

Word of Hope

Mount Hope United Methodist Church

February 2012



Rev. Rigby Writes:

Here I am, Christmas Eve and with pen in hand setting out to write a Pastor's article for this *Word of Hope*, a pleasant task but difficult because I've been asked to make it relate to Lent, which begins in February. Well, here goes, in spite of the necessary radical shift of mood.

I've composed a simple verse to serve as a Christmas greeting every year except one since 1967. Of course these little free-verse poems have been themed to Christmas, the nativity of the Lord Jesus, what it meant to those who first experienced it and what it suggests for us today. This year's verse, which came to me on the porch of my Lake Champlain cottage last July, is no exception but uncharacteristically this one carries a rather dark twist. It is this very personal "twist" that suggests something powerful for our consideration in Lent. Here is the poem:

I Was There

*I was there
the day the Child was born,
there in the shepherds
and the eastern seers
and in all who came to stare*

and gaze in wonder and in awe.

*I was there
the day the others came,
those sent
by one whose heart was black;
I was there in those
who wielded blood-drenched
swords
for power and command.*

*I was there
in the shadows that this Evil
cast.
And so it is, and always is,
with those of us
who first believe
in what we find and wonder at
in Bethlehem.*

You see, all of us who discover the Lord Jesus and believe him to be "The Way, The Truth and The Life" sooner or later betray him, deny him and turn from him in both small ways and large. We say we believe in him and do what he wants us to do, and perhaps that is how we try to fashion our lives at first, but gradually our commitment weakens and even before we realize it we are back in the old ways of life "B.C." – "Before Christ."

The season of Lent is the Christian church's reminder of

our inclination and tendency to fall away from God and back into lives that are so self-centered and selfish that God has difficulty in using us to bless others. Our calling as Christians is not primarily to be blessed but to be a blessing. And here is where we fail, isn't it?

Lent challenges us to acknowledge this dark side of our lives, our tendency to carelessness and indifference, careless in our living and indifferent to the needs of others. Lent urges us to look within our selves, to find the shadow that Evil has cast and ask God, by his grace-in-Christ, to give us the strength to move back into the light of Christian faith and practice so that he again can use us – bless us! – to be a blessing.

Make this Lent powerful this year, won't you? Ask God to challenge your life, to renew and deepen your faith and energize your practice of it. Lord, may it be!

- Pastor Rigby

Lent: Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is February 22nd. We will be celebrating the beginning of Lent with an Ash Wednesday meal and service starting at 6pm in Habbersett Hall. (There will be no 12:30 pm service this year.) The format for the service will be similar to that of the wonderful Thanksgiving gathering last November in which so many

people felt the Spirit move and were blessed. Our dedicated Hospitality Team will be preparing turkey and we are asking you to bring a hot or cold side dish to share. A sign up sheet will be available in the Narthex starting on February 5th. Space is limited to 120 people so get your reservation in early.

Subsequent to the meal there will be a time of scripture and praise, reflecting on the great sacrifice Christ made for us. The evening then will culminate with the celebration of the sacrament of communion and the giving of ashes.

Please plan to attend this time of reflection and praise.

Pastor Ealy

The Meaning of Lent

Taken literally, the word *Lent* means that this is the time of the year when the days *lengthen*. This season of the church year is a time of preparation, reflection, growth, and change. As God's people take the time to learn more about God and their relationship to God and to others, the season before Easter can be seen as the springtime of the soul – a time of growth in faith and time to nurture the faith that is already theirs.

The season of Lent began in the early church as a time for preparing new converts for Baptism on Easter. By the middle of the 4th century, a 40-day preparation period had been established. During that time, candidates for Baptism fasted and heard lectures from early church leaders. Later, the season of Lent became a time for all Christians to prepare for Easter. It remains a 40-day long period, not counting Sundays. All Sundays are considered "little Easters," celebrating the resurrection.

People today look to Lent as a time of growth and change. They often include fasting or restriction of some of their favorite foods or drinks during the 40 days of Lent. Some people spend more time in prayer and meditation while others give up habits they think are unnecessary. Still others search to discover how they can share God's love with others in the world in meaningful ways.

