelopes will be made available as soon as they arrive.



SIHN

Our Southbridge Interfaith Hospitality Network coordinators, **Vicki Foskett and Lori Pickering** are looking for sign ups for SIHN. All volunteers must have CORI forms submitted. See Vicki, Lori or John Hunt for more information. As SIHN gets reorganized under the leadership of Laura Kaplan, any new changes will be communicated to our SIHN coordinators.

Do you enjoy Fellowship Hour after church?

You can help. This is a very special time for us to “break bread together” and enjoy fellowship with each other. Please sign up to provide snacks for after church. It doesn't have to be fancy or homemade. Bring a bar of cheese and box of crackers, a coffee cake, etc. And, occasionally drop a little money into the freewill offering bowls to offset the cost of cream, sugar, etc. Thanks!



Pretzels Anyone?

Our Sunday School is all revved up to sell pretzels and begin raising money for **Heifer Project**. This year it looks like they are *sponsoring a cow*....stay tuned for details from our Sunday school leader and children!



From Samaritan Purse:

We are deeply grateful for your congregation's commitment and support of Operation Christmas Child in 2008. Some 8 million gift-filled shoe boxes were collected, including 4.9 million in the United States—the most ever since the project's inception 16 years ago. That's 8 million children and their families who will hear the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ, and it is mission-minded churches and groups like yours who make this spiritual harvest possible!

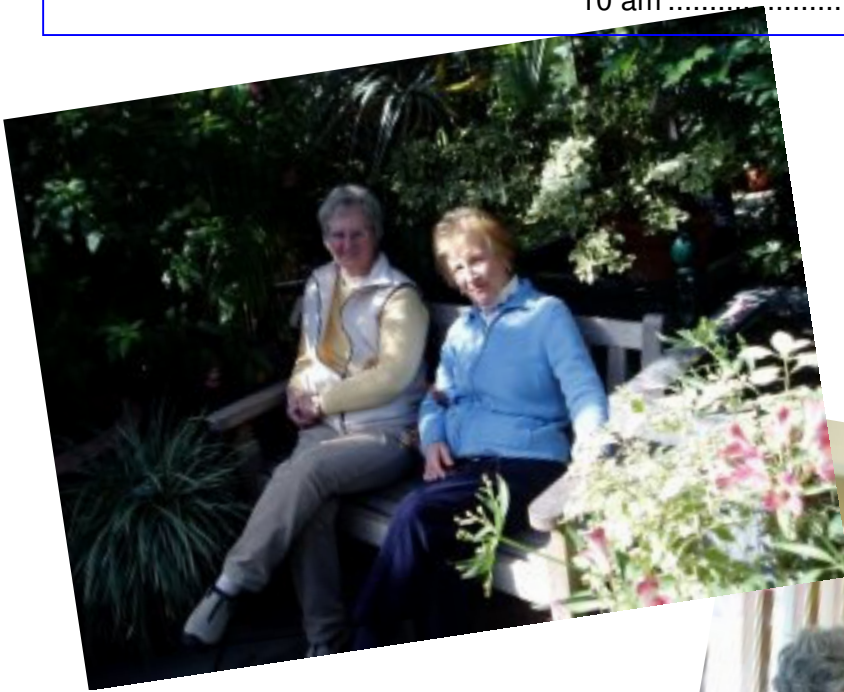
In December, Samaritan's Purse delivered thousands of shoe box gifts to war refugees in the Eastern European country of Georgia. We hope the article and video report will serve as a powerful testimony to the impact Operation Christmas Child is having on hurting people in need of a Savior.

Thank you, and God bless you for your passion to bring children around the world to faith in Christ!



Next Newsletter Deadline—March 25th

Sat	Feb 28	9 am	Music Committee
		10 am	Worship Committee
Sun	Mar 1	Pretzels for Heifer
		2:30 pm	Living Faithfully – Brimfield
Mon	Mar 2	7 pm	Missionary from Paraguay
Tue	Mar 3	all day	Life Line
Wed	Mar 4	7 pm	Lenten Study
Thu	Mar 5	10 am	Lenten Study
Wed	Mar 11	7 pm	Lenten Study
Thu	Mar 12	10 am	Lenten Study
		7 pm	Men's Fellowship
Sat	Mar 14	5:30 pm	Men's Supper
		7 pm	Shiloh Concert
Sat	Mar 16	7 pm	Administrative Council
Wed	Mar 18	7 pm	Lenten Study
Thu	Mar 19	10 am	Lenten Study
Wed	Mar 25	7 pm	UMW
		Newsletter deadline
Thu	Mar 26	10 am	Lenten Study
		7 pm	Lenten Study
Sat	Mar 28	9 am	Music Comm.
		10 am	Worship Comm.



*United Methodist Women
enjoy visiting Tower Hill
Botanic Garden's
Camellia Show.*



March 2009