



March 1, 2024

Remembering Joy

Several years ago, I was privileged to be a part of the ecumenical dialog team that engaged in conversation with representatives from the Roman Catholic Church. For four years, United Methodist and Roman Catholic laity and clergy, including two bishops, met together to share their perspectives and theologies.

Together this team crafted several liturgies that could be used during the holy seasons of the church year, and we celebrated our shared ministry and theology of justice and compassion. Ecumenical conversations are important and lifegiving. Learning about Roman Catholicism's traditions and distinct theology deepened my understanding of faith.

One of their traditions that remains with me is the celebration of Laetare Sunday on the fourth Sunday in Lent. The Latin word "laetare" means "rejoice." Isaiah 66:10 proclaims, "Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her: rejoice with her in joy." On that Sunday, the priests wear pink (rose) vestments, flowers adorn the altars, and services are celebratory in nature.

The fourth Sunday of Lent is the halfway point between Ash Wednesday and Easter. The early church prepared candidates for baptism at the Easter Vigil during the season of Lent. It was a time of penitence and self-examination.

The color purple, used during Advent and Lent, is symbolic of this time of repentance and reckoning with one's mortality. On this day, the candidates for baptism were given the Apostles' Creed for the first time. It taught them about the joyful promise of the "communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting."

The fourth Sunday of Lent is a time of refreshment and celebration within this season of Lenten austerity. Pink symbolizes joy and love as we anticipate Christ's resurrection. Through the years, there have been various expressions of jubilation on this special Sunday, such as weddings, baptism remembrances, the eating of treats and fruitcake, and the decoration of fountains with flowers and garlands.



Bishop's Office

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In Protestant circles we have not officially caught on to the idea of Laetare Sunday. We have made a connection on the third Sunday of Advent with the pink candle on the Advent wreath. That is known as Gaudete Sunday in the Roman Catholic tradition. I am holding out hope Laetare Sunday will become yet another shared tradition in the future.

Until then, what we can take from this is a reminder of the importance of joy, not only on special Sundays in Lent and Advent, but throughout our lives. The Book of Nehemiah reminds us, “The joy of the Lord is our strength.” (Nehemiah 8:10).

Undoubtedly the world is full of terrible events that challenge, threaten, and perplex us. We can be filled with fear and despair, or we can choose joy. Joy is an act of resistance, an affirmation of faith in a God who triumphs over hate, evil and death, and who will restore all things.

Joy means having hope in the midst of despair and having love for even the most despicable, knowing that “love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.” (I Corinthians 13:7)

This fourth Sunday of Lent, carry that joy in your heart (and maybe wear some pink). Take time to rejoice during this season of solemnity. Anticipate the Easter to come by bringing joy to someone to whom love is a stranger — that includes taking a special offering for UMCOR at your church, so relief efforts can be enhanced and people in need across this globe might have the joy of restoration ([UMCOR Sunday is March 10](#)).

Resources:

Wikipedia

[The Pillar, Laetare Sunday is much more than 'pink' vestments, March 26, 2022](#)

[The Scott Smith blog, Laetare Sunday: What is that Pink \(or Rose\) Sunday in Lent Called Again?, March 14, 2021](#)



Special Prayers for these Wesley Family, Friends, and Others...

