

# The Circuit Writer

The Monthly Newsletter for the churches of Chatham United Methodist Circuit

**Chatham**

**Liberty**

**St. Louisville**

**March 2021**

**From Pastor Bryan**

*At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. Mark 1:12 – 13 NIV*

Lent is the time that we “go with” Jesus into the wilderness to contemplate our nature and our relationship with God. After His Baptism, Jesus was lead, forced, driven into the wilderness in order to contemplate His relationship with God. Satan repeatedly tried unsuccessfully to turn Jesus away from God, to renounce the mission for which he was sent by God all for short term and earthly blessings. The challenges of the wilderness have a way of making us reconsider our present and eternal situations. Bishop Palmer sent out a note this week that helps us understand our time in the wilderness and I thought that his words would be beneficial to us during the coming month of March and experiencing a full 40 day in the wilderness.

*“For at least the last fifteen months I have been reflecting on the role the wilderness plays in our lives. Here at the start of Lent I am in apparently good company. Every year the Gospel reading for the First Sunday in Lent (drawn from either Matthew, Mark or Luke) is on Jesus in the wilderness. According to these writers and depending on the version one is reading Jesus is lead, forced or driven into the wilderness following his baptism.*

*I assume that in the main most of us don’t go out of our way to traverse wilderness seasons. That does not mean that we don’t seek the refuge and solitariness of alone time. What I mean is that to the extent that wilderness is a place holder for lonely, dry, barren, tough, rough and inhospitable we don’t especially seek it out. At least I don’t. According to the first three Gospels we don’t have the sense that Jesus sought his “forty days” in the wilderness with the wild beasts. Though we do have signs that he “stole away” to isolated places to pray now and again.*

*But that the wilderness however perceived, defined or experienced clearly played a critical role in his ministry and in the shaping of Israel is not in dispute. In fact, it has been said that more than half of the Torah takes place in the wilderness. So, there are clear indicators in our scriptures that God is at work in the wilderness. God speaks in the wilderness. God continues to be God in the wilderness. To what end? God knows that the subject cannot be exhausted here. But let me venture a couple of roles that time in the wilderness can play in our lives individually and communally. In the wilderness with Jesus, we can:*

- *Get clear about identity and purpose.*
- *Hear the Word that addresses us about new futures with God.*
- *Grow our capacity to really depend on God.*

*So, welcome to Lent. Welcome to the wilderness. Let us redeem this time and opportunity to the glory of God and for the sake of the world. I am always, Bishop Gregory V. Palmer*

## **Planning ahead to Worship our Lord**

*These are the lessons planned for the coming month. Please take the time to read the scriptures (the message lesson is always the last one listed), review the message preview and consider what the scriptures are teaching us as you prepare to come to worship each Sunday.*

### **March 7: Third Sunday in Lent, Communion Sunday**

**Scripture:** Psalm 19:1 - 4, John 2:13 - 33, 1 Corinthians 1:18 - 25,

**Message:** *Wiser than Wisdom, Stronger than Strength*

**Description:** In Exodus we read that when the Glory of God passes by us we see God from behind because mankind can only hope to perceive the divine work of God after it has happened, we cannot anticipate how the majesty and power of God before it happens. This is true of the path that Jesus takes to our salvation, it comes by and through the Cross, that the tough of anyone on a Roman Cross being wise and strong is simply foolishness. This week in our Lenten journey, we come to understand and appreciate that the salvation that is ours or could be ours comes to us not through wisdom of the world or through strength of the mighty. Rather it comes to us when we find the Truth found only in the salvific sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and we find the strength of Jesus to lay down his life so that we can reject the ways of the world and follow him. In these truths we become *Wiser than Wisdom and Stronger than Strength*.

### **March 14: Fourth Sunday in Lent**

**Scripture:** Psalm 107:1 - 3, Numbers 21:4 - 9, John 3:14 - 21

**Message:** *Lifted Up*

**Description:** Our scripture lesson for today includes a verse that is unquestionably one of the most widely known and has been called "the Gospel in a single verse". Of course, we are talking about John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" But the theme of the entire lesson goes beyond that verse with a challenge to be Lifted Up. Just as Moses *Lifted Up* a God ordained solution to the situation that the Israelites found themselves in because of their disobedience, so too the Son of Man must also be *Lifted Up* as the solution to the problem that the world has with suffering because of its disobedience, that everyone that believes may have eternal life. As believers we too then are *Lifted Up* by the coming, ministry and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

### **March 21: Fifth Sunday in Lent**

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:14 - 17, John 12:20 - 33, Jeremiah 31:31 - 34

**Message:** *In Their Minds and On Their Hearts*

**Description:** Over the past few weeks in worship and in Bible Study we have been talking about covenants, which are pledged and defined relationship of responsibility between God and his people". God ordained covenants with Adam, Abraham and Moses with expectations of both man and God. Through disobedience man broke those covenants but God never gives up on his children. Our lesson today is the only reference in the Old Testament of a "new covenant" with the people of Israel that was coming. This time rather than writing it on stone tablets God says that He will put it *In Their Minds* and write it *On Their Hearts*. The foundation of this new covenant is none other than Jesus Christ himself. The new covenant does not promise sinlessness because of our inherent sinful nature, instead it promises gracious forgiveness. We are saved sinners. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone through Christ alone.

