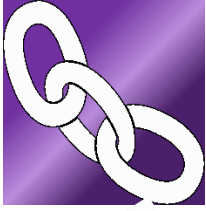


First Presbyterian Church

321 N. 5th St., Burlington, IA 52601, 319-752-6626

1stpresb@1stpresb.org

www.1stpresb.org



Connections

March 2025



Let's Talk About Worship

You may have noticed recently some additions and adjustments to our worship experience. Right now that is inclusion at the beginning of each service or other strategic parts of the service the use of brief videos that are anywhere from 1 to 3 minutes in length. They're being used to help set a tone or express in a different way the experience of worship unlike what we have done before.

I use the word "experience" because worship ought to trigger all sorts of emotions and stimulate your thinking. It is a way of creating a meaningful, relevant worship experience. Meaningful worship is the acknowledgement and celebration of God's power and perfection, where the heart values and treasures God above all things, It is a way of connecting with God, allowing God to speak to our hearts and experience fellowship and communion. That is what I work all week every week to create in and for every season, including funeral services. Meaningful worship needs to speak each and every week to you and send you home with the sense you have been in, touched by and transformed by God's presence, Spirit, love and grace, and where you feel energized with the resolve to be more and do better as a disciple in the days to come.

Add to this challenge is making worship relevant. Relevant worship is not just about what happens in church, the liturgy, music, scripture or sermon. It begins with you, the worshipper. On Monday, did you think about the scripture that was shared on Sunday or thoughts provoked or supported by the sermon? On Wednesday did you begin to think about and making plans to attend worship in just a few days? On Thursday and Friday are you forming expectations of what the upcoming worship experience needs to be for you? As you drive to church on Sunday, are you asking God to provide you an open mind and heart? As you enter the sanctuary, are you ready to experience the power of God, to see, hear and feel the Word in a transformative way? When you sit down in your pew, are you willing to drop your guard and be vulnerable to God's Spirit?

We have not often connected all of this together. Relevant and meaningful worship has been the sole property and responsibility of the pastor. But as you can see, the formula for relevant, meaningful worship begins with each worshipper doing their part. Worship was never intended to be a spectator event or performed as entertainment. It is a whole life experience and an encounter with the living, loving God and his Son, Jesus Christ.



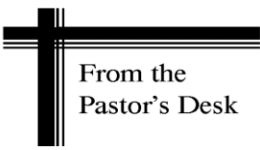
Digging Deeper Into Our Mission Statement: Establish in Faith

Last month I began to explain the significance of each of the four parts of our Mission Statement. First was Engage with the lost. The second part is Establish in Faith. In that first part I alluded to the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Jesus' final words to his disciples following his resurrection were unambiguous: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." The inference is that those living in "the nations" were not people of faith, had no knowledge of God or his son, and for all intents and purposes, were considered "lost." In order to baptize them and make disciples of them required developing a belief in God and his son. That means establishing in them a faith upon which they are able to understand what discipleship is and what disciples do. The apostle Paul is unbelievably clear on this, particularly when he spoke to his protegee, Timothy. We are to teach, convince, exhort and rebuke. This becomes a serious conversation. It can be considered a life and death, "come to Jesus" conversation. It is by faith we are saved, not good works. God takes us and our lives seriously, so much so, that he planned from the beginning of creation to sacrifice his own flesh and blood for us.

Lest it be forgotten, we have the ongoing responsibility of growing the faith of those who are believers. Nothing about Jesus Christ is static and that is also true of our faith. It has often been said that the church of Jesus Christ is functioning on a middle school faith. That harsh analysis is based on the fact that for many adult Christians, confirmation was the last time they engaged in any serious study of our faith. As we mature so should our understanding of Jesus Christ mature as well as how Christ impacts our lives. The responsibility of the church is to enable the growth of faith at every stage of a person's life. Scripture is our best source to understand this. In Hebrews 11:6 it says, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

Jesus says in Matthew 17:20, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, nothing will be impossible for you." The apostle Paul reinforces this in II Corinthians 5:7 "For we walk by faith, not by sight."





