



The Central Connection

MESSAGES & OPPORTUNITIES FROM CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH TO YOU!

March 2011



Opening the Door to Lent

Once again, it is time to enter the season of Lent through the door of Ash Wednesday. Some might wonder why we do this to ourselves: Why do we gather each Ash Wednesday (this year, March 9) to be reminded of such unpleasant truths as our mortality and our sin? But just as Jesus began his ministry with the invitation to repentance, so we hear again his call to return to the Lord. Pleasant? Perhaps not. Necessary? Absolutely.

Lent asks us to live honestly, without denial or pretense. This is the only way to freedom and new life in Christ. Self-examination and confession prepare us to receive new life in those areas of our lives where we had denied Christ. By trusting God's mercy, we are able to set aside the failures of the past and lean into who we are yet to become by the grace of God.

After we have entered Lent through the door of Ash Wednesday, Lent becomes a time for spiritual growth, deepening faith, richer prayer, and a renewed sense of God's presence. We find that the door, which at first seemed too difficult to open, swings freely on hinges of

grace. And Christ welcomes us into his house of love.

This love is not sentimental, however. Subjectively, we think we need sympathy and comfort, while what we really need is clarity, and cleansing of the abyss of sin within us. This is not condemnation, but right diagnosis. What a relief to finally admit that we are in need, not only of forgiveness of past sins, but the healing of our hearts, which is a lifelong process.

The freedom of Lent is that while "weeping at Jesus' feet, we [discover we] have nothing more to conceal, no more self-justification, no more self pity. We are fully known, even in the depths that we ourselves cannot see, cannot bear to see. Instead of hoping that God will love us for our good parts and pass over the rest, we know that he died for the bad parts, and will not rest till they are made right. The depth of our sin proves the height of his love, a height we cannot comprehend until we realize how desperately we need it. We are fully loved, and one day will be fully healed. . ." (*The Illumined Heart*, Frederica Mathewes-Green)

If you hesitate to enter into the Lenten disciplines, because you are afraid of what you might find out about yourself, hear Jesus say, "Do not be afraid. It is I."

I'll meet you at the door. Pastor Stephanie

**If you hesitate to enter...
Hear Jesus say,
Do not be afraid. It is I.**



LECTIONARY READINGS

March 6

Exodus 24:12-18
Psalm 99 (UMH 819)
2 Peter 1:16-21
Matthew 17:1-9

March 13

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7
Psalm 32 (UMH 766)
Romans 5:12-19
Matthew 4:1-11

March 20

Genesis 12:1-4a
Psalm 121 (UMH 844)
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17
John 3:1-17

March 27

Exodus 17:1-7
Psalm 95 (UMH 814)
Romans 5:1-11
John 4:5-42



**What do
United Methodists
Believe?**

**Class to be held on
Wednesdays,
beginning in March
(Time to be
announced)**

- Are you interested in finding out more about United Methodist beliefs?
- Do you have questions about Baptism, Communion, or Christianity in general?
- Or, how do the different denominations differ?
- Please consider coming to an introductory class which will be starting in March. This class is for all who are considering membership--or just plain curious--and will offer lots of time for your questions.

Please call Pastor Stephanie (886-3441) if you are interested.

*Child care can be arranged if we receive advance notice.

The Central Connection is the monthly newsletter of Central United Methodist Church, Lewis and Beverley Streets, Staunton, VA.

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IN MINISTRY

The Mission of Central UMC is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Pastor.....	Stephanie M. Sault
Minister of Music/Organist.....	Sherry von Oeyen
Church Secretary.....	Agnes Campbell
Child's Play Director.....	Jo Ann B. Black
Custodian.....	Janet Nuckoles
Retired Missionary Professor.....	Hunter P. Mabry
Retired Pastor.....	David D. Reed



**Supporting Our Mission
through our Easter Offering**

As you prepare to rejoice in Jesus' resurrection in a few short weeks, please take time to look around our community and observe the needs, be they earthly or spiritual, that our church can help ease. Please give as generously as you can, be it in time you can volunteer, food you can give to our Food Pantry, money you can donate, or prayers you can make for those in need.

Do not think that any gift is too little. Each small gift makes an enormous difference to God and to those who will directly benefit. Know that each cent or minute you can give is felt; Jesus was able to feed thousands from those five loaves and two fish. God will work his miracles with your gift as well.

—Josh Gutshall, Chairperson, Finance Committee



March 9, 7:00 p.m.

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent with worship that focuses on the themes of sin and death in the light of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ. Traditional words used during the service are "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." We receive everlasting life only as a gift of God's grace.

Ash Wednesday worship...is a call to observe Lent as a time of self-examination and repentance, of prayer and self-denial, of reading and Bible study, of meditation on Jesus' life and death, and of giving oneself to others, especially those who suffer and are in need.



