



March 2020

“Yucca Breeze”

T H E U N I T E D C H U R C H E S O F H O T S P R I N G S

P A S T O R ' S P U L P I T :

As a Presbyterian Pastor, I have had the great privilege of not only being exposed to the tradition of observing the Liturgical calendar, but also to watch as God has moved in the lives of folks as they have participated in both Advent and Lent observations and services. Both are times of “pulling away.” Pulling away from the hustle and bustle of both seasons. Pulling away from the abject commercialism that has captured both Christmas and Easter. Pulling away, yes, but also, pulling “toward.” Both Advent and Lent allow us who know Jesus Christ to purposely let God pull us toward; toward the heart and meaning of the season, toward the true meaning behind the season to begin with. Or in other words, toward the heart of and compassion of God himself. As part of the reformed tradition, I came across the following article that tried to answer more of the question as to the why do reformed churches practice Lent. It is written from the perspective of the Christian Reformed Church—a denomination, but its relevancy is for most, including the Presbyterian Church, if not all, reformed churches in general.

Lent in the Christian Reformed Tradition

Growing up in a Christian Reformed Church, I can't say that I was very aware of the season of Lent. Then one year my mom bought purple fabric for the communion table and cross in the sanctuary. That's when I learned purple was the symbolic color for Lent because it was the color of the robes the Roman soldiers used to humiliate Jesus. Purple was the color of royalty, and ironically the Romans mocked Jesus as the “King of the Jews.” During Lent, purple symbolizes Jesus' pain and suffering, representing the mourning and penitence of the season.

Quite honestly, my ability to experience Lent has grown proportionately to my involvement in planning the worship experience. I think this is because the observance of Lent in the CRC can happen all around you; it doesn't require anything of you until you choose to actively participate in it and allow it to prepare your heart to remember Christ's sacrifice on Good Friday and celebrate His resurrection on Easter morning. There is a really good reason for this which stems directly from the reformed DNA in the Christian Reformed Church.

Lent in the history of the Reformed Church

The practice of Lent arose from a need in the early Church. John Witvliet summarizes this need well: “Lent was developed in what we now call a ‘missional context.’ It was a pastoral innovation for a time much like our own, where vast numbers of people do not grow up in the church. Lent was the church's way of saying ‘yes’ to the free offer of salvation and ‘no’ to cheap grace—baptism without discipleship.”

(Continued on Page 2)

However, through the course of church history, the human compulsion to try to ensure our own outcomes crept into the observance of Lent. Just like pharisaical law in Jesus' day, the practice of Lent turned toward legalism as the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches began mandating particular practices. Naturally this became a slippery slope, confusing the purpose of Lent with the idea that one's works made it possible to earn favor with God.

It was this kind of mindset that reformers like John Calvin were trying to correct in the church. Consequently, Calvin, and others like him, said "no" to the practices of Lent. For them, since God did not command the church to observe Lent, they preferred instead to prepare for Easter using sermon series designed to focus the believer on Jesus' suffering and death.

Lent is more about our hearts than what we do

Historically, the Christian Reformed Church has shared John Calvin's perspective about misguided practices of Lent. Today, the CRC places less emphasis on the things we do during Lent, because it can lead to legalism. Instead, we focus on the symbolic elements of Lent—the liturgy, visuals, and music designed to tune our hearts and minds to hear the message Lent communicates. These elements emphasize the preaching of God's Word, which is the overarching priority in CRC churches all year long.

When I was in high school and college, I began to take an active role in the planning of worship in my church. I took notice of the intricacies in the liturgy. It might involve visual, nonverbal cues like the seasonal color purple in banners, vestments, or table coverings. It might incorporate depictions of the cross, nails, and the crown of thorns in the worship space to evoke a sense of humility and reflection. In some CRC churches, a more formal, spoken liturgy will reflect the introspective, penitent mood of the season. For one small example of this, some churches choose to refrain from using the celebratory exclamation Alleluia during Lent. They do this to contrast reflection of Lent on our need for a Savior with the Good Friday and Easter celebrations of having been saved by grace.

Lent today in the Christian Reformed Church

However, in the last few decades the CRC has seen a renewed interest in some of the practices of Lent. While we continue to recognize that Lent is a human construct, it is understood that the personal and communal decisions of whether or not to observe Lent should stem from how it can help believers prepare for Easter and mature in his or her faith.

In her book *Mudhouse Sabbath*, Lauren Winner writes, "Practicing the spiritual disciplines does not make us Christians. Instead, the practicing teaches us what it means to live as Christians." I think the same applies to our Lenten observance - it's entirely voluntary; what we do during Lent does not save us. Rather what we do gives us the space to mature in our faith as we reflect on the magnitude of God's gift of salvation. That is what Lent in the CRC is about: to create the space for the individual, and the gathered body of Christ, to set distractions aside and remember the suffering and sacrifice of our Messiah.

My encouragement to you this Lenten season is simply, come to our abbreviated Wednesday night services and see, come to our Sunday worship times and feel, come and pull away for a while and let yourself be pulled toward the God who loves and believes in you.

