

The VOICE

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Writings From The Rev

As we are entering into the month of March we are also entering the Season of Lent and Easter. Although for some of us, the remnants of Christmas are still lingering in our memories. Or perhaps for some, remnants are still hanging around the edges of our roof. Well, now it's time for us to look ahead and prepare ourselves for the coming of a new season of Christian celebration, the Season of Lent. So it might be good to ask the question, "What is the origin and purpose of this Lenten Season?"

Lent, as it's experienced now, is a season of spiritual preparation for Easter, as well as commemorating the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness following his Baptism.

Lent has its origins early in the history of the church. Up until the Church had its first major split in 1054 A.D., when the Eastern Orthodox churches became "independent" of the Western churches, led predominately by the bishop of Rome, the Christian community of faith shared a common history.

The Lenten Season has its roots as far back as the 2nd Century A.D. when there emerged a two and a half week training period for baptismal candidates. Easter, even then, was the time when people were baptized and became part of the church, the body of Christ. Part of the early preparation for baptism included a time of fasting (giving up food) so that one might give more attention to spiritual concerns.

By the 4th Century the season of Lent was lengthened to six weeks in order for there to be better attendance at the classes of instruction. Also, by this time all the faithful were encouraged to join the candidates in their discipline of fasting as well as attending "membership" course!

So it was that Lent was first established as the

time to instruct new prospective members of the church before their baptism. It was only after the 4th Century that the fasting of Jesus in the wilderness became associated with Lent. The season was extended to a full forty days of fasting, excluding Sundays, but the addition of three days before the first Sunday of Lent, which includes Ash Wednesday.

While the custom of fasting has received the most attention, Lent was actually meant to be a season generally of spiritual renewal. Leo, an early bishop of the church, in Lenten sermons insisted strongly on mutual forgiveness and forbearance, on the intensification of private prayer and generosity in almsgiving, and regular and devout attention to biblical and doctrinal instruction as a major part of one's Lenten observances. He sought to make these as strictly required of the Christian as the physical abstinence from food. When the whole world was becoming Quasi-Christian there was a great wholesomeness about this annual requirement of a season of serious self-discipline for Christian reasons. Whether a lacked or devout Christian, it reminds us all of the claims of the Christian Standard: "***Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds...***"

May we indeed make our observance of Lent a time to increase our prayer life, to take advantage of Bible Studies, and to share deeds of Christian goodwill. The truth is, we are all called to follow Christ and to be baptized with him in love; a love that is willing to be inconvenienced and suffer for the salvation of the world, so that the love of God and humankind might be increased.

May our Faith truly grow as we prepare for the coming of Easter.

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Grafton, OH 44044
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Interim Minister: Rev. Ralph S. Wearstler
Licensed Minister: Judy Ponting
Christian Ed. And Youth Director: Polly Tallos
Secretary: Londa Blaine
Interim Worship & Music Director: Diana Tyler
Pathways Counseling and Growth Center: Dr. Ralph Thompson

Experiencing the Words of Jesus

The Christian Education Department will be offering a new 6 week Sunday Morning Adult Bible Study beginning Sunday, March 8. The Bible Study will be held during the regular Sunday School Hour, after the 9:30 AM service. If you are interested in joining please see Polly Tallos or Melissa Folk.

From the book cover:

You know what He did for you. Now experience the power of what He says to you. Experiencing the Words of Jesus.

Though Jesus' ministry was brief-only three and a half years-the words he spoke have stood the test of time. In his day, the Savior's words turned heads, turned hearts, and ultimately turned the world upside down. They do the same for us today. His words: our heritage.

We memorized them in Sunday school, we quote them, we even have Bibles that print them in red letters. We frame them and hang them on our walls. And when we experience them in our hearts, they come alive, energizing our moments and giving purpose to our lives.

This Bible Study takes a fresh look at the words of God's Son. There are six lessons. Read the stories; hear the voice of Jesus for yourself.

The One who spoke, still speaks.