**WEDNESDAY NOON LENTEN
SERVICES & LUNCHEONS**

12:05 p.m.

Each Wednesday March 16 – April 13

Preaching / Serving Lunch:

March 16

Rev. Jeff Allen, St. Paul's UMC

March 23

Rev. DeBorah Barnwell, Cherryvale UMC

March 30

Rev. Robert Sharp, Marquis Memorial UMC

April 6

Rev. Stephanie Sault, Central UMC

April 13

Rev. Robert Edwards, Christ UMC

A short Worship/Devotional Service will be held in the Sanctuary, following which a Soup and Sandwich Luncheon will be served in the Fellowship Hall (\$2 donation). The service and lunch time are planned to fit into the noon "lunch hour." Both are open to the public, and everyone is invited to participate.



MUSIC NOTES

This year Easter is on April 24; and the Chancel Choir will be singing the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's *The Messiah* at the worship service.

We would like to invite any who would like to sing with us. You can join us at any time for Thursday evening rehearsals (7:00 p.m. each week) as we have already begun to learn the music. Or, if you already know your part well, you may come to the last couple of rehearsals before Easter.

It's a very wonderful piece of music..... it expresses our great joy for the risen Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Come join us!

—Sherry von Oeyen

Thanks

Recently a small workshop group from the Virginia Conference needed a meeting place which Central was able to provide. A couple of days after the meeting, a retired minister who had attended called to express his personal appreciation for Central's hospitality.

He said that he was very impressed with the facility— clean, orderly, bright, and has good indoor signage. He commented that sometimes older churches begin to get a little dark, uncared for, and uninviting, but he was impressed with Central.

He also commended Central for involvement with Fair Trade Coffee.

So, congratulations to the congregation, Trustees, Custodian and other staff—and let's keep up the good work!

CHURCH WOMEN UNITED WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FRIDAY, MARCH 4



Cherryvale UMC

Registration 9:30; Program 10:00

Women, men and children in more than 170 countries and regions will celebrate World Day of Prayer on March 4. The women of Chile have written the service around the theme *How many loaves have you?* They ask us to enter a process that draws us into the Bible, into the context of Chile and into the real situations of our lives and communities. Together, we are asked to respond to what we have and how we can share it with others. In this past year, Chile has been challenged by a devastating earthquake and the collapse of a mine in which many miners were trapped. Again, we are reminded to share our bread and to receive the bread that is shared with us.

All are invited to join the women of Chile in prayer and song to support women's ecumenical ministries toward justice, peace, healing and wholeness. The annual offering will support the work of World Day of Prayer USA and help meet the needs of families who are victims of many forms of poverty, violence and human trafficking.



Lyndhurst United Methodist Men will have a Pancake Breakfast Saturday March 12, 2011 at 7:00 a.m. in the church's Fellowship Hall. Menu includes Pancakes, Sausage, Sausage Gravy, Orange Juice & Coffee.

Prices: Adults \$5.00; Children 6-12 \$3.00;
Children 5 & under Free.

Takeouts will be available.

All are invited. For more information contact the church office at 540-943-8057 or Rev. Dettmer at 540-471-9332.



DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME begins Sunday, March 13. Be sure to “Spring Ahead” and set your clocks up one hour. (We know you won’t want to be late for Sunday School and Worship!)

IMPORTANT DEADLINES

The Church Secretary will be out of the office March 25–April 1, which necessitates the following deadline changes for March:

For April Newsletter – Friday, March 11

(This is very early, but we know you can do it!)

March 27 Bulletin – Tuesday, March 22

April 3 Bulletin – Tuesday, March 22



Thank you to everyone who made possible the Celebration Dinner for our Food Pantry friends. We appreciate all who helped pray, plan, promote, prepare, invite, host, serve, and clean up afterward. Thank you for your outstanding participation and ministry. What a wonderful event it was!



**Not just
Books!**

CHURCH LIBRARY

Sure, our Church Library has a number of books – all kinds of books.

But we also have music CDs, VHS & DVD movies.

Come, check us out!

CENTRAL’S WEBSITE

www.centralumcstaunton.org

Thanks to Joe Hill for keeping our website up to date with current bulletins, newsletters, calendar events, and so much more.

If you have visited there lately, take a few moments and see what’s new.

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF GOD’S KIDS

After Sunday School in a Methodist church, a mother asked her three-year-old boy what they had studied that day.

“We talked about Lent,” the boy replied. “Lent is the stuff between your toes after you take your socks off.”

