

Trinotes

The Mission of Trinity United Methodist Church is to proclaim God's love by building community and living by the example and teachings of Jesus Christ.



The Life and Death Cycle of a Seed

"...for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God."
— 1 Peter 1:23

Ash Wednesday is next Wednesday. Read that again. Ash Wednesday is next Wednesday. It's really hard for me to believe. We were in the season of Lent last year when our worlds were turned upside down. I remember the 2-week-long Spring Break that stretched on until the end of the school year and into the beginning of the next. Time has ticked on and, in some ways, it's still Spring Break of 2020.

We're back, again, to the season of Lent.

Ash Wednesday is my favorite day of the liturgical calendar. The Ash Wednesday service is my favorite service of the year. It is the most under-attended service of the year and because I am so passionate about this service, I've never quite been able to understand why. There is a beauty and horror (but the kind of horror that must be confronted) about our mortality and reflecting on our humanness. It's like a very dramatic, somber painting that you hate to look at and at the same time, cannot help but see. Every year the painting changes and there is a holy catharsis about seeing it again. We look at it again on Ash Wednesday and spend 40 days praying that, come Easter Sunday, the hues are brighter and the dissonance is replaced with a sense of peace.

It is the holy, difficult, challenging, relentless work of Lent, and Ash Wednesday ushers us into it. It calls us to attention and begs us to grow. And, if we were honest about it, it is the ongoing work of discipleship.

And so for weeks I have agonized over what to do with Ash Wednesday. Colleagues, one in particular who lives with me, are trying to get creative while maintaining that the hardest and best work we do right now is staying safe so that our neighbors stay safe. We've debated the simplicity of drawing a cross on the foreheads of our flocks — excusing the physical touch with, "It's only for a second." What else can we use to dispense the ashes? We've thought of mailing them to you, but didn't want to risk any of you missing the fine print and mixing the ashes with water to impart them yourself, only to find that, that'll burn you. It has seemed, like much of the last year, that we are stuck between that proverbial rock and hard place.

Thus, we'll continue ahead as we have. Our worship service will air via Livestream at 7:00 on Ash Wednesday. We will not impart ashes this year. It was painful to write that. However, I want to offer you a practice to consider taking on this year in lieu of Ash Wednesday and for the entire season of Lent.

I spent the morning studying the life and death cycle of a seed. When a seed is buried in the ground, something happens called dormancy. The seed — a lifeless vessel of, well, the potential for life — breaks open and begins to sprout. The protective coat splits and the embryo that is in the seed then has a chance to produce life. Part of the embryo becomes the plant and the other part becomes the roots. The seed is nothing before it is buried and breaks.

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What a perfect metaphor for what we're hoping to experience during Lent. We who may or may not have yet reached our potential for spiritual life just yet, must, in a sense, die to ourselves — break open — to become the living vessel of hope for the world.

This Lent I'd like you to find a seed. Start from the very beginning. I'd like you to plant it, water it, pray over it, and hope for it. Let that seed be the parts of you that are both beauty and horror — your mortality, brokenness, and humanity — hopeful and longing for growth, newness, and resurrection. Take a moment and think of your seed everyday, praying that God's work within you, by the power of the Spirit, will spring forth again as we move toward a season of joy and celebration — of light, life, and resurrection hope.

Into the Wilderness,
Rev. Sara

The United Methodist Lent Quiz

(Underline the correct answer.)

1. **What does the term “Lent,” which comes from “lencten,” mean?** *Sacrifice—Time—Spring—March Madness*
2. **How were ashes imposed in the early church?** *Shape of a cross was drawn on the forehead—Ashes were smeared across closed eyelids—Ashes were poured or sprinkled over the head.*
3. **Why do people give things up for Lent?** *To follow the example of Jesus' 40-day fast in the wilderness—To help us focus on parry and devotions—To give the acquired savings to the poor—All of the above.*
4. **What snack food has significance during Lent?** *Chocolate—Pretzels—Popcorn—All of the above.*
5. **Many people fast during Lent. How often did John Wesley fast?** *Twice a week—Twice a month—Twice a year—Rarely—He did not fast.*
6. **Why does Lent last 40 days?** *To represent the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, tempted by Satan—To recall the 40 days and nights the earth was flooded in the Old Testament—To remind us of the 40 years the Israelites wandered in the desert.*
7. **What do some United Methodists not sing at Lent?** *Doxologies—Alleluia—“In the Garden”—The communion liturgy.*
8. **Which hymn, based on St. Patrick's prayer, would be a good Lenten devotion?** *“Jesus Walked This Lonely Valley”—“Christ Beside Me”—“O Happy Day, That Fixed My Choice”—“Come and Find the Quiet Center.”*
9. **True or False? Sundays are not counted in the 40 days of Lent.** *True—False*
10. **When early Methodists in America sat in a church on a mourner's bench, they would:** *Repent their sins—Experience a new birth—Rededicate themselves to Jesus—All of the above.*