March Sermon

Lenten Theme - What Did They See In Him

The season of Lent is a long prelude to Holy Week and Easter. It's a time filled with drama as one person after another meets and experiences Jesus. The passion of Christ is called the Greatest Story Ever Told and is full of characters who had a myriad of emotions in meeting Christ. We have the benefit of time, of knowing how the story ends, but for the people of that time, they were reacting in real time, and it wasn't always their finest hour. None knew what lie ahead. None knew how Jesus would change the course of salvation history. None knew anyone in all of history who had done anything like this or had experienced such unselfish love.

This series of reflections will look at some of the most significant characters in Jesus' journey to the cross. Each will seek to answer the question, what did they see in him? Did he elicit shame, anger, confusion, compassion, indifference? What was it that drew them to him, or, repelled them? One of the problems some have with Jesus even today is that no one can be neutral about him, and because of that he forces us to confront feelings we'd often not have to deal with. Each character we will focus on had a unique moment with Jesus that altered the rest of their lives. Now 2,000+ years later things haven't really changed. We still wrestle with the question, what do you see in Jesus? Jesus forces us to confront thoughts and feelings we would prefer to leave alone. Though we know the story, Jesus still brings out a host of reactions and responses.

March 2 Communion Sunday

Text: Isaiah 58:6-12

I Peter 3:8-22

Title: "Why are You so Hopeful?"

Video: "Come to the Table"

March 5 (Ash Wed.) Imposition of Ashes Service in Chapel 7:00 p.m.

Text: Isaiah 50:4-9a

Mark 14:1-9

Title: Mary of Bethany

March 9 1st Sunday in Lent

Text: Psalm 31:9-16

Matthew **26:14-25**

Title: Judas

Video: The Journey of Lent

March 16 2nd Sunday in Lent
Text: Psalm 41:1-13
Luke 22:31-34; 54-62
Title: Peter
Video: Journey With Jesus

March 23 3rd Sunday in Lent
Text: Psalm 31:9-16
Matthew 26:57-68
Title: Caiaphas
Video: This is the Cross

March 30 4th Sunday in Lent
Text: Isaiah 50:4-9
Luke 23:1-12
Title: Herod
Video: We Seek You

April 6 5th Sunday in Lent Communion
Text: Psalm 22:1-16
John 18:28-19:16
Title: Pontius Pilate
Video: Remember My Sacrifice

April 13 Palm Sunday
Text: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
John 12:12-19
Title: The Crowds
Video: Hosanna

April 17 Maundy Thursday Communion & Anointing with Oil In Chapel
7:00 p.m.
Text: Isaiah 50:4-9a
Luke 23:26-31
Title: Women of Jerusalem

April 18 Good Friday Location & Time TBD
Text: Isaiah 53:1-12
Luke 23:39-43
Title: Two Dying Men

April 20 Easter Sunday Communion

Text: Numbers 14:1-12

John 20:24-31

Title: Thomas

Video: Because He Lives
Remembrance



Lenten Reflection

For many of us one of the very first Bible stories that we learned as children was probably the story of the creation of humankind by God out of the dust of the earth. God took a lump of dust and breathed into it the “ruah” or breath of God, and it became a living being. Fantastic stuff, this notion that ordinary dust could become alive through the ruah of God.

A little later, probably about the time I was in late elementary school I learned another bit of fantastic stuff, that our human bodies are made up of about 99% water and a little bit of solid matter, “dust” if you will. Perhaps, if I had only thought about it then, I shouldn’t have been surprised at that epiphany, and the thought that, if all of the water were removed from my body, all that would remain is a bit of dust.

And so it all comes together for me as an adult on the First Day of Lent, which we call Ash Wednesday. We receive a mark of ash in the form of a cross on our foreheads with the admonition “Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return...” The prayer for the blessing of the ashes says “Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, that we may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

In that action of inscribing an ashen mark on our foreheads there is perhaps one of the most paradoxical of all our liturgical acts if there ever was one. That little smudge of ash is superimposed upon another mark, the indelible one made at the moment of our baptism when we are sealed and marked as Christ’s own forever.

