

Agape

Greek for "Love without Limits"

North Olmsted United Methodist Church

Vol. 55 Issue 2

February 2021

The Season of Lent

February 17 - April 3

The Holy Season of Lent and the approaching day of Easter will be honored and celebrated in the life of the church even though we will not be worshiping in-person until vaccinations are widely distributed throughout the public, and it is determined that people can gather safely in groups, particularly in respect for the physical size of our sanctuary.

However, here are some resources that you are encouraged to focus on and journey with during the Holy Season of Lent. First, understand again the meaning of Ash Wednesday and Lent.

What is Ash Wednesday?

"The first day of Lent. It marks the beginning of a period of reflection and penance. In the Bible, sprinkling oneself with ashes was traditionally a sign of one's sorrow for having committed sins. In the Christian tradition, Ash Wednesday also marked the beginning of preparation for the understanding of the death and resurrection of Christ. The particular symbolism of ashes for this day comes from a practice in the Roman Catholic Church in which the ashes from the palms used in the preceding year's Palm Sunday celebration are blessed. With these ashes, the priest on the first day of Lent marks a cross on the forehead of each worshiper. This practice has become a part of Ash Wednesday services in many United Methodist churches." (Source: A Dictionary for United Methodists, Alan K. Waltz, Copyright 1991, Abingdon Press. Used by permission.)

What is Lent,

and why does it last forty days?

"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 *lencten*, meaning 'lengthen' and refers to the lengthening days of spring. The forty days represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his ministry.

Lent is a time of repentance, fasting, and preparation for the coming of Easter (April 4, 2021). It is a time of self-examination and reflection. In the early church, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by new converts and then became a time of penance by all Christians. Today, Christians focus on relationship with God, growing as disciples and extending ourselves, often choosing to give up something or to volunteer and give of ourselves for others.

Sundays in Lent are not counted in the forty days because each Sunday represents a 'mini-Easter.' This is why you will see the designation 'Sunday in Lent' rather than 'Sunday of Lent' in the naming of these Sundays. On each Lord's Day in Lent, while Lenten fasts continue, the reverent spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful anticipation of the Resurrection." (This content was produced by Ask The UMC, a ministry of United Methodist Communications.)

Please be looking for an email notice before Ash Wednesday, February 17 in which



instructions will be given for people to safely receive the imposition of ashes and prayers in the parking lot or prayers via phone with Pastor Hoyte.

The Season of Lent

Lenten Resources for Use at Home

Experience a humorous approach to understanding Lent with the video: “**Chuck Knows Church: Lent**” <https://www.umc.org/en/content/chuck-knows-church-lent>.

Read the article below: **Spiritual decluttering: A fresh start for a new year** (A UMC.org feature by Joe Iovino) as a way to reflect upon and experience positive things in the New Year 2021 and the Season of Lent.



Purchase and read one or both of the following books: **Savior: What the Bible Says about the Cross**, by Magrey deVega, that explores why Jesus died and how it brings us salvation, or **Seven Words: Listening to Christ from the Cross**, by Susan Robb, that examines the last words of Christ on the cross.

Contact Pastor Hoyte at hoytewilhelm@gmail.com if you are interested in doing a Zoom study with one of these books by no later than Wednesday, February 10.

Spiritual Decluttering: A Fresh Start for a New Year

A UMC.org feature by Joe Iovino*

One of the wonderful things about each new year is that it brings with it a sense of a new beginning, 365 days of promise and possibility. Some use this time to bring freshness to their lives. You may decide to declutter the junk drawer, attic, or garage. It may also mean removing many of the sugars, fats, and carbohydrates from our diets. As a United Methodist church member, parting with some things for a season may help declutter your spiritual life. Doing so helps make room for a new movement of the Holy Spirit in the months to come. What might you set aside in the next year?

Time-wasters: John Wesley instructed his pastors to "Never trifle away time" (2016 Discipline 330.5.d.19.a). Instead, they were to be engaged in the practice of ministry or the development of their spiritual lives. While we may not want to get rid of *all* time-wasters since we need times of rest, there are diversions we could remove and replace with something more beneficial. Consider finding ways to free up time to make regular calls to old friends and church members you no longer see, to join a class or small group at your church, or when possible, volunteer at a local food bank or other mission.