Go to page 5 of this *Trinotes* for the answers.

You can find more details about each answer by following this link:

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/addendum-to-the-united-methodist-lent-quiz>

Why Do You Go to Church?

“Why Do You Go to Church?” That was the title of Pastor Sara’s sermon two Sundays ago. On the Monday before that Sunday, I turned seventy-five years old, and these words brought up many memories of my growing up in the church, specifically at Hays Avenue Methodist Church in Jackson, Tennessee.

I was painfully shy and self-conscious as a child. I do not know why that was so because there was never a child more loved than I was by my family, friends, and neighbors. But I went to church as a very reluctant and sometimes sullen participant. The term “kicking and screaming” (sometimes externally and always internally) applies here. I remember our driving past children playing in their front yards on the way to church and wishing I could be playing in my own front yard, instead of having to go to church. (This is a revelation that may surprise many of you who know how many years I have spent working with children in this church.)

Despite my unwillingness to go to Sunday School, I did learn there, although I did not apply myself in the way that I did in my weekday schoolroom classes. I ended up with just a vague understanding of who Jesus was, and I never “felt” him in my heart. But from all the adults who worked with children, I learned that, even though I was reluctant, I was loved, which is the essential thing that any child must learn if the church does what God calls us to do.

Unfortunately, that was not all I learned at Sunday School. From one little girl in my Sunday School class, I learned early on that I was a kid from the wrong side of the tracks. I even thought that my A’s were deficient to her A’s until high school, when we were finally in the same school; at that point I learned that my A’s were in truth better than her A’s. It took me many years to understand that she was a very unhappy person and to be able to finally forgive her for her unkindness.

There was another girl, a year older than I, who was quite the opposite in her approach to me. She always had a friendly, welcoming attitude. By the time I got to junior high school, I think my parents despaired of my ever willingly and joyfully attending church. They encouraged me to participate in MYF, but I never took them up on that invitation. But Jean Gilbert never gave up on me. She continued to invite me to attend MYF, occasionally, kindly, gently, persistently. And I eventually took her up on it. That experience – being a part of MYF - changed my life and my feelings toward the church. I finally knew that the church was where I really belonged, most especially in a faith group where I formed relationships with others. That included both the kids who were part of our MYF at Hays Avenue Church, as well as our wonderful adult leaders, many of them who were parents of our youth. They were a beautiful example of the church family at work and in play together.

After graduation from Jackson High School, I went off to school at Memphis State University. On the Sunday of the first weekend that I came home from college, our family went to church. After the worship service I was suddenly surrounded by church family members who were hugging me and wishing me well. I burst into tears and cried inconsolably until my parents finally were able to get me in the car and take me home. I had not realized until that point how very much that church meant to me and how very home-sick I was for those good people.

The first Sunday that Joe and I attended Trinity UMC, I said to him, “Some of these people look so familiar to me.” “Oh, Irene,” he joked, “they just look like Methodists to you.” But it was more than that. I knew in my heart that I was home again. This time, I was beginning to understand just who Jesus was, and is, and will be. And I am still learning. Much of that learning takes place as I am helping teach our children in Sunday School.

Pastor Sara said in that sermon on January 31st that the reason for coming to church is not for receiving information. It is for transformation, and that is the miracle. This is my witness to that truth in my life.

Peace and love to all,
Irene Dycus

[Editor's note...]

