

St. Mary's News

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Prepare for Easter's Joy with a Holy Lent

All Christians, no matter the denominational background, can benefit from a time of preparation leading up to Easter. Historically, the season called Lent allowed for this spiritual preparation for the joys of Easter.

I know a few folks in our parish grew up in other churches, so doing the Episcopal "Lenten Preparation" is not as familiar as it is to me or some others who were raised in the Episcopal Church. Let's be honest. If you were not raised keeping Lent, you are probably thinking, "This is one of those sort of Catholic things I avoid." I would like to challenge you to learn more about what it means to prepare for Easter with the season of Lent, and then decide if it is right for you.

In the first few centuries of the Christian Church, there developed the practice of baptizing new Christians on the eve of Easter. The newly baptized would then take part fully in the worship service for the first time on Easter Sunday. It was customary for the folks who were to be baptized to observe a fast for two or three days leading up to the baptism.

By the year 325, that custom of a two or three day fast had been extended to a forty-day fast leading up to baptism, with the whole church joining those to be baptized in the time of preparation. The forty day fast was based on Jesus' own fast which followed his baptism in the Jordan River. Moses and Elijah also kept forty-day fasts.

The fast of lent was observed by eating only one meal a day in the evening, with no meat, fish, and in most places eggs, also forbidden. Every Sunday was a feast of the resurrection, and so they were not considered fast days. Therefore, the forty-day fast lasted for the six weeks from Ash Wednesday (which this year was February 13) through Easter Eve.

By the fifteenth century, the fast was gradually falling out



of favor, with the addition of eggs coming first. In time, the only fast days observed were Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. However, the entire forty-day period continued to have its character as a time for denial and self-examination.

The Reformation further took its toll on the observance of Lent. The Reformers rightly knew that we cannot earn God's love. Lent seemed to many people as an attempt to earn God's favor. Therefore, most reformed denominations dropped the observance of Lent, which had been common in the Christian faith for centuries.

Of course, all Christians affirm that we cannot work our way to heaven. We cannot earn God's favor and love. It is through faith alone that we are made right in God's eyes.

However, a time of self-examination is always helpful. Keeping this time during the historic forty days of Lent, which lead up to Easter is a most appropriate time.

Lent is an inward journey. Lent is a time for concentration on fundamental values and priorities.

You may have heard of people giving up things for Lent. This dates to the practice of fasting. But, Lent is not a time for self-punishment. The custom is to mark the season of Lent by giving up some things and taking on others practices to deepen faith. Either can serve to mark the season as a holy time of preparation.

Some examples of things people give up for Lent include sweets, meat for all or some meals, tobacco, or alcohol. What you pick is a very personal choice. Denying yourself chocolate for example is a way to say that your love of God matters more than your love of chocolate.

In most cases, giving up something for Lent is more meaningful if you use the money or time for another purpose. For example, meal times on fast days could be spent in prayer.

Another example is that if you give up meat during Lent, the extra money that would go to meat dishes can be given to a group, such as Love One Another or daystar Ministries or the Salvation Army. These groups all help needy families in our own city to get food.

Some things added during Lent could be daily Bible reading, times of prayer, taking a course of study related in some way to your faith, more frequent church attendance, or begin tithing.

Whatever you choose as a way to grow closer to God made known in Christ this Lent, whether it is to deny yourself or add to your personal discipline, remember the goal is increasing your own awareness of God in your life.

Lent should be a time of deeper reflection, a time to discover and remove the self-made barriers that keep you from experiencing God more fully. Then your joy in celebrating Easter will be all the more meaningful as you will have spent six weeks drawing closer to God made know to us in Christ Jesus.

The Rev. Dewey E. Brown, Jr.

Outreach

Some Things a Thermometer Can't Measure

Forget the thermometer: December was a warm month at Saint Mary's. Cold weather clothing for the children at Cox Elementary overflowed around the Giving Tree in Freeman Hall. And at the ten o'clock service on Epiphany Sunday, symbolic baskets of cold weather gear were brought to the altar, acknowledging the generosity of our Sunday Schoolers, Youths and Wise Men and Women of the parish.

