

# ***Christ Church***

## ***Good News and Notes***

**\* Please note that all new items for this edition are in red**

### **I will, With God's Help**

Lent is commonly understood by many as a season of sacrifice, a time when we give up this or that. But while we might make external sacrifices, these actions are simply meant to be outward signs of internal transformation. Sunday we will hear a piece of the story of Abraham, a man of faith, who accepts the call to leave his home and travel to a new land to found a nation.

God's covenant with Abraham is about the inward transformation of a man and woman. It is a transformation that not only shows nothing is impossible with God, but it sweeps generations of peoples up in God's promises.

This story affirms that God is interested in all aspects of our individual lives—even the mundane and most intimate—are sites of God's interaction with humanity.

The transformation of Abram and Sarah is symbolized by their names. Their new names are an outward sign that they have undergone a rite of passage. That they have made a decision to believe in God's promise, a promise that this old man and barren woman would bear a child and become the parents of a multitude of nations. Sarah actually laughed out loud at the prospect it seemed so absurd, but in the end allowed God to offer her a new beginning.

So the season of Lent in this light is less about sacrifice and more about transformation. The season of Lent invites new actions or new decisions that usher in an internal change. It is a time to explore what it truly means to be in covenant with God—as well as how we live this covenantal relationship with God through our community of faith.

Covenantal relationship says that when we decide that in all things we are God's person, we understand that our life is then profoundly linked with God's will. Life holds many challenges for all of us, how we respond to these challenges is part and parcel of the nature of our relationship with God. That is why in our Baptismal vows some of our responses to those hard pledges about how we will now live our lives in response to God's love are "I will, with God's help." We acknowledge we need God when we are not being our best selves.

God created the world and loves everything that is in it. God's purpose in sending the Christ is to redeem and reconcile the whole world to God once and for all. When we decide that above all else we are first and foremost God's people, in Covenantal relationship with God, we participate in God reconciling and redeeming purposes.

Being God's person is not about getting it "all perfect" or always knowing the answer. It is simply about deciding, not just once, but possibly a thousand times over before our lives are through, that we belong to God. And then, because we *have* decided to belong to God, God's merciful will must always be married to our own in all that we do. And as a result we *will be asked* to change our hearts and minds to more closely mirror God's love. Even, if not especially around difficult decisions of justice and mercy for others in the human family, especially those for whom the world has not been kind. And as the devil is in the details, what are those daily habits into which we have fallen that fail to honor God?

Can you name the damaging habits that happen in families, churches, and workplaces that fail to mirror the grace of God? It is no small thing to remember we are God's person.

This is where having a covenant becomes our pledge to place God's will at the center of who we are as individual persons and as the gathered community of faith. And in light of having given ourselves to God, we have the courage to face destructive behaviors and make things right in the relationships or situation in which we have caused unnecessary pain. God's love for us and for those we've hurt will hold us in relationship in such times. Because of this we can be brave and love as Jesus taught us.

Lent offers us a sweet invitation to examine our lives and reorder our relationships and decide once again that we belong to God and that we will shape and mold our hearts and actions to God's purposes. Covenant is an invitation to transformation. It is our chance to stand with Abraham, Sarah, Noah, Moses, Peter, Mary mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene and all the faithful and say, I am God's person and we are God's people!

Together, with our Covenanting God, we can do marvelous things.

Happy Lent, Stephanie+

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## **Worship Notes**

With another Liturgical Season upon our Sunday, Liturgy will, of course, reflect some subtle changes that are demanded by the theme of the season. Lent is a time of repentance (which means a time to change our minds) and

calls for fearless self-reflection to identify and heal those things within ourselves that create barriers between ourselves and God.

We fast from the Alleluia's in our hymns and Eucharists, drape and veil our crosses with cloths of mourning, and our flowers at the altar reflect a time of winter's sway before spring bursts forth in glorious flower.

We will begin our services with the confession of sin, the Gloria is replaced with the Taizé hymn *Bless the Lord My Soul* and we will speak the Nicene Creed.

