

## **Preparation**

### **An Invitation to a Lost Art**

**Lent 2010**

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

“. . . a people prepared for the Lord.” – Luke 1:17

Since at least the seventh century, Christians in the west have used the forty weekdays before Easter to prepare for the defining event in the Christian faith, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Fasting, works of charity, study, prayer, and other forms of disciplined spirituality have marked this season of penitence and preparation from its beginning. Lent is a time of self-discipline, which often includes self-denial, but neither self-discipline nor self-denial is the point of Lent. The point of Lent is preparation, a virtue and an art nearly lost in our instantaneous society.

Our culture is saturated with the ethic of immediate self-indulgence. The message in the street, over the airwaves, and texted to everyone with a mobile device is the same: I want it, and I want it now. Waiting is a thing of the past; it's unnecessary; it's even unseemly. We can have anything we want when we want it in our 24/7 lives.

Into this maelstrom of demands and deliveries comes the word of Lent: prepare. The important part is yet to be. It is not yet here. It will never fully be here in our fallen world. But our task as Christians is to prepare for the triumph of resurrection – God's ultimate yes to all the world's penultimate no's – all the same. And preparation takes time, and that is what Lent gives us: forty days of time in which to prepare.

The Lenten observance at Faith Church this year, as in years past, is intended and designed to help you discern and accomplish – or at least seriously engage – the spiritual work God has set for you, and only you know what that work may be. Through special services, meals, study, and fellowship, Faith will provide many opportunities for you to discover or rediscover what God is calling you to do and be as the new creature Jesus Christ has promised all of us we can be. A deeper commitment to social justice; repairing a broken relationship; breaking the grip of a besetting sin; broadening and enriching your prayer life – any or all of these may be part of your Lenten discovery and work, and Faith is here to help you with them.

The opportunities for you to participate fully in Lent are listed in this booklet, and it is my hope and prayer that you will avail yourself of the ministries of worship, reflection, support, and service offered by this church. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

A blessed Lent to you all,



Gene McAfee, Pastor and Teacher

### **Ash Wednesday Service**

Wednesday, Feb. 17<sup>th</sup>, 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.

### **Jesus Before Christianity -- Adult Midweek Lenten Program**

Wednesday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, March 10<sup>th</sup> (not March 3<sup>rd</sup>), 17<sup>th</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup>, 6 – 8 p.m. in the Social Hall. The Pastor will lead a four-week study of Albert Nolan's book, *Jesus Before Christianity*. Nolan's book attempts to strip away the accretions of Christian tradition that have obscured the radical nature of Jesus' life and message, giving us a fresh look at the human being who embodied God's eternal Word. Each evening begins with a simple vegetarian meal, followed by clean-up and discussion of assigned readings. Cost is \$20 per person, payable at the first meeting, to cover the cost of meals. Please bring your copy of Nolan's book and your Bible to each session.

### **Homewood Service**

Tuesday, February 16<sup>th</sup> and March 16<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 a.m. 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 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 Don Post, Donna Nedrow, or the Pastor if you would like to join us.

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

Thursday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 6-8 p.m. We will gather for a simple supper provided by the Worship Ministry in the Social Hall at 6:00 p.m., followed by group clean-up and moving to the sanctuary for a 7:30 Tenebrae service focusing on Jesus's last supper with his disciples. There is no charge for the meal, but please sign up by the end of church on Sunday, March 28<sup>th</sup>. Children are welcome at both events.

### **Palm/Passion Sunday**

Sunday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 10:30 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.

### **Good Friday Ecumenical Service**

Friday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 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. The service will be held here at Faith, with music provided by a combined choir under the direction of Mary Ober, and child care will be provided.

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

Saturday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 8:00 p.m. We will 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 in the service.

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

Sunday, April 4<sup>th</sup>. Lent having ended at midnight on Holy Saturday, we will celebrate the resurrection of our Lord with an all-church pot-luck breakfast at 9:00 a.m. in place of church school, followed by a service of Holy Communion during regular Sunday Worship at 10:30 a.m.