

Trinity Times

"Growing in Christ, Sharing in Love"

A publication of Trinity United Church

A joint congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Church of Christ

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Elsie Armstrong Rhodes, Pastor

Cyndy Reames, Editor

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From the Pastor's Pen:

By The Reverend Elsie Armstrong Rhodes

The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. (Romans 8:26 NT & Psalms Inclusive Version, Oxford University Press)

How should we pray? Do you ever wonder about this?

Something a seminary friend once said in a sermon about prayer has stuck in my mind all these years...He began his sermon with this: "My mother prays for a parking space close by, and she gets it. My friend, Bishop Paulus, prays for his people in Ethiopia who are starving...their hunger continues. What's going on here? How should we pray?"

In this Lenten season, I find myself asking this question all over again. While the world's gaze may not be on Ethiopia at present, one wonders when the world seems bent on war, and when one is all too aware of people in great pain and dealing with deep loss: *how should we pray?*

First, *I believe prayer matters.* I know that prayer has changed me, and has altered the course of my life journey. I have seen the power of prayer at work in others - and yes, even in the world.

Second, I think we can take refuge in and learn from the biblical examples of praying. We need only to dig into the psalms, to listen in on the conversations between Moses and God, Hannah and God, Jeremiah and God, Habakkuk and God...Jesus and God. As we listen to their pleas, their prayerful petitions to God in behalf of their people - we can learn something about prayer and its efficacy, and about how to pray.

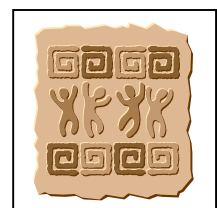
Prayer requires that we let go of *our control of the situation* and that we *turn it over to God.* Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen, author of *Kitchen Table Wisdom* put it this way: "Prayer is not a way to get what we want to happen...prayer may be less about asking for the things we are attached to than it is about relinquishing our attachments in some way..."

Prayer is a movement from mastery to mystery (pp. 270-2).

How God answers our prayers is up to God. Whether or not we pray - and how we pray - is up to us. In the remaining weeks of Lent, I invite you to explore different ways to pray. Try setting apart a space and a time for *quiet prayer*, for *quiet listening to and waiting on God.* Take the worship bulletin home and pray each day for the people in need of healing, whose names are listed on the back of the bulletin. Each time a prayer comes through the prayer chain, take a moment to lift that person up to God in prayer. After reading the newspaper, offer prayers for those people and places in the news. I have a dear friend who begins each day with these words from scripture: "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." A colleague recommended this ritual: each morning, lift up (literally, *lift up*) your calendar and planner to God, saying: "God, I give you my time this day. Bless my time, that I may use it well and to your glory. Amen." At the close of the day, we can offer a similar prayer, asking God to take our efforts from the day, and to use them for God's purposes, to lift from our hearts any burdens that we carry, that we may put them to rest, if only for a night, entrusting our cares to God.

As for those times when our urgent requests of God are not granted, our deepest desires not realized - does that mean that our prayers have not been heard, indeed have not been answered? No. I believe that *God hears and responds to all our prayers.* We may not understand the answer, or there may be unexpected answers to our prayers that we may not even be aware of for years. But our prayers are not wasted. They are not lost. In the words of author Madeleine L'Engle, "God holds them, hand outstretched to receive them like precious pearls," (*Two-Part Invention*, p. 187).

With hope and prayer -
Pastor Elsie



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Notes from the Covenant Board

Gary Pratt, Clerk of Session

On February 12, the newly elected 2005 Covenant Board Members met for a one-day retreat. The purpose of this time apart was to become better acquainted with one another and to establish goals and responsibilities for the coming year. Their first official meeting will be Tuesday, March 8, 7:00pm at the church.