Our Eucharistic Prayer is Prayer I from *The Book of Common Prayer's* Supplemental Liturgies in *Enriching Our Worship: Supplement to the Book of Common Prayer*. It at once focuses on the wideness of God's mercy while being clear about how sin in the human family leads us away from God's hope for us. A perfect prayer for Lent.

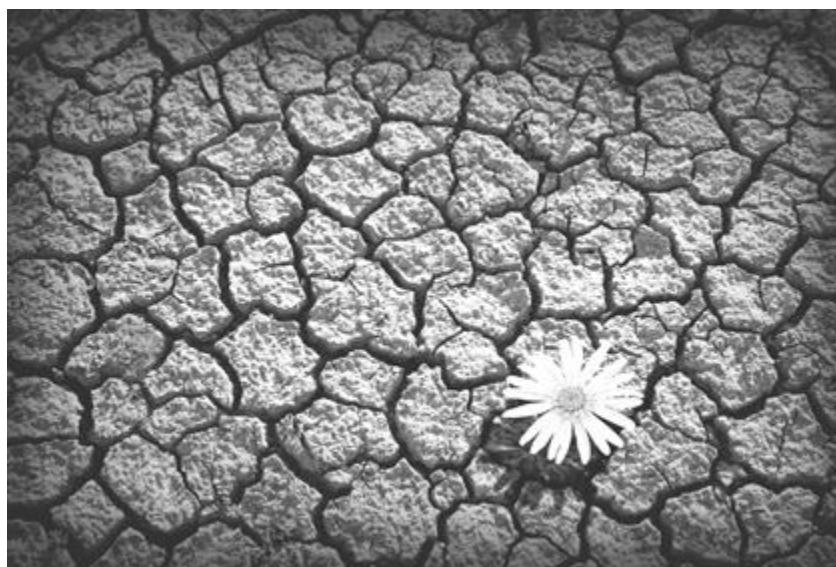
Join us on Sundays and let the mysterious beauty of worship guide you into a meaningful Lent.

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### **Bible Study of the Gospel of John**

A study of the Gospel of John will begin on Thursday, March 22 and continue every other week at 6:00 pm at the Seckel Barn, 404 Vestal Road, Sparta. The study will be led by the Rev. Martha Honaker. Please join us!

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**Wednesday Morning Service in Lent**

We hope you'll join us Wednesday mornings at 10:00 am for our regular Eucharist as another opportunity to worship and reflect during this Lenten season. Services resume February 21.

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### **Adult Forum Sundays @ 9:15: All Invited to Join our Confirmation, Reception & Reaffirmation Class**

On Sunday mornings we are exploring more of the Episcopal tradition in preparation for the Rites of Confirmation, Reception and Reaffirmation as we prepare to welcome Bishop José on Sunday, March 18th. This class is a wonderful intergenerational event for our community and an excellent way to share fellowship! There will also be 2-3 activities that happen outside the Forum Hour. It will be a fun and informative experience even for those who will not be participating in any of the Rites.

All those interested in being confirmed, received or reaffirmed during Bishop José's visit on March 18<sup>th</sup>, should have already contacted Stephanie.

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### **LENT ALTAR ARRANGEMENT OFFERINGS**

You may have noticed that the sign-up sheet for Altar Flowers Offerings has the Sundays of Lent marked with 'Altar Guild'. If you have a special reason for wanting to provide an altar offering during Lent, you may do so, but first check with an altar guild person. The sense of the season of Lent dictates modified altar offerings.

The use of greens or some other muted color natural item(s) are appropriate altar offerings during Lent. If used at all, flowers on the altar should be subdued in color during Lent. Absolutely no vibrant colors. Use different shades of off white, beige. Very pale dried flowers the color of the season is another choice. Simplicity is the order of the day during Lent. (You could also read the lessons assigned for the Sunday and make an offering based on a reflective understanding of the readings.)

So, if you have a compelling reason for making an altar offering during Lent, see an altar guild person and discuss your desire.