I'm sure you've heard the expression, "Bad things happen to good people." Or maybe it would be more familiar in the form of a question: "Why do bad things happen to good people?" I remember a book published in 1981, written by Harold Kushner, a Conservative rabbi. Titled "When Bad Things Happen to Good People," it became a best seller and is still popular among a lot of people who have experienced tragedy and are looking for answers.

Rabbi Kushner experienced a personal tragedy when his firstborn child died. Having a theological education did not prepare him for the pain he experienced from that loss. People from a more traditional perspective asked him if he thought the death of his son was part of God's plan, but he rejected that traditional idea of an omnipotent God.

In an interview with NPR reporter Renee Montagne, Rabbi Kushner shared this insight: "The ... theological conclusion I came to is that God could have been all-powerful at the beginning, but he chose to designate two areas of life off-limits to his power," Kushner says. "He would not arbitrarily interfere with laws of nature. And secondly, God would not take away our freedom to choose between good and evil." Whether one chooses to agree or disagree with Rabbi Kushner theologically, that statement resonates with me.

We have been dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic for about a year now. All of us have lost something or someone, whether it just be the freedom to go out for dinner with friends or, more tragically, to experience the death of a loved one. I'm a member of a tiny Cumberland Presbyterian congregation. We are mostly older folks, some of whom have significant health problems, so we've been very careful about exposure to the coronavirus. In many ways, we're much like Trinity's congregation. On May 24, 2020, we lost Frances, who contracted the virus while isolated in a senior residential facility. She died once week from the time she exhibited symptoms and tested positive. Francis was just days from turning 93. More recently, on January 20, 2021, June died peacefully in her sleep. She had tested positive for the virus, as well, but had recovered, or so we thought. June was 94. We've known for some time that the virus is more dangerous for seniors. But on January 28, Thelma Tate died. She was only 61. She had started a job with Room in the Inn-Memphis back in October of 2020. It was her dream job. She had the opportunity to work with families who needed permanent housing. According to RITI-Memphis' executive director, Rev. Lisa Anderson, Thelma had already impacted the lives of 70 families when she was hospitalized with COVID a month before her death.

In the January 27 issue of *Trinotes*, I wrote about the death of another friend of mine, Deloris Clayborne, who died on January 15. I don't know the exact cause of Deloris' death, but COVID-19 affected the level of care she received in the ER because of an overworked and overwhelmed ER staff. I am tired of losing the people I love. Of not being able to say good-bye to Frances, June, Thelma, and Deloris. Of being afraid to go to their funerals. Of not being able to visit my grandson.

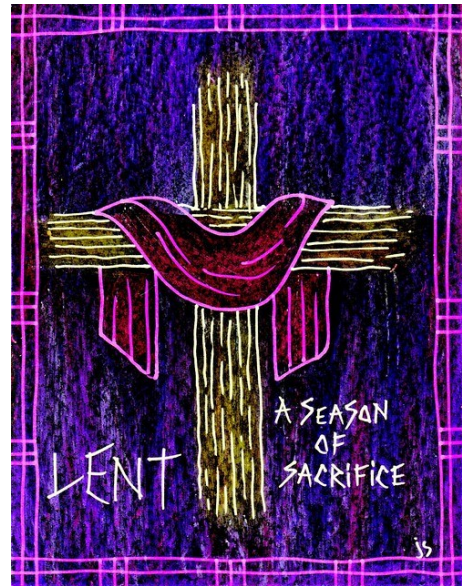
It feels like I've had enough loss to last my lifetime. Part of me wants to shake my fist in God's face, screaming, ENOUGH! FIX THIS! But I'm really not ready to give up my free will. I like the idea of a God who follows God's own rules. There's something very right, very reassuring, very *fair* about that. Certainly there are consequences to our actions. That's the outcome of exercising our free will. If I ever shook my fist at God, it wouldn't be because God had somehow failed me. It would be because we have failed ourselves and each other. People's careless insistence on "life as usual" has endangered us and our neighbors.

My husband and I received the first dose of our Pfizer vaccine on January 28th, the day Thelma died. We're still hunkered down, staying safe, avoiding any chance of infection. I'm not sure when we'll get back to "life as usual." But we won't put any of you at risk just so we can enjoy the pleasure of your company. Let's stick to FaceTime or Zoom for now.