MEMBERS OF THE COVENANT BOARD – 2005

Outreach Team

Karen Kaslusky	Evangelism	908-822-7398
Phil Krieter	Mission	908-707-4031

Ministries Team

Lorraine Kimsey	Christian Ed.	908-580-9761
Karen Van Manen		908-908-1979
Kit Bebbington		732-356-3730

Administrative Team

Bob Hurd	Bldgs. & Grds	732-560-9209
Mildred Waale	Personnel	908-754-6557
Robert Willitts		732-564-1508

Clerk

Gary Pratt		908-647-6094
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OFFICERS OF THE CORPORATION – 2005

President:	Bob Hurd
Vice President:	Kit Bebbington
Secretary:	Gary Pratt
Treasurer:	Carol Krueger

Members of the 2005 Pastoral Relations Committee

Harry Morgan	Kathy Pantalone
Phil Krieter	Gary Pratt
Linda Mobus	Karen Van Manen
Joyce Pratt	

TUC Annual Meeting: A First-Timer's Impression

By Heather Harris-Galgoci

It's been a long time since I attended a formal congregational meeting at a church. The last time had to be when I was still in high school, and my sister and I would stay after church with my grandparents for their yearly meeting. We didn't look forward to it and not just because most of the information was irrelevant to us. Yes, we were just teenagers, so we didn't have any strong feelings on the church's budget (heck, the money we contributed wasn't money we had personally earned), but the whole thing was just plain uncomfortable from beginning to end.

First of all, if we had opinions on anything, we were certainly not encouraged to express them. Since we were the only "youth" in the church at that time, no matter how involved we were or how regularly we attended, our opinions meant nothing to those in charge. To be honest, when they talked about heating bills and bathroom renovations, I was probably sitting there thinking about what we'd be having for lunch. However, when the discussion turned to things such as how we felt about the

current minister and criticized a lot of his ideas, I had an opinion, but it wouldn't have occurred to me that I was allowed to speak my mind about it.

What my sister and I found most distasteful was when the meetings would turn "ugly"—which they always did at some point. There were always issues where the debates got heated and out of control. It seemed to me that there were just a handful of individuals running the congregation, and they all secretly hated each other because no one wanted to share control. Everyone else in the congregation was just intimidated by them and kept quiet. The lowest point that I can remember was hearing a parishioner sternly tell the minister to "be quiet"—as if he were a little boy being scolded by his father. What made it truly detestable was that the minister was only trying to maintain order and facilitate the meeting.

So, now that you have a general idea of my past experience with church meetings—TUC basically had nowhere to go but up. To be honest, I was probably still somewhat pessimistic going into the meeting, but from what I've already learned about this church, I knew it had to be better.

First of all, I commend the church for providing very detailed information about everything being covered in the meeting. It was also wonderful to have an organized agenda. (I know that probably sounds silly, but I don't remember ever getting one at the church where I grew up. With the exception of reviewing the budget, it was just free-form chaos.) I also appreciated the biographies of the nominees, the committee reports, and the survey results. I personally didn't realize all that had been accomplished during the previous year until I saw it in writing.

Also, it was nice to observe members expressing differing opinions without being criticized or silenced. It was refreshing to see that everyone was acknowledged and that all ideas and suggestions were taken into account. Not once did I feel that the conversation was getting out of hand.

It also warmed my heart to see that the entire congregation felt so strongly about Elsie. She is truly an inspiring and unifying force in the church, and I hope that she'll be with us for many years to come.

The best part about the meeting was the general positive attitude that I observed. It was really moving to see support and recognition for so many individuals' hard work over the past year. Also, although I know that everyone is concerned about the budget deficit, I didn't walk away filled with worry. With so many ideas of how to close the gap, I still felt a sense of optimism, and I know that if everyone pitches together, we can overcome this temporary obstacle.

Overall, it was a good experience for me. I won't be apprehensive about coming to meetings in the future. Thank you all for renewing my faith and proving to me once again that the true spirit of Christianity is alive and well at TUC.

Financial Report:

Ralph Pratt, Financial Secretary; Carol Krueger, Treasurer

The operating income received through tithes and offerings in February 2005 was \$4,552.44. Other contributions received during February included \$260.00 for medical kits to aid the Tsunami victims, making a total of \$350.

In January 2005 our adjusted operating income was \$12,124.27 while expenses were \$16,976.89. In February, adjusted operating income was \$7,398.47 while expenses were \$9,769.03. Bottom line, we are spending more each month than we are receiving.

Words from Worship

Numbers that Matter: Worship Attendance

February 6	48 Adults	11 Children/Youth
February 13	43 Adults	6 Children/Youth
February 20	41 Adults	5 Children/Youth
February 27	37 Adults	15 Children/Youth

COMMUNION was served to 59 people on February 6, 2005.