The mark of the ash reminds us of where we came from and where we are going, “from ashes to ashes and from dust to dust..” A stark reminder that there is an ultimate defeat of our mortal nature, of all of our hard-won and cherished progress and all of our earthly accomplishments. And superimposing this mark upon the indelible mark on our souls tells us that we cannot come to the full and eternal life promised in baptism without taking seriously our need for the total and sacrificial offering of ourselves, our souls and bodies.

Sooner or later we will all wash the ash smudge off of our foreheads, but even if the material ash we receive is gone, the spiritual mark remains until Easter Day.

I would suggest that each of us, as we mark these forty days of Lent daily place before God a new and figurative batch of ashes each morning. Where might those ashes come from?

The first source is everything about you and your life which has been taken from you without your consent - the hurts, the unkind words and deeds, the power plays that sent you reeling, the withdrawal of recognition and support that someone else decided you should no longer have and had the power to take from you. Let God take those things and burn them up in God's consuming fire.

The second source are those things about you and your life that has special significance, either positive or negative, that you choose to offer to God for both transformation and renewal. There are things about each of us that may have had value once, but their day is past and they are ready either for burning or for renewing by God's ruah.

So daily, in your mind, take something from each source and place it before God and ask that God's fire come and consume it. Offer it up totally so that only the very residue of the ash remains. Then mark the sign of the cross on your own forehead as a daily reminder that which has not died cannot be raised, and anything not surrendered cannot be made new again, except by the creating, redeeming and sustaining love of God.

I invite you to keep this paradoxical and great truth before you as you seek to walk a holy Lent.

Warmly,

Randy+



What Is Lent?

The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith.

The hallmarks of a holy Lent were self-examination and repentance, by prayer, fasting, and self-denial, and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word.

The word Lent itself means simply "spring." In the ancient Anglo-Saxon language from which it stems, the meaning is of the lengthening of days; the season in which flowers and trees begin to put forth new shoots. The season of Lent is, then, a time for new growth, not only in the flora and fauna around us, but also in our own spiritual lives.

Lent is the liturgical season, marked by fasting, and lasting for forty days (excluding Sundays) before Easter. During the first three centuries of the church, the period of fasting in preparation for Easter did not, as a rule, exceed two or three days, which is evident from a statement of Bishop Irenaeus, recorded by the historian Eusebius. The first mention of a period of forty days, probably referring to the season we now call Lent, occurs in the Canons of Nicaea (A.D. 325). The custom may have originated in the prescribed fast for candidates for baptism, and the number forty is evidently suggested by the forty days fasts of Moses, Elijah, and certainly of Our Savior Jesus Christ himself, although the period was calculated differently in different churches. In the eastern churches, the Lenten fast was observed for seven weeks with both Saturday and Sunday exempt, totaling only thirty-six actual fasting days. In the west, the church fasted for six weeks, exempting only Sundays from fasting, and also totaling only thirty-six actual days. Only at Jerusalem was fasting done for forty days, covering five days in each of eight weeks. The number forty was not set in the Latin Church until the seventh century, when the four days from Ash Wednesday were added to the six weeks of six days from the First Sunday in Lent through Easter. Here we should note that Sundays are referred to as "Sundays in Lent," not "Sundays of Lent," since Sundays are always Feasts of Our Lord.

Shrove Tuesday is the day immediately preceding Ash Wednesday. Its name comes from the Old English word “shrive,” meaning “to confess;” it is on this day that confession of the faithful privately to a priest, and the receiving of absolution occurred.

Mardi Gras, French for “Fat Tuesday,” was the public revelry that developed on the day before Lent began. Among the many things that were to be abstained from during the somber and penitential season of Lent was the use of fat, grease or butter to fry foods in. It was on this day that all of the fat in the household was used up until Easter. This is the reason why Pancake Suppers are connected with Shrove Tuesday; the griddle cakes were fried in butter or grease which needed to be used up before the beginning of the season of Lent.

