

THE SPIRE

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 3

MARCH 2017



Lent And Laughter

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Lent is a forty day period which marks the most somber of seasons of the church calendar. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, and ends on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday, and Christ's resurrection from the dead. In the early church catechumens were instructed about the Christian faith during this season. On Saturday evening, before the joys of Easter Sunday commenced those who had successfully completed their course of study would be baptized by the believing community – rising from the death of one's old life, into the newness, and rebirth which Easter denotes. Preparation for that special Sunday involved learning the creeds of the church as well as the Lord's Prayer. Most of all, during this forty day period, prospective Christians were "taught" the importance of penitential prayer and fasting. Both practices alerted one to his or her sins in the face of Christ's abandonment and crucifixion.

Those mathematicians among us will note that the days beginning with Ash Wednesday, and ending on Holy Saturday number 46. What gives? The early church understood that each Sunday during the somber Lenten period, should symbolize a little Easter, pointing to the main event on day 47! Thus punctuating the forty days of fasting, prayer and penitential self-examination were the six Sundays of Lent in which feasting replaced fasting, and celebrating effaced contrition. The simplest word "in" replaces the word "of" in describing these Sundays. "Of" conveys the idea that the Lenten Lord's Day is no different from other days of the somber week. "In" implies it stands apart from the Lenten rituals. We stand in the latter word's tradition.

I look forward to Lenten Sundays, if only as a reminder that even during bleak periods God's good life for us involves resurrection whose "symptoms" are celebration, partying, and indeed, laughter, a radical break from the Monday through Saturday penitential grind. Did I write the word "laughter"? For me the word conjoins with joy. Perhaps it is the highest expression of joy. Laughter erupts, often suddenly and unexpectedly, pointing to a God who liberates from those brief or extended periods of sadness, fear and cross bearing which mark every Christian's life.

One of my favorite passages in Scripture comes from Ecclesiastes: "Feasts are made for laughter; wine gladdens life" (10:19). Ecclesiastes is a somber book in which the writer states that there is little to secure us, and that God's purposes for our lives are often inscrutable. Nevertheless, in spite of its dour tone, we leave the book knowing that existence can be rich beyond measure, if we enjoy the simple pleasures of eating and drinking, with those we love. Laughter, then, is indicative of life's celebrative nature.

Then there's the Genesis account of God's visitation to Abraham and Sarah. The Almighty notes that the patriarch's wife will deliver a baby in her 90th year. At the news, "Abraham fell on his face and laughed" (17:7). In a second version of the story, Sarah hides behind a door, and overhears God's surprising news to her husband. Sarah, too, splits a gut which she denies doing when God asks her. The Almighty does not hold their outbursts against them. On the contrary God affirms laughter when He tells them to name their son Isaac (18:8ff). Isaac in Hebrew means "laughter." As the Christian writer Frederick Buechner notes, "Faith is laughter at the promise of a

(Continued on page 2)

child called laughter.” You may remember that one of the hardest chapters in Scripture is Genesis 22, when God calls Abraham to sacrifice his son, his only child at a high place where the future city of Jerusalem will be built. God spares Isaac’s life at the last moment, as Abraham draws his knife, a harrowing story for the reader, which strains our understanding of what faith means. What can we extract from the scene is that the child “laughter” is exposed to life’s difficult and mysterious realities of God’s will and the demands of faith. If we take Genesis 22 symbolically, perhaps laughter – personified by Isaac – is woven into the weft of life’s harshest tests and challenges. Don’t we experience this reality on occasion? Someone cracks a joke in the middle of an unsettling or terrible time in our lives, and we laugh heartily and loudly perhaps, and then experience pangs of guilt because laughter seems inappropriate, and indeed a sin given our circumstances. Suppose, however, God wants us to laugh during those periods? Suppose the one liner, or risible situation are God given signs of His presence with us during despairing moments? Suppose they are signals which inform that little resurrections, those Sundays in Lent, will overcome whatever life hands us?