A version of the Bible: If you have been a Christian for some time, you probably know the Bible fairly well. There are verses you know by heart, and stories that are very familiar. Reading from a different version of the Bible can help bring new life to those passages. A translator's decision to use one word over another may give you some new insight you hadn't thought of before. If you regularly read from a modern version like the Common English Bible, consider a more traditional translation like the New Revised Standard Version. If you gravitate toward the more traditional, try something more modern. Search the web for Bible reading sites and apps (there are many free ones) where you can access a new version of Scripture.



A devotional: Devotionals are helpful aids to lead us in Scripture reading and prayer every day, but we can become stuck in a rut with them as well. If you have been using the same book or website for more than a year, you may benefit from trying something different this year. A new devotional resource, like an unfamiliar Bible translation, can bring new life to your time with God. There are many devotional helps available online and in physical and digital books. [The Upper Room](#) from Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church, is a very good source. Try something new.

A favorite author: Many readers have favorite authors. We like the way they turn a phrase, develop a story, or how they put into words what we have thought or felt for some time. Growth, though, often comes from thinking about things from more than one perspective. Reading a variety of authors can challenge us to do just that.

When looking for a book to read for spiritual enrichment (Cokesbury and Abingdon Press are good places to start), consider something new to you, which actually may be something quite old. You might want to read from a theologian whose work you have heard is important but you have never read, a person on the best-seller list whose views you think may be different from yours, or a recommendation from your pastor.



A class or group: Give yourself permission to take a break from that class or group you have been attending solely out of habit. It's OK. Try a new class. Join a group that discusses things that interest you. Be careful with this one, though. Connections to other people of faith are vital, so don't pull away from all groups. If you take a break from one group, make sure you find other Christians with whom you can share and from whom you can learn.

Negativity: Although we do not like to admit it, there are seasons when many of us fall into patterns of negativity. Discouraged by the news, the theology of others, policies of our denomination, and practices of our congregation can become sources of stress and fodder for complaining. Removing negativity from our lives and choosing instead to find things to celebrate can lift your spirits and renew your passion for that which matters most. Find where you see the love of Jesus in the world and celebrate it.

Your pew: Many of us are not attending in-person worship at the start of the year, but when we do, our pastors often know where each member of their congregation sits each Sunday. Choosing to worship from a new seat for a season will give you a new perspective—literally. As an added bonus, when you are worshiping in person, changing your seat may also change who is near you, the usher with whom you interact, the members of the choir or praise team you can see, and more. All of this can help you stay more focused on the worship service as you see things a little differently.

Obligatory church-stuff: Some of us do things in the church that bring us no joy. We're not really sure how we ever got the job. We don't really want it. Yet, we are pretty sure that if we don't do it, it won't get done. Those types of obligations often lead to church burnout. After the New Year is underway, schedule a conversation with your pastor. Ask how you can step away from that obligation and into a new way of using your gifts to serve your church or community. That will be a blessing both to you and your congregation.

New possibilities: The New Year can be one of new experiences in your church and spiritual life. Make room in days ahead for the Holy Spirit to do a new work in you. Then see what happens.

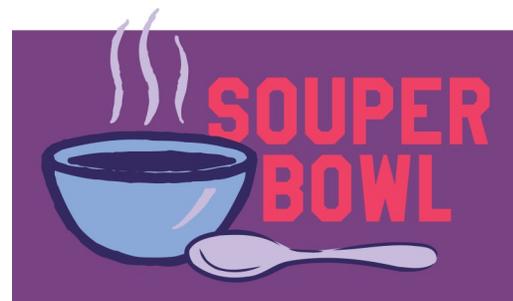
**Joe Iovino works for UMC.org at United Methodist Communications. This feature was originally published December 31, 2015. Updated January 2021.*

Christian Education

Souper Bowl of Caring

Sunday, February 7

Our youth will help to fight hunger and poverty, joining a national effort to refocus Super Bowl weekend into a weekend of sharing God's love with our neighbors in need. Souper Bowl of Caring helps us to be mindful of those who go without even a bowl of soup to eat as we enjoy our Super Bowl celebrations. All donations will go to benefit the Oxcart Pantry. *Please make checks payable to NOUMC and write Souper Bowl of Caring in the memo. Send checks to the church office, attention Wendy Cooper.*



Easter Flowers Sale

Sale begins February 21; Orders due March 14

The youth are selling Easter flowers to decorate our altar for Easter worship this year. If we are not in person on Easter Sunday, arrangements will be made to photograph them for our livestream worship and for pick-up. Proceeds will go to benefit the Africa University Sunday School Mission Project. *Please send the enclosed form with your check to the church office, attention Wendy Cooper or email her at sundayschool@noumc.org.* Thank you for supporting the mission project!