Purple is the color associated with the season of Lent and is used in churches that observe liturgical traditions. Purple is a solemn color, reminiscent of royalty and repentance. It reflects the serious and somber nature of this time in the life of the church.

Ash Wednesday is the first day in the season of Lent. It is a day of fasting and prayer and a time when we can publicly confess the sin that entangles us. The ashes of this first day in Lent are a symbol that has been derived from several ancient

customs. As far back as the third century, ashes were worn on the body as a visible sign of sin and a public request for forgiveness. Ashes were also used sometimes as a cleanser when soap was not available. In time past, farmers would burn off their fields in the spring, turning dried stubble to ash before new planting began. Thus, ashes become a symbol of repentance *and* renewal.

This year Ash Wednesday falls on February 22. Plan now to start the Lenten Season with dinner, worship and communion in Habbersett Hall. This six-week period prior to Resurrection Sunday can be a time of renewal in your life if you will choose to take the time to draw close to your Lord.

Looking ahead – Palm Sunday is April 1; Maundy (Holy) Thursday is April 5; Good Friday is April 6; and Easter is April 8.

Sharon Kope,
Director of Music

Thank You

I want to thank the congregation for their generous gifts I received for Staff Appreciation and Christmas. I

sincerely appreciate the support given to the music ministry of Mount Hope and myself all these

years. I cannot do my job without all your prayers and support!

Sharon Kope,
Director of Music

Spring Cantata

Looking ahead – please put Sunday, April 29th on your

calendar as the day for the Spring Cantata.

Thank You from Our D.S.

Dear Pastor McGill and Members of Mount Hope United Methodist Church,

I want to thank you for paying your Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Connectional Ministries Account in full! I know in this day and age every dollar counts for ministry in the local church, so I doubly thank you for

your faithfulness in this, your first line mission giving.

May these words from John Wesley encourage you in your faithfulness:

"You will have no reward in heaven for what you lay up; you will, for what you lay out! Every dollar you put into an earthly bank is sunk: it brings no interest above. But every dollar

you give to the poor is put into the bank of heaven. And it will bring glorious interest; yea, and as such, will be accumulating to all eternity!"

Once again, Thank You!

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Thomas C. Haugh
Southeast District Superintendent

Education

Mount Hope Children's Center

Our February Bible Verse:

"We love because He first loved us."
John 4:19

This year we have been blessed with a mild winter, which means we have been able to enjoy much more of the outdoors. This month the children will learn about all types of love, especially about our Lord's love for us.

Some of the older classes will visit the Giant supermarket with their

parents. They all enjoy a Valentine's card exchange and party in the middle of the month, and learn about the color red, the heart shape, and the five senses.

"Goodness" is our Fruit of the Spirit this month. Chapel will be on February 23rd and 24th at 9:30AM. The teachers continue to test the older children for kindergarten readiness, the younger children for their progress reports and parent conferences for all.

We began our September 2012 in-house family registration in January; we are filling up quickly! February 1st will begin our regular registration. If you are interested in finding out about our program, please stop up to see us or give me a call at 610-558-0442.

Kris Leary
MHCC Director

Youth Notes

Youth Sunday

We are currently working on Youth Sunday, which will be held February 12th at all 3 services. We need ALL youth. This year we are doing something a little different. If you have EVER attended Youth Group, NO matter what age you are, please come! We would like to recognize ALL who have been in YF, to express our thanks to all who were involved through ALL the years that our youth program has been in existence. Without you we wouldn't be where we are today!

Our Youth returned from an amazing weekend training conference called Dare2Share.

This year's theme, Game Day, was built around 2 Timothy 4:1-8, the Apostle Paul's famous passage on running the race and winning the prize. Through dynamic training, worship, drama, and outreach opportunities, your teenager came away motivated to follow Paul's three powerful charges to young believers:

Go...preach the Word by learning the basics of the full story of the Gospel.

Fight...for their friends by training hard and learning to use the tools of prayer, pursuit and

persuasion to reach their friends who need Jesus.

Win...the reward by playing for keeps, so that, like the Apostle Paul, they can say: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me."

