

Bellringer

Sherman Avenue United Methodist Church

March, 2015

Lent: Time for a New Beginning

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word "Lenten", which means "spring". The Lenten season is a time of preparation for celebrating Easter. Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts and then became a time for penance by all Christians.

Lent is a beautiful season that encourages us to stop a while from our normal routine and reflect upon the truth about ourselves. Lent is a time that invites us to see our need to renew our personal encounter with Jesus Christ. First, Lent encourages us to take an honest look at ourselves and the realities that surround us, in the light of the truth which God reveals to us through His Word. Secondly, with God's help and His grace, we can find the motivation to get started and be transformed, becoming an authentic people; because we cannot afford to be satisfied with the way we are.

For this reason, today, we wish to focus upon the need to be authentic in all our actions, starting with a new beginning. By 'authentic' we mean that which is true as opposed to that which is false. The authenticity of each and every one of us as individuals can mark the authenticity of the society we form a part of and in which we live. Sunday after Sunday during the Lenten season, the Word of God will call us to be more authentic. Authenticity is a great virtue, which we require, so that we do not hide behind our own mask, which does not permit us to reveal our true self. Authenticity means that we are not afraid to admit the truth about ourselves, both individually and also as a society, even if this truth is unattractive.

The worst sins in life - those which are difficult to be forgiven - are those sins which we become aware of, yet do not feel guilty about. As the Psalmist says, "God earnestly forgives all those who seek Him humbly and contritely. He is unable to forgive us if we close the door to our heart." As the book of Revelation says, "Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends." Sisters and Brothers, the Lord will continue to knock on the door of our hearts, but only we hold the key.

Finally, I encourage you to fully engage the season of Lent as we prepare to celebrate the Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Blessings, Pastor Rafael

Starting in April, the Bellringer will be distributed via E-Mail

**If you have not already provided your email address, please do so NOW.
All you need to do is send an E-Mail to the church at saumcall@gmail.com.
For those of you who do not have Internet, there will be a way for you**

to receive a printed copy of the Bellringer.

**The reason for the change is to cut the cost of distributing
the newsletter to at least half of the present cost.**

If you have any other questions, please see Ed McDonald.

The Bellringer will also be posted on the webpage ShermanAvenueUMC.org.

The church calendar is also posted on the new webpage.

Please continue to contact the Church office to reserve the Church for an event.



The Presence of God by Veronica Berry

*“When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart.”
Jeremiah 29:13*

A tiny snowflake always reminds me of the presence of God. Every snowflake is different, beautiful with its own intricate pattern. One tiny snowflake seems so light and fragile easily melting in your hand. But when hundreds of snowflakes constantly fall, together they form heavy mounds of snow that only large snow plows can remove. Fragility and strength fused together in one miraculous creation.

The greatest discovery we can make is to recognize God’s presence in every experience of our lives. From the beauty of a sunrise on a warm summer morning that we are longing to see to the unrelenting winter wonderland that we are ready to say goodbye to, God’s spirit is there. Sometimes we have to become a spiritual detective in order to heighten our senses' awareness so we can open our minds to see what is right in front of us. We have to decide that no matter what we are going to look for God in every experience.

Some mornings I do not want to leave my warm bed to go out into the bitter cold and go to work. I’ll listen to the radio and hear that the temperature is 10 below but with the wind chill it feels like it’s 40 below, and I think to myself this weather is not fit for humans to go outside. But then, I look out my door and see a bright red cardinal peacefully sitting still on a branch in a tree, and I know God is here. I find hope and appreciation in those moments because I am grateful that I recognized the strength and peacefulness of God’s creation who instead of avoiding or fighting the cold, accepted and flowed with the rhythm of it.

Sometimes our mindless realities obscure the image of God’s presence in our lives. Setting time aside to deepen our relationship with God is essential. Prayer, meditation, reading scripture, and taking time to notice God’s blessings in our lives strengthens our faith. These disciplines fortify our faith so we can see the presence of God in every situation during our day. As we build that trust and recognize that he is there, the magnitude of our issues diminish and fade so we can see him and feel his love for us.

Wherever you are, God is. He is in the doctor’s office with the medical staff giving you the care you need. He is at the store with all the folks and families tediously choosing all the right foods for their household. He is on the playground with the children who love being together and just want to be outside and play. He is in our homes at the dinner table watching us as we pray and give thanks for our meal. He is by our side at all times, even when we can’t see him, with his all abiding love. Please take time every day to feel the peace of his spirit and recognize his presence in all areas of your life.

“Put these things into practice; devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress.” 1 Timothy 4:15.



News from the Women's Groups

The next UMW Meeting is Tuesday, March 3, at 6:00 PM.
Patsy McDonald will be leading the discussion on the book,
"Orphan Train" by Christina Baker Kline

We will also discuss ideas for our programs in 2015
Anyone interested is invited to attend

Spring clean up day will be Saturday April 18, 2015, from 8AM until noon

Connections from Craig Myrbo

Since Lent is traditionally a time of fasting, reflection and prayer; perhaps it would be good to reflect on what scriptures say about fasting. One passage that speaks to the practice is Isaiah 58 . His audience did not "get it".