Sunday School Mission Project: Africa University

Along with the rest of the world, the students of Africa University have been affected by the global pandemic of COVID-19. The University's fall semester was conducted fully online. As of August, AU was the only university in Africa approved to offer online programs in Zimbabwe. But the pandemic hasn't stopped AU students from giving back and paying it forward! Africa University's goal is to make higher education accessible to all youth in Africa. Being aware of the low income status of the average African family, AU offers funding to assist with the payment of their university fees. Money for this funding comes from individuals and churches all over the world who donate to ensure that financially disadvantaged students have access to life changing education. The students, thankful for the opportunities given to them and the sacrifices made for them, are sacrificing the little they do have for others in need. On "Giving Tuesday" students who were sheltering in place on the campus, unable to travel to their home countries, took donations of farm produce and other necessities to families hard-hit by the pandemic in the wider community. Your donations are also equipping the students and alumni of Africa University to serve, lead, and be a change for good in the world!

This year, we hope you will support the Sunday School Mission Project by helping us raise money to build a new dorm for female students of Africa University! A new dorm will enable women from all over Africa to be housed in a safe place while completing their education. Make checks payable to NOUMC, write Africa University in the memo, and send them to the office, attention Wendy Cooper.

United Methodist Women

UMW has yet to meet this year, but we do have one date that is finalized. The craft show will be on October 16, assuming that life has attained a little more normalcy by then. We are aiming for a late spring UMW FUNdraiser, so we ask that you try to find a spot where you can save your items for the trailer in the parking lot once again. As soon as we get confirmation from Dean's Greenhouse, we will have a date and information about the spring plant sale.

Easter Flower Orders

*Sale begins Sunday, February 21
Orders due Sunday, March 14*



Email form to Wendy at sundayschool@noumc.org
or mail it to the church office, attention Wendy Cooper.

All proceeds to benefit the
Africa University Sunday School Mission Project.

Name _____

Phone _____

Size	Color	Price	Quantity	Total
6 Inch	Mona Lisa Lily (Pink)	\$10.00	_____	_____
6 Inch	Easter Lily (White)	\$10.00	_____	_____
6 Inch	Daffodil	\$10.00	_____	_____
6 Inch	Hyacinth	\$10.00	_____	_____
6 Inch	Tulip	\$10.00	_____	_____
6 Inch	Martha Washington Geranium	\$10.00	_____	_____
10 Inch	Pansy Basket	\$10.00	_____	_____
8 Inch	Hydrangea	\$15.00	_____	_____

Total: _____

Paid _____ / Owe _____

Dedication

In Honor Of/From:

and/or

In Memory Of/From:

COVID-19 Reminders

Worship with Us Online!

Live-stream worship on Sundays at 10:30 am

Join us online as we live-stream worship on Sundays at 10:30 am! Visit our [YouTube channel](#) to worship with us. The videos will also be available to view later. For more information and assistance, visit www.noumc.org or our [Facebook page](#).

Visit <http://www.noumc.org/worship-remote-worship-resources/> for bulletins and weekly announcements.

Office Hours

To protect the health and well-being of you and the staff, we will be working from home whenever possible. Please conduct business with the staff by phone or email, when possible. If you leave a voicemail at the church or send an email, a member of the staff will respond. If you need to conduct business in person, please call ahead to be sure someone is in the office to assist you, or contact a staff member and leave a voicemail to make an appointment.

Pastoral Care

Please reach out to Pastor Hoyte by using his cell phone or email address (330-428-1545 or hoytewilhelm@gmail.com) if you have any questions or want to schedule an individual time to talk as he will be working remotely much of the time from the church office consistent with the rest of our support staff.

Pastor Hoyte continues to keep you in his thoughts and prayers. God *IS* with us!