In the book of Acts, Luke’s sequel to his Gospel, the Evangelist records two incidents in which, I believe, he solicits our laughter. The first concerns Peter’s miraculous release from a Jerusalem prison. He escapes and it appears he is running for his life from the authorities. He finds a house church, and knocks on the door. A maid named Rhoda recognizes Peter’s voice. He’s probably yelling “help” at the top of his lungs. Luke notes that, “Rhoda was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate” (12:14ff). The disciples

take their time discussing with the maid and among themselves whether Peter is really at their door. “Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking” Luke writes. Sweating bullets, no doubt! The second joke occurs later on in Acts, as Paul preaches an interminably long sermon to his fellow apostles right up until midnight. Luke writes: “A young man named Eutychus who was sitting in the window began to sink off into a deep sleep while Paul talked still longer. Overcome by sleep he fell to the ground three floors below and was picked up dead” (20:9). Paul races down, restores his life, and then, horror upon horror, he resumes his ungodly sermon marathon. Won’t ministers ever learn? Nevertheless what Luke does intentionally is to mix fear of capture in the first instance, and a possible loss of life in the second – with humor. Cross and resurrection cannot be separated.

Recently I met with my little literary group in New Jersey. We dine, then discuss a short story chosen by the host and hostess for that evening. This past outing we examined James Joyce’s brilliant but pessimistic short story, “Little Cloud.” Our reading led to a discussion of what we could leave our children and grandchildren. What life lesson or word of wisdom could we impart? I was the last one to be asked. I said that I’d leave my kin CD’s of all David Letterman monologues. No one laughed. But I perceived a few smiles along the way.

In Christ’s service,

Doc Bob

MARCH EVENTS

March 1	Ash Wednesday
March 2	Senior Citizens
March 5	Church Birthday Party
March 8	Social Solos
March 13	Consistory meeting

March 15	Men’s Group
March 20, 27, April 3	Lectures for Parents
March 25	Boy Scout Ziti Dinner
April 1	Lenten Fish Dinner
Continuing until April 11	AARP Tax Preparation



The January Mission of the Month, Food Bank of the Hudson Valley, received \$350 from our funds to help offset hunger in our area. We are pleased to be able to contribute to this cause.

February's Mission is the Deacon's Fund, which is an essential part of our church's outreach commitment to the community and those in need.

March will be a busy month with the "Walk for Water" mission which was so successful last year. Since clean water is one of the most basic needs of the world, with 842,000 people dying every year from diarrhea caused by inadequate drinking water, sanitation, and hand hygiene, this is a worthwhile humanitarian program. The walk will be held at Grace Community Church in Lake Katrine on March 25, 2017. One of the Mission Committee will be manning a signup table after church starting March 5th with additional information. Please help in whatever way you can. It is appreciated so much.

TAX PREPARATION

Did you know that the Hurley Reformed Church provides space for AARP Foundation Tax-Aide?

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide offers free tax preparation help to anyone and if you're 50 and older, and can't afford a tax preparation service, we were made especially for you. We understand that retirement or other life changes may mean your taxes are a little more complicated now. With the help of our team of IRS-certified volunteers we make it easy for you. Taxes will be done by appointment beginning February 1 on Wednesdays and Thursdays until April 12, 2017.

Call for an appointment: 845-255-0791

We wait with great anticipation for the first signs of Spring.

A warm breeze, sunlight that warms our soul, a shoot breaking through the soil, a bird in song, a bud on the trees, longer days ...

a time when God gives us new birth. The season of Lent is our season of anticipation.

A time of waiting and self-examination. A time that builds in our hearts and souls until the magic of the open tomb once again fills us with warmth, song, happiness and new birth.

Take your time during Lent to reflect, introspect, and build your anticipation for our dear Jesus' resurrection.

The meaning of the Resurrection only comes to those who take time to take it in.

Take time, visit Stickley Gardens and find peace.

