

Dates & Meetings

- Mar. 3 - 10:45 Membership
Information Gathering
- Mar. 5 - Book Club/Discussion
Noon & 6:30 pm
- Mar. 5 - 6:30 Membership
Committee Mtg
- Mar. 6 - 6:30 Outreach
Committee Mtg
- Mar. 8 - 1:00 Communications
Team Mtg
- Mar. 10 - 11:00 Funeral
Planning
- Mar. 12 - 7:00 Property &
Finance Committee Mtg
- Mar. 13 - 6:30 Deacons Mtg
- Mar. 14 - 5:30 Lenten Soup/
Study
- Mar. 17 - Happy B-Day Neil!
- Mar. 19 - 7:00 Worship &
Music Mtg
- Mar. 20 - 6:30 Church
Council Mtg
- Mar. 21 - 10:00 Caring
Connections Visitation
Celebration Coffee
- Mar. 21 - 5:00 Stewardship Mtg
- Mar. 21 - 5:30 Lenten Soup/
Study
- Mar. 24 - Stories from Kenya
- Mar. 28 - Lenten Soup/Study
- Stitches of Love meets every
Tuesday at 7 pm
- Choir practice is Thursday 7 pm
- Bell Choir practices Sundays
10:45 am

Tower Tidings



March 1, 2019

Pastor's Letter • Lent: Giving Up or Giving Back

Dear Friends,

In Indiana and Michigan where I spent 24 years of my ministry, there is the tradition from the Polish community of eating Paczkis pronounced "puns key" being eaten on Shrove (Fat) Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday. Here in New England I've known churches that have the Shrove Tuesday Pancake breakfast. The idea being that you clean out of your house all the things you shouldn't or are not supposed to eat during Lent.

We often think of Lent as a time to "give up" something and it usually is something that we probably like. Traditionally it was things like chocolate, sugar, meat, coffee or caffeinated beverages etc. A more contemporary list might include a fast from things like: social networking, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

From the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer we get the traditional words that many churches use to call the faithful to begin the season Lent:

"I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word."

The tradition has been for many Christians to commit to fasting as a way of giving up certain luxuries in order to replicate Jesus' journey into the desert for 40 days.

In one of the biblical passages read on Ash Wednesday Jesus talks about the discipline of almsgiving, giving to the poor and needy, the outcast and stranger. (Matt. 6:1-4) This got me thinking about our Lenten disciplines and how we often focus on giving up things but what if we also focused on giving back? For the Islamic Faith during their month of fasting (Ramadan) part of their fasting is to pledge a percentage of their savings to the needs of the poor. What if this Lent we thought more about giving back rather than up.

Consider what you may save by fasting from that daily Starbucks or DD latte or that movie ticket and popcorn and donating it to programs that feed families or houses the homeless or works with persons struggling with addiction illness. Or perhaps you don't give up something but you discipline yourself to give a little more during Lent to persons with needs with the discipline to make sure to give it *"without your left hand knowing what your right hand is doing."* (Matt. 6:3) Maybe you choose volunteer a few more hours as your Lenten discipline. I think you will find joy in such things. No one, including Jesus, ever said these things (fasting, almsgiving, prayer) were supposed to be miserable, difficult perhaps at times, but not gloomy. In fact, Jesus even said that when we fast we are to *"not look somber as the hypocrites do,"*

So put on a smile, find a place to serve, and this Lent let us practice a Lent of giving back rather than up.

Caring Connections Celebration Coffee!



Submitted by Louise Bastille Members of our Caring Connections and those interested in being part of the Caring Connections Visitation Team are meeting on Thursday, March 21 at 10 a.m. This will be a time to check in with one another, welcome new visitors to our team and hear from our pastors about the importance of our work. There are lots of ways to be part of our caring ministry: meals, rides, visits, and prayers. Please join us in the Church Library, former Multipurpose Room. Call Diane Wells, Kay Vercoe, or Louise Bastille to learn more.

Faith Formation News

In January, Rev. Paula led the young people in a special communion service. On a Sunday in February, she told the story of the Good Samaritan using the wooden pieces that church members had created a few years ago. Rev. Paula will be spending one Sunday a month being involved with and teaching the children and youth. The next date is March 17!



