

## February 2018

### Reflection for lent

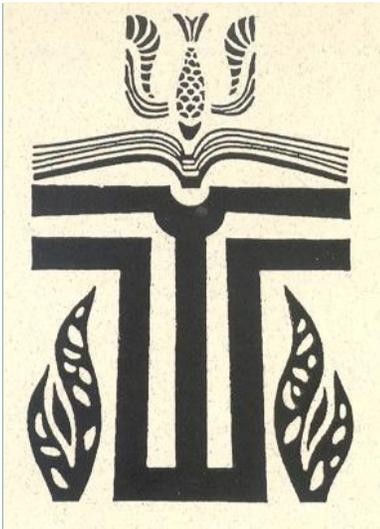
Lent is fast approaching. Ash Wednesday kicks off the early start of Lent on February 14<sup>th</sup> this year. While the days are starting to get longer, with such an early Lent, there is still much darkness as we move towards Easter. This darkness often makes most of us uncomfortable. We'd rather not only have the longer days, but also see bright light at the end of the tunnel rather than a faint glow of a tiny dot at the other end. However, there is something about being able to sit in the darkness that allows for reflection and examination. Of course, this is hard to do at times. This darkness makes us take a deeper look, perhaps at something we don't want to see, so we search for whatever light we can find. It often happens that in the darkness all of our fears come out. Fears of the unknown, fears of what cannot be seen, fears of what might be lurking around the corner. For some reason all of our fears seem more prominent in the dark. Not only this, but have you ever noticed how everything sounds louder in the dark – the creaking of the tree branches, the settling of the house, the thoughts running through our heads. So we search intently for whatever light there is offered to us, but there is a need for darkness just as much as there is a need for light. There is a need to sit with our most inward thoughts – examining ourselves all the way down to the deepest darkness of our souls.

Theologian Barbara Brown Taylor recently wrote a book called, "Learning to Walk In the Dark" where she journeys through the phases of the moon. Starting from a full moon to a new moon all the way back to a full moon again. She journeys deeper into the darkness not just of the world around her but what this darkness means for her life, especially along her faith journey. While darkness usually is not seen as being a good thing in the Bible, she points to times where God is found in the darkness or where God meets the people in the darkness. Jacob wrestles an angel of God in the middle of the night before reconciling with his brother Esau. The Israelites escape Egypt through the Red Sea in the dark of night. God is a cloud of darkness that leads the Israelites in the wilderness. God promises Abraham his descendants will be as numerous as the stars. There is something about the fact that in this covenant promise the stars can shine only at night.



### **Good News Gazette**

First Presbyterian  
Church of  
Chester, NY  
94-96 Main Street  
Chester, NY 10918



## LENTEN LUNCH BAG DEVOTIONALS

February 21<sup>st</sup> we will start our 6 week Lenten Lunch Bag Devotionals. We will meet in a classroom in the CE building for devotionals starting at 12pm followed by a bag lunch in the library. All are welcome.

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It is truly in these times of darkness, both the literal darkness of night and the metaphorical darkness of doubt, worry, fear, grief, pain, of wondering what is next, where God meets us. It is only in examining ourselves, entering into the darkness within us, that we can welcome God further into our hearts. For in examining these darkest parts we are acknowledging they are there and we are acknowledging we need God in them. Without this, pretending they don't exist, the darkness remains in us but we deny God access. Barbara Brown Taylor states, "If we turn away from darkness on principle, doing everything we can to avoid it because there is simply no telling what it contains, isn't there a chance that what we are running from is God?"

## PER CAPITA

Our per capita per member this year for the PCUSA is \$37.00. We ask you to please consider contributing this \$37.00 to help contribute to the work of the larger church. The per capita is a shared expense to help keep our larger denomination moving forward. It helps to sustain presbyteries, synods, and general assembly (which are all larger governing bodies in the PCUSA). While many times small churches can feel disconnected from these larger governing bodies they do help to provide a lot for every church in the PCUSA. Also, it helps to keep us connected as a denomination, rather than a bunch of independent churches. For more information please look for a handout on the bulletin board that explains more and gives a breakdown of how the money is used. On behalf of session, we thank you for contributing what you can for the per capita for our church and for the work of our larger denomination.

This Lent I invite you to reflect on the darkness around you. Both in the phases of the moon and the journey from shorter to longer days and also the darkness within. Where do you still need to invite God into your soul? What parts are still hurting that you need to give over to God? What doubts or fears are you tired of holding on to? Where do you need to let go of sins and be forgiven? God is waiting to be welcomed. While this welcoming may mean a wrestling match in the middle of the night or a promise made in the beauty of the stars, remember either way you are left with a blessing. It is worth the work of walking through the dark.

Pastor Erin

## LENTEN PRAYER PRACTICES

Reading scripture or a prayer and reflecting on it – either in your living room or walking around outdoors in nature.

The Daily Examine Prayer- At the end of your day sit down and reflect on the day. Where did you see God that day? Where might you have shut God out instead of inviting God in? Where did you need God in your day? Then say a prayer over your day and ask God to continue to reveal God's self to you.

Open up to the book of Psalms and read a Psalm or two. Then turn it into a prayer for your life or someone else's who might need prayer.

**Don't forget to pick up a devotional book. They are on the back table in the sanctuary.**

## LOOKING AHEAD

- February 4 – Communion Sunday  
Deacons meeting following worship
- February 5 – Bible Study at 10 Main St. 10 am,  
Music and Worship meeting 1pm
- February 11 – Annual meeting following worship  
Session meeting following
- February 12 - Bible Study at 10 Main St. 10 am
- February 13 – Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper 5-7pm
- February 14 – Ash Wednesday Service 7pm
- February 18 – Roast Beef Dinner meeting following worship
- February 19 – Bible Study at 10 Main St. 10 am,
- February 20 – Women's Council Meeting 1pm
- February 21 – Lenten Lunch Bag Devotionals
- February 22 – Food Pantry Distribution 4-7pm
- February 26 - Bible Study at 10 Main St. 10 am
- February 28 – Lenten Lunch Bag Devotionals

*If you have an article or announcement you would like to have in the next newsletter, please have it into the church office by February 19th.*

If you are in need of pastoral care, please contact our pastor at the church office number (845-469-4877).

### February Second Offering

Our second offering for February 18<sup>th</sup> will be for:  
Per Capita.

Church Office:

(845) 469-4877

E-mail:

[info@chespresny.com](mailto:info@chespresny.com)

Website:

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