



Faith Connections – March 2023

Ionia United Methodist Church
2120 Elton Rd., Ionia, NY 14475
585-657-6984 www.ioniaumc.org

From Our Pastor's Desk:

Greetings dear ones!

We are now experiencing the liturgical season of Lent in the Church. Lent is a time of emptying out, filling ourselves with prayer, and paying close attention to the movement of God in our lives and the world around us. The classic language in the institution of the church is: fasting, prayer, and almsgiving.

This season is confusing for some Christians because we often wonder why we need to pay close attention to take these days and nights (40 of them plus Sundays) to wander up to the cross with Jesus. Why pay close attention to the betrayal, hatred, and injustice Jesus experienced as written in scripture? Why walk in sorrow 2,000 years after the death of Jesus when we know He resurrected to allow the disciples to testify to life never ending?

It is possible that we know what betrayal is because we have betrayed someone or been betrayed; we have hated or have experienced the hatred of others; we have participated in injustice toward others or been marginalized ourselves and experienced injustice in this world. And it is possible that we get stuck in those spiritual places of betrayal, hatred, or injustice which can distance us from our beloved Lord, when we yearn for closeness to Him.

What we can learn from Lent's offering of intentional time is that God through Christ can wipe sin and anguish away if we name it, pray it, and ask to be lifted from it. Only God through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit can bring us into this mystery of faith. Jesus experienced all the ugliness of spirit people could land on him and he took all that sin to the cross so to die, because sin will not have the last work; He rose because sin and death cannot defeat God.

And what seems like a miracle is grace! Grace for all Creation. With this grace, we can step into the world with the ability, strength, and courage to bring peace through love. The peace in our own hearts because we have been gifted by His grace that will shine, through our living, inviting anyone to get to know the amazing grace of Jesus Christ. It is a blessing, and a privilege.

This is truly a time of deep spiritual reflection to be closer to God. Our discernment in reflection with the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving

means: we pray a little (or a lot) more, participate in simple food (maybe less food), and some version of almsgiving, like filling up the food shelf in our community by leaving something week by week.

If Lent is still confusing, try this; a relationship with God needs some attention and reminders!

- pay close attention where you might have been assuming too much
- make intentional time and space for the grace that is possible to not only receive, but to give because in this relationship you are loved
- if you have enough, you share

Together we shall make Lent a season that provides spiritual depth and a place of more questions than answers, even that which seems impossible - because with *God, all things are possible (Matt 9:26)*, even the forgiveness of our sins through Christ who gave it all for love.

With grace and love, Pastor Robin



Kevin, Pastor Robin's nephew
 Louise Childs, Pastor Robin's mother-in-law
 A parishioner's son
 The people of Ukraine, Russia, & Turkey
 Our nation & the world
 Jan Bartlett
 Doris Daniels
 Jean Frelier
 Elaine Parrish
 MaryAnn & Cliff Pimm
 Alice Wells
 Norene Adams
 Pat & Ron Bennett
 Mary Dunne
 Shirley Kelly
 Leona Parrish
 Dorothy Strapp
 Our home-bound
 All youth in today's world
 Our military men & women
 All those battling COVID 19, cancer, & diseases

3 Articles from Pastor Robin:

I found this story online

A Church goer complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone for 30 years now", he said, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But I can NOT remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the preachers are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all."

After much deliberation the church goer's good friend came up with this response: "I have been married for 30 years now. In that time my spouse and I have prepared & cooked at least 22,000 meals together. For the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. Though *I do know this! They nourished me and gave me and my family the strength needed to do our work e.g. go to school, work, and be a family. If we had not shared those meals, we would be physically dead today. So, if we had not gone to church for nourishment, would we be spiritually dead today?*"

Come to worship seeking spiritual nourishment during Lent, because He loves you.



Why fast during Lent? Is it about weight management or saving money (aka purchasing less food for the pantry?)

Fasting is a point of confusion for folks during the season of Lent.

