

Parish Visitor

Web Edition

Volume LVII Issue #3



First Congregational
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

An Ecumenical Congregation in the Congregational Tradition
200 NORTH MAIN STREET • MOUNT VERNON, OHIO • 43050



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March 2025

Contact Us



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Hours

Monday—Thursday

9:00 am to 12:00 noon

1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Friday

9:00 am to 12:00 noon

From Pastor Jay



The Solemnity of Lent

Solemn is a religious word. Performed with due religious ceremony or reference; sacred, devoted to religious observances - are definitions offered by my dictionary.

Like most of our religious traditions the Christian practice of Lent began its infancy in the fifth century. Lent is the solemn Christian religious observance in the liturgical year commemorating the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the desert and enduring temptation by Satan.

Most progressive Christians have a tepid relationship with Lent. Maybe this year we could add dashes of solemnity and purpose to our Lent experience. Tradition calls for three basic features of Lent – prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Prayer – for Lent this year consider creating a short mantra-prayer that you can say every day. (Example – God – today take my thoughts where you want them to go,) Come up with yours – or use this one -the shorter the better.

Fasting – I don't know about you but I am NOT giving up chocolate for Lent. How about fasting from negative thinking during Lent? (L.E.N.T. – Let's Eliminate Negative Thinking.)

Almsgiving – the traditional simple definition of almsgiving in the church is the act of giving charity to another. There is great spiritual healing and wholeness that can come from giving something away every day during Lent. I know a person who emailed or texted a different friend/family member once a day during Lent and wrote this – Once a day during Lent I am praying for one person's joy in God – today you are that person. This daily act took my friend about a minute each day – and made a meaningful difference in 40 people's lives.

Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke hold accounts of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry. John does not.

Matthew and Mark both report that at the end of the wilderness experience angels attended to Jesus. But Luke ends his account with this haunting note – When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Maybe truth and reality for us lies in between angels seeking to attend to us in love and the wolf of evil never being far away.

The solemnity of Lent can help us steer the course to grace, courage and joy.

Blessings—Pastor Jay

Your Church Footprint



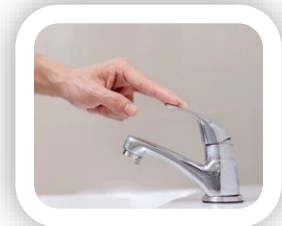
This is just a reminder that you can help the church out a little bit. We do not have a custodian that is at the church every day - as Scott M. used to be. Bobbie is doing a great job for us, but she is just here a limited time each week, and her main focus is cleaning. So, if you see something that you feel needs attention, please let either Bill or a Building Committee member know so we can pass that along to her.

And you can help Bobbie and the church by:

- 1) Turning off lights.
2. Turning off water faucets.
- 3) Closing doors -- except the 2 doors to the Chapel. We like to leave those open 3 to 4 inches to help with air circulation and the "musty" smell that room has from time to time. (Thank You!)
- 4) Putting trash in a waste basket, and dirty dishes in the baskets on the stage during hospitality, or near the dishwasher in the kitchen any other time.
- 5) Keeping the kitchen clean - to aid Hot Meals and Hospitality hosts.
- 6) Pushing your chair back up to the tables in the Social Hall and returning chairs "borrowed" from another table.
- 7) Make sure the Choir Room doors are always closed.

By doing these things Bobbie can spend her time at church doing what she does best -- cleaning!

Thank you for helping! -- The Building Committee



Here's What's Happening

WHAT	WHEN	WHERE
Regular Worship Service	Sundays 9:30 am	Sanctuary
Social Time	Sundays 10:30 am	Social Hall
Adult Forum	Sundays 11:00 am	Chapel
Chancel Choir Rehearsal	Thursday 7:00 pm to 8:15 pm	Choir Room
New Members and Seekers Session	Sunday March 2, Noon	Social Hall
Council Meeting	Sunday March 23, 11:50 am	Front Parlor
Health, Healing and Fitness Ministry	Will resume at a later date	
Health, Healing and Fitness, Karate	Will resume at a later date	

Other Happenings

March 9—Daylight Savings Begins

Lose an hour and try not to show up at church an hour late!

March 20—Spring Equinox

One of two days of the year when daylight and night time hours are equal.

March 17—St. Patrick's Day

Born Maewyn Succat to wealthy Christian Parents around 386 AD. Enslaved in Ireland for 6 years. Escaped and returned to Ireland as a missionary. Legends also say that St. Patrick used the three leaf shamrock to help him illustrate the Holy Trinity.



From the Christian Education Committee



HAVE A CHILD REACHING A MILESTONE YEAR?

The Christian Education Committee is beginning plans for Recognition Sunday in May. If you know a child within the congregation who will be entering kindergarten, fourth grade or eighth grade in the fall or graduating from high school this spring, please reach out to Jennifer L. High school graduates should also be on the lookout for information about Graduation Awards that should be available later in March.

Sunday School In the Fall



If you have an interest in helping shape a children's Sunday School program for the fall of 2025, please reach out to Jennifer with what you are interested in doing to support a program and your level of commitment in seeing that program succeed. Each class needs two dedicated teachers who are committed to being present most Sundays and we would also need a list of people

who are willing to serve as substitutes. Every volunteer needs to have a background check on file in the church office. The forms and information on how to do that at your own convenience are available in the rack outside of the church office. If you have more questions about the background check, Jennifer or Becky are happy to answer.

HAVE EXTRA BOOKS?



The **Little Free Library** (LFL) outside the church courtyard sees a lot of traffic being on Main Street and as a location for Hot Meals. Books of all reading levels and interests are welcome. If the LFL at the church is full, there are others LFLs in town that are frequently used. Nearby, there is one inside SPI on South Main for children's books, several inside Ariel-Foundation Park by the lakes, and one in front of Dan Emmett Elementary. LFLs are a great, environmentally friendly way to get books into the hands of new readers.



I thought that this month, rather than go in depth about various types of scams, I'll leave you with a few tips on being diligent about not falling for scams.

1. **DON'T TRUST INCOMING CALLS.** Your bank or companies with whom you do business may certainly may have legitimate reasons to call you. However, NEVER divulge your Social Security number, passwords, account numbers, or any other sensitive information to someone who calls you. Instead, call back to the company's PUBLISHED phone number. **EXAMPLE:** Someone claiming to be your bank calls you about suspicious activity on your credit or debit card. Thank them and end the call. Then, call your bank's customer service phone number, or the phone number on the back of your card, and ask for their fraud department, and tell them why. Then since you called them, give them the information they ask for to verify your identity.
2. **THE IRS AND THE FBI DO NOT MAKE FIRST CONTACT TRANSACTIONS BY EMAIL.** They start by sending letters through the U.S. Postal service. Don't respond to the emails, or click on UNSUBSCRIBE. Call the agency on the phone yourself and tell them why you're calling.

That's it for this issue. More next in the April Parish Visitor. 