LOCAL—Habitat for Humanity

On January 31st, Jim and Linda Ickes, Brian Insley, Linda Rodak, Darrell Wilford, Bill Cromling, Melissa Folk, and Larry Hejduk (Melissa's brother-in-law) worked on a Habitat for Humanity house in Elyria. The day started out slow, but then the group got involved with painting and hanging doors. Chantay, whose home the house would become, was working along with us. She is a single mom, supporting her family as a preschool teacher. It was wonderful to know that we were helping a Christian woman with her first home. We had a great time singing "Our God is an Awesome God" with her while painting.

Londa Blaine and Jen Hayward brought the group lunch- hoagies, chicken noodle soup, potato salad, and brownies (Cindy Thompson's home-made ones). It was all delicious. Later that day, the gentleman who will be getting a house next showed up to help. He is working 3 jobs to provide for his wife and children. Seeing these deserving people was a nice assurance that Habitat for Humanity isn't being abused by people who are good at "playing the system" but people who were working hard for everything they have. We're looking forward to helping with another build. If you are interested in participating, talk to Melissa Folk.

Teaching or Facilitating?

You may not know, but I am a teacher of at risk youth; my students range in age from 12 to 17 years. Their ability level can vary even greater, depending on the group. Because of this, it would be a disservice to my students to stand in front of the classroom and teach traditionally. When most of us think of teaching, we think of the teacher as the primary source of knowledge, bestowing this knowledge to his or her pupils. If I tried this with my students, especially in math, I would lose most of them; some students would have already mastered the topic and be bored, others would be overwhelmed because it would be too difficult. They might act out, and only a few of them would receive the teaching that is right for them. Therefore, I facilitate their learning. Students use other means (computer curriculum) for the content, and I help them when they have questions. This can happen at church, too. Many of us may be hesitant to lead an adult Bible study or Sunday school class because we feel inadequate in our knowledge of God's word to teach (be THE source of knowledge), so we pass the opportunities by. However, there are many studies which do not call for a teacher but a facilitator, where there are usually no set right or wrong answers. The content of the study comes from study guides, books, or other curriculum. The class just needs someone to facilitate it—to ask the questions, make sure everyone has a chance to participate, and keep the group on track. Because of different experiences, ages and places on our faith journeys, these types of classes allow the participant to glean something different from the materials. So, how about it? If you do not feel qualified to teach a class on one of the books in the Bible, why not try facilitating a class on a topical study? Feel like you need to be better equipped?

Speak to Polly Tallos, and she can enroll you in a free online course, such as Small Group Host or Small Group Leader, which may be the encouragement you need.

- Melissa Folk

LENT

“Don’t start your day without it”—the wooden chalice you received in worship on MARCH 1, that is.

The small wooden chalices will be part of our ongoing Lenten experience these next few weeks, as we reflect on the life of Jesus, in preparation for our Easter celebration

HOLD your chalice each day as you pray and meditate. Bring it with you to worship each Sunday and to the Maundy Thursday worship service on April 9.

“May your cup of blessings runneth over”

(If you were not able to worship with us on March 1st, we will have a chalice for you the next time you come to worship. See you soon.)

A Lenten Bible Study, utilizing “The Case For Christ: A Journalist’s Personal Investigation of the Evidence For Jesus”, by Lee Strobel, will be held Wednesday evenings (March 4-April 8) 6:30-8:00 at the church.

You won’t want to miss this examination of pointed questions regarding Jesus’ existence and divinity (i.e. “Does archaeology confirm or contradict Jesus’ biographies?” “Was Jesus crazy when he claimed to be the son of God?” “Is there evidence that Jesus’ resurrection was an actual historical event?” and more).

A grant from NECC’s Fair Fund will cover the cost for all course materials. Call the church, 440-748-2230, to sign up. Even if you missed the first class, plan to join us.

YEARBOOK REPORTS for 2008 are due as soon as possible. We need to get the book published. Email them to Cindy Thompson or bring to the church office.

Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday—April 5

Procession of Palms w/Children’s Choir @ the 9:30 worship service.

EGG HUNT—2:00 p.m.