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### **Memorial / Thanksgiving Easter Lilies**

Remember those you love by placing an Easter Lily in the Church for Easter. Gifts can be made in thanksgiving for or in memory of. Forms will be in the

back of this Sunday's bulletin and afterwards, available on the Information table. Completed forms can be put in the offering plate or slipped under the office door. **Last day to have the form in the office is Friday, March 23.**

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## **Women's Fellowship**

Friends in Faith usually meets on Wednesdays at 11:00am but will be taking a break until after Easter. Watch *Good News & Notes* for our next gathering date!

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## **Outside our Walls...**

### **Lent Services at Sparta United Methodist Church**

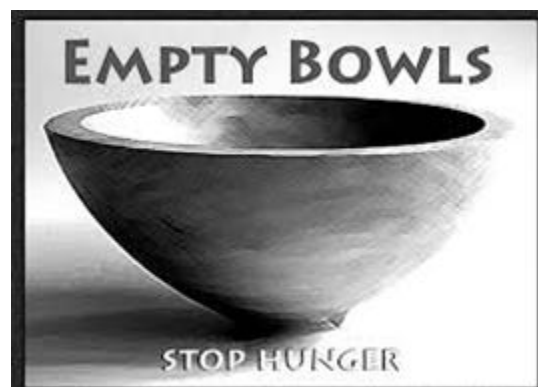
Sparta United Methodist Church will be holding weekly Wednesday services during Lent along with a light lunch. Services begin at noon.

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### **World Day of Prayer Invitation**

Lu Grubb has reached out from Shiloh United Methodist Church about the upcoming World Day of Prayer. Their Women's Group is extending an invitation to the women of Christ Church to have a participant in their local World Day of Prayer service. The service will be held at Shiloh United Methodist on Friday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>. If you would be interested in participating in their program, please contact Lu so that she can get a script to you. Lu can be reached at [grubblh@gmail.com](mailto:grubblh@gmail.com), 336.372.5091 (home) or 336.572.2581 (cell).

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## **9th Annual Empty Bowls Fundraiser**

The 9th Annual Empty Bowls Fundraiser will be held on Monday, April 9, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm at the new Pugh Outreach Center of Sparta United Methodist Church. Tickets are \$30 and include a delicious lunch plus a hand-crafted pottery bowl by local artisans. Proceeds support Solid Rock Food Closet's Summer Feeding Program for the children of Alleghany County. Tickets are available through Jeanne Green at church on Sunday or call her @336-372-4781. Thank you for supporting a hunger-free community!

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If you have any questions regarding anything building or grounds related, please contact Phil Donaldson or Willie Plummer with your concern.

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**For Urgent Prayer Request** – Contact Gary Medley. Please be sure to get permission to share any details for the Prayers. Also, if you like to be listed as an Urgent Prayer Partner, please let Gary know.

Great thanks & peace, Gary Medley  
[gapdweller@gmail.com](mailto:gapdweller@gmail.com)  
336.372.7464 or 336.572.2905

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## **Mark Your Calendars**

### **Sunday, February 25 – Second Sunday of Lent**

9:15am – Adult Forum hour  
10:30am – Holy Eucharist

### **Wednesday, February 28**

10:00am – Holy Eucharist

### **Sunday, March 4 – Third Sunday of Lent**

9:15am – Adult Forum hour  
10:30am – Holy Eucharist

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**Prayer requests from the staff and prisoners at  
River North Correctional Center, Independence, VA**

Pray for the peace of the Lord to be given to us all.

Lord bless all of the families of the young who got lost. I just want them to see our prayers are with them. -LD

Pray for the chaplain and for his new position that God will give him the wisdom to rule with diligence and courage. -JS

Pray for my family and friends and for my salvation. Thank you. -PM

Pray for me and my three sons and family. Pray for RN church and guests.