First, it is a spiritual discipline – more about that in a moment. Second, you might experience weight management if you find yourself consuming less food, is that Lent? Or you might save some money if you purchase less food – is that Lent? The simple answer is no, these are not primary reasons for fasting during Lent.

In a time of intentional focus on our inner lives and relationship with God, we seek to clear away any distractions. In our western culture, food has become more than fuel for our bodies that they can function in worship, work, and play. Food has become an industry that has lured us into believing it will make us friends (watch a soft drink commercial to see if the actors are fighting or modeling laughter and good times). Food has become addictive because processed food is engineered that we can't get enough sugar or salt that trips our brains into thinking we can't stop eating cookies or chips. And food has us distracted by the notion that it defines scarcity vs.

abundance. Plus, in our full-up western culture we basically assume we will have food.

I believe the assumption of the presence of food in our lives is important because it is indeed, fuel for our physical bodies. What food is not meant to be (*man shall not live bread alone said Jesus to the tempter*), is that which is addiction-making, a definition of scarcity vs. abundance, or that which will make us popular among our peers. I know you know that, but let's name it, anyway.

Setting aside time to leave out a meal from your routine and spend time in prayer means that you begin to question some of the assumptions about food in your life. If you have a healthy relationship with food, this will not be a big deal because you simply miss a meal, spend time in prayer talking to God, and move along with your day knowing the next meal will sufficiently fuel the body. But if food has become a distraction for you, take it to God and listen for how God will speak to you. This is the spiritual discipline of eliminating a distraction in the time of Lent. I also need to say that if you have a medical condition that requires food, please do not eliminate meals, there are other forms of fasting, too.

Perhaps you will choose to fast a certain food – chocolate, chips, or anything with sugar, so you will use that time the craving comes along to pray about it.

Many choose to fast something else like social media, too much time in front of the television, or never surpassing the speed limit when driving (how many of us do 65 mph in a 55 mph zone?) The idea is change up the routines, take a look at how we honor God in our lives, and why we are distracted from putting God first, all the time?

If we could truly put God first all the time without distractions, what would the world we live in look and be like?

Blessings on the fasting of your choice during Lent.

Almsgiving during Lent

Another of the Lenten spiritual disciplines, we give what we can to benefit the needs of those in our community. We have chosen to give food to the Blessing Room, the local food shelf in our community. We are going to bring something each week to fill up the bins in the fellowship hall, thus connecting ourselves with the needs of those who maybe fasting not by choice. If you have even been a visitor to the food shelf because of your needs (as this Pastor has), then you know how much it means. Bring the money for the meals you fasted, or the food for the meals you decided to fast each week during Lent. Blessings on your generosity.

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33



February 22nd, 7 pm
prayer, meditation, and imposition of ashes.



Tuesdays during Lent at 10:00 am
See the article in this newsletter



Easter Altar Plants
Flowers will be placed on the altar for this Easter.
See the article in this newsletter



Palm Sunday, April 2nd



Good Friday, April 7th, service, noon,
The sanctuary will be open until 6pm



Easter, April 9th
Easter Worship: 9:30 am
Easter Brunch 10:30 am



The donations from our Easter offering envelopes will be donated to the Blessing Room in Bloomfield. These envelopes will be distributed with the April newsletter and placed in the church.



Lenten Devotions Online For

Free: "God Loved the World" There will also be some print versions at church

<https://www.luthersem.edu/godpause/lenten-devotional/>



LENTEN WORSHIP SERIES

Learning to Live Inside Out



Second Sunday in Lent March 5, Holy Communion Sunday Go From Your Country **Genesis 12:1-4a Psalm 121 John 3:1-17**

This is the week that the "moving out" part of our theme is most obvious. Whether we are talking about the call to go to a new place, like Abram in Genesis 12, or to move to a new understanding, like Nicodemus in John 3, movement is required. Movement means change, which is always difficult & scary. So this is a week about faith & about trust and the willingness to commit to the discipleship path.