In this second Outreach project for our neighbors at Cox – the first being the very successful school supplies effort – more than 200 caps, gloves, socks, sweatshirts and pants, jeans and jackets were presented to the grateful staff at the school. And more:

\$675, a third of the proceeds of the ECW Basket Auction, and a \$500 gift from a parish family were given to the school and used for food for needy families. About 98 per cent of Cox families qualify for Food Stamps, which often run out by the end of each month, just as the schools close for the holidays in November and December. Children who receive two meals at school during the week often go hungry just when many are feasting.

Many thanks to all who continue to make Matthew 25:34-40 resonate throughout the parish: St. Mary's outreach committee, all who participated in and shared the ECW Basket Auction proceeds, and all who spent time and dollars during a busy and often expensive season to share with the children at Cox. You are indeed ".....blessed by my Father."

No Time for Tea

The makings were available but no one took time for tea as St. Mary knitters (and one crocheter) met for the first time. Some were beginners, some revisiting neglected skills; some are pros who helped teacher Barbara Barber. We started with the basics; learning to turn a skein of wool into a usable ball (not as simple as it sounds) and we *had* a ball doing it. Barbara promises there is a warm scarf, then a cap, for our local homeless at the end of our efforts. If you knit or crochet, join us. Contact Barbara at 352-518-2667 or bebe930@earthlink.net.

Warm Clothing

Keeping warm is still on our agenda for February. We will continue to collect warm clothing for the homeless through February. As gardeners we wait until the full moon in March to signal the end of the worst of our cold weather. This year that full moon falls on the 8th of March. As the cold weather continues so too will our accepting your generous donations of warm clothing. We look forward to the offerings of our newly created Knitter's Guild.

Calling All Love One Another Volunteers

It's time to check your calendar. Are you available to help serve our meal on Sunday February 26th? It will be great to have our 'regulars' back and we always look forward to introducing new folks to this important ministry. Join us as we prepare and serve over 100 meals to our hungry neighbors. Call or e mail Margaret Thompson if you can be a part of our meal on Sunday February 26th, between 1:00 and 3:30 P.M.

Margaret Thompson - Telephone = (352) 567-7449 or e mail = afoolforflavor @ yahoo.com

February 2012 Christian Ed News

Sunday, January 22, a lively group of 37 met to play games and share dinner. The Wii was a great hit, and there was a friendly game of corn toss on the front lawn. Some just came to chat, and that was fun, too! More game nights are planned for the coming months, so keep an eye out for dates.

Children's Chapel is up and running again. Betty Milton teaches a group of children in Freeman Hall during the 10:00 service. More helpers are needed. School age children are welcome. Contact Betty Milton if you are willing to help.

The Parenting class, led by the Hobby's and the Phillips, meets at Tanno Hall, during Sunday school. The new programs for the spring feature Kevin Lehman's, "The Turbulent Waters of Adolescence" and "Making the Most of Your Marriage". Join us at 9:00 Sunday morning to learn and discuss how to successfully navigate parenthood. Anyone who has children in their lives is welcome.

Mark your calendars for the week of June 18-22. St. Mary's will be transformed into Lava Lava Island for the week of Vacation Bible School. VBS meets in the evenings, with dinner included. The week will conclude with a family style event. Be sure to invite friends, neighbors, grandkids, nieces, and nephews to come.

During February, the Sunday school has been asked to decorate placemats for the Kairos event. Beginning January 29, placemats will be available in Tanno Hall to decorate for the Kairos team to take with them when they visit people.

Other upcoming events:

February 5: Super Bowl Sub sale/pickup. Be sure to order your subs for the big game!

Pasco County Fair: the Youth Group will be meeting at 12:30 on February 25 at Tanno Hall and attending the rodeo and fair for the afternoon. There will be no YG meeting on that Sunday.

Hayride and Campfire at the Jennings' on March 3. This will be a family event. More details to follow look for it in the bulletin and newsletter.

Carol Jennings

Youth Ministry

Greetings to my Saint Mary's family. Linda and I are so thankful for all of you and how you have received us into the family. First of all, we thank you for all of your prayers concerning my health issues as well as for my Dad. He is doing well in his recovery and is even talking about the possibility of coming to Florida later in the spring. Thank the Lord for answered prayer. Prayers have also been answered concerning my health. I have a diagnosis and am in early recovery being treated with meds and rest and look forward to improved health.