Change for the Church continues to be a very successful way to collect an offering. Each week we pour the donated coins into an empty gallon water jug. The first time we filled it we counted over \$400 to donate to clean water projects through World Vision. With this money we are purchasing one Water Purifier kit (\$160) that can create safe water for drinking, hand-washing, and bathing. We are also buying one Foot-Powered Water Pump (\$250) that will help farmers irrigate their crops without carrying buckets of water back and forth. Our second water jug is about 2/3 full of coins already! Thank you!



When: April 11-13



Submitted by Hollis Thompson The Rummage Sale is right around the corner! We are desperately seeking donations of household items from your attic to basement and everything in between. Don't forget the tools, toys, jewelry, books, and linens! You may begin to drop off your donations at the church starting April 5. Starting April 8, we are in need of your help to sort, sell and clean-up!

During the week of work, we feed our volunteers and, on Thursday before we open at 5:00 p.m. we provide the volunteers with a hot meal. We gladly accept donations of snack foods and desserts as well as other items for our meal. Dessert items will be on sale on Friday. Thanks for your help and support.



Sign up sheets will be available during Coffee Hour after church Sunday starting Mid March. If you are unable to help during the week, if possible, please help with food or desserts.

Lenten Soup & Study

Mark your calendars for this season's Lenten Soup and Study to be held on Thursday evenings - March 14, 21, 28 and April 4 at 5:30 p.m. in the Church Hall.

Led by Pastors Neil and Paula, the study is centered on the book "Plenty Good Room."

Combining an in-depth look at scripture, American history, and the music and lyrics of several African American spirituals, we will reflect on the history and the context of these origins. These songs are incredible and were created by faith-filled saints who survived a devastating period in history. They left being music that has inspired millions throughout the years.

Join in a time of fellowship, spiritual reflection and a meal of soup. Simply come and be filled with warm soup and the love of God.



A Note from Paula

Amazing as it may seem, the Lenten Season is right around the corner – it begins March 6th. Lent is a time in the Christian calendar for us to reflect on what Jesus' life, death and resurrection means to each of us and what impact it has on our own lives.

Depending on your tradition you may reflect on the season through giving up something or taking on something extra. The tradition of giving something up began to replicate the sacrifice of Jesus' and his 40 day journey in the desert. Commonly, people have fasted or given up luxuries, such as chocolate or desserts.

Sunday, February 17th the Confirmation Class traveled to Dover to the Islamic Society of the Seacoast to learn more about the Muslim faith. We were greeted warmly by Yussara, who spent time with us to share her faith's history, practices and fundamentals. The Muslim practice of five times a day prayer and how Yussara explains it is beautiful and for me inspiring. She explains that taking time to plan into your day when and where you will pause for 10 minutes or so, 5 times in the day to focus on God, you are reminded of what is truly important in life. God!



She said it helps you to remain close to God because you have placed the priority in your life of spending five times each and every busy day to focus on God.

Part of my practice this Lenten season is to plan and practice praying 5 times each day – so if my cell phone dings while I'm talking to you – it's probably a reminder that it's time to spend time with God. (However, I will not be waking myself up in the middle of the night to pray as is the practice of those following the Muslim faith.)

I encourage you to really think about what you might do for the 40 days of Lent to draw nearer to God. If giving up chocolate reminds you of God in your life each time you see chocolate then go for it.

Blessings

Paula

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering March 31, 2019

Submitted by Bill Gile

There are 5 special offerings in the UCC - maybe the best known is the One Great Hour of Sharing or OGHS. It is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that carries God's message of love and hope to people in significant need or crisis.

Through One Great Hour of Sharing, lives are literally changed daily. Imagine the ripples of change we can make happen by sharing our gift with the world.

We sometimes think that "imagination" means something escapist or illusory. Yet, imagination is not something unreal or fake. No, it is essential to God's hope for creation.

Hear how the Apostle Paul put it:

"Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine...." Ephesians 3:20-21

And God imagines a world where all are safe, all are loved, all are fed.