Helen Sakovich (neighbor of Susan Williams), Neil Ashton (past member) who had a stroke, Emily Smith, Tom Friend, Paula and Calvin Kelly (sister and brother-in-law of Linda Dylewicz), Al (friend of Linda and Lou D’Acri), Sandra Scheys (who visits the church often), Linda (a friend of Linda D’Acri’s), Linda Keister, Todd (Linda Keister’s friend), Pinamang Boateng, John Davis (Ronna’s husband), Dot Ellis, Earl Flagg, Jim Hoffman, Dorothy Norcross, Grace Woode, Baby “T” with a heart condition (friend of Carol Samanen), Beverly Grimshaw, Peter Woodcock, Joseph Boateng, Anne Burrows, Ray Cournoyer (friend of Bill Robbins), Barbara Fletcher, Kathy Freeburn (friend of Linda D’Acri), Don Johnson (Phil’s brother), Charles & Samira Kiefer, Sandra O’Driscoll, David Samanen, Alysia Simoneau, Janet Terzian, Donald Tremblay, Barbara, Frank & the Vietze Family; Laura Zoldak, Susan (friend of David Potts), Malika Gujarati (family of the Hoffmans), Margie (Linda Keister’s sister), Page (Allison Hansen’s sister).
Those who struggle with depression, anxiety, and alcoholism.

There is a prayer quilt today. Please come tie a knot and say a prayer for Helen Sakovich for comfort.

Announcements

A Message from Church Council & SPRC

In an effort to continue the process of right-sizing our church, and after carefully reviewing the current needs of the congregation, as well as being good stewards of the church finances, a recommendation was made by SPRC, and was decided by vote through Church Council that effective March 4, 2024, the church office will no longer be open on Mondays.

April Herald: *There are always extra copies of the Herald in the Narthex by the Welcome Office.*

The April Herald will be part of the April 7th bulletin; however, it will be posted by April 3rd. Please send all articles to me no later than Wednesday, March 27th. *Thank you, Debi*

The March Rose Window lighting is available for dedication. The cost of is \$40 for the month. If you are interested, please email me (office@wesleyworc.org) or call the office and let me know.

Thanks, Debi Reynolds

Grocery Gift Cards -- Now Accepting Email Orders

Gift card sales to prevent homelessness will now be available after church once a month. If you would like to order cards, please email Allison at AChis4788@aol.com, and depending on availability, she will bring your order the following Sunday, or after the next pick-up date from Central Mass. Housing Alliance.

Cards from local grocery stores, coffee shops, CVS, Panera and Target will still be on offer after church on:

March 3
March 17 (don't forget those Easter baskets!)
April 14
May 5 (just in time for Mother's Day and graduations)
June 2
June 16
August 4

Thanks to all the people who continue to support this ministry!

Allison Hansen

UWF to Host Affordable Housing Conversation on March 9 with Ed Augustus

Ed Augustus, the Massachusetts Secretary of Housing and Livable Communities, will be the keynote speaker for a program on the affordable housing crisis at Wesley on Saturday, March 9. Together with panelists from local agencies, he will address approaches the state is taking to create more homes.

United Women in Faith will host the meeting with lunch at noon in Brewer Hall and the program will begin at 1 p.m. in the Sanctuary. **All are welcome.** Childcare will be available. Invite your friends!

Mission Matters

Almost every week, In the Hour of Need Family Shelter (IHN) is in need of volunteers to be at the house when staff are not there. I've been sending the Director's invitations to only those Wesley folks who have volunteered before for the evening or overnight shifts. One volunteer suggested that I make this opportunity to serve available to more Wesley people and so more will begin receiving those emails. If you've never volunteered at IHN on June St., I can give you information on what the role is, answer your questions, and show you around the house at the start of your first shift.

Betsy Pennino (betspenn35@hotmail.com)

Holy Week

Holy Thursday, March 28, 2024

6:00 pm Soup and Bread Supper

6:30 pm Worship

Good Friday

12 noon – 3:00 pm Stations of the Cross, Chapel

Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 30, 2024

You are invited to the Easter Egg Hunt and Crafts on Saturday, March 30th, 10 to 11:30 am. Please provide one dozen pre-filled eggs for each child you bring. Easter eggs for those over age 4 can be filled with stickers, candy, etc. *All food items must be wrapped* so individually wrapped candy would work well.

For the younger children, fill the eggs with stickers or wrapped goldfish/animal crackers and put stickers on those eggs so the older kids won't collect them. The event is sponsored by United Women in Faith (formerly UMW).