Blessings and Grace,
Pastor David

MARCH Birthdays:

9 Carla Johnson
12 Joann Walker
13 Delores Hickman
17 Jim Hansen
25 Mary Jane Cape
Kevin Cape



FEBRUARY Anniversaries:

16 Don & Sheila DeVries



If your name is not included on the Birthdays and Anniversaries list and you would like it to be added, please contact the church office by email: uc@gwtc.net or call 745-5640.

MISSIONS TEAM

Loose Change Offering for March Going to Heifer International

Originally, this program would donate one heifer to a community to start a herd. They have since widened their donations to include so much more.

This program is designed to alleviate hunger and poverty around the world. They service 21 countries, educating them in agriculture and/or livestock. They try to make lasting changes from the ground up.

They offer mentorship to the participants in building a business and then marketing their products.

Some of their donations include seeds for crops, gardening supplies, chickens, goats, pigs, as well as gift boxes for knitting supplies, food preservation, etc.

The Missions Team have set our goal at \$500. We appreciate your generous support!



We will be celebrating our 100th anniversary as the oldest Federated Church west of the Mississippi River on **September 5th, 2020**, just after the Labor Day weekend. All the other celebrations seemed to be in December, so the committee decided to celebrate when it was warmer. The other Anniversaries were well planned and many guests were invited to attend the celebrations. The Centennial Committee is looking for help in searching for past ministers and intern ministers to invite them to the celebration. We also need help with other sub-committees. Please contact Gerald Collogan 745-3684; or Carol Nelson 745-3596; or Jeanne Wyatt 424-2633. Some important dates: Introduction of the Constitution, Dec. 5, 1920; Church building ground breaking, Dec. 3, 1950; Cornerstone laying, Dec. 2, 1951.

CHURCH BELL: The Church Bell was saved from the original Methodist Church building. The bell was brought into Hot Springs by Fred Evans with an ox team. It is now housed in the Bell Tower.

LAYING OF THE CORNERSTONE of The United Churches (pictured right): December 2, 1951; I. M. Munck (Baptists); Mrs. Pearl R. Glattly (Presbyterians; Mrs. C. A. Wilson (Methodists).



LENTEN SEASON NEWS

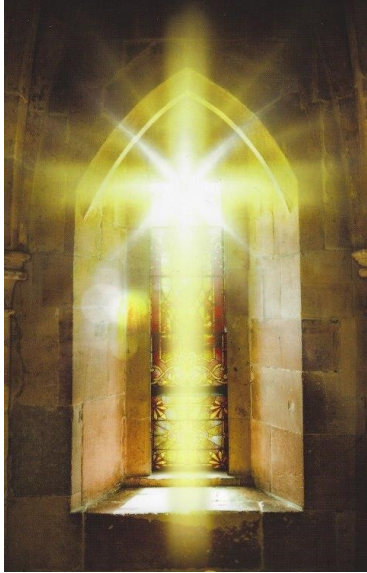
- ♦ Wednesday, February 25th — Ash Wednesday. Pastor David will begin our mid-week Lenten Services at 7 PM that evening.
- ♦ Wednesday, March 4th — will be the first of the Lenten Luncheons at Noon. The United Churches is sponsoring this one, with our wonderful Fellowship Team proving the soups, etc., and Pastor David sharing the message. The HSMA organizes these special luncheons during the Lenten season, so each one thereafter will be sponsored by a different church, hosted here. Please plan to attend as many of these as you are able. They are offered “for a donation”, which goes toward the HSMA’s needy fund.

Learn More About the New Automated External Defibrillator (AED)

Now that we have purchased this medical device, we hope we don't need to use it! But, should the occasion arise and the AED is needed, just knowing where it is located, and a few basics, will be especially important. An informational session will be held immediately following the Potluck Luncheon on Cantata Sunday, March 29. For those not interested in certification—*good news!* This is *not* a certification class. For those interested in learning what an AED does and some of the basics of a cardiac emergency—this informational session *is* for you. *All are encouraged to*

GOT BEEF?

If you, or a rancher you know, would like to donate a beef to the Hot Springs Ministerial FOOD PANTRY, the Food Pantry will pay for the processing, and your donation is considered a tax deductible donation. If you need more information on this you may ask Pastor David, who is a very active member of the HSMA.



“SANCTUARY”

A Cantata of Hope and Peace

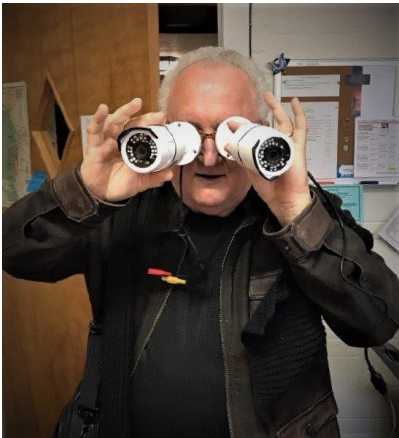
Presented By the Choir and Musicians of The United Churches
 Sunday Morning — March 29th — 10:00 AM

Musical Selections include: *Prelude of Peace; Sanctuary of Grace; Shelter of Hope; Hosanna! A Procession of Promise; In the Shadow of Your Wing; Give to the Winds Your Fears; Flee as a Bird; Sanctuary of the Soul and Postlude of Peace.*

Mark your calendar and make plans to join us as we lift this beautiful tribute of musical worship to the Lord!