STICKLEY GARDENS

FOR MORE INFORMATION - CONTACT ANY OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

LISA LONGTO (331-1438) CHAIRPERSON

JIM PIRRO (383-0079) TREASURER

ESTHER STICKLEY (331-2919)

SANDIE GREGORY (330-7626)

LINDA DIDD, CONSISTORY LIAISON

REV STICKLEY, SECRETARY

A SACRED PLACE OF BEAUTY AND CONTEMPLATION.
LOCATED ON THE SOUTH LAWN OF THE CHURCH

March

BIRTHDAYS

Lily Gram Collins	1
Camila Boice	1
Craig Jansen	2
Linda Bognar	3
Dennis Horvers	5
Dr. Bob Gram	6
Marianne Mizel	7
Barbara Sartorius	10
Barry Rell	10
Julia Wolf	10
Danielle Wolf	10
Kim Burgess	13

Deborah Zuill	14
Allan Masters	14
Ellen Stephano	14
Jace Provenzano	17
Frank Warren	17
Frank Presti	17
Joyce Pinckney	18
Dino Sumerano	8
Angie Rockwell	19
Katrina Rubino	19
Justin Nekos	21
William Gaffken	23
Jean Marrus	24
Christine Henning	24
Gretchen Giles	24
Phyllis Bliss	24

Deidre Sills	25
Cathy McGraw	27
Jennifer Hinsdale	28
Bernadette Baker	31
Logan Brennan	31

ANNIVERSARIES

Jean & Jay Marrus	9
Emily & Art Harder	16
Charles & Sheila Jansen	25



Prayer Chain meets on the first Sunday of the month directly after worship and fellowship. If you have something to bring to our attention, see Debbie Zuill.

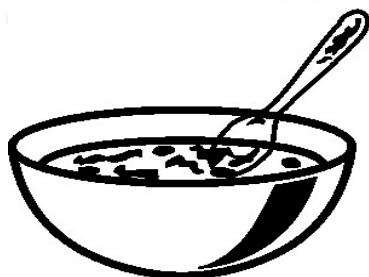
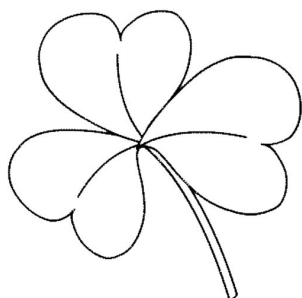


Looking for good fellowship?!

The Men's Group meets the third Wednesday of the month. Next meeting is February 15 at 7 pm. Come hang with us. See Paul Vonderheide for details.

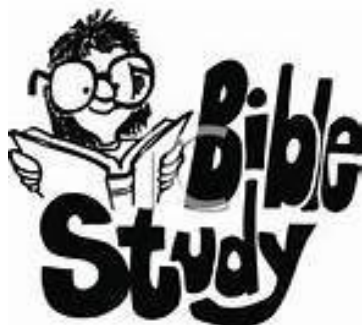


Social Solos will meet for our monthly lunch date on March 8 at 12 noon at the 99 Restaurant.



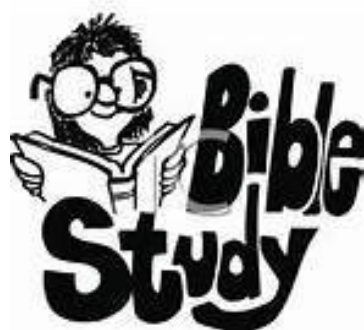
The Soup Elves are industrious. Soup Sunday is March 19. Enjoy this month's soup!!

Leftovers are available from last month. See Dennis or Sonnie on Sunday.



Women's Ministries Bible Study is on hiatus until March 21, 2017. They are continuing their study of the book Really Bad Girls of the Bible by Liz Curtis Higgs. We are currently studying Herodia. (You can read ahead!)

Women's Ministry Bible Study meets every other Tuesday at 1pm in the Dutch Room. For more information, contact Nancy Sweeney.



Lenten Bible Study: Dr. Gram will be presenting a course on the Reformation whose 500th anniversary we celebrate this year. The class will be held Tuesday evenings, March 7, March 14, and March 21 in the Dutch Room.