What relevance does this have to us? What would Isaiah say to us today? The fast I choose: Fasting from Injustice

Isaiah 58

1 Shout loudly; don't hold back; raise your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their crime, to the house of Jacob their sins.

2 They seek me day after day, desiring knowledge of my ways like a nation that acted righteously, that didn't abandon their God. They ask me for righteous judgments, wanting to be close to God.

3 "Why do we fast and you don't see; why afflict ourselves and you don't notice?" Yet on your fast day you do whatever you want, and oppress all your workers.

4 You quarrel and brawl, and then you fast; you hit each other violently with your fists. You shouldn't fast as you are doing today if you want to make your voice heard on high.

5 Is this the kind of fast I choose, a day of self-affliction, of bending one's head like a reed and of lying down in mourning clothing and ashes? Is this what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

6 Isn't this the fast I choose: releasing wicked restraints, untying the ropes of a yoke, setting free the mistreated, and breaking every yoke?

7 Isn't it sharing your bread with the hungry and bringing the homeless poor into your house, covering the naked when you see them, and not hiding from your own family?

8 Then your light will break out like the dawn, and you will be healed quickly. Your own righteousness will walk before you, and the Lord's glory will be your rear guard.

9 Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and God will say, "I'm here." If you remove the yoke from among you, the finger-pointing, the wicked speech;

10 if you open your heart to the hungry, and provide abundantly for those who are afflicted, your light will shine in the darkness, and your gloom will be like the noon.

11 The Lord will guide you continually and provide for you, even in parched places. He will rescue your bones. You will be like a watered garden, like a spring of water that won't run dry.

12 They will rebuild ancient ruins on your account; the foundations of generations past you will restore. You will be called Mender of Broken Walls, Restorer of Livable Streets.

13 If you stop trampling the Sabbath, stop doing whatever you want on my holy day, and consider the Sabbath a delight, sacred to the Lord, honored, and honor it instead of doing things your way, seeking what you want and doing business as usual,

14 then you will take delight in the Lord. I will let you ride on the heights of the earth; I will sustain you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Christian Education Opportunities

During the Lenten season, the 8:30 Adult Sunday School class will study *24 Hours That Changed the World* by Adam Hamilton. This study examines the last twenty four hours of Jesus' life, and our response to his death.

After Lent we will begin "*Unfinished*", a six week study "to rediscover the critical mission of Christ in our World today and the richness of God's calling on our lives."

On May 31st we will start a thirty-one week church wide study "*The Story*". More details will follow in the Bellringer.

Thursday Bible Study begins 4:30 pm. The group will continue studying the Gospel of Luke.

Sunday School for All begins at 10:45 am each Sunday. There are classes for children and adults. The topics vary.

The Youth Group meets on Wednesdays and Fridays. Please check the Bellringer and Bulletin for activities, topics and times.

Anyone interested in joining in for any of these studies is welcome at any time.

What does an Administrative Council do?

The Administrative Council exists to create and supervise the strategic plan for the local congregation so that the congregation fulfills its mission of making Disciples of Christ.

Currently team leaders on the Council are working on reviewing the Ministry Plan developed in 2014 with members of their committee. The plan is based on the Wisconsin Conference theme "Imaging Wisconsin Anew." Ideas included in this theme include plans for Meeting Our Neighbors, Planting New Ministries, Being Green and Meeting the Needs of Us.

If you have any ideas or suggestions that would help us develop these ideas, or would like a copy of the 2014 plan, please contact a member of the Administrative Council.

When the Council meets again in March we will put all of our ideas together and adjust the plan.



Imagine No Malaria

During this season of Lent we will focus on our Imagine No Malaria Campaign. We have almost reached our pledge goal of \$2000.00. These giving opportunities are for your consideration.

During Lent all coins collected during Sunday service will be designated for the INM Campaign.

In Fellowship Hall you will find a display with information about the campaign and mosquitos that you may take away from the net for a donation. Also there are some washable tattoos for the young and young at heart.

Your donation can provide the following help:

\$10 will Purchase one insecticide-treated mosquito net

\$20 will pay for the food and treatment of anemia in pregnant women with Malaria

\$30 will provide fifteen Rapid Diagnostic Test Kits for Malaria.

New Member Classes

New Member classes will be held on Sunday March 1 and March 8, 2015 after the 9:30 service. Classes will be one hour. Reception into the Church will be on March 15th. Contact: Pastor Rafael at 608 225 8899 or Pastor Luke at 608 513 9740.

The Wisconsin Annual Conference cabinet has approved a redistricting plan. The conference will be organized into 5 districts. We will be in the South West District with Rev. Scott Carlson as our District Supervisor. The plan will take effect July 1, 2015. If you would like a copy of the new map please see Patsy.

