

Sunday Announcements for March 9, 2025



March 5, 2025

Adding to Your Life this Lenten Season: What Will You Put On?

Lent has always been a very special time of centering for me. As with Advent, I love the discipline of a measured amount of time to anticipate and prepare. The days leading up to a certain event provide an opportunity to make the event itself more significant and meaningful. Advent means nothing without Christmas. Lent means nothing without Easter. Crucifixion means nothing without resurrection. They are all preludes to the real revelation that lies ahead.

As a boy, I looked forward to the opportunity to anticipate the high and holy days with a time of preparation. I loved my pastor, John. He meant the world to me and surrounded me with love and grace. And yet, he and I took a totally different approach during the season of Lent. Pastor John would always begin Lent by announcing what he was going to be “giving up” for the season. Every year it was something different: soda, certain foods, or a favorite television program. And, every year, I would quietly ask myself “What difference does it make?”

In my quiet revolt, I decided long ago that instead of “giving up” something for Lent, I would instead discern something that I would acquire or “put on” for the 40 days (not including Sundays) leading up to Easter. My passion was and remains to seriously think about what I should *add* to my life that would bless and complement my spiritual journey.

What practice needs to be engaged or re-engaged that will make me a better disciple? What is something that I have neglected or something that has fallen by the wayside that, when revitalized, will bless my spiritual life?

Over the years I have “put on” a day of fasting, a daily time of quietness, a commitment to listen more deeply. I have added things like an intentional day of service in the community, a conversation with someone I haven’t connected with for years, or a daily written note to someone who has come to mind. Often, when Easter has past, I still find myself practicing the discipline that I have added during the season of Lent as a boy.



Bishop's Office

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton

Brenda Cayer
Administrative Assistant
Phone: (978) 682-7555 ext. 250
Fax: (978) 682-9555
BishopsOffice@neumc.org

Currently, it seems that every day presents us with something that calls us to respond. The world is changing quickly, and in a high-tech, high-touch, quick-response world we must be always ready to act! As spiritual leaders, it's up to us to inject the principles of grace, hope, justice, joy, and love into the conversations that often are devoid of these core theological principles that ground our faith.

And yet, if we empty ourselves in a posture of sacrificial service and do not replenish our spiritual tanks, we will find ourselves reacting to rapidly unfolding events rather than responding in a way that's reflective of the Christ-like life we are called to live.

What that means for me is that every day must be a sabbath day. Every day should include "sabbath moments" of prayer, reflection, penitence, and peace. Every day the "addition" of sabbath practices can be the preparation we need in order to be more nimble and responsive in a rapidly changing world.

What will you "add" to your life this Lenten season? The Apostle Paul offers an excellent suggestion. In Romans 13, Paul makes this urgent appeal to the Christians in Rome, a place of great conflict and tension between opposing forces (sound familiar):

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Romans 13: 11-14, NRSV Updated

It's pretty simple, really: Wake up, the day is near! Throw off anything that breeds negativity and darkness! Add the things that bear witness to the light! Most of all, "put on" Christ and let this daily addition not only bless you but bless the world around you with the visible reminders of "the way, the truth, and the life!"

May each of you have a holy and blessed Lenten season.

The Journey Continues, . . .

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Bickerton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Thomas J. Bickerton
Resident Bishop
The New Hope Episcopal Area

Special Prayers for these Wesley Family, Friends, and Others...

Janet DeNapoli, Kasey Charzenski (Kimberly Lindsey's son), Shea Pugh, Katie Johnson (Phil Johnson's daughter-in-law), Justin Clark (Debi Reynolds' neighbor), Jane Borthwick, Troy (David Potts brother, wife of Cathy), David Patrick (Evette Walters husband), Kathleen Herbert (Evette Walters mom), Giendora Lewis (Evette Walters aunt), Carolyn Bellil, Debbie Plant, Sandra O'Driscoll, Melissa Houlihan (friend of Bill Robbins), Alice Douglas, Barbara McLaren, Cathy (sister-in-law of David Potts), Rich Reynolds, Grace Woode, Beverly Grimshaw, Rosamond Hammond, Linda Keister, Pinamang Boateng, Joseph Boateng, Stephen Boyns, Anne Burrows, Dot Ellis, Barbara Fletcher, Jim & Judy Hoffman, Don Johnson, Charles Kiefer, Dorothy Norcross, David Samanen, Janet Terzian, Donald Tremblay, Barbara and the Vietze Family; Peter Woodcock, Laura Zoldak, Susan (friend of David Potts), Margie (Linda Keister's sister), Page (Allison Hansen's sister), Libby T. (friend of Phyllis Yngve), Neil Ashton (past member), Paula and Calvin Kelly (sister and brother-in-law of Linda Dylewicz), Those who struggle with depression, anxiety, and alcoholism.

There is a prayer quilt today for Kasey Charzenski. Please come tie a knot and say a prayer for healing and comfort.

Keep in your prayers, The Holton Family of Shrewsbury (David Potts' neighbors). The father Dile passed away unexpectedly earlier this week.

Announcements

AN ALL-CHURCH MEETING

Will be held Sunday, March 23rd following worship.

Lenten Devotionals for adult, youth and children are available in the Narthex.

Confirmation Class has begun. We will meet on Sunday's after church at 11:40 am in John Wesley. All Parents and Mentors are expected to attend with the student(s) please.