Free Concert Series at The College Church, South Lancaster, MA

William Ness, organist

Saturday, March 16, 2024 at 7:00 pm - Free

The College Church

337 Main Street

South Lancaster, MA

J.W. Walker & Sons organ 1992

Music by Bach, Mendelssohn, Emma Lou Diemer, Margarita Merriman, Calvin Taylor, Denis Bedard, Eurydice Osterman, Amy Beach, and Carl Haywood.

Music from several cultures on this recital. New and old represented by male and female composers and black composers who embrace the organ and its history plus two Irish tunes! William Ness will be one of the composers.

GOD MOMENT

If you could share a story of seeing God's work in your life, please tell me or email it to me. The story can be anonymous or signed, and all are invited to participate. Betsy (betspenn35@hotmail.com)

A note from Betsy--

I have often thought that Wesley is blessed by the colors of the rainbow appearing in the sanctuary on many Sunday mornings. All of the colors were there on February 11th, not in an arc like Noah's rainbow but splashed on the wall. This happens on sunny mornings during worship when the sun is at the right angle, which is during the winter months-- and when do we most need reassurance? I try to sit where I can see the colors on the front left wall above the balcony. We as Christians are to bring the light into the world and Wesley does that in many ways. Our Church Secretary tells how she carried light into the world of a homeless person...

A God Moment by Debi--

I met Annie (and Patches, her dog) last summer when she came to the church needing gas for her van and I was able to help her with a gift card. Every now and again I would help Annie with ice and other small needs and food while she and her dog lived in her van, homeless. Fast forward to January, a very cold night, I finally convinced Annie to stay at my house and out of the cold. She stayed with me for 4 nights, then another person opened their home to her for 4 nights over the weekend. From there, between generous people paying for hotel rooms or opening their homes, she and Patches were out of the cold. At the end of January, Annie and Patches came back and stayed with me for 2 weeks while the apartment she had found was finished and inspected.

Recently while helping Annie with things for her apartment, she received a text message from Chris asking if she could check on the car and cats at her house. Apparently, Chris fell and broke her shoulder and was in the hospital. So, we took a ride to Chris's house. While there I pulled the trash cans up from the street and watered her plants while Annie cleaned up after the cats and made sure the food and water was refilled.

Annie didn't know Chris before last summer when she let Annie store her belongings in the garage. Chris took in Annie's cat while she and the dog lived in her van.

All these acts of kindness... God was there for Annie in her time of need; and now Annie is there for Chris while she needs help. God moments at their finest.

If you are interested in attending and have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me.

Gerard Piscitelli (disasterneumc@gmail.com)



Northeastern Jurisdiction Mission Academy March 18-21, 2024

Presenters

Willie Berman, Manos Juntas Mission
Debroah Cobel, WV
Ronda Cordill, WJ UMVIM
Rev. Dr. Kevin Johnson, Discipleship
Una Jones, Global Ministries
Rev. Tammy Kuntz, NCJ UMVIM
Angela Overstreet, UMCOR
Rev. Dave Stilgenbauer WV UMVIM
Stefanie Williams, NCJ UMVIM

Opening Worship: Bishop Peggy Johnson

*Rolling Ridge Retreat Center
660 Great Pond Rd
Andover, MA 01845*

**Nearby airports include Boston
(Logan) and Manchester, NH.*

[Registration](#)

Contact: Ray Yarnall
NEJ UMVIM Coordinator
nej@umvim.org

Scheduled Sessions

UMVIM Team Leader Training
UMCOR Early Response Team (ERT) Training
UMVIM Overview
Global Ministries Overview
Connecting Neighbors
Safer Sanctuaries
Hosting and Caring for Volunteers
Mission Theology
Serving with Manos Juntas Mission
Serving in Alaska
Serving with UM Economic Ministries
Abundant Health
Meaningful Youth Mission Journeys
Social Justice Mission Journeys
Devotions for Mission Journeys
Communicating in Disaster
EarthKeepers Overview

Growing in God's Mission

DID YOU KNOW?