Maundy Thursday—

April 9 7:30 p.m.

Worship Service (led by the Elders)

Good Friday—April 10 12:00-3:00

The sanctuary will be open for silent prayer and meditation. Please use the South Sanctuary entrance ONLY.

EASTER SUNDAY — April 12

(NO SUNRISE SERVICE @ cemetery)

8:00 A.M. Worship Service

9:30 A.M. Worship Service

EASTER BREAKFAST —8:30-9:30 a.m.

French toast, bacon, fruit, juice & coffee

Proceeds will benefit the youth programs as well as the CYF Mission Trip to Lexington, North Carolina, June 2009.

A Ticket, a Basket.... To help cover the cost of a women’s conference in May, Christian Education is sponsoring a **themed gift basket raffle**. We are asking for donations of baskets. Possible themes for baskets include Christian enrichment, movie night, scrap booking, tea time, tee time, etc.; the limit is your imagination. Baskets will be raffled off the same way the Chinese auction is held. Baskets will be on display and tickets sold on Sunday after both services for 3 weeks, starting March 22. Tickets will be 5 for \$1 or 30 for \$5. Winning tickets will be drawn at the Easter breakfast on April 12. For more information or to volunteer to donate a basket, please contact Melissa Folk, Robin Galvin or Polly Tallos

Women’s Retreat.... I believe God is leading me to present to our ladies an opportunity for a women’s conference instead of hosting our own women’s retreat. **Godgirls In Motion Christian Women’s Conference is coming to Kalahari May 15 and 16.** You can check out the website at http://www.godgirls_inmotion.com. Suzi, one of the co-founders of the conference, explained to me that the conference came from a “wanting to unite Christian women of all denominations through praise and worship, teaching from the Bible, special music and even Christian comedy”. The message is, that God not only loves women very much but also has put His hand on them for something special (1 Thessalonians 1:4). Flyers with more info are coming. To help cover the cost, Christian Ed. will be sponsoring a fundraiser. If interested in attending, please let me know before the end of March so we can take advantage of early bird pricing.

Faithfully, Melissa Folk

JYF & Chi Rho Overnight Fri., March 6-Sat., March 7

Theme: Totally Twisted Priorities
Cost: \$5.00 per person

The JYF and Chi Rho have been invited to attend an overnight at Heights Christian Church on Friday, March 6 and Saturday, March 7.

The evening will kick off with Youth—Unplugged, featuring youth talent and skits. Youth are encouraged come up with individual, small group or large group activities. Throughout the course of the night, we will play card games, board games, Foosball, and other games. We'll have a Praise Break Worship Service at midnight, watch movies and conclude with a breakfast Saturday morning.

Although the overnight will encompass a large age range, there will be some separate activities for specific ages and there will be separate sleeping rooms for boys and girls. If you have any questions, please contact Polly Tallos.

Souper Bowl of Caring

“Thank you” to everyone who donated to the Souper Bowl of Caring on Sunday, February 1. The Jr. Youth Fellowship stood at the Sanctuary doors holding soup pots, accepting your donations. We collected over \$200 and 65 food items. The money will go to support the Dunham Ave. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Free Meal Program. A group of servers go the 2nd Saturday of each month to work with members of Dunham Ave. Christian Church. The food items went directly into the NECC food basket pantry.

Nationally, the Souper Bowl of Caring project has collected more than \$9.1 million in cash and food this year. More than 260 Disciples congregations have helped raise contributions totaling more than \$93,000 for the project.

Souper Bowl of Caring mobilizes congregations, schools, and businesses to collect money or food for charity on or near Super Bowl Sunday.

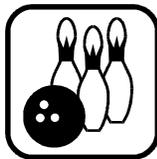
National Youth Ministry Conference

Beth Wilson and Polly Tallos will be attending the National Youth Ministry Conference in Columbus, OH February 27- March 1.

Group Publishing and Simply Youth Ministry are presenting the conference. Polly and Beth are looking forward to meeting with hundreds of youth workers from around the United States. It should be a exciting, uplifting, growing experience for both of them.