The revelry which sprung up, especially in the French Quarter of Louisiana, as well as in places such as Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on “Fat Tuesday” have to do with the death and burial of the “Alleluia.” From Ash Wednesday until Easter Day no Alleluias are used in public worship. In many areas there is even a symbolic coffin paraded through the streets, accompanied by traditional funeral “parades.”

Ash Wednesday is the first day of the liturgical season of Lent, six and a half weeks prior to Easter. Until the seventh century, Lent began on Quadragesima Sunday. The four extra days were later added to secure the exact number of forty week-days of fasting, Sundays being excluded.

At one time penitents in Rome were ceremoniously admitted to begin their public penance on this day in preparation for baptism on the Easter Vigil. As this discipline fell into disuse, between the eighth and tenth centuries, the general penance of the whole congregation took its place. This was symbolized by the imposition of ashes, in token of mourning, and penitence, on the heads of clergy and people.

During the early centuries the observance of the fast was very strict. Only one meal a day, taken towards evening, was allowed, and flesh meat and fish, and, in most places, eggs and milk products (such as cheese and butter) were absolutely forbidden. By the ninth century in the west, the practices were relaxed, the hour of fast breaking was moved up to three in the afternoon, and by the fifteenth century, even members of religious communities were allowed to eat at noon.

In the western churches the penitential character of Lent was reflected in various features of the liturgy, such as the use of purple vestments and the omission of the Alleluia and the Gloria in excelsis. In some places the vestments use a “Lenten Array,” usually unbleached linen, a modern-day version of sackcloth, which is adorned with red and black orphreys (symbolizing the blood of Christ’s wounds and the somberness of his death).

Lent is a time for “working on our spiritual disciplines.” We often talk of “giving something up for Lent,” a practice which finds its roots in the church’s ancient understanding of fasting. Fasting can mean giving up a part of one’s diet, but it could also be understood as giving up or refraining from an activity. However we choose to fast, we need to choose something that will have continuing post-Easter implications in our walk with Jesus. Giving up chocolate for forty days, only to eat it again on Easter Day, for many probably really isn’t “fasting.”

We hope that every member of First Presbyterian Church will join in an observance of a holy Lent.

Warmly,

Randy+



Second Sunday Luncheon, Sunday, March 9 following the morning service

A Lenten Luncheon: The Legend of Stone Soup

Home-made vegetable soup will be provided.

Some travelers come to a village, carrying nothing more than an empty cooking pot. Upon their arrival, the villagers are unwilling to share any of their food stores with the very hungry travelers. Then the travelers go to a stream and fill the pot with water, drop a large stone in it, and place it over a fire. One of the villagers becomes curious and asks what they are doing. The travelers answer that they are making "stone soup", which tastes wonderful and which they would be delighted to share with the villager, although it still needs a little bit of gar-nish, which they are missing, to improve the flavor.

The villager, who anticipates enjoying a share of the soup, does not mind parting with a few carrots, so these are added to the soup. Another villager walks by, inquiring about the pot, and the travelers again mention their stone soup which has not yet reached its full potential. More and more villagers walk by, each adding another ingredient, like potatoes, onions, cabbages, peas, celery, toma-toes, sweetcorn, meat (like chicken, pork and beef), milk, butter, salt and pepper. Finally, the stone (being inedible) is removed from the pot, and a delicious and nourishing pot of soup is enjoyed by travelers and villagers alike. Although the travelers have thus tricked the villagers into sharing their food with them, they have successfully transformed it into a tasty meal which they share with the donors.

Stone Soup





Sunday School



After taking the Fall off, Youth Sunday School has resumed classes! We will meet at 9:00am on Sunday mornings. All classes will be held downstairs in the youth rooms! Join us for some fun and learn all about Jesus!





March Birthdays

- 01 - Marianne Briggs
- 03 - Irene Kress
- 09 - Bear Haller
- 11 - Matt Murray
- 12 - John Dewey
- 20 - Connie Bowen
- 23 - Marilyn Lyday

2nd Sunday Luncheon

Sunday, February 9,
following morning service!

A Lenten Luncheon: The Legend of Stone Soup

Please Join Us!

Luncheon is free and gracious donations help to defray the cost and are much appreciated.