None of this, however, has slowed down our youth ministry. Since coming on board in November Linda and I have lead weekly youth meetings every Sunday evening from 5-7. The regular format is to begin with worship, have a brief lesson, and conclude with games and fellowship. Approximately 10-12 youth come faithfully every week. We would invite other youth in our church family to join us. You really don't know what you're missing.

We were busy in December with a few other activities in addition to our usual weekly meetings. We held a successful Christmas wrapping and babysitting service, went Christmas caroling, and survived a "Lord of the Rings" movie marathon and lock-in. As the new year began we resumed our regular weekly schedule and determined a 2012 agenda and budget. We have an exciting year ahead of us filled with regular weekly meetings on Sundays, church and community service projects, fund raisers, retreats, a mission trip, concerts, reward or fun trips, and involvement in numerous church and parish ministries. The calendar includes our annual Kumquat Festival parking project, annual Super Sub Sale, attending the annual rodeo at the Pasco County Fair, a hayride and campfire at the Jennings', a 'youth spring cleaning auction', a Spring Retreat, early Summer mission trip, back to school swim party, fall retreat, etc. We are currently working through a study on "servant evangelism" and will be planning 'random acts of kindness' opportunities throughout the year. You will hear more (cont. page 6)

New Hearing Impaired Sound System

For those of you who have over the years fell victim to even a partial loss of hearing, the good news is that St. Mary's now has installed a device that will help with hearing and understanding the worship service, or any other function conducted in the church sanctuary. This system simply plugs into our current audio system and then rebroadcasts audio to anyone with a receiver and ear bud.

After a thorough search and investigation, the Vestry has authorized the purchase of the hearing impaired sound system. The receivers are available in the back of the church and the ushers or the Junior Warden, Vince Rieger, can assist anyone wanting to enjoy a complete and clear audio of the entire service. The receiver can be put in a pocket or "clipped" onto clothing and currently have a small 'ear bud' that is placed into the ear. For those who currently wear a hearing device, the ear bud replaces the hearing aid in the ear.....however, one can also plug in a headset to the receiver and continue to wear the hearing aid while getting even better audio of the service.

The new system was first utilized on Sunday, Jan. 29th and those who tried it were very happy with the clarity and ease of use. They encourage everyone with any degree of hearing loss to at least give the new system a try. Hopefully you will be well pleased with the experience.

Jack Morgan

Pastoral Care

We are in need of someone to take on the responsibility for the Health and Wellness area of Pastoral Care. If this sounds interesting to you, please call Anne Johnson at (352) 567-6841. We also need volunteers to help Diane Smith with visiting homebound and nursing home persons and making phone calls to those unable to attend church. Without volunteers, we are unable to do the outreach to our own members that helps make St. Mary's a family. Please consider helping in any of the areas of pastoral care.

Landscape Guild

The plants are finally slowing down their demands on the Landscape Guild members, but the weeds continue to flourish. If you wish to help with the upkeep of our beautiful grounds, please give a call to Anne Johnson. We are currently in the process of replacing some plants that have not done well in the past several years and would appreciate any assistance. Once the chance of freeze is past, we hope to start cutting back the dead leaves and branches and begin sprucing things up for Spring.

Anne Johnson

MUSIC NOTES

Greetings from St. Mary's Music Ministry! We are off to an enthusiastic start for 2012, and the singers, instrumentalists, and Julie and The Youth hope that your worship experience is enhanced as we continue to offer our talents and time to glorify God each week. Remember, this is a new adventure for all of us, and we welcome your hymn suggestions and would also be happy to have new members join us.

In meeting you during this past month, I know I have asked many questions to try and familiarize myself with you all. There have been three main questions that many of you have asked me. So, I would like to share this information with everyone:

Q: How do you like the choir? A: Not only do I like them, I love each and every one of them! They are extremely dedicated...not just in showing up, but in trying to create the most beautiful sound that they can produce. They work hard, but also like to have fun (very important detail for volunteers). The best part about rehearsals is the spirituality that fills the choir room. I think we make a great team and I cannot thank God enough for placing me with them! I envision a wonderful future together.