Third Sunday in Lent March 12, Give Me Water **Exodus 17:1-7 John 4:5-42 Psalm 95**

We're thirsty this week. That's the point. Thirsting for the living waters that Jesus spoke about to the woman at the well. And not simply a one time or easy but unsatisfying spiritual refreshment, but a recognition of the deepest thirsts that we have and how we seem to always be thirsty, no matter how often we drink.

Fourth Sunday in Lent March 19, In the Presence **1 Samuel 16:1-13 Psalm 23 John 9: 1-41**

Do you know what it is like to be chosen? Well, you do because you were. Our texts this week are about being chosen by God. Most of us don't think that we were chosen, certainly not to be king like David. But surely, we chose the jobs that we do and the hobbies that we pursue and the service that we perform, didn't we? Well, yes. But God chose too. And not just in the past tense, God is still choosing.

Fifth Sunday in Lent March 26, Who Could Stand **Ezekiel 37:1-14 Psalm 130 John 11:1-45**

Here at the end of the Lenten observance (well, almost the end anyway), we have hints of Resurrection. We have "a foretaste of glory divine," as the hymnist Fanny Crosby says. As if the Spirit and the lectionary preparers knew that we would need something to help us through the next couple of weeks. As if they knew that without this reminder, we would find it a very hard road as we made our way stumbling behind the Christ who suffers and dies for us.

Palm Sunday April 2, Holy communion Sunday

Good Friday April 7th Tenebrae Service at noon

Following the service, the sanctuary will be open for personal prayer and reflection with scripture and slide show till 6:00 pm



Tuesdays at 10:00 am.

Bring your bible for a Lectionary bible study that will take us through Lent and pay attention to how God is moving through Christ to bring Him to carry the cross for our sins.

Ray Van Der Laan & Max Lucado DVD Studies – after Sunday Worship



Easter Altar Plants



We will be ordering Easter Flowers for our Altar this Easter. They are in 6" pots with pot covers. The order deadline is Monday, March 13th. Sign up in Fellowship Hall or call Jacquie at 755-3825. Payment by cash or checks made out to Ionia UMC. Options & prices: 5 blossom Easter lily \$9.50, Tulips \$7, Daffodils \$7.00, Azaleas \$17.50, Calla Lilies \$15.15. Questions or to order, give her a call.



Birthday Sunday

on the 2nd Sunday of each month celebrating all those people with birthdays that month! To make a cake for this celebration, you may sign up in Fellowship Hall or call Carol 657-7310 You may buy one and be reimbursed.

If you wish to receive this newsletter by mail or by email, please email ioniaumc2120@hotmail.com or call 657-6984 leaving a message with your address or email. Or if you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, do the same. Thank you!



Future Ionia UMC Dates!

- Game Night: in March TBA
- Easter Services April 7th & 9th
- Strawberry Social: Thursday, June 15th
- Fall Festival Saturday, September 16th
- Holiday Fair Craft Show: Saturday, November 18th



Don't forget to set all of your clocks one hour ahead!

Sunday March 12th!



Happy March Birthdays

- 4 Mary A. Bennett
Doris Daniels
- 7 Gary DiGiulio
- 8 Rory Bennett
Lorraine Frelier
- 9 Ron Stonewell, Jr
- 13 Tara Schaefer
Mike Brien
- 16 Russ Kenyon
Carol Ann Pratt
Ed Price
- 19 Peggy Madafferri
- 21 Kathy Maier
Kyler Mohr
- 22 Patrice Sullivan
- 23 Kimberly Tiffany
Joshua Tyo
- 25 David Fraser
David Frelier
Ashley & Megan Parrish
- 27 Curt Evans
- 28 Mollee Thomas
- 31 Suzann Fryer

Birthday List Update: If I do not have you or a family member's birthday, please call 657-7722 or email me at mt2152@hotmail.com. Thank you!

"Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long."

Psalm 25:5





Our church's mission is to serve our church family & community.

Mission Team: Carol Hinds, Pastor Robin, and of course, the body of Christ!

Our church Administrative Board has voted to donate to several of our Mission Projects:



First, to donate a ark of animals to Heifer Project International!

The Heifer Project International's motto is "Change the world two by two." A Gift Ark donation includes two water buffalo, two cows, two sheep, two goats, bees, chickens, 2 pigs, ducks, rabbits and more. Donating a Gift Ark will help to:

- **Care for entire communities with milk, eggs, honey and wool
- ** Provide income by supplying an abundance of goods to sell
- **Sustain farming by providing livestock to work the land
- ** Improve the lives of families for generations by multiplying and passing on the gift of offspring to their neighbors.

Our Gift Ark donation goes around the world, from Africa to Asia to the Americas. Wherever they find hunger, poverty & hopelessness, they answer with not only the animals, but also the training, & encouragement to change their whole community. They do not just give animals.

They connect farmers to resources and support.

They train them on proper animal care.

They teach them to grow crops without hurting the environment.

They help them sell their goods.

They encourage families to pass on their knowledge and gifts to others in the community.

For more information, visit heifer.org



And donating to:

UMCOR's International Disaster Fund, that will benefit the recent earth-quakes, Ukraine, and other disasters around the world. For more info, visit: info@umcmission.org 100% of donations goes to the relief efforts.

Also donating to: **The Blessing Room in Bloomfield** Donations from our Easter offering envelopes will be donated to the Blessing Room in

Bloomfield. The Easter offering envelopes will be distributed with the April newsletter and placed in the church. <https://stbenedictonline.org/blessing-room>



Drop off your clean "NYS deposit" Pop Cans & Bottles for Missions

Place into the crate next to the shed behind the church. Please drain the bottles & cans & place them in plastic bags! Thank you for all your donations! Pop cans and bottles do add up... Already this year we have collected over 4,000 more cans & bottles, all proceeds to be donated toward our missions!



Prayer of St. Brendan

"Help me to journey beyond the familiar and into the unknown.

Give me the faith to leave old ways and break fresh ground with You.

Christ of the mysteries, I trust You to be stronger than each storm within me.

I will trust in the darkness and know that my times, even now, are in Your hand.

Tune my spirit to the music of heaven, and somehow, make my obedience count for You." Amen

An Irish Blessing

May there always be work for your hands to do;
May your purse always hold a coin or two;
May the sun always shine on your windowpane;
May a rainbow be certain to follow each rain;
May the hand of a friend always be near you;
May God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.



Our Church Joys!

The Lenten decorations in our sanctuary & entry!

Our Brunch & "Afternoon at the Movies" event!

The new lighting in Fellowship Hall! Thank you to Don Frelier & his helpers!



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PO Box 8
2120 Elton Rd.
Ionia, NY 14475



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2120 Elton Road, P. O. Box 8
Ionia, New York 14475

Sunday Worship Service:
9:30AM AM

Church Website: www.ioniaumc.org
Church Email: ioniaumc2120@hotmail.com
Facebook: "IoniaUMCNY"
Church Phone: 585-657-6984
Pastor: Rev. Dr. Robin Blair
Pastor's Email: revrobinblair@gmail.com
Pastor's Phone: 315-729-4485



Calendar

Sundays, 9:30 AM Worship Service &
10:30 AM Coffee Hour & DVD Studies
Tuesdays, 10 AM Lenten Bible Study
Tuesday 7th : Trustees meeting
Sunday, 12th: Birthday Sunday &
turn clocks ahead
Thurs., 21st: Ad Board meeting
Sunday, 26th: Sunday Pot-Luck Brunch

"May the strength of God pilot us, may the wisdom of God instruct us, may the hand of God protect us, may the word of God direct us. Be always ours this day and for evermore."

Saint Patrick