Offering Envelopes should be coming soon. In the meantime, if you use a pew offering envelope, please be sure to write to envelope number on it. As well, it's helpful to the counters if you can write your envelope number on your check – next to your name or on the memo line. *Thank you.*

From Carty Cupboard... During the month of March, we are in need of strawberry or grape jelly, and cereal - it can be oatmeal in the variety packages or cold please. Thank you to everyone who continues to purchase food for Carty Cupboard, we appreciate your kindness. *Nancy*

Lenten Study: The Grace of Les Misérables... Join us for a Lenten study, The Grace of Les Misérables by Matt Rawle, Abington Press. The study, led by Veronica Winder, is meeting in the John Wesley room on Friday mornings March 7 - April 18 from 10 am to 12 pm. Sign up after church in Brewer Hall. Books can be purchased from Amazon. Please contact Veronica (615-424-8960 or via email vmwinder@gmail.com) or Chris Flagg (erf115@msn.com) with any questions.

Lenten Labyrinth Walk

Walking a labyrinth is a contemplative spiritual practice which symbolizes the Christian spiritual journey. The physical walking of the labyrinth provides time and space for interior reflection. As we enter the Lenten season Wesley's floor labyrinth and materials for a self-guided walk will be available in the chapel during the following times:

- Saturday, March 8 during the retreat sponsored by the United Women in Faith
- Sunday, March 9 following morning worship

The walk is intended to open the way for your Lenten pilgrimage and to provide an opportunity for you to set your intentions for your spiritual walk through this holy season. All are welcome.

You're Invited! Sandra and her husband, Stephan, joyfully invite the church family to a luncheon after the church service on Sunday, March 16th, to celebrate the baptism of their daughter, Yvonne Ekoa Blay-Morkeh. This moment marks a significant milestone in Yvonne's life, and they are eager to share this joyous occasion with their church family. Join them for a time of heartfelt fellowship, delicious food, and grateful thanksgiving as they dedicate Yvonne to the Lord. They look forward to celebrating this occasion with you!

Help Keep Families in Their Homes

Looking for a way to help Worcester families facing homelessness? Buy groceries or a cup of coffee! This is an easy way to help address our city's growing numbers of unhoused individuals and families.

- 1) Buy a gift card for Shaw's, Stop & Shop, Big Y, CVS, Panera, Dunkin, Starbucks, Amazon, Target or TJ Maxx/Marshalls. Larger orders, please email Allison Hansen at AChis4788@aol.com.
- 2) Do your regular shopping.
- 3) Rejoice that close to 10 percent of your purchase goes to grants for back rent, utilities, car repair or other expenses that make the difference for families remaining home or on the street.
- 4) Repeat!

Allison will be in Brewer Hall after church on:

March 16 & April 6 -- Two chances for Easter baskets!

May 4 – Don't forget Mother's Day! • June 1

Thank you! Allison Hansen

April 2025 Herald: *There are extra copies of the Herald in the Narthex by the Welcome Office.*

The April Herald will be part of the April 6th bulletin. The deadline for articles is Friday, March 28th.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Debi

Tower & Rose Window Lightings

The Tower lighting for March is given in loving memory of Dr. C. James Brenneman by his daughter Betsey.

The Rose Window lighting for March is given in loving memory of Rose Ventura, their mother, and Thomas Ventura, their brother, in celebration of their birthdays by Gary, James, and Debbie.

The 2025 altar flower calendar is now available.

Altar flowers are available to order in honor, celebration or memory of a loved one. If you would like to donate the altar flowers on a given Sunday, you may sign up in the book in the Welcome Office or call me during the week. Please take a form from the book, complete it and return it to the office with your payment. It's \$80 for both arrangements on the altar (\$40 per arrangement), or a single arrangement for \$50. The single arrangement will be placed on a brass stand in the center of the altar. If by chance two people would like flowers on the same day, we will list them both and they will be placed in the same area as usual, on each side of the altar.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you, Debi Reynolds

GOD MOMENT

If you could share a story of seeing God's work in your life, please tell me or email it to me. The story can be anonymous or signed, and all are invited to participate. Betsy (betspenn35@hotmail.com)

A God Moment from Kim (a friend of Debi Reynolds)

My daughter-in-law was napping at home with my grandson, almost 3. She woke up to thick smoke in the house, so badly that she could not see anything. They had just received an oil delivery that morning and that morning my son had just shown her where the shut-off valve was. She quickly grabbed my still sleeping grandson and ran downstairs, shut the valve off and ran outside.

Once outside, she saw a police officer talking to the next-door neighbors, porch combined. She noticed the road had already been blocked off and the firemen were there as well. The police officer put my DIL and grandson in the back of his car because she just had shorts on - no coat or shoes. The firemen were able to get their dog and put it in the car with them and found their cat and was able to put it in the dog crate in the home for the time being.

Turns out, there was a fire still within their heater. Thankfully, because of a passerby, it did not spread further. By the time I got there, the front door was open, and they were airing out the house.

She learned that someone had been driving by, saw the smoke from the chimney and thought that it was not your normal chimney smoke, so had called 911.

I truly believe it was a higher power that they were lucky that things happened the way they did and how everything is coming together for them so far. There was another home just days before that did not fare as well. I believe it was destroyed by the fire, no lives lost thankfully. I know they just had their heater serviced about three weeks prior, but I am not sure if their chimney was cleaned.

Safety Note: Perhaps this story made you think about reviewing where the oil shut-off valve is with the adults and teens in your house. Some houses have a safety switch in another part of the house too.

If you have gas heat instead of oil, the shut-off switch is on the furnace, at least in the newer models. Since the gas furnace is probably in the cellar, you don't want to go there. Instead, if you smell gas get everyone and your pets out of the house immediately and Call 911.