Stay Connected—We Are Not Alone

If you would like to subscribe to receive weekly e-newsletters, up-to-date email announcements from Pastor Hoyte, and prayer concerns from the congregation, email office@noumc.org.

Financial Contributions to North Olmsted United Methodist Church

Please continue to be faithful with your financial gifts by sending your stewardship contributions to the church office to the attention of the Financial Secretary, Ed Brewster.

March Agape Deadline

February 15

Email articles to office@noumc.org or mail them to the church, attention Megan Howe, by February 15.

Church Staff: 440-779-6634

Pastor: Hoyte Wilhelm
hoytewilhelm@gmail.com
ext.16
cell: 330-428-1545

Christian Ed.: Wendy Cooper
sundayschool@noumc.org
ext.13

Organist: Marlene Dirksen
marlened959@gmail.com

Admin. Assistant: Megan Howe
office@noumc.org
ext.10

Youth Director: Chris Byrns
youth@noumc.org
ext. 14

Music Director: Gabriela Martinez
gabrielamarmar@aol.com

Social Media: Hanna Moore
social@noumc.org

Opportunities to Give

Support West Side Community House

Penny Sunday is February 21

February's Penny Sunday offering will go to support West Side Community House. WSCH is a mission site of The United Methodist Church. This is a very busy place helping families, youth, and seniors. They provide help for people on the west side of Cleveland with classes, advice, after-school activities, helping youth during the summer, senior meals, and many other activities. Any help you can give is appreciated.

*Make checks payable to NOUMC and write **February Penny Sunday** in the memo. Send checks to the church office, attention Ed Brewster, Financial Secretary.*

Free Community Meal (Carry-Out Only)

Thursday, February 25, 4:30 pm - 6 pm

The menu for February is Shepherd's pie, bread, fruit, and dessert. For more information, contact Barb Linton.



A Message from the Stephen Ministries Team

I was talking with Pastor Hoyte the other day about the Christian season of Lent and how it is a time dedicated to personal reflection. Traditionally, on Ash Wednesday, we hear these words, "Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return." But what do those words feel like for each of us as we live immersed in a pandemic? When we are already spending a lot of time alone? Already doing more reflecting on the meaning of life and on the concerns of our world than we usually do?

I've recently read several suggestions for ways to "Tend to the Soul" that I'd like to share with you today. Perhaps, instead of "giving up" something for Lent, you will choose to "take on" a new practice of soul care.

For instance, this Christmas my prayer was that God would be "born" anew in my spirit. And in the season of Epiphany my prayer has been that God would help me to see light in the midst of so much darkness in the world. What will my prayer be for the season of Lent? Lent is a season of 40 days we spend remembering Jesus's life and journey to the cross. Perhaps my prayer this year will be that I would "Be Present to God's Presence" all around me.

For some "Being Present to God's Presence" may mean keeping a journal of prayers, listening to hymns, or reading a sacred book. For others it may mean "Being Present to God's Presence" as it is manifest in the creation around us or in our relationships. I guess what I'm feeling called to is simply this: to be mindful of God's Presence in everything I do. Whether it is in eating, resting, being more active in my body (or perhaps in slowing the pace of my mind/body), or even in my breathing.

What spiritual, self-care practice do you need to "take up" this year? I encourage you to reflect on this and then share it with someone in our church community so we can journey together. And always remember, if you feel alone and wish Christian companionship in your life, our Stephen Ministers remain available to come alongside you.

Many blessings, Rev. Alice Walsh

Church Family News

FEBRUARY



BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

3	Ron S.
8	Rachael B.
9	Don A.
10	Emily B.
12	Beth C.
13	Andrew S.
14	Carol W.
20	Joanne K.
21	Terri W.
23	Sydney S.
25	Carolyn B.
28	Philip W.
13	Jean and Gary S.
29	Lisa and Ron S.