NECC FAMILY BOWLING....

Bring family and friends for an afternoon of bowling on Sunday, March 8, at Brunswick Zone Lanes, in North Ridgeville, 1–3 p.m. The cost will be \$10/person and includes 2 hours of bowling, shoe rental, pizza, and pop. I need to know how many plan to attend so I can reserve the lanes.



Please RSVP on the friendship register (B - #attending), or by email to Carol Bokman at bokmans@cox.net or by phone 440-891-1819. We hope to see you there.

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES....

MARCH

- 2 John & Lillian Ingram
- 3 Collin Trimble
- 5 Alex Carpenter
- 6 Eileen Weber
Stephanie Tyler Garvin
Brittney Bokar
- 7 Lisa Woodby
Arlene Squire
- 8 Mary Tite
- 11 Jill Hartness
- 12 Dolly Dixon
- 13 Susan Smith
- 14 Cassidy Karban
Kevin Wilson
Robin & Jim Galvin
- 17 Mike Krasnevich
Dan Landin
Kennadi Daniels
- 19 Sylvia Ott
- 20 Melissa Daniels
Val & Ted Fletcher
Glenn & Carol Swartz
- 21 Ted Fletcher
Angie & Ed Carter
Donna & Bruce Burdick
- 22 Jeremy Piper
- 23 Linda Morrison
- 24 Rachel Trimble
Doris Goist
Liz Bokar
- 25 Bill Nowagarski
- 28 Scott White
Shannon Belfi
Carol & Doug Busche
- 30 Christine Smith
Kristy Piper
- 31 Vicky Spitzer
Paige Bokman



APRIL birthdays & anniversaries (first week) 1-Jean Kekic, Renate Maurer 2-Diana Butcher, Tony Ward 4-Luke Bowen 7-Don Binnie 8-Kathy Carpenter

Contact information to reach Rev. Ralph Wearstler—

Cell phone: 440-289-8219

E-mail: revralphw@sbcglobal.net



THANK YOU

“Thank you for all the prayers and thoughtful concerns that I have received these past few weeks. I would like to also thank the person who sent me the gift card. It means so much to me that I am loved and cared about during this very hard time in my life.
Dawn Schieferle

Dear Church Members,

My father, Wally Forbes, died on Christmas Day. Mom died in 2005 in Arizona. Dad had Alzheimer's for a few years but continued to keep his warm funny disposition. He enjoyed your newsletter very much. Although they belonged to other churches after leaving North Eaton, none compared to yours. It was home.
Fondly, Kathie Forbes Gibson

News Among the Pews

Judy Ponting had surgery and is now at LifeCare of Elyria for rehabilitation. She is feeling better each day and is working hard to get home, back to church and back to work.

Del Ott has been in and out of the hospital over the past month. He is now at Grace Hospital in Amherst for rehabilitation. He is very anxious to get back home!

Jan Mitchell had surgery and is home recuperating. She will be out of the nursery for about 6 weeks.

Marge Borchert has been in Elyria Hospital for a couple of weeks. She is getting better but needs to get her medications regulated before going home.

Please keep our church family in your prayers that they will get stronger each day and will be back in worship with us soon.

Welcome a new part time employee:

Kathy Currence has been hired as our new part time bookkeeper. She will be working closely with our Treasurers, Jen Hayward and Mary Scott.

Kathy was born and raised in Elyria and graduated from Elyria High School in 1980. She has lived in Washington D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland. For the past five years she has worked for Levis, Noland and Co., CPA's in Elyria. She is single and lives in Elyria with her special friend, Mark.

General Assembly—

A “Hands On” Event

July 29-August 2

“...for the Healing of the Nations”

The logo for the Assembly was designed by a Disciples layperson and depicts dozens of hands representing the leaves of the tree. General Assembly organizers stress the hands are intentional, to represent hands raised in prayer, hands poised for work and hands used for healing.

Get YOUR hands on this opportunity for growth, service and fellowship. Visit

www.disciples.org for more information.