LENTEN SOUP SUPPER

&

SERVICE

Thursdays, 6:30 – 7:30pm

March 3 – March 24, 2005

To observe the season, join us for supper and a simple intimate worship service, inspired by Lenten lectionary and liturgy.



SOUP MAKERS OF TUC LEND ME YOUR SOUP!

From "Soup Coordinator" Joyce Pratt

Our Lenten Soup Supper and Services continue through **Thursday, March 24**. Each week, we need at least six soups. Sign-up on the sheet that is in the PCN notebook on the piano in the sanctuary or contact coordinator, Joyce Pratt at (908) 647-6094. Dinner begins promptly at 6:30 p.m., so please be sure to bring your soup at least 15 minutes early, to ensure we can get set up!

If you don't cook or don't have the time to prepare and deliver a soup, there are other ways to help with the Lenten Soup Suppers, including, but not limited to: dish washing (take home church-owned utensils and bowls to be run through your dishwasher); laundry service (washing the cloth table coverings); and bell ringing (being the clock watcher on a specific week to ensure we start and end on time). Please contact Cyndy Reames (732-271-1885) if you can help.

In the Garden...

Jesus spent many hours in prayer, especially during the last days and weeks of his life on earth. If you are interested in spending time in prayer with others during the coming Lenten season, contact Pastor Elsie or Cyndy Reames. As people indicate a day and time that would work for them, we will put you in touch with others who have similar availability. Together, we can turn TUC into a Garden of Prayer.

Maundy Thursday Supper and Service at TUC

March 24, 2005

6:30-8:00pm

Maundy Thursday Service has long been a tradition at TUC, observing through a candlelight vigil the last supper Christ shared with his disciples prior to his arrest and crucifixion. This year, join us for the last of our Lenten Soup Suppers and then for a meaningful service led by our Youth.



A Christian Education Minute

Lorraine Kimsey, Elder

On **February 13**, Pastoral Assistant, Elias Ortega-Aponte began leading the Sunday Adult Christian Education Class in an in-depth study of the Passion Narratives found in each of the Gospels. The class started their study in John, and has covered Matthew and Luke. They will end their study in Mark.

OUTWARD BOUND ~ MISSION AT TUC

Kay Hurd, Missions Chairperson

FOOD BANK NEWS

The next **Hunger Offering** for the Food Bank Network of Somerset County will be received on **Sunday, March 20, 2005** during morning worship. Needed items include stews, soups, tuna, pastas and sauces, rice, cereal, vegetables and fruit, peanut butter, canned meat, and powdered milk that are the most urgently needed. "Luxury items," such as coffee, cookies, bar soap, shampoo, and baby food are also appreciated. You may also write a check to "Trinity United Church," earmarked "Hunger Offering." In January, five bags of non-perishable food items were collected and \$367.00 in cash contributions.

Thank you, Al DelVecchio and Ernie Cottrill, for delivering TUC's contributions to the distribution center.

One Great hour of Sharing: Palm Sunday, March 20

Submitted by Kay Hurd

Every year we hear about the OGHS. It's no great secret that PCUSA and UCC join with other denominations to give to the OGHS for disaster relief and other help. This is why we are prepared to offer help in times of disaster. It's easy to nod our heads when asked, and write a check. Non-Christians - good people, humanitarians everywhere - give generously of their money in times of disaster. But, I'd like to explore why we, as Christians, Christ-followers, do this:

1. In talking about Judgment Day, Christ explains how we will be judged before God, separating the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:38 -41) -

I was hungry and you fed me,

I was thirsty and you gave me a drink

I was homeless and you gave me a room

I was shivering and you gave me clothes

I was sick and you stopped to visit.

I was in prison and you came to me.

Then the sheep said to him, "Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you drink, and when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you? Then Christ will say, "I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me - YOU DID IT TO ME. To the goats he said: I'm telling the solemn truth. Whenever you failed to do one of these things so someone who was being overlooked or ignored, that was me - YOU FAILED TO DO IT TO ME.

We have a mandate from Christ to care for others, to feed the hungry, care for the poor, and heal the sick. So when we care for others, wherever they may be, we are also caring for Christ and in Christ's name. We are more than just good folks; we are living what we believe. We have put our faith into action.