Prayer Concerns

First Responders
 Victims of natural disasters
 Those suffering from mental illness
 Those affected by gun violence
 Those who are homeless
 Stephen Ministers
 Care Receivers
 Our condolences to Tom M. following the passing of his daughter-in-law, Adrienne Ron W.
 Danielle, lifted by Alice and Andy W.
 Josh O. and Guylene H.
 Dallas, Terri W.'s father
 Bobbi, Terri W.'s sister
 Barbara B.
 Viola C.
 Susan W.
 Carolyn and Alex B.
 Mary, Sue S.'s mother
 Jeff, Judy K.'s friend
 Kifah, David L.'s friend
 Bob, Carole B.'s son
 Donald R.
 Sheryl, lifted by Sally S.
 Frank M.
 Keith A.
 Gwen H.
 Danielle, lifted by Gwen H.
 Mary Lou L.
 Sterling B.
 Bev, lifted by Josh O.
 Darlene, friend of Barb A.
 Donna, sister of Carol N.
 Bill and Vince, brothers of Reba Y.

Russ, friend of David L.
 Andy, Faye W.'s son
 Dusty, nephew of Reba Y.
 Israel, Sarah's student
 Dawn, friend of Susan W.
 De Niro and family
 Connie C.
 Jim, friend Bill and Marilyn R.
 Donna friend of Judy K.
 Kevin, friend Barb and Ron C.
 Zack, son of Jennifer G.
 Brian R.
 Steve, son of Mary Ellen M.
 Carol, lifted by the Jane and Ray B.
 Selene, lifted by Carole A.
 Christopher Y., USAF
 Matthew F., USAF
 Lt. Col. Bill G., USMC

Because of your generosity, we donated \$270 to the United Methodist Committee on Relief to be used where it is most needed. Thanks be to God for this opportunity to serve in this vital network of relationships in the U.S. and in more than 60 countries in which UMCOR and partnering agencies engage in direct ministry to persons in need.



February 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 8:30 pm AA (FH)	2 12 pm Racial Justice Group (Zoom) 7 pm Facing Covid Together (Zoom)	3 10 am - 2 pm Sanctuary Reserved for Organist	4	5	6 11 am - 2 pm Sanctuary Reserved for Organist
7 <i>Souper Bowl of Caring</i> 10:30 am Worship (livestreamed)	8 8:30 pm AA (FH)	9 12 pm Racial Justice Group (Zoom)	10 10 am - 2 pm Sanctuary Reserved for Organist	11	12	13 11 am - 2 pm Sanctuary Reserved for Organist
14 10:30 am Worship (livestreamed)	15 <i>March Agape Deadline</i> 8:30 pm AA (FH)	16 12 pm Racial Justice Group (Zoom) 6:30 pm Stephen Ministries (Zoom)	17 <i>Ash Wednesday</i> 10 am - 2 pm Sanctuary Reserved for Organist	18 11:30 am Lunch with Friends (at home)	19	20 11 am - 2 pm Sanctuary Reserved for Organist
21 <i>Penny Sunday</i> 10:30 am Worship (livestreamed)	22 8:30 pm AA (FH)	23 12 pm Racial Justice Group (Zoom) 6:30 pm Worship Committee (Zoom)	24 10 am - 2 pm Sanctuary Reserved for Organist	25 4:30 pm - 6 pm Free Community Meal (Carry-out Only)	26	27 11 am - 2 pm Sanctuary Reserved for Organist
28 10:30 am Worship (livestreamed)						

*Please contact the church office to add your meeting or gathering,
virtual or in-person, to the church calendar.*

North Olmsted United Methodist Church
4600 Dover Center Rd. North Olmsted, OH 44070
440-779-6634 + office@noumc.org + www.noumc.org



North Olmsted United Methodist Church
4600 Dover Center Road
North Olmsted, Ohio 44070

Agape Newsletter



Our Guiding Principles

- We appreciate and invest in our youth.
- We actively serve our neighbors in the North Olmsted community and the wider world.
- We provide varied opportunities for people to grow in their faith.
- We welcome and nurture a diverse congregation who become extended family.
- We foster lasting personal relationships, which are especially important in a digital world.

Free Community Meal Carry-Out Only



Thursday, February 25

4:30 pm - 6 pm

Carry-Out Menu:

Shepherd's pie, bread,
fruit, and dessert

The Free Community Meal is a mission of North Olmsted United Methodist Church with assistance from our friends at St. Richard and St. Clarence Catholic Churches and others in the community. All meals are funded by donations, and the dinners are prepared and served by volunteers. Menus may change because of donated food or food pricing. Additional volunteers are always welcome! If you would like more information, please contact us at 440-779-6634. *We are an accessible facility.*