Come and hear some of the amazing testimonies that our youth will be sharing on Youth Sunday. It's amazing how God works in the lives of our young people.

Elaine Faulkner, Youth Director

Mount Hope Youth Missions Trip

Are you looking for a life-changing experience this summer? Well, join the Mount Hope Youth Missions team along with Next Step Ministries to help in the aid of Katrina victims.

Mount Hope Youth Missions Team is heading to Hancock County, Mississippi

When: June 29th to July 8th

Cost: \$600.00 with a \$50.00 non-refundable deposit. We will be having fundraisers to offset the cost of your trip.

Mission Statement: We are committed to providing opportunities for our youth to explore their faith, experience God and extend services to those

in need, all in the name of Jesus Christ.

Through compassion and understanding, the students will form relationships with the residents and come to learn what it means to trust in the Lord during difficult times.

Be a part of this life-changing movement by repairing damaged roofs and siding, laying new foundations, hanging drywall and building wheelchair accessible ramps and decks.

Make a difference in the lives of Hancock County residents by meeting the serious physical needs of a broken community while spreading God's love.

My hope is that this mission trip will provide each of you with a life-changing experience and memories that will never be forgotten. You will leave with the satisfaction knowing that your hard work has made an incredible impact on the lives of those who suffered such devastation from Hurricane Katrina.

If you are interested in going or would like more information, please contact Elaine Faulkner at 610-485-0498, cell# 610-715-0200 or email me at ebfaulkner86@comcast.net.

Elaine

Walk to Emmaus

The Walk to Emmaus is a 3-day spiritual renewal program sponsored by The Upper Room of the United Methodist Church. It's named for the encounter two of the disciples had with the risen Christ. (Luke 24: 13-35).

Who can attend? Any Mount Hope member interested in

renewing their relationship with God, growing spiritually, or building a firmer foundation for their life. Sponsorship by someone who has already attended a Walk is required.

Each Walk consists of two consecutive weekends, the first for men, the second for women.

The Spring Walks are April 26 – 29 (men) and May 3 – 6 (women) at Camp Innabah. March 1st is the deadline to submit your application for the men's walk. Contact Carolyn Lobb at 610-494-1267 for more information.

May We Have Your E-Mail Address?

We're continuing to reduce our office costs by e-mailing a link to the on-line *Word of Hope* each month. Sending you a link saves the church

on postage, paper and copier charges. If you don't mind reading the newsletter electronically, please email us at office@mthope.org and each

month we'll send you the link to our web site.

The Church Family

Changes of Address

Deborah Highfield
32120 Trapp LN
Selbyville DE 19975

Dr. Mark & Mrs. Jan Rodgers
4 John Meyers Cir
Glen Mills PA 19342-1227

Happy Birthday to Homebound Member Margaret Williams, February 23
4711 Hurford PL, Aston PA 19014

Transportation Committee

Jack Mitch is the new Transportation Committee chair as of January 2012. Please be sure to call Jack at 610-872-2013 to schedule use of the vans.

Please plan ahead: anyone hoping to drive any of the

Mount Hope-owned vehicles must first comply with Conference regulations. That includes an orientation course with a member of the Committee; providing copies of your current driver's license to Jack and to the

church office; and copies of your current (no older than 3 years) Pennsylvania Criminal Records Check and Childline Child Abuse Clearance Certificate.

Musts for Your Reading List - Updated

I highly encourage you to read the following books. You will be amazed at the impact they will have on your life. Your walk with Christ will change, your understanding of the **LOVE** of God the Father for you will be transformed, and your life lived by the empowering Holy Spirit within you will amaze you!

"The Power of Persistent Prayer" by Cindy Jacobs
"Dressed to Kill" by Rick Renner. This is a scriptural look at what it means to be dressed in the Armor of God based on Ephesians 6:11ff. This is a must read for anyone who desires to understand the purpose of the use of spiritual armor in their life.

The truths contained in this book will help you discover both your ability and your responsibility to enforce Satan's defeat at Calvary so you can walk out God's perfect plan for your life. Both of the books can be ordered through Amazon.

Pastor McGill