2. We do this at this time of year in response to the sacrifice of love by Christ made on our behalf. He died for us. We don't have a crucifix in this church but sometimes it might be good for us to see Christ hanging on the cross. This Lenten season is the time we remember His sacrifice for us.

3. And finally, we were created by God to care for each other, and the world we live in, it's our purpose for being born.

I heard a child crying, in war, in hunger, in desperation, in abuse, in the cold, and I was very angry with God.

"Why don't you do something about this? You are the all powerful, knowing God! You have the power to end this stuff! Why aren't you doing something?"

In silence I heard the still small voice of God saying, "I did, I created you!"



TSUNAMI MEDICAL KITS

Submitted by "Medical" Kit Bebbington

We have collected enough money (\$350) to send off the first kit. Our young Tsunami Bracelet Makers have sold at least 50 of their colorful yarn reminders at \$2 apiece. We will continue to collect items for the medical kits through June. Each kit will provide medical products for 1,000 victims for 3 months and should include:

- 10 bottles of Adult Full Strength Aspirin (100 ct)
- 10 bottles of Iron Tablets (100 ct)
- 10 bottles of Kids Chewable Multi-Vitamins (100 ct)
- 10 bottles of Adult Multi-Vitamins (100 ct)
- 10 bottles Children's Tylenol-type (100 ct)
- 10 tubes of Antibiotic Ointment (Neosporin-type)
- 10 boxes 4 x 4" Sterile Gauze Pads
- 10 rolls First Aid Adhesive Tape

No time to shop? Cash and checks for prescription drugs and shipping are also welcome.

For more information on this endeavor, contact "Medical" Kit Bebbington at 732-356-3730.



TUC COMMUNITY ART SHOW AND SALE

Submitted by Kit Bebbington

Everyone is invited to come and enjoy a "bit of culture" and all around fun as TUC hosts its second Community Art Show and Sale on Saturday, April 23, 10 am to 4 pm. To date, 10 artists from the church and community have committed to exhibit their craft.

Openings are also available for volunteer workers both the day before the sale, Friday, April 22, and throughout the sale and show on Saturday, April 23. For more information on how you can participate, contact coordinator, Kit Bebbington at (732) 356-3730 or by e-mail at g.bebbington@att.net.

TAPE MINISTRY

Submitted by Merl Coslick

TUC has begun its latest technological innovation, our tape ministry. All sermons are recorded and made available for distribution in either audiotape (available immediately following the worship service) or in CD format (available upon request). A library of master recordings is being maintained and any prior sermon can be retrieved as desired. Soon all sermons will be posted on our church website, to be downloaded and listened to by all Internet visitors.

Your support is sincerely appreciated. To help in any way (financially, technically, or by tape distribution), contact Merl Coslick, Gary Pratt, Henry Coslick or Thom Rhodes. Won't you consider becoming part of this team?

**When we get tangled up in our problems, be still.
God wants us to be still, so He can untangle the knot.**

Words of Wisdom
from the Healing and Wholeness Ministry

Nurse's Prescription

By Kay Hurd R.N., Parish Nurse

The month of March is a month when we remember the mentally ill. These are our forgotten people, the people who are homeless and on the streets, those who wander aimlessly through life with the “demons” inside of themselves. Scott Peck, the Christian psychiatrist, wrote in his *People of the Lie*, that the evil people of the world are not those who are mentally ill, those who suffer with bipolar disease, those with schizophrenia, depression. These are people with brain “glitches” even the worst serial killers, are not evil, but mentally ill no matter how horrendous their crimes. We eventually will find the “cures” for these biochemical disarrangements - if we don't keep sweeping them out into the street. Evil is on another plane. Maybe it's using us to sweep?

On a personal side we go to the doctor at the first sign of an ache, pain or infection to get the “cure”. But we never think to go to someone for our emotional pain – until it reaches the physical level. Then we just want a pill to take the pain away. Alcohol, cocaine, heroine, marijuana, and prescription painkillers, are all drugs used taken to take away emotional pain. Somehow we believe that it is OK to run around in emotional pain but not in physical pain. So we use what is available by prescription or on the street to take away the pain of loneliness, loss, sadness, inferiority, etc. As a proponent of the quote “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” maybe we wouldn't hurt everywhere so much if we took care of the emotional pain to determine why we are hurting and how we can change our lives so that we don't hurt so much. Just a plug for mental health workers – they don't have magic pills or surgery to take away the pain. They lead you into those areas so that you can deal with and relieve your own emotional pain. That's a tough place, as tough as or often tougher than facing open-heart surgery or cancer diagnosis. But, it works when you are willing to work through it. It's so often that we quit when the going gets really tough and we begin to examine ourselves and our own behavior.