(Guess he didn’t hear *the rest of the story!*)

A DAY AT THE ASSEMBLY

By Luz M. de Tablan, UMW President

In his book, *At the End of the Day*, James Moore shares about Ken Medina who wrote a song entitled, "If this Is Not a Place." In this song he expresses the need of so many lost and hurting people and asks for a place where one can go when seeking answers and when needing to speak and be heard. The song runs like this:

*If this is not a place where tears are understood,
where can I go to cry?*

*If this is not a place where my spirit takes wing,
where can I go to fly?*

The place that Ken Medina referred to is the church, the place of love, growth and acceptance; a place of refuge; an island of caring in the midst of a hostile, competitive world; a place that treats everybody equally and does not segregate poor or rich, alien or native, struggling or successful; a place that offers and accepts all as they are and all are supported, comforted and heard. This is the United Methodist Church, a beacon of light and love.

On February 3, Susan Obaugh and I joined three hundred Virginia United Methodists for the U.M. Day at the General Assembly in Richmond. It was a day for our church to put our faith, hope and love to action and show all people that we care for them.

It was an exciting day for us because it was our first time to participate in this worthy cause for those who are marginalized and pushed to the edge by unfairness and injustices..

The moment I was inside that big building I became more anxious, excited and moved by the scene of so many United Methodist men and women with the name tags of UMC with the cross and the flame. The flow seemed endless, like water flowing from a stream. I felt I was also "commissioned" by God to bring into light the sufferings and concerns of our people, especially the children. The legislative event became so meaningful to me because I was one of those given the mission to communicate the sentiments of those "voiceless" brothers and sisters to our lawmakers, so they will be heard and able to exercise their human rights like the rest of us.

Leaders of the delegation gave us copies of issues of concern to bring to the attention of those lawmakers, one of the tasks to which God calls us.



Some of the issues were:

1. Oppose HB 1775-The Children Should Not be Scapegoats--requires that any person enrolling a child in a public school must indicate the citizenship status of the child's parents. The reporting requirement creates an atmosphere of fear.
2. Oppose HB 1465-Restricting Education Access Affects the Whole Community-bans undocumented immigrant children from being admitted to public colleges and universities in the state. Children affected by this legislation include those brought to this country through no fault of their own.
3. Oppose HB 1430-Local Immigration Enforcement Risks Public Safety--requires arresting officers to inquire into the citizenship status of any person arrested and report to Immigration and Customs Enforcement information of any person who claims to have been born in a different country, to be a citizen of another country, or whose citizenship cannot be ascertained. It also extends to arresting officers authority previously reserved to jailing officers to ascertain the citizenship status of those taken into custody.
4. HB 1420--requires the State Police to enter into a 287g agreement with the Dept. of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement and extends federal immigration law enforcement authority to state and local police.

These issues were brought to the attention of our Congressmen and Senators for their action.

That day at the Assembly Ken Medina's description of the church came into being and our United Methodist Churches became visible carrying the mission of hope to those who are hurting, because we understand the meaning of tears of the "least of these." Everyone there came with a mission and vision that some day, and soon, the fears and tears of those children as well as their parents will be wiped away and then comes the dawn of a new day.



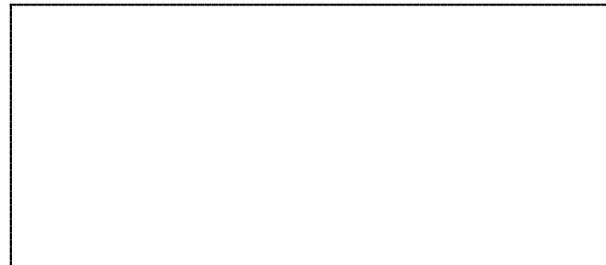
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BIRTHING KITS

Imagine a mother about to give birth to a precious child, one she's carried and nourished in her womb for nine months. She awaits the moment with great anticipation, knowing that her family, doctor, nurses, technicians, and support group are prepared to bring that child into a healthy environment.

But wait. The scene is different in Third World countries where sanitation, germs, and disinfectants aren't the topic of conversation as much as where the next meal or bucket of water will come from.

So, our Church Council would like to help a bit by providing Birthing Kits to give such newborns a better start in life—at least as sanitary a birthing process as we can.



Our Goal: 100 Birthing Kits, to be sent to Virginia Annual Conference in June. This is a worthy goal and we can accomplish it if we start now.

Several Council members have volunteered to provide the miscellaneous items needed

(Ziploc bags, string, 4-mil plastic, etc.). We're asking the church family to help provide:

- Flannelette receiving blankets for each kit. Or flannelette fabric approximately 36"x36". Each Birthing Kit will contain 2 receiving blankets.
- Hotel-sized hand soap, 1 oz., or larger.

This will be our main emphasis for kits (although anyone is welcome to provide other kits if desired). We will announce a time for assembling the kits at a later date.