

# Lent

## Ash Wednesday to Easter 2013

### Faith United Church of Christ, Richmond Heights, Ohio

“For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” -- Isaiah 56:7

Centuries before Jesus, the prophet Isaiah was inspired by God’s Holy Spirit to utter the words of welcome above, and Jews and Christians down through the ages have struggled to live up to and into them.

Helping us become a more welcoming congregation will be one of the two foci of Lent this year at Faith. Every church thinks of itself as a group of friendly people, but all of us can benefit from a careful and loving look not simply at our thoughts and programs, but also at the practical applications of our faith: our physical spaces, our worship experiences, and our shared times together. A special guest, the Rev. Henry G. Brinton, will help us identify those areas where our welcome is extravagant and where it needs work.

The second focus of our Lenten journey will be four weeks of immersing ourselves in the wisdom of the Psalms as they speak to four important areas of our lives: happiness, suffering, gratitude, and justice. No reality of human experience is beyond the pale of Scripture’s wisdom, and the Bible is a resource to which we may turn, again and again, for comfort, guidance, challenge, and encouragement.

Lent is the time in the church year when we clear away some of the demanding non-essentials and remind ourselves of those aspects of our lives that matter most. When we do that – when we prioritize our wants, needs, and commitments – we discover that there are many things we can easily manage without – indeed, we are better off without – leaving us more time, energy, and attention to devote to the things that are essential for our spiritual, as well as our material, lives. Both our attention to hospitality and our immersion in the Psalms this Lent are intended to help us sharpen our focus on our chief priorities.

Some of us remember a power outage just before morning worship not long ago that reminded us of what awaits when we slow down, look around, and step away from our ordinary, harried routine. Far from being a hardship, the service without electricity was a treat: streaming sunlight, a more tightly-knit congregation, an altar aglow with candlelight. We rolled with the punches – or, better perhaps, frolicked in the waves – to our delight.

Lent reflects life clearly in the sense that we get out of it what we put into it – and, sometimes, take out of it. I pray that you will make a solid investment – and perhaps withdrawal – in Lent and in life.

Yours in faith,



Gene McAfee, Pastor and Teacher



### **Homewood Service**

Tuesday, February 19th 11:30 a.m. (Skilled Nursing, Building #3) and Tuesday, March 19th, 11:30 a.m. (Clair Bridge, Building #2). Since the autumn of 2008, Faith has had the privilege of providing a brief service of Scripture, song, reflection, and prayer for the residents of Homewood Assisted Living across Richmond Road from our church. On the third Tuesday of every month, we gather with our friends and neighbors at Homewood – including Frances Olhava – to share God's love and Word. Everyone is welcome to participate, and the residents of Homewood greatly enjoy meeting members of the congregation. Please contact Marilyn Glover, Bert McGrath, Donna Nedrow, Don Post, Betty St. John, Karen Wagner, or Gene if you would like to join us.

### **Ash Wednesday Service**

Wednesday, February 13th, 7:00 p.m. Lent begins with a service of confession, reflection, Scripture, and music centered around the imposition of ashes, the ancient and traditional sign of penance and mortality. Children are welcome in the service.

### **Bread for the World Lenten Table Tents**

Let our Bread ministry help you help the poor and hungry each time you sit down to an abundant table with Bread's Prayers for Hungry People table tents, which will be provided in the bulletin to take home on the first Sunday in Lent. Each table tent includes a Scripture reading, a prayer, and a call for action for each of the five weeks in Lent.

### **Lenten Sunday Morning Study: *The Welcoming Congregation***

February 10th, 17th, 24th, March 3rd, 9:30 a.m. Faith is honored to welcome **the Rev. Henry G. Brinton**, pastor of Fairfax Presbyterian Church in Fairfax, Virginia, and the author of *The Welcoming Congregation: Roots and Fruits of Christian Hospitality* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 2012) to the Cleveland area for a weekend workshop on church hospitality on March 1-3 (see more below). In preparation for that event, Barb Holtz will lead us in three special Sunday morning sessions devoted to reading and discussing Henry's book. Henry himself will lead our final Sunday morning session on March 3rd. Everyone is encouraged to participate in both this special discussion and in the events of the hospitality weekend.

### **Lenten Wednesday Suppers and Study: *Psalms in Our Lives***

February 20th, 27th, March 6th, 20th, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Using the Immersion Bible Study series as a guide, Gene McAfee and Karen Wagner will help us look closely at the wisdom of selected psalms in four important areas of our lives: happiness, suffering, gratitude, and justice. Our sessions will begin with a light supper at 6:00 p.m. provided by the Worship Ministry, followed at 6:45 by our study. Please bring your Bible and study guide, which you can get from Karen Wagner. There will be no session on March 13th to accommodate the annual Richmond Heights Cultural Commission Community Read, hosted by and at Faith.