March 7

Martin Luther

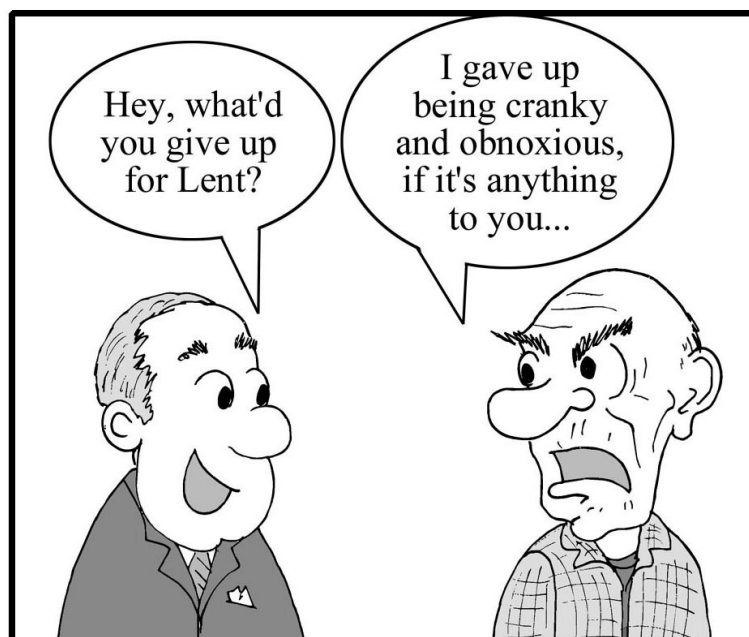
March 14

John Calvin

March 21

Ulrich Zwingli and the left wing of the Reformation

Each class will look at the biography and the significant writings. We will focus particularly on their understanding of the cross.



EASTER PLANTS

_____ LILIES	\$7.50
_____ Mini Roses	\$5.00
_____ Tulips	\$6.00
_____ Daffodils	\$6.00
_____ Hyacinths	\$6.00
_____ Mini Daffodils	\$3.00
_____ Primroses	\$2.00

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Please print clearly:

Placed by: _____

In memory of:

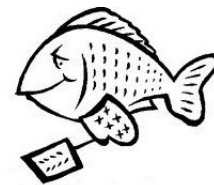
In honor of:

We encourage you to take your flowers home. The church garden and the rail trail berm are getting full.

Please make checks payable to: HRC Women's Guild.

Mail or give your order by March 31.2017 to:

Doris Alden
236 East Drive
Hurley NY 12443



LENTEN FISH DINNER

April 1, 2017

ADULTS: \$12.00

Open Seating: 4:30 – 6:30

Take Out Available

HURLEY REFORMED CHURCH



Flowers for the altar are needed. Get them from the florist, the supermarket, Adams, your backyard. Many Sundays available. See Kathy Jansen.

