An open and affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ

Signs of Spring
A Note from the Pastor  - Reverend Ken White

What is Easter to you?

When I was growing up, Easter primarily meant a big chocolate bunny on the living room couch before church. Chocolate for breakfast – now that's a holiday I could get behind!

Because of the some of the beliefs of my fundamentalist community, Easter was not a religious holiday for me. I didn’t notice this until one Easter when Lucia went to church with me and pointed out after the service that there had only been one passing reference to Easter the whole time. We both thought that was strange: she wondered why we didn’t talk more about Easter in church, and I wondered why we talked about it in church at all!

Since then, I’ve come a long way in understanding and appreciating church seasons. I’m still not as schooled in these as many of you, but I’m learning. I did find these fascinating in seminary, especially about how seasons were celebrated in the early church.

We don’t know for sure how seasons and traditions were celebrated in the very earliest years of the church, but it does seem like Easter (pascha) was celebrated from very early on, and that it became common practice to connect baptism (which in this case was usually adult baptism) with Easter. At some periods, people wanting to join the church had three years of teaching and preparation before baptism! Even in less intense cases, however, there was work to be done before Easter baptism, and this work became connected to a period of 40 days before Easter, commemorating the 40 days that Jesus spent fasting in the desert. Fasting became part of the experience, and as the whole church began to seek ways to be present with the folks preparing to be baptized, the church shared in this Lenten journey.

This Lent, it feels like we’ve been honoring this ancient tradition together. As our new members have been exploring what it means to be part of College Street, many of us have been participating in learning groups and praying groups and being groups. We’ve been making new connections and trying on new things. We’ve been doing the work that early Christians saw as preparation for transformation by the Holy Spirit through baptism: being intentional about connecting with each other in the name of Christ. A number of you have rearranged your schedules in these six weeks to try something new.

On Easter Sunday, we’ll celebrate God’s power in God’s world by celebrating the promises of baptism and community, rejoicing with infants and adults alike in delight of the gift of Christ-centered community. What a gift this will be to celebrate together!

And then, I encourage you to take a pause. We will have just spent Lent doing the hard work of intentional self-examination and the joyful work of intentional community, and you may need to just rest in the glow of Easter for a little while. Please give yourself permission to do that. If you lead a small group or a board, consider taking a week or two off, if that’s possible. Take a week or two off from obligations – the church will survive. Come to worship and just be. Enjoy Spring, as the promise of New Life materializes around you in exciting (and warm) ways!

I’m finding this Lenten season to be powerful in connecting us to each other – thank you for your work that has made that happen. It is a true blessing for me, and I believe for many of you as well. I can’t wait for Easter!

I’m so grateful to be your pastor.

Ken
From the Deacon’s  

Shrove Tuesday

Lent started a couple of weeks ago. As the season started; I couldn’t help but think back to my childhood and what I remembered about Lent. Two things come to mind - pancakes at the beginning and Easter eggs at the end. Over the years, I’ve learned a lot more about the season; but I still think about Shrove Tuesday; maybe because it seems to be treated different in the US.

Shrove Tuesday, Mardi Gras, Fat Tuesday - all different names for the same day - the day before the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday. There is another name for Shrove Tuesday - the one I fondly remember as a youngster growing up in England - Pancake Day.

Pancakes were a rare sight in England in the sixties; they certainly were not an everyday breakfast food. In fact, I suspect we only had pancakes once a year; you guessed it - on Shrove Tuesday. Those pancakes were delicious. Full of raisins, sultanas and whatever else my mother could find. Topped with globs a treacle made a child’s day (I now know that treacle, aka golden syrup, is a very poor substitute for maple syrup - but hey, what does a six year old know - it’s sugar).

Back then I didn’t understand why we celebrated pancake day. I remember being told it was a figurative way of cleaning out the pantry before Lent. But why? Why should we clean the pantry before Lent? This question was not answered for many years; not until I was old enough to understand the meaning of Lent and the symbolic idea of fasting; of eating simpler and less satisfying foods while we reflect upon Christ’s forty day sacrifice.

Mardi Gras (Great Tuesday) and Fat Tuesday are self explanatory terms; they expound on the celebration of the day. But what does the word ‘shrove’ mean. A clip from Wikipedia states:

*The word shrove is a form of the English word shrive, which means to obtain absolution for one’s sins by way of Confession and doing penance. Thus Shrove Tuesday was named after the custom of Christians to be “shriven” before the start of Lent.*

Within the UCC we do not practice physical confession and penance; however, we can all give thought to what we do and have done, how we do it and how we can better serve our Lord, our Church, our family and ourselves.

I find it disturbing that the original thoughts of a day for absolution have been overrun by the party attitude; and to most, the day is known as the day of the carnival. While I encourage everyone to enjoy those pancakes as we clean out the pantry; let’s use the day to reflect upon the upcoming period and the sacrifices made. As for the names Fat Tuesday, Mardi Gras, or Pancake day - I’m going to continue thinking of the day as Shrove Tuesday; a day of absolution, rather than the carnival day.
Youth Ministry

First, I just want to say a big thank you to everyone who contributed to the Envelope Fundraiser. With your support, we raised over $1400! As part of our expression of gratitude, we spent part of our youth group time this month baking cookies for you! (If you haven’t gotten yours yet, let me know and I’ll be sure to get you some!)