Table for One

Our March event will be held Wednesday, 3/5 @ 5:30p.m.

Yum-Yums

News from Yum Yums. Due to inclement weather, Yum Yums did not meet in February. Those who attended in January, chose to go to Green Bay Tap in Wever, IA, so we will keep that for March! On March 20,2025, we will meet @ 5:00pm at Fareway for Carpool. If you have any questions, call or text Sandy Russell @ 319-572-6124



Meeting Highlights

February Session Highlights

Our tower restoration is finished and all bills have been paid, so our focus now will be on working on the interior of our building.

Mission Committee has been very busy, being involved in at least 15 mission opportunities. New members are always welcome. Session approved to apply to the Presbytery for a Mission/Social Action Grant in the amount of \$2,000 that will be used for our Hesus Students. This grant can be applied for yearly.

Wireless microphones used during worship have been replaced with new, sturdier ones. We have also placed an ad in the Chamber of Commerce directory, which will be distributed to local realtors and Welcome Wagon baskets to new residents, and also available in a digital directory.

The next Session meeting will be Thursday, March 6, 2025 at 1 P.M.

Cheryl Lotz, Clerk of Session



Messages from the Deacons

Hello FPC members! The Deacons would like to invite you to an all church Birthday Party on March 30, 2025 after our service. We will provide: Maidrites, chips, relish tray, cupcakes and ice cream. If you would like, please bring a side dish to compliment the menu. We want to celebrate everyone's birthday together!!

Also know that you are being prayed for individually by us. We are thankful for all our members of FPC and would like to help in any way. Please contact the deacons if there is something we can help with!





A Thank you from Janet Calvin

MY SINCERE THANKS TO ALL FOR THE BEAUTIFUL VALENTINE CARDS, CARDS AND PRAYERS .

YOU ALL MADE MY VALENTINES DAY VERY SPECIAL. I ENJOYED OPENING AND READING ALL THE CARDS. YOUR CARDS AND PRAYERS ARE VERY SPECIAL GIFTS .

BLESSINGS TO ALL OF YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES,
JANET

A Thank you from Transitions DMC

Dear First Presbyterian Church,

On behalf of Transitions DMC, Inc., I would like to thank you for your donation of \$200. Transitions DMC, Inc. relies on the generosity of donors, such as yourself and is grateful for your support.

During 2024, your donations have helped us serve 161 clients (men, women, and children) for 341 nights. Their average length of stay with us was 21 nights. We have placed 129 of these individuals in permanent housing solution for an average placement of 83% of the people who attained this status.

Thank you once again.

Sincerely,
Joseph Myers,
President & CEO Transitions DMC

A Thank you from Janet Calvin

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR CONTINUED PRAYERS FOR MY GRANDDAUGHTERS, KERRI AND XIOMARA, THROUGH ALL THEIR CANCER TREATMENTS. YOUR PRAYERS ARE HELPING THEM THROUGH MANY ROUGH DAYS. I AM SO GRATEFUL TO ALL OF YOU AND YOUR PRAYERS.

BLESSINGS TO ALL OF YOU
AND YOUR FAMILIES,
JANET

A Thank you from Marcia Bailey

Just a quick thank you to church friends for all your cards, calls, and visits. Certainly makes time go faster! I've been a "captive" now for 5 weeks...

Your Friend,
Marcia Bailey

KNITWITS

The Prayer Shawl Ministry was started in 1998 by two graduates of the 1997 Women's Leadership Institute at the Hartford Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut. It started a ministry which continues today throughout the United States. The shawls are intended to give comfort, solace, peace, as well as joy and happiness. Made with prayers the recipient is wrapped with the unconditional embrace of a sheltering and loving God. The shawls may be given to someone undergoing an illness; bereavement and comfort after a loss; engagement or marriage; celebrating a birthday or anniversary; etc...