But those with deep mental illness are never relieved of their psychic pain. The lost and lonely are in deep pain without much hope of help. What can we do? I really don't know. Except when we say our church is open to the handicapped we cannot just mean that the doors are wheelchair accessible, and there are elevators for those who cannot use the stairs. We have to mean that in our worship service, we include, not exclude, those who may say “silly” or inappropriate things, at inappropriate times, or are dressed inappropriately or have bizarre ideas. We need to include and love them, too. They are creations of God and have a place in the house of God. Then PRAY that we find the solutions to mental illness, or at least a place to take care of them besides the streets.

Movement for Everyday Living

By Yvette Halpin

Again from last month: Before jumping out of bed for your day, take a few moments after you acknowledge God's omnipresence and move your body while still in bed.

REVIEW:

1. FULL BODY STRETCH
2. TWISTING POSITION
3. WIND ELIMINATION:

Still in bed, inhaling bend your right knee, bringing it toward your chest. Exhaling, interlock your fingers a few inches below the knee or behind the thigh, pressing your leg close to your chest. On an exhalation, tuck your chin and slowly lift your head and aim your chin, nose or forehead (depending upon your capacity) toward your knee. On an inhalation, release your upper back, neck and head back to the bed and let your leg glide out. Repeat with the left leg.

Then bend both legs, clasping and pressing toward your chest, keeping your tailbone pressed to the bed. Exhaling lift your chin, nose or forehead toward your knees making sure you are relaxing your shoulders and back, keeping them soft. Then release your upper body to the bed and on an inhalation release your legs.

The areas of our body that are very important to health are our elimination and digestion. This morning's movement stimulates both areas and helps keep them flowing, open and nourished.

REMEMBER: CONSISTENCY IS THE KEY. Be persistent, patient and positive. Behold and take care of this treasure, your body. It is the day-in and day-out repetition that will strengthen and stretch the unused muscles and bring blood and circulation to all the areas. You WILL see the difference.



*Blessed are the flexible,
for they shall not be bent out of shape.*

Church Bells and Fire Sirens ~

Sunday, February 20, found the congregants of Trinity United Church gathered in the parking lot as members of the Washington Valley Volunteer Fire Department and the Warren Police Department tracked down the source of smoke billowing from the vents in the sanctuary. A damaged blower in the furnace was the culprit and once the building was safe, everyone filed back in for morning worship. It may not have been the warmest sanctuary or the most structured service, but it was lively and meaningful. Later in the day, a representative from PSE&G came and repaired the blower and by Monday morning, the heat was back on in the church!

In an email, Pastor Elsie issued the following: “Thank you to all who took care of the situation, helping to ensure everyone's safety and well-being. I know I speak for everyone when I say THANK YOU to the emergency personnel (the police and the firemen) who responded immediately to the call.”

PR FOR TUC

Submitted by Yvette Halpin

In the 21st century, word of mouth is not enough for the work of the church to become known. It takes advertising and planning and consistency. It takes teamwork. At TUC, Yvette Halpin, Andrew Galgoci, Kay Hurd, Gary Pratt, and Joyce Pratt are doing that teamwork. For more information on the team, to make them aware of something that needs to be publicized, or to offer suggestions on resources for publicizing, email them at publicity@trintyunitedchurch.org.