Pray for the world. Keep God first. Stay prayed up. Whatever God does is best. Love always. -SC

Pray for all those affected by the school shootings. Pray that many ministries around the world reach countless people this year. Bless all the men here at RN. -NW

Pray for the men and women serving overseas fighting for our country. Pray for the victims and their families of the school shooting. Pray that I am able to gain a better understanding of the Bible so that I can help lead others to God. -CD

Pray for those involved in the shooting. Pray for me and my fiancé that we may have a wonderful marriage. Pray that I get out of prison and go home to her and that I take the Word home with me and spread it once I get there. Thank you. -BB

God I want to thank You not just for another day but for the blessings You give in between. I want to thank You for granting parole for my father's release after 33 yrs. Pray for all the deaths of evil doers on God's green earth. Amen. -AR

Thank God to be here again. May the Lord bless each and every one and their family. God bless us here. -IJ

Praise God. Will you pray for my family and friends on the outside. Pray for all the men her at RN, the visitors that come to worship with us. -KJ

Pray for the souls of the children and teachers killed. Pray for forgiveness and salvation for the killer who committed the crime. Pray that our leaders will finally use this tragic event to fix a very broken system. Pray that all children whom leave home to go to school be protected from the evils of this world. Amen. -FH

Continue prayer for my family, friends, and all those who keep us in their prayers.

Pray for my family and friends. Thank You for watching over me God.

Thank You God for this time to praise and worship in Your heavenly name.

God use me to do Your will and give me the strength and courage to do Your will. Amen. -PP

I need the Lord to give me the strength through this trial and keep me cell partner safe. -GS

Pray for souls to be saved. Amen.

Lord Jesus, bless You and our Holy Father, first and our family and church and friends and by Your stipes we are healed. -AR

Pray for the homeless. -HR

Pray for all those lost and saved. Pray for my family, my friends, and my enemies. Pray for the growth, for spiritual growth of myself and for them me to become a better man in Christ. -JM

Lord, I want to first thank You for waking me up this morning. I ask that You be with my wife and kids right now. Touch them and guide them through the difficult times they are going through. Bless my family and everyone in RN and in the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I give thanks to God for all that God does for all God's children. I give all glory, honor, and praise. May You continue to protect, preserve, and shelter us all with every feather of Your wing.

Keep my father and aunt in prayer. My dad is dealing with many health issues and my aunt has cancer. Thank you all. God bless. -JV

All of us are blessed. Love it. Live it. -B

Pray for everyone outside if incarceration that have to deal with everyday struggles and trials and tribulations.

I must tell Jesus, I love You Lord.

Pray for me, my family, friends, and for my case to get back in court. -JO

Pray for my family and all the families in the world. -DA

Pray for my grandparents and my little brother and the kids and families that are affected by the shooting.

Pray for all the lost and the brothers and sisters of Christ and that the Lord will look over my children, family, and friends. Pray for all lost in the shootings and their families. God bless. -GT

Pray for me, my family, and the people. -RN

Pray for all those families that have experienced bad things no matter its shape and forms or fashion. I know I have a good heart and my heart feels others pain. Yet I am in a very dark place and have been for almost six years. -RL

Pray for my family. My grandmother passed away peacefully during lockdown. Ask the Lord to comfort everybody. Let God guide them to stay strong and be faithful. Pray for the victims and families of the shooting. Be with the students. -MW

Pray for my growth and guidance. Pray for my family and parents. -KS

Pray for my spiritual growth that I want to do God's will and not mine. -DJ

Continue to pray for the way I think and what I do. Pray for my family, friends, and loved ones. -MD

Pray that God gives me wisdom and strength and that my faith becomes stronger. I am going through multiple storms all at once. I realize that I will only make it through with God.

God bless all of our families and friends. Thank you.

Pray for my family and my wife's mom and for the Cos here. -FS

Pray for my family and friends and this entire congregation. -R

Thank You Lord for all You do in our lives. I continue to ask for Your forgiveness and guidance. I pray that all this suffering that is going on



around the world from killings to shaming will go away. Pray for the world to prosper spiritually for the sake of Your name I pray. Amen.