Love in Christ,
Debby Marston

Answers to The United Methodist Lent Quiz

1. The correct answer is spring.
2. Ashes were poured or sprinkled over the head.
3. The correct answer is all of the above.
4. The correct answer is pretzels.
5. John Wesley fasted twice a week.
6. To represent the time Jesus spent in the Wilderness, tempted by Satan.
7. The correct answer is alleluia.
8. The correct answer is "Christ Beside Me."
9. The correct answer is true.
10. The correct answer is all of the above.



[Editor's Note: If you wish to receive Trinity's ENews electronic newsletter, please send your request to office@trinityumcmemphis.org so your e-mail address can be added to the list of ENews subscribers. ENews is published each Thursday, and a link to *TRINOTES* is included in ENews the week the print newsletter is mailed out.]



February 1	John Holtzman
February 2	Beryl Willard
February 7	Sally Ramsey
February 12	Myra Finch
February 13	Jacobi Hemingway
February 19	Paul Skjoldager
February 22	Eli Witt
February 27	Amy Moritz
February 27	Rev. Sara Corum



THE UPPER ROOM

The regular print version of the March/April issue of *Upper Room* can be picked up from the front porch of the church building. We can also mail you a copy if you cannot get out. Send an e-mail to office@trinityumcmemphis.org or call and leave a message on the church office voicemail: 901-274-6895. Please be sure to specify the print size: regular or large print. Regular print can be mailed out right away, but we are still waiting to receive the large print version.

PRAYER CONCERNS

Our country and the world - for all those in our country and around the world who are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; for people of faith around the world who are experiencing persecution; for refugees seeking asylum from war and social unrest; for safe drinking water for those living in developing countries; for people around the world experiencing terrorist attacks; for the poor, homeless, and disenfranchised in our city; for immigrants who are struggling due to lost jobs and lack of resources; for persons of color who are speaking out against racial profiling and injustice, and for families who have lost loved ones due to violence; for President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris in their first days in office—pray for their wisdom; and for those impacted by the violence in Washington, D.C. on January 6th

The United Methodist Church - for our Pastor, Rev. Sara Corum, her husband Josh McClurkan, and their five children; for our Bishop, the Rev. Bill McAlilly; and for our District Superintendent, the Rev. Dr. Deborah Smith

Trinity UMC - for members of the congregation homebound due to chronic illness or age; for children and youth as they attend school, whether virtually or in person; for new visitors joining us as we worship online; for all families who are grieving; for our congregation as we deal with transitions. Wisdom for our Trustees and Church Council. Also, specific prayer requests by and for:

Maggi Comes' niece, **Katie Pendleton**, diagnosed with Tumefactive MS

Bryce Sellers, fighting Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy

Paige Warmath, Alyson Foreman's cousin, died January 11th after a long illness. Pray for her husband and two sons and her mother and two brothers.

Kanyon Glover, now 2 years old and doing well: a happy, valiant fighter, according to Chris

Donnie Glover, Chris's brother, bone marrow test showed his cancer has returned

Jacob Foreman, son of **Caley & Alyson**, diagnosis is ENS; please pray for him.

A Praise!! **Gene and Irene Opel**, while still medically fragile, are now able to visit with Irene's daughter, **Anita Bunn**.

Jeri Ashley, multiple health concerns

David Harrison, Carol Miller's brother, is suffering from a broken hip, many other critical health issues.

Don Culpepper, Carol Miller's brother-in-law, has lung cancer.

Sally Ramsey, out of her back brace and having physical therapy

Joan Smith's cousin/mom, **Gigi**, aka **Kathryn Ellis**, at Allenbrooke Rehab

Carol Bruce, Chris Glover's sister, living alone & grieving the death of her last companion, a talking bird

Peggy Kinney, Charlotte Comes' 95 year old cousin in Georgia with broken hip, in rehab, struggling with depression

Charles Abraham, following successful surgery, has moved to step-down ICU. Praise God!

Rev. Richard Hackleman, in rehab in Somerville, TN, said to be doing well

For all members and friends of **Trinity UMC** as they shelter at home, as they work from home, and as they look forward to a time when they can see — in person — the faces of their church family

*(Please contact the church office if you have additional prayer concerns,
need a concern removed, or need to make a change or correction.)*