To enjoy the diverse culture of our church, we would like to expand on an International Dinner to be held in the spring and return to a Traditional Ham dinner in October. We feel this would enhance the experience of each dinner yet honor the diversity of our community.

Are you on Board with this proposal? _____ Yes _____ No

Please return your response to the Outreach & Mission mail slot by the office or directly to Cyndy Hoffman.

We value your input and appreciate your support. Thank you!

Stephen Recognition In the spirit of the Book of Acts

"Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word." Act 6: 3-4

Sherman Avenue United Methodist Church Certificates of Appreciation Presented to

Joan Stephen (February)

In recognition of your volunteer service to our church by being a devoted member of the church, being a key part of the Rummage Sale, serving on the Finance Committee and as Financial Secretary, teaching Vacation Bible Study, being Secretary of Sunday School, helping with the Ham Dinner, being a member of United Methodist Women, and doing so much more.

Cindy Van Pelt (January)

In recognition for volunteer service to our church as editor of the Bellringer, as choir member and substitute pianist, raising Ebola awareness, maintaining the flower beds, preparing the Jesse Tree, contributing bake sale items, being a former church secretary, and the many things she does of which we are not aware.

We hope these certificates will serve as a lasting memento of our appreciation for your continued and dedicated service.

In the name of God, Thank You!

March 2015

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 UM Student Sunday 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:45 Sunday School 11:30 Worship 6:00 Self-defense 6:00 Ping Pong	2 6:15 Brownies 6:30 Cub Scouts	3 9:00 ELL 6:00 UMW	4 1:00 Staff Meeting 6:00 Band Practice	5 4:30 Bible Study 6:30 Choir	6	7
8 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:45 Sunday School 11:30 Worship 6:00 Self-defense 6:00 Ping Pong	9 6:15 Jr Girl Scouts 6:30 Cub Scouts	10 9:30 ELL	11 1:00 Staff Meeting 6:00 Band Practice	12 4:30 Bible Study 6:30 Choir	13 6:00 Hmong Youth/Women	14
15 Youth Breakfast 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:45 Sunday School 11:30 Worship 6:00 Self-defense 6:00 Ping Pong	16 6:15 Brownies 6:30 Cub Scouts	17 9:00 ELL 6:30 Admin Council	18 1:00 Staff Meeting 6:00 Band Practice	19 4:30 Bible Study 6:30 Choir	20 4:00 Hmong Ministry	Hmong National Youth Revival
22 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:45 Sunday School 11:30 Worship 6:00 Self-defense 6:00 Ping Pong	23 5:00 Newsletter Deadline 6:15 Brownies 6:15 Jr Girl Scouts 6:30 Cub Scouts	24 9:00 ELL 6:30 O/M meeting	25 1:00 Staff Meeting 6:00 Band Practice	26 8:00 Copy & Fold 4:30 Bible Study 6:30 Choir	27 6:00 Hmong Youth/Women	28
29 Palm Sunday 8:30 Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:45 Sunday School 11:30 Worship 6:00 Self-defense 6:00 Ping Pong	30	31 9:00 ELL	Need A Prayer? Call Pat Bruccoleri (576-7331) Cyndy Hoffman (513 2280)			

<p style="text-align: center;">March Birthdays</p> <p> COLEEN H 3/2 CHUCK L 3/3 TERRY W 3/5 PADEA L 3/6 PAZOUA L 3/8 HAZEL T 3/8 KAZOUA M 3/15 CHOU L 3/18 GARY K 3/19 CASEY V 3/25 DOMINIQUE M 3/25 </p> <p style="text-align: center;">Anniversaries</p> <p> LUKE T & KAZOUA M 3/14 VINCENT & GEORGETTE W 3/17 </p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;"> <i>These are the dates that are in the database. If you find that your name is not included with the Birthdays or Anniversaries, please call Matt Treadaway</i> </p>	<p>Please take a moment to remember our homebound members</p> <p>Linda Jungbluth</p> <p>Marvel Mapes</p> <p>Jean Kramer</p> <p> Call 244-0868 or email saumcsec@gmail.com for more information. </p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Prayer Corner</p> <p> Lord, Let everything I do this day and in this season of Lent come from you, be inspired by you. I long to be closer to you. Help me to remember that nothing is important in my life unless it glorifies you in some way. It's so easy to get caught up in the day to day of my life and keep saying, "Tomorrow, I will spend more time in prayer". But now my longing meets your love and I want to do it now. Help me to rely on you for help. The prayer asks you that I reach perfection. Please, Lord, remind me that "perfection" isn't the crazy, "successful" way I try to live my life, but a perfection of my most authentic, real self. My "perfection" might be holding my many flaws in my open hands, asking you to help me accept them. Heal me, Lord, and help me to find you in the darkness of my life. Let me reach out in this darkness and feel your hand and love there to guide me. </p> <p style="text-align: center;">Amen.</p>
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