Please sign up, **indicating which suppers you will attend**, by the end of church on Sunday, February 17th, and speak with Karen, Nancy Jacquet (chair of the Faith Formation Ministry), or the pastor if you have any questions.

### **Weekend Workshop on Church Hospitality with Henry Brinton**

Friday, March 1st - Sunday, March 3rd. In conjunction with Hillcrest Area Churches and Gerry's House of the Western Reserve Association, Faith Church is proud to sponsor a weekend-long workshop on church hospitality, led by the Rev. Henry G. Brinton. With neighbors from the Hillcrest area and friends from the WRA, and across four sessions, three worship services, and three shared meals, we will discuss with an authority on hospitality how we can make our congregations more welcoming to those seeking a community of faith. Registration and more information will be distributed in the weekly bulletin, and is already available on line at our church website, <http://www.faithucrrhoh.org/news-1/thewelcomingcongregation> .

### **One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS)**

The UCC partners with other global ministry and aid organizations in over 80 countries, providing clean water, agricultural assistance, medical help, disaster relief, schooling, job training, shelter, and ministry. OGHS is one of the UCC's 5-for-5 offerings, and our support of OGHS helps make us a 5-for-5 church. **This year's OGHS offering will be received on Sunday, March 10th.**

You can learn more about how the OGHS offering is used at <http://www.ucc.org/oghs/>.

### **Confirmation**

Sundays, March 10th, 17th, April 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th, May 5th, 12th, following worship to 3:00 p.m. Four of our young people will be added to the membership roll of Faith Church after receiving eight weeks of formal instruction and the rite of confirmation on Pentecost, May 19th. We ask your prayers for this class of 7th – 12th-graders and for Karen and Gene, and especially hope for your presence and support in worship on Pentecost Sunday.

### **Richmond Heights Cultural Commission Community-Wide Book Read**

Wednesday, March 13th, 7:00 p.m. For the seventh consecutive year, Faith welcomes to our Social Hall residents of Richmond Heights for a discussion of Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, which won the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for promoting cultural diversity in 1949. Jointly sponsored by the Faith Reading Group and the Richmond Heights Cultural Commission, this annual event is one of the ways we open our doors to our community. All are welcome to read the book and attend. Teachers from the Richmond Heights schools will also lead discussions for students. *Rocket Boys* by Homer Hickam (which inspired the movie *October Sky*) is the high school and middle school selection, and the youngest students will read and discuss *Rules* by Cynthia Lord. Children and youth are welcome to read the appropriate titles and join us for this intergenerational event.

### **Palm/Passion Sunday**

Sunday, March 24th, 10:45 a.m. The children of Faith Church will open Holy Week with a palm procession at the start of Morning Worship, followed by a dramatic reading of the Passion narrative according to Luke by members of the congregation.

### **Maundy Thursday Supper, Tenebrae, and Communion Service**

Thursday, March 28th, 6:00 - 8:30 p.m. The service of Tenebrae ("shadows") focuses on Jesus's last evening with his disciples. We will gather in the Social Hall for a light supper, after which we will move to the sanctuary for a quiet service of remembrance and thanksgiving, with a reading of Jesus's last evening by members of the congregation, and communion served to all and by all. **Please sign up for supper**, and children are welcome at this service.

### **Ecumenical Good Friday Service**

Friday, March 29th, noon to 1:00 p.m. Join congregations from the Hillcrest area in a traditional one-hour service of Scripture, music, prayer, and meditations on the Seven Last Words of Christ. Music will be provided by a joint choir that includes singers from Faith. Watch the Sunday bulletin for the location of this service.

### **The Great Vigil of Easter**

Saturday, March 30th, 8:00 p.m. We welcome the high point of the Christian year and the Christian life by keeping the Great Vigil of Easter, which will include the Service of Lights, the Service of the Word, the Service of Water, and the Service of the Table. Children are welcome and will participate in this intergenerational service.

### **The Sunday of the Resurrection, Easter Day**

Sunday, March 31st. Lent having ended at midnight on Holy Saturday, we will celebrate the resurrection of our Lord with an all-church potluck breakfast at 9:15 a.m. in place of church school, hosted by

our Worship Ministry, followed by a service of Holy Communion during regular Sunday Worship at 10:45 a.m. There will be only a brief coffee hour after worship.