At this point we are now a couple of weeks into our journey through the liturgical season of Lent, a period of forty days (not including Sundays) of preparation for Easter, beginning with Ash Wednesday. In fact, in several languages the days of Lent are referred to as “The Forty”. Did you ever wonder about the significance of the number *forty* in this context? Various numbers are used in the Bible, often with symbolic meaning, and a period of forty days or years is a common and important reference. Forty is often used as a round number that implies a relatively long time. It also connotes a fullness of time, in the sense that it is the time necessary to attain fulfillment e.g. of a prophecy. Most often it is associated with hardship, affliction and a time of testing or judgment.

The number forty also has strong Biblical associations with a time of preparation. Certainly Jesus’ preparation for ministry by fasting for forty days in the wilderness is one of the main reasons that Lent consists of forty days, but the Bible is full of other references to the number forty. According to Laurence Hull Stookey in *Calendar: Christ’s Time for the Church*:

“In Biblical terms forty is a round number symbolizing fullness—a span of time sufficient to accomplish what needs to take place; as such the number is used frequently and becomes a kind of shorthand for much of sacred history. Rain fell in Noah’s time for forty days and nights; for this same period of time Moses and Elijah (who represent respectively the Law and the Prophets) dwelt at Horeb; for forty days Jesus endured temptation in the wilderness and later for the same period was revealed to the disciples after the resurrection. Nineveh was given forty days in which to repent. For forty years Israel wandered in the wilderness prior to admission into the promised land. Eli was a judge over Israel for forty years, and Saul, David, and Solomon are reported to have had reigns of forty years each.”

In the New Testament, Jesus’ experience of forty days in the desert wilderness after his baptism and prior to the start of his ministry are often seen as a recapitulation of Israel’s forty years in the wilderness, but they also were a time of testing and preparation for his ministry. Each year as we live through the Forty Days of Lent we too are called to self-assessment and self-examination of our own call to Christian discipleship. As we continue our Lenten journey may this period of devotion and spiritual discipline be for each of us a “sufficient time” for us to prepare not only for our celebration of Easter but also to ponder the endless possibilities for renewal offered to us as we move forward to live into God’s call in our lives, both in our individual lives and in the corporate life of our congregation.

*Submitted by,
Deborah O’Driscoll*

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Pastor	Rev. Byungmoo Lee	Carty Cupboard Food Pantry	Nancy Spencer
Organist	Ronna Davis	Education Committee Co-Chairs	Joseph Fletcher
Chancel Choir Director	David Potts	Youth Bible Study	Ivy Hammond
Ghanaian Choir Director	Desmond Cheetham	Finance & Stewardship Co-Chairs	Joseph Fletcher
Director of Children's Ministries	Rhianna Burke	Financial Secretary	William Wong
Church Business Administrator	Matt Crane	Church Auditor	Peter Hansen
Church Secretary	Debi Reynolds	Ghanaian Association	Earl Flagg
Building Consultant	Tim Murphy	Hospitality Chair	Cynthia Fletcher
Building Superintendent	Phil Johnson	Medical Ministry	Paul Hayfron
Custodians	April Dylewicz	Mission Coordinator	Linda D'Acri
Head Usher	Gerard Piscitelli	Staff-Parish Relations Co-Chairs	Ron Ramsay
Communion Steward	David Dagle	United Women in Faith Co-Chairs	Betsy Pennino
Wesley Tech Team	Earl Flagg	Music Committee	Chris Flagg
Church Council	Mark Muncey	Worship Committee	Judy Hoffman
Co-Lay Leaders	Brent Drajesk		Allison Hansen
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	Joseph Fletcher		Debbie O'Driscoll
	Gary Robinson		Debbie O'Driscoll