You see, when we use our imaginations in the way that God does, we can begin to envision – and work for! – a world where no child goes unfed, un-housed, or unloved; where no one ever fears abuse or violence; where clean water is not a dream but a reality for all; where small farmers do their work with dignity and are paid a fair wage for their labors; where agricultural practices enrich and renew the land rather than deplete it; where survivors of natural disasters have the resources they need, now and for years to come; where vulnerable immigrants are welcomed in Christ's name.

Can YOU imagine these things? Through your gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing what we can imagine becomes ever more a reality for more and more people. Please give generously! "More Than You Can Imagine..."

We are receiving the One Great Hour of Sharing on Sunday, March 31, 2019. Look for the envelopes in the pews and in your bulletins & please give generously.



Spring Ahead on
March 10, 2019



January 23, 2019

Dear Partners in Christ:

The vision of a body united - in purpose, in mission, in vision - is one that inspired the birth of our denomination. All of our spiritual impulses reverberate in an effort to call us into a more perfect union. Throughout our shared history as a people of faith and as a part of the Body of Christ, we have challenged ourselves to widen the circle of inclusion. Widening the circle has always come with growth pains as we shed old skins and welcome those whom we had previously thought unwelcome. And, with each new articulation of a more fully expressed Body of Christ we have realized new joy. Through it all we remain focused on the call to be one and committed to meeting the challenges inherent in that call.

We are now living in and through a season when the threats to unity are legion. Talk of walls that mark refugees as threats, labels like 'terrorist' that attach too easily to Muslims, overt racial bias that normalizes fear and hatred, a pandemic of abuse to women with the trigger reflex to forgive the men who author that abuse have turned America into a land many of us no longer recognize and that too many of us are finding harder and harder to reconcile with our faith.

Now more than ever, the Holy Spirit of the Living God and the Risen Christ is seeking to partner with anyone committed to unifying the human community. The gospel mandate to love our neighbor as we love ourselves resonates deep within us. It calls for the better angels among and within us to always resist impulses to hate, to condemn, to vilify, or to castigate. In such a time as this, the United Church of Christ's call to fulfill the prayer of Jesus, that they may all be one, stands as an urgent mandate to disciples who envision a just world for all.

United with you in God's service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John C. Dorhauer".

The Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer
General Minister and President

Officers of the Church

Rev. John C. Dorhauer
General Minister and President

Rev. Traci D. Blackmon
Associate General Minister
Justice and Local Church Ministries

Rev. James A. Moos
Associate General Minister
Global Engagement and Operations
Co-executive for Global Ministries



Congregational Church of
Laconia, UCC
18 Veterans Square
Laconia NH 03246

The Congregational Church of Laconia UCC has been sponsoring Dawning's high school education in Kenya through One Life Africa for three years. She is in her final year before taking exams to enter the University, If she passes her exams she will be able to attend University for free. Each year, at the beginning of classes Dawning writes us a letter to let us know how she is doing. The letter is below. Keep Dawning and her schooling in your prayers as she enters her final year.

Senior Pastor:
Rev. Neil Wilson
neil@laconiaucc.org

Associate Pastor:
Rev. Paula B. Gile
paula@laconiaucc.org

Editor-in-Chief:
Camille Gibson
churchoffice@laconiaucc.org

To Congregational Church of Laconia.

I Dawning Akuku Okuthe, take this opportunity to greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Kenya I live in Kisumu County and my sublocation is Nyaka. In our family I am the only child and both of my parents are dead.

I schooled in a local school called Apanda Kasayo Secondary School in Kisumu County. I normally work hard to achieve my dreams. My favourite subjects in school are Mathematics, Chemistry, Geography, Business Studies and physics and this makes me to have a dream of doing Civil Engineering in my University level so I kept working for it.

I would like to thank OneLife Africa for the camp they have been preparing during the school holiday. This camp always help to mentor us in encouraging us and it also helps us to learn how to deal with issues that happen in our lives in the changing world.

I would like to encourage all of you to continue helping other students who face the same problem like me. If it was not for you then I would be nothing in this world.

To Congregational Church of Laconia received my sincere thanks you in the Lord's name for supporting my education. If it were not for you then I would be nothing. I would like to encourage you to support my education till the end. I promise to put much effort in my studies. Thank you, merry Christmas and happy new year 2019.

Yours faithfully
Dawning Akuku Okuthe.