Upcoming TUC Meetings and Events:

- Mar. 2 (Wednesday 7:00pm) – Choir Rehearsal
- Mar. 3 (Thursday 6:30-7:30pm) – Lenten Soup Supper and Service
- Mar. 6 (Sunday 9:30am) – Church School for all ages
- Mar. 6 (Sunday 10:30am) – Worship, Service of Communion – Lent 4
- Mar. 6 (Sunday 11:45am) – Farewell Luncheon for the MacGregors
- Mar. 6 (Sunday 1:30pm) – Xtravaganza (off-site)
- Mar. 8 (Tuesday 7:00pm) – Covenant Board Meeting
- Mar. 9 (Wednesday 7:00pm) – Choir Rehearsal
- Mar. 10 (Thursday 6:30-7:30pm) – Lenten Soup Supper and Service
- Mar. 10 (Thursday 7:45pm) – Publicity Committee Meeting
- Mar. 11 (Friday) – Wedding Rehearsal
- Mar. 12 (Saturday 6:00pm) – Harvey/Kluckas Wedding
- Mar. 13 (Sunday 9:30am) – Church School
- Mar. 13 (Sunday 10:30am) – Worship – Lent 5
- Mar. 13 (Sunday 12:00pm) – Administrative Team Meeting
- Mar. 16 (Wednesday 7:00pm) – Choir Rehearsal
- Mar. 17 (Thursday 6:30-7:30pm) – Lenten Soup Supper and Service
- Mar. 20 (Sunday 9:30am) – Church School
- Mar. 20 (Passion/Palm Sunday 10:30am) – Worship, Hunger Offering and Medical Kit Supplies Received – start of Holy Week
- Mar. 23 (Wednesday 7:00pm) – Choir Rehearsal
- Mar. 24 (Maundy Thursday 6:30-8:00pm) – Lenten Soup Supper and Special Service led by Youth
- Mar. 27 (EASTER Sunday) – NO Church School
- Mar. 27 (EASTER Sunday 10:30am) – Worship
- Mar. 29 (Tuesday 7:30pm) – All-Teams Meeting, at the manse.

A Recently Spotted Bumper Sticker:
"Blessed are they who can laugh at themselves for they shall never cease to be amused."

TUC Women's Retreat Rescheduled to JUNE 10-11, 2005 "Come to the Waters ..."

Come...refresh your spirit; restore your body and soul.

Enjoy the gracious hospitality of Lonnie Miller, our host and retreat facilitator.

We will spend time together at table and at play, in meditation and in silence.

The retreat will be held at the Millers' home at the shore in Silver Beach, near Lavallette, NJ.

Cost for lodging, meals and program is \$60 (payment must be made in full to secure a spot; if you signed up prior to the date change, please confirm your registration.)

LADIES DAY

Saturday April 2 10-2 PM

Bake Sale

PLUS

Salesmen's sportswear samples from quality manufactures

At 40% less than wholesale prices

And

Complimentary Teas and nibbles will be served as you shop!

Bring friends, neighbors, family
EVERYONE to our first Fund Raiser



What's happening in and around TUC

“Project Healthy Bones”

This active, joyful, exercise and fitness group now meets at 10am each *MONDAY* and Wednesday. With the retirement of Don and Laura, the new leader for the group is Carole Juth. For more information on becoming how you can become involved, contact her at (732) 469-5666,

Yoga: Stretching Into New Territory

The gentle exercise known as Yoga is back at TUC in a big way! Each **Sunday at 7:30pm**, Mary Beth Healy leads a class that includes stretching and breathing exercises. For information on joining this session, contact Mary Beth at 908 672-3455.

Certified Yoga Instructor, Yvette Halpin leads sessions on **Tuesday mornings at 9:30am** and **Tuesday evenings at 7:30pm**. For more information and to register, contact Yvette at 732-271-8786.

A CapPALS

Join voices with others seeking ways to turn their love of a cappella singing into outreach opportunities. This fun loving, dedicated group meets usually meets every other **Saturdays at 10am** at the church. For information on the next rehearsal, becoming a member, or if you have an opportunity for this group to perform, contact Harry Morgan at 732-469-5994.

KNITTERS AND CROCHETERS UNITE

Since March 1996, over 200,000 sweaters have been given to needy children all over the world through *The Guideposts Sweater Project*, newly named, *Guideposts Knit for Kids*. To pick up copies of basic sweater patterns, or to learn more about this unique project, contact Carol Krueger at 908-647-5870. There is a new Aran pattern for those who want more of a challenge. You can be creative! Your sweater can be a one-of-a kind creation that will be worn and loved by a very special child.

CineMinistry / Readers' Club

These two popular groups alternately share the time slot of **4pm** on the **4th Sunday** of each month.