March 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<div>26</div> <div>10am - Worship @</div> <div>11am - Church Birthday</div> <div>11am - Prayer Chain @</div>	<div>27</div>	<div>28</div>	<div>1</div> <div>Ash Wednesday</div> <div>7:30am - Bible Study @</div> <div>8:30am - AARP tax</div> <div>5:30pm - Dog Training</div> <div>7pm - Boy Scouts Troop</div>	<div>2</div> <div>8:30am - AARP tax</div> <div>9:30am - Badminton @</div> <div>1:30pm - Hurley Senior</div> <div>4:45pm - Dog Training</div> <div>7pm - Sisters in</div> <div>7:30pm - 1st Capitol</div> <div>7:30pm - Choir</div>	<div>3</div> <div>Setup for Church</div>	<div>4</div>
<div>5</div> <div>10am - Worship @</div> <div>11am - Church Birthday</div> <div>11am - Prayer Chain @</div>	<div>6</div> <div>9:30am - Guild Quilters</div> <div>12:30pm - basket class</div> <div>3pm - Quilting @ Dutch</div> <div>5pm - Dog Training @</div> <div>7:30pm - Al-Anon @</div>	<div>7</div> <div>9:30am - Badminton @</div> <div>11am - Balance for Life</div> <div>4:30pm - PC 101 @</div> <div>7pm - Bible Study @</div> <div>7pm - Boy Scouts Troop</div>	<div>8</div> <div>7:30am - Bible Study @</div> <div>8:30am - AARP tax</div> <div>12pm - Social Solos</div> <div>5:30pm - Dog Training</div> <div>7pm - Local 1582 @</div>	<div>9</div> <div>8:30am - AARP tax</div> <div>9:30am - Badminton @</div> <div>4:45pm - Dog Training</div> <div>7pm - Sisters in</div> <div>7:30pm - Choir</div>	<div>10</div> <div>7pm - Motorcycle Club</div>	<div>11</div> <div>9am - Brandon Quilters</div> <div>10am - Genealogy @</div> <div>3pm - boy scout spring</div>
<div>12</div> <div>10am - Worship @</div> <div>11am - Women's</div>	<div>13</div> <div>9:30am - Guild Quilters</div> <div>11am - VFW @ Dutch</div> <div>3pm - Quilting @ Dutch</div> <div>5pm - Dog Training @</div> <div>7pm - Consistory @</div> <div>7pm - Hudson Valley</div> <div>7:30pm - Al-Anon @</div>	<div>14</div> <div>8:30am - Hillside Acres</div> <div>9:30am - Badminton @</div> <div>11am - Balance for Life</div> <div>7pm - Bible Study @</div> <div>7pm - Boy Scouts Troop</div>	<div>15</div> <div>7:30am - Bible Study @</div> <div>8:30am - AARP tax</div> <div>9am - Finance</div> <div>5:30pm - Dog Training</div> <div>7pm - Hurley Lions @</div> <div>7pm - men's group @</div>	<div>16</div> <div>8:30am - AARP tax</div> <div>9:30am - Badminton @</div> <div>4:45pm - Dog Training</div> <div>7pm - NE WoodWorkers</div> <div>7pm - Sisters in</div> <div>7:30pm - Choir</div>	<div>17</div>	<div>18</div> <div>9am - Brandon Quilters</div>
<div>19</div> <div>10am - Worship @</div> <div>11am - SHD Committee</div>	<div>20</div> <div>9:30am - Guild Quilters</div> <div>10am - Genealogy @</div> <div>3pm - Quilting @ Dutch</div> <div>5pm - Dog Training @</div> <div>7pm - lectures for</div> <div>7:30pm - Al-Anon @</div>	<div>21</div> <div>9:30am - Badminton @</div> <div>11am - Balance for Life</div> <div>6:30pm - nursery</div> <div>7pm - Bible Study @</div> <div>7pm - Boy Scouts Troop</div>	<div>22</div> <div>Spectrum Services In-</div> <div>7:30am - Bible Study @</div> <div>8:30am - AARP tax</div> <div>5:30pm - Dog Training</div>	<div>23</div> <div>8:30am - AARP tax</div> <div>9:30am - Badminton @</div> <div>4:45pm - Dog Training</div> <div>7pm - Hurley Heritage</div> <div>7pm - Sisters in</div> <div>7:30pm - Choir</div>	<div>24</div> <div>Boy Scout Ziti Dinner</div>	<div>25</div>
<div>26</div> <div>10am - Worship @</div> <div>11am - Women's Guild</div>	<div>27</div> <div>9:30am - Guild Quilters</div> <div>10:30am - Genealogy @</div> <div>3pm - Quilting @ Dutch</div> <div>5pm - Dog Training @</div> <div>7pm - lectures for</div> <div>7:30pm - Al-Anon @</div>	<div>28</div> <div>9:30am - Badminton @</div> <div>11am - Balance for Life</div> <div>1pm - Women's Bible</div> <div>7pm - Bible Study @</div> <div>7pm - Boy Scouts Troop</div>	<div>29</div> <div>7:30am - Bible Study @</div> <div>8:30am - AARP tax</div> <div>5:30pm - Dog Training</div>	<div>30</div> <div>8:30am - AARP tax</div> <div>9:30am - Badminton @</div> <div>4:45pm - Dog Training</div> <div>7pm - Sisters in</div> <div>7:30pm - Choir</div>	<div>31</div> <div>Fish Dinner @</div>	<div>1</div>

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The Rev. Dr. Robert L. Gram, LCSW
Pastor

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