We had a lot of fun with the cookies and playing Catch Phrase together. We also had a great discussion about well-known “catch phrases” in pop culture and how we (as a community and as individuals) have the power to create our own “catch phrases” – words we are known for – and how we can use these words not to tear others down but instead to build them up.
Financial Futures Committee  - Elaine Hubert

New Projects

A big thank you again to everyone who contributed to the challenging goal of retiring the church mortgage by 2019. The good news is that generous donations helped reach that goal in January 2019, rather than the original target of the end of the year, and removed mortgage payments as a 2019 budget issue. It’s amazing that we were able to reduce a $400,000 mortgage to zero. Thinking is underway with Ken about how we can celebrate this milestone -- stay tuned!

In addition to ongoing efforts to highlight planned giving (more in next month’s Banner), two subcommittees are gearing up to address the following important issues for the ongoing financial health of the church:

1) Identifying, with the YMCA, how we can modify space use, furniture and storage in the basement to allow the church easier weekend access to the space, while maintaining the day care as an important contributor to the church’s mission and cash flow. Bill Harwood, Jonathan Farrell, Alison Pierce and Jessica Titcomb have agreed to work with the Y on this project.

2) Undertaking a capital needs assessment of the church to help us financially plan for what has to be done at some point (the boiler, stonework, etc.) and what we dream about doing (better handicapped access, etc.). Andrea Rogers has agreed to lead this effort, and so far Chris Gordon, Sandie Lindberg and Frank Willis have volunteered to work with her.

If anyone has ideas that could assist these two efforts, please do not hesitate to contact the Financial Futures Committee or the subcommittees.

(Other committee members: Mark Dorgan, Bill Harwood, Andrea Rogers, Gail Stevenson)

A Note from Trustees  - Mark Dorgan

Budget update--great start to 2019!

It is hard to believe April is upon us, and I know we are all looking forward to the warmer weather that will soon follow. It feels like ages ago when the budget meeting was held during the depth of winter in January.

Since the budget meeting, and the initial months of the New Year, the board of trustees is pleased to share some good news on the budget. You may recall during the January budget meeting we shared our decision-making process specific to certain parts of the budget to ensure it is balanced for 2019. As a result we deferred budget requests for several items, which included new furniture for the children’s classrooms, new lightweight plastic tables for the basement, and a request for new bells for the bell choir.

Soon after the budget meeting, we received some amazing news. For each of the requests we were not able to fund in the budget, several church members directed additional gifts to support the purchase of some or all of the requested items. We are so blessed and so grateful to those who stepped up to provide financial support, above and beyond what they may have already pledged, to help with the purchase of these items. Also, as reported in this edition of the Banner, the church mortgage has been paid off thanks again to several generous donors. All of this is just another example of what an amazing church we have, and the commitment the congregation has to support our mission and worship activities. What a blessing!
From the Council  - Laura Engelken, Council President

“Exploring Possibilities”

One of the gifts of being part of a vibrant congregation is seeing the ways God might be moving in the interests and energies of both individuals and our in community as a whole. One such emerging possibility at College Street comes in the form of an intergenerational service trip.

Roughly two years ago, a church-wide survey invited individuals to register their interest in various ministry opportunities. One of the options put forth on that list included an international, all-ages service trip, similar to the ones experienced by our youth. With that initial beginning, a small group of individuals began exploring possibilities for a unique opportunity for faith development and cultivating a broader understanding of the Kingdom of God beyond Burlington, Vermont.

During our March meeting, members of the Church Council heard from Jason Giroux and Debbie Ingram as they shared some of their findings after a long period of research and evaluation. Their goal has been to identify an organization or project that would: welcome the participation of children, youth, and adults; be economically feasible for members of our congregation to participate; and be open to the possibility of a long-term partnership. Through their searching, the group connected with Global Ministries, a joint effort between the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that works with faith-based international organizations. https://www.globalministries.org/

Global Ministries will be an excellent resource for the group moving forward as they help our congregation explore whether, or how, God might be leading us to establish connections with our global community. If you are interested in being part of this discussion and reflection process, contact either Jason or Debbie.
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<td>9 am - New Member Group</td>
<td>6:30 pm - Worship Sous Chef</td>
<td>7pm - Deacons Meeting</td>
<td>7 pm - Media Small Group</td>
<td>2 pm - Brownbag Bible Study</td>
<td>1 pm - Meditation</td>
<td>6 pm - Bell Choir Rehearsal</td>
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<td>9:30 am - Staff Mtg.</td>
<td>9 am - Worship</td>
<td>10:30 am - The Bible Story</td>
<td>11:30 am - Youth Choir</td>
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<td>10 am - New Member Group</td>
<td>11:30 am - Children's Choir</td>
<td>3 pm - Social Band Concert at CSCC</td>
<td>3 pm - Deacons Meeting</td>
<td>7 pm - Media Small Group</td>
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<td>6:30 pm - Worship Sous Chef</td>
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<td>7 pm - Media Small Group</td>
<td>12 pm - Brownbag Bible Study</td>
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<td>7:30 pm - Choir Practice</td>
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<td>9 am - New Member Group</td>
<td>PALM SUNDAY</td>
<td>10 am - Worship</td>
<td>11:30 am - COTS Lunches</td>
<td>11:30 am - The Bible Story</td>
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<td>11:45 am - Caring for Aging Love Ones</td>
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<td>6:30 pm - Worship Sous Chef</td>
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<td>6:30 pm - Council Meeting</td>
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<td>7 pm - Media Small Group</td>
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<td>7 pm - Media Small Group</td>
<td>12 pm - Brownbag Bible Study</td>
<td>1 pm - Meditation</td>
<td>5:30 pm Community Connections</td>
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For the most up-to-date Calendar, visit our website!
The Banner is the monthly newsletter published by College Street Congregational Church.
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Church Council:
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Vice President - Michelle Metzler
Treasurer- Claire Willis
Clerk– Karen Hammer Williamson
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Stephanie Dorgan  Jess Lilly

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