The next selection for the Readers' Club has been changed to "The Bridge of San Luis Rey" by Thornton Wilder. This small book provides myriad opportunities for discussion. Since the 4th Sunday in March is Easter Sunday, the Club will meet on **Sunday April 3 at 4pm** at the home of Ernie Cottrill and Joanna Marston, 24, Berkshire Drive in Warren.

The next CineMinistry viewing will be on Sunday, April 24 at 4pm.

All CineMinistry and Readers' Club events are open to the community, so be sure to invite your friends and neighbors.

In Final Tribute ~

It is with great sadness that we share with you the recent death of the Reverend Nate VanderWerf, who passed away unexpectedly Tuesday evening, February 8. We so appreciated his pastoral ministry with us. Our prayers are with his wife Dorothy and their family. The following is an excerpt from a letter sent from the Rev. Bob Foltz-Morrison of the Elizabeth Presbytery:

For those of you who knew Nate, you know of his energy and passion and his willingness to take on great challenges. His latter years of service in the presbytery included an interim pastorate at Trinity United Church in Warren; closing the Elmora Church as its second interim pastor and creating the Elmora Legacy Fund to serve Presbyterian mission in the City of Elizabeth; and, at his death, interim director of PRISM—Presbyterians Renewing in Spirit and Mission, a cooperative ministry of the Presbyterian congregations in Elizabeth and Hillside and the Elizabethport Presbyterian Center.

Those who had more extended conversations with Nate know of his years as Director of the Council of Churches in Cleveland during the Civil Rights Era, service with the National Council of Churches of Christ in New York City, a past and recent visit with former President Jimmy Carter, travels outside the United States, his years as a Reformed Church in America pastor, singing in a choral society, and...well, you will need to listen for more of Nate's life story.

When Pastor Nate left TUC as interim, Joyce Pratt wrote this farewell poem, which is fitting as this, our final farewell to him.

A Farewell Tribute to Nate VanderWerf Our Interim Pastor and Friend

You came to us a stranger
You're leaving us a friend
The plans that God has given you
For us, are round the bend

It started out on shaky ground
Since change is hard to do
But with your persistent nature
We are re-directed and new

It's been so very handy
To have you around this place
We are runnin round like Bandy
And like Paul, we're runnin the race

You brought your musical talent
And your skill for rattlin our cage
We've been much more than just good PALS
But it's time to turn the page

So think of us from time to time
And be sure that when you do
You think of special moments
That will shine in your heart so true

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Thinking About Lent

By Heather Harris-Galgoci

Easter has always been my favorite holiday. As a child, Christmas may have meant more presents, but there was just something more exquisite about Easter. I've always loved everything about it—from the smell of Easter lilies in church to all that wonderful Easter candy. I was even baptized on a beautiful Easter Sunday.

But, what about Lent? I mean, the season before Easter is supposed to be one of self-reflection and penitence. You might think that's why I liked Easter so much—the big celebration at the end of the suffering, but to be honest, the season of Lent pretty much meant nothing to me as a child. I wouldn't have even known what it was if it wasn't for the fact that I grew up in the predominantly Catholic coal region of Pennsylvania.

I guess initially, I thought the whole thing was silly. My family and my church never did anything special for Lent. When I was in school, other kids would talk about it, but I rarely paid attention; however, my first memory of dealing with the subject is rather unique. When I was about 10 years old, I remember being in my school cafeteria for lunch on a Friday during Lent. I was eating a sandwich that was comprised of some type of meat. One of my friends suddenly realized what I was doing, pointed to me, and said, "Oooh...you're going to hell...you're eating meat on a Friday during Lent..." I didn't know what to say in response to her, but another one of my friends responded on my behalf. She said, "She's not going to hell. She's Protestant. Only Catholics go to hell if they eat meat on Fridays during Lent." I remember laughing a little bit about it, and the conversation moved on to other things. The whole thing seemed ridiculous to me. Why would God care what I ate, or what they ate for that matter? I couldn't imagine why one would receive eternal damnation in exchange for a few slices of chicken breast. I blew off the whole incident and thanked God that I wasn't Catholic.

By high school, the same people who critiqued me for my less-than-Christian eating habits were themselves great purveyors of the sins of cold cuts. They had gone from having a fear of damnation to "not caring unless they were with their parents." This made me think that the whole season of Lent was just absurd. They all began to seem like a bunch of hypocrites to me. Since they stopped practicing what they originally preached, I was glad I never participated in it in the first place.

