

We will begin the season of Lent with an Ash Wednesday service at 6:30 p.m. in the chapel. The date is February 17th. I hope you will plan on attending this service as we begin anew to search for God and prepare for Easter. Lent is a time for seeking, for reflection and prayer. We are very fortunate as a congregation to begin a new ministry of prayer called "Share and Prayer Triplets." Different people in groups of three will learn about one another and practice the presence of God. Our Interim Team has been tireless and faithful in promoting this venture of faith and I am sure that participants will experience the benefits of sharing faith together.

"The more excellent way of the gospel is a way of generous forgiveness that hopes all things and forgives all things." This sentence was written by Walter Brueggemann, contributing Editor to Sojourners Magazine and professor emeritus at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. In The Lord's Prayer we say again and again over an entire lifetime as a church that we are to forgive others and ask God to forgive us whether we use the word sin, debt or trespass.

If we called an interim a quilt, forgiveness would be like a contrast color that adds beauty to the quilt but is not the main color in the design or pattern. We use it when we need it so we do not hurt others or ourselves. Sooner or later it is wise to forgive others and ourselves for grievances that have come out of the past. Let our prayers include those of forgiveness so we do not hold grudges or maintain power struggles. This is not easy but who said it was easy to follow Jesus? The God who calls us to serve others is a God that forgives and rescues. God provides new beginnings out of hurt and forgiveness. Our church needs to be a forgiving church and it can be a church that looks beyond itself to serve.

The warming shelter is another opportunity for us. We are fortunate to have so much to give. Pray for strength and resources to meet the needs of the homeless. We will be asked to contribute money, time and energy to this endeavor. It will be housed at the Family Center seven nights a week from 7-7:00 a.m. Food will be needed and participants will be trained to stay with the overnight guests. There will be two shifts and two teams needed per overnight. We are especially looking for night owls!

For your devotional life I offer a prayer poem "Seeking and Finding" by Joyce Rupp from May I Have this Dance? Copyright 1972, Ave Maria Press. Used by permission.

I search for God, elusive, hidden God, I long to dwell in the heart of Mystery. I search for my true self more of who I already am, knowing there's so much yet to be discovered. I search for love, the unconditional love that enfolds me and asks to be shared. I search for vision in the shadows of my soul, impatiently waiting the moment of lighting. I search for compassion in a world gone deaf to the cries of the hurting and the pleas of the powerless. I search for Home, always for Home, unaware, of course that I am already there.

May the season of Lent be a journey of prayer, forgiveness and service for all of us.