PLEASE NOTE

There will be no Children’s Church on Sunday, March 29th (Cantata) and Easter Sunday, April 12th. We are asking our children to join the adults for both of these services.



**WE ARE
 ALL
 ABOUT
 DOING
 SECURITY
 UPDATES**

**January
 Missions & Ministry**

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Basic Needs Boutique | 34 (supplies/40 household) |
| Bearly Used Boutique | 25 (clothing) |
| Spaghetti Supper | 568 Meals |
| Food Pantry | 274 served |
| Loose Change Offering | 355.00 |
| Car Repair (Needy) | 163.99 |
| Electricity (Needy) | 150.00 |
| Gasoline (Needy) | 94.12 |
| Motel (Needy) | 310.00 |
| Non-food (Needy) | 21.26 |
| Propane (Needy) | 76.68 |
| Rent (Needy) | <u>226.00</u> |
| Total: | \$1397.05 |

Welcome to our New Office Assistant!

We are happy to have Bernice Cook join our staff ... and she is happy to be here. She will be assisting Peg with various projects, as well as working on the monthly “Yucca Breeze.” She will in the office approximately 6-hours per week. Her e-mail address will be:
 ucassist@gwtc.net.



HYMN HISTORY — TRUST AND OBEY

(John H. Sammis 1846-1919)

But Samuel replied, "Does the Lord delight in burnt offering and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams," (1 Samuel 15:22)

Life can often be a restless, disrupted existence until we give ourselves wholeheartedly to something beyond ourselves and follow and obey it supremely. Such implicit trust in God's great love and wisdom with a sincere desire to follow His leading should be every Christian's goal. Our willingness to trust and obey is always the first step toward God's blessing in our lives.

In 1886 Daniel B. Towner, director of the music department at Moody Bible Institute, was leading the music for evangelist D. L. Moody's series of meetings in Brockton, Massachusetts. A young man rose to give a testimony, saying, "I am not quite sure – but I am going to trust, and I am going to obey." Mr. Towner jotted down this statement and sent it to the Rev. J. H. Sammis, a Presbyterian minister and later a teacher at Moody, who wrote the present five stanzas.

Salvation is God's responsibility. Our responsibility is to trust in that salvation and then to obey its truths. "Trust and Obey" presents a balanced view of a believer's trust in Christ's redemptive work, and it speaks of the resulting desire to obey Him and do His will in our daily lives. Then, and only then, do we experience real peace and joy.

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, what a glory He sheds on our way! While we do His good will He abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey.

Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies, but His smile quickly drives it away; not a doubt nor a fear, not a sigh nor a tear, can abide while we trust and obey.

Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share, but our toil He doth richly repay; not a grief or a loss, not a frown nor a cross, but is blest if we trust and obey.

But we never can prove the delights of His love until all on the altar we lay, for the favor He shows and the joy He bestows are for them who will trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet, or we'll walk by His side in the way what He says we will do, where He sends we will go – Never fear, only trust and obey.

Chorus: Trust and obey – for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus – but to trust and obey. **Bible References:** Psalm 37:3-5; John 8:31; John 14:23; James 2:14-26; 1 John 2:6. Experience the glory and abiding presence of Christ as you determine to trust Him more completely and obey His leading more fully in all that you do. Carry this musical reminder with your remembering.



CREEDS AND CONFESSION CORNER

THE SCOTS CONFESSION

The Scots Confession was written at a turning point in the history of the Scottish nation. When the Queen Regent Mary of Guise died in her sleep in 1560, the Protestant nobility of Scotland was able to secure English recognition of Scottish sovereignty in the

Treaty of Edinburgh. To the Scots, this favorable conclusion to the civil war with Mary's French-supported forces represented a providential deliverance.

The Scottish Parliament, having declared Scotland a Protestant nation, asked the clergy to frame a confession of faith. Six ministers, including John Knox, completed their work in four days. In 1560, the document was ratified by Parliament as "doctrine grounded upon the infallible Word of God."

Beginning with a pledge of unconditional commitment to the triune God who creates, sustains, rules, and guides all things, the first eleven chapters of the Scots Confession narrate God's providential acts in the events of biblical history. The kirk (church) of the present and future is continuous with the kirk of God's people going back to Adam. While affirming that the Bible is the norm by which the kirk judges itself, the Scots Confession also sees the Scriptures as a sacred history in which the present day church, through the Holy Spirit, participates until the end of time. God's providential deliverance is a continuing, not merely a past, reality.

The Scots Confession sets forth three marks of the true and faithful church: "the true preaching of the Word of God," "the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus," and "ecclesiastical discipline ... whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished."

"Cleave, serve, worship, trust" are key words in this document. As a call to action in a turbulent time, the Scots Confession reflects a spirit of trust and a commitment to the God whose miraculous deliverance the Scots had experienced firsthand.

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