In college, I became a Religion minor, and the more I studied, the more I re-evaluated my beliefs. My roommate, Trisha, was raised Catholic, and we talked about our faiths on a fairly regular basis. She had strong Christian beliefs, but she had many problems with the church as an institution. Trisha also had her own theory about meatless Fridays during Lent. Her feeling was that it all stemmed from some kind of under-handed deal that the Catholic Church had established centuries ago with fisherman and seafood distributors. In her opinion, it was about money, not sacrifice. All this did was re-

affirm for me that *people* created fasting practices during Lent, *not God*, and God could probably care less.

Around this time was when I also began dating Andrew. He and I also had many religious and philosophical discussions. After we were dating for a few years, and we started to think about the future together, I realized that I might have to start taking this Lent thing seriously. He was raised Byzantine Catholic, and despite any personal issues that he may have had with the church, Lent was one of the traditions he felt strongly about keeping, for religious as well as ethnic reasons.

For Byzantine Catholics, the first day of Lent (the Monday before Ash Wednesday) and the last day of Lent (Good Friday) are considered strict fasts—no meat or dairy products. The Wednesdays & Fridays in between are simple fasts—no meat. At first, this seemed really over-the-top to me. I initially decided that he could maintain his tradition, but I wanted no part of it. When we got married, however, I had to reassess the situation. If we were supposed to be "one" in God by virtue of our marriage, and if we were going to have children at some point and become a family, I felt that I needed to start incorporating traditions that he felt strongly about into my life as well.

It was at that point I started to follow the Byzantine Catholic dietary restrictions of Lent. Personally, I loved a good excuse to make fish, but those no-dairy days were really rough! The first year I did it was solely for Andrew's benefit, but by the second year, it really made me think about Lent and what it means. I realized that it wasn't about what you ate or didn't eat, but about the fact that you made conscious changes to your habits. I was focusing on these changes out of respect for my husband, who in turn, focused on these changes out of respect for Jesus' sacrifice. It was a symbolic practice—no one was being condemned if you messed up and ordered Stromboli for lunch. It reminded me, and still does, that although God is always watching over me, I'm not always thinking about him, and maybe I need to do more of that. If someone had explained this to me years ago, I wouldn't have been so cynical about it in the first place.

Obviously, I'm not recommending the practice of fasting during Lent, but on a personal level, it has helped me to reflect on Christ's sacrifice and what this season really means. It reminds me that I am here to serve God, not the other way around. It's also brought me closer to my husband, whom I know truly appreciates the fact that, although I don't have to, I want to participate in his traditions and beliefs just as he participates in mine. Observing Lent also renews my awareness of what has made my marriage successful, despite our differences in upbringing. It's all about sacrifice, compromise, communication, and love. I think that God has made me finally understand what the season of Lent is really about, and although I still love Easter best, I have a deep appreciation for the time that precedes it.

Sunday Sermon Notes

Worship begins each week at 10:30am

Sunday School for all ages begins at 9:30am

Pastor Elsie Armstrong Rhodes can be reached at the church at 732-469-5044, on her cell at 908-304-3605, or via email at thereverend@trinityunitedchurch.org

March 6: "Thirsting for God"

Scripture: John 4:5-42

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Celebration of Communion

The Rev. Elsie Armstrong Rhodes, preaching

March 13: "That We May Have Life"

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1-14, John 11:1-45

Fifth Sunday in Lent

The Rev. Elsie Armstrong Rhodes, preaching

March 20: "Passage to Passion"

Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11, 26:14-27:66 (selected)

Passion/Palm Sunday

Readers' Theater, Liturgical Dance

Special Offerings Received: Hunger, One Great Hour of Sharing; Tsunami Medical Kit Supplies

March 27: "And so it begins..."

Scripture: Matthew 28:1-10

EASTER / RESURRECTION OF THE LORD!

The Rev. Elsie Armstrong Rhodes, preaching

Scriptures listed can be read online at <http://www.blueletterbible.org/index.html>

Trinity United Church

118 King George Road

Warren, NJ 07059

"Growing in Christ, Sharing in Love"

MARCH 2005