Knitwits is the name given to the group of women, within the church, carrying on this ministry. They have friendship with one another and crochet and/or knit prayer shawls. These prayer shawls, located downstairs, **are free and available for the taking**. The Knitwits welcome anyone who would like to join our group - whether or not you know how to crochet and/or knit. We have willing and patient teachers to help you learn. Even needles and yarn will be provided, or you can bring your own. We meet on the first Wednesday of the month from 10:00 to 11:00 A. M. Our next meeting is March 5 , 2025.

May this shawl be a sign of God's loving, healing presence.

May it warm you when you are weary,

May it encourage you when you are discouraged,

May it assure you of God's care and Comfort,

May it remind you that you are surrounded by the prayers of others.



Missions Is Up To Doing Good

Mission Committee Upcoming Meeting

The Mission Committee plans to have its monthly meeting on the first Wednesday of each month at 12:00 noon. Bring a sack lunch. March 5th next meeting.

Souper Bowl

Thank you to everyone that donated to our Souper Bowl Collection! A variety of soups and other canned goods were gathered. Also, \$82 will be used to shop for more soups to be distributed to Community Action, Transitions DMC, and The Homeless Shelter to help stock their shelves!



Announcements!



Ash Wednesday Service will be held on Wednesday, March 5th at 7:00pm in Edward's Chapel.

2nd Sunday Luncheon will be held on Sunday, March 9, following Worship! The theme this month is "A Lenten Luncheon: The Legend of Stone Soup"!

Remember that Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, March 9. Be sure to turn your clocks ahead one hour before going to bed on Saturday. "Spring forward, fall behind!"

Farmer's Market will be held on Thursday, March 20, from 4:30pm-6:00pm. If you, or someone you know, is needing help with food, send them down for a bag of food!

Shepherd's Table @ First Congregation Church will be on Wednesday, March 26 from 4:30pm-6:00pm. This is a free meal and open to the public.

The All Congregation Birthday Party will be put on by the Deacons on Sunday, March 30th after worship service! Maidrites, chips, relish tray, cake and ice cream will be provided. If you can, please bring a side dish! Please, join us!

Live Streaming our Worship Services

Can't make it to Sunday service? No problem! Every Sunday service is live streamed on Facebook! Please join us! Just go to Facebook on your phone, tablet, or computer and navigate to our Facebook page!

If you have not yet watched a Facebook service, or don't know how, locate Facebook on your phone, tablet or computer, search for First Presbyterian Church of Burlington, Iowa, and then sit back and enjoy. The weekly bulletin is being provided via e-mail so you can follow along and take part as you wish. Comments are appreciated.





March 2025



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>Office Hours <u>M-W-F 1:30 pm-4:30pm</u></p> <p>T-Th 9:00am-1:00pm</p>						<p>1</p>
<p>2 Transfiguration of Our Lord 9:00 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Ed. 10:00 a.m. Worship</p>	3	<p>4</p>	<p>5 8:30 a.m. Bible Study <u>Mission Mtg @ 1pm</u> <u>KnitWits meets @ 10am</u> <u>Table 4 One meets @ 5:30pm</u></p> <p><u>Ash Wednesday</u> Service Edward's Chapel 7:00pm</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Session Meets @ 1pm</p>	7	8
<p>9 1st Sunday in Lent 9:00 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Ed. 10:00a.m.Worship 2nd Sunday Luncheon <i>Daylight Savings Time</i></p>	10	11	12 8:30 a.m. Bible Study	13	<p>14</p>	15
<p>16^{2nd} Sunday in Lent 9:00 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Ed. 10:00 a.m. Worship Deacon's Meeting</p>	17 	18	19 8:30 a.m. Bible Study Deadline For Connections	<p>20 Farmer's Market @ the Church 4:30pm-6pm Yum Yums @ Green Bay Tap, Wever, IA, Carpool @ Fareway @ 5pm</p>	21	22
<p>23rd Sunday in Lent 9:00 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Ed. 10:00 a.m. Worship</p>	24 Trustees Meet @ 10 a.m.	25	26 8:30 a.m. Bible Study <u>Shepherd's Table</u> 4:30pm-6pm	27	28 	29
<p>30th Sunday in Lent 9:00 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Ed. 10:00 a.m. Worship All Congregation Birthday Party by the Deacons!</p>	31 					