Q: Who picks the music? A: Since before being hired, I have been very fortunate that my schedule allowed me to meet at various times with Father Dewey, Barbara Jones, Connie MacKay, Dennis Alfonso, Jean McNary, Sandra Sartain, Kathi Boyle, Perry Cain, and Laurel Weightman (Several Altar Guild and Vestry members have also been very informative). They, along with the choir, instrumentalists, and Julie Brumback have all given in-put about which music is chosen for worship. On my end, I always spend time reading the given scriptures and looking up the music suggestions presented in Kucharski's "The Episcopal Musician's Handbook." Since August (when you first advertised this position), I have spent countless hours listening to the on-line hymnal and Episcopal worship services throughout the country. I looked up every hymn and anthem that I saw on St. Mary's weekly bulletin, so to become as acquainted as possible (I practiced every one of them!). The most important part of song selection, however, is the prayerful consideration that I give before any music is rehearsed or submitted each week.

Q: Since you have always been involved with The Methodist Church, are you going to continue being a member there, or what? A: I treasure my up-bringing in The United Methodist Church. They, too, have a rich heritage that has helped me evolve into the person I have become. I have also always been involved in Ecumenical worship through organizations like The American Guild of English Handbell Ringers, The Junior Federation of Musicales, The Florida Fellowship of Musicians, and The American Guild of Organists. So to answer your question, I am the type of person that doesn't do things half-way. Since I am now your choir director and attending St. Mary's, my intention would be to immerse myself in learning the Episcopal ways, take classes, and eventually become a full-fledged member. I believe that is what God is leading me to do.

So, there you have it! If you would ever like to bend my ear, please feel free to contact me. I am very flexible and open to what you have to say. I am enjoying getting to know you and look forward to many worship-filled days in the future.

Singing God's Praises,

Sharon Brant

Youth Ministry continued

about this later and will be invited to assist us in some of these ministries.

We are also excited about the approval by the Vestry of the purchase of a mobile sound system and keyboard that the youth will use in our weekly worship times as well as to be used in outreach ministries that we hope to have in the coming year. This equipment will also be available to other groups in the church to use in various ministries. Our young people are full of energy, talent, and abilities to do God's work and we look forward to a busy and productive year in spreading the love of Jesus in our church and community. Thank you for all of your prayers and support.

Rev. Perry Cain, Youth Minister

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

February Birthdays

1 - Julia Auvil

Paul Haglin

2 - Steve Carey

6 - Kathi Boyle

Kathy Phillips

7 - Amberly Bozone

Barbara Nicholson

8 - Judy Walls

Larry Smith

11 - Sharon Phillips

12 - Harry Edwards

14 - Brennan Allen

Kaleigh Hicks

Anne Gonzalez

Mary Teschner

15 - Bill Thompson

17 - Jim Burnsed

Audrey Phillips

20 - Jill Wiemer

21 - Dot Brenn

22 - Amanda Jordan

Bonnie Hilton

23 - Lee Freeman

Elizabeth Beltz

24 - Elaine Moorman

24 - Tony Carbone

Ashley Tunker

Debi Brown

26 - Ray Battle

Sandee Sayre

Jonathan Smith

27 - Jane Cole

28 - Dennis Celentano

29 - Carol O'Connell

February Anniversaries

1 - Bill and Faye Schnedler

6 - Clay and Amanda Jordan

7 - Leon and Betty Milton

13 - Glen and Margaret Thompson

16 - Ed and Jane Cole

21 - Jon Sidney and Lorie Larkin

23 - Dennis and Nancy Alfonso

26 - Wally and Sally Collins

Bob and Carrie Luckey





St. Mary's Episcopal Church

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[Check out our Website...](#)

www.stmdc.com

Upcoming Events

Feb 5th - Youth Group's Super Bowl Subs

Feb 21st - Pancake Supper

Feb 26th - Love one Another

March - Family Hayride and Campfire

June 18th - 22nd - Vacation Bible School