### **March 28: Palm Sunday**

**Scripture:** Psalm 118:14 – 15, 25 - 29, Philippians 2:5 - 11, Mark 11:1 - 11

**Message:** *Parade for a King*

**Description:** As Christians throughout Lent we should be repenting, coming together, and embracing the new thing that God is doing within us and among us. Hopefully it has been a season of turning our hearts to the One whose promises are bigger than the stars; a season of fasting from the things that harm, while

feasting on grace. If we have walked the pathway in purposeful prayer and self-reflection, we discover that the very landscape of our hearts has been turned and cultivated. What was once a rocky desert is now beginning to blossom with new and beautiful blooms. But today, at least for a few hours, we can set aside our trepidation about what we know is coming in the next few of days and live in the excitement that this day offers. We emerge today from our wilderness wanderings and find ourselves caught up in of all things a parade, a party, a celebration, a procession of palms, a *Parade for a King!*

### **The Life of the Church Coming Events**

**Bible Study**, March 3, 10, 17 & 24 @ 2PM. We are continuing our study of the Book of Exodus. On March 3<sup>rd</sup> we will be studying Chapters 35 and 36. Call 508-924-5730 to join. The audio of the Bible Study is also available at 508- 924-5730 by noon on Thursday!

### **Holy Week and Easter Services**

The plan is, and we have had to endure multiple changes in our Worship schedules over the last year, that we will have Maundy Thursday, April 1<sup>st</sup> @ Chatham, 7 PM, Good Friday April 2<sup>nd</sup> @ St Louisville 7 PM, Easter Sunrise April 4<sup>th</sup> @ Liberty, 7 AM and Easter Sunday Worship beginning at 9 AM for St Louisville and the other churches as we have done in the past. At this point these services will likely be Drive-In services but stay tuned!

### **Keep Watch and Pray with Jesus!**

We started a custom last year, a custom where it is possible to feel the poignancy of the night that Jesus is betrayed. In essence each of you, the faithful are asked to accompany Jesus, like Peter, James and John, in the Garden and console him during his great agony as He is arrested and the trials of Good Friday begin.

On the night of Maundy Thursday, April 1<sup>st</sup> I will ask each of you to take on that challenge, to *Keep Watch and Pray* with and for Jesus! I am asking each of you to set aside one hour of time, from 9 PM Thursday until noon Friday, to pray, read and mediate on the scene in the garden that sacred night. Imagine being there with Jesus in the Garden, watching the sweat of blood drip down his face as he prepares to sacrifice himself for our sins. Dear Ones, will you *Keep Watch and Pray* for one hour to appreciate just what Jesus Christ has done for you?

### **St Louisville News**

The new mission for March is the Baby Pantry. Also it's still not too late to donate to Heartbeats (February's mission). And just a reminder that we are collecting every week for the YMCA Backpack Program. Last year's total was \$391. (Thank you to all who supported this program.) Every \$1 helps.

The UMW is planning on having a meeting on March 16 at 12:00. Most of us should have had our Covid-19 vaccine but masks will still be required as well as social distancing. A "dessert only" will be provided instead of a luncheon. It's been a long time since we have been able to get together. We have lots to talk about.

***Thirty-one days of Lenten Scripture Lessons for your spiritual growth!***

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Scripture</u></b>	<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Scripture</u></b>
March 1, 2021	John 4:27-42	March 17, 2021	John 6:27-40
March 2, 2021	John 4:43-54	March 18, 2021	John 6:41-51
March 3, 2021	John 5:1-18	March 19, 2021	John 6:52-59
March 4, 2021	John 5:19-29	March 20, 2021	John 6:60-71
March 5, 2021	John 5:30-47	March 21, 2021	Mark 8:31-9:1
March 6, 2021	John 7:1-13	March 22, 2021	John 9:1-17
March 7, 2021	Mark 5:1-20	March 23, 2021	John 9:18-41
March 8, 2021	John 7:14-36	March 24, 2021	John 10:1-18
March 9, 2021	John 7:37-52	March 25, 2021	John 10:19-42
March 10, 2021	John 8:12-20	March 26, 2021	John 11:1-27
March 11, 2021	John 8:21-32	March 27, 2021	John 11:28-44
March 12, 2021	John 8:33-47	March 28, 2021	Matt 21:12-17
March 13, 2021	John 8:47-59	March 29, 2021	John 12:9-19
March 14, 2021	Mark 8:11-21	March 30, 2021	John 12:20-26
March 15, 2021	John 6:1-15	March 31, 2021	John 12:27-36
March 16, 2021	John 6:16-27		

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***“Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2***

**St Louisville**

Mark Soter  
Bryan Miller  
Warren Parsons  
Teri Schaller  
Dick and Mary Ann Power  
Bonnie Pound  
Pauline Cliver  
Betty Street  
Carolyn Miller

**Chatham**

Frances Garno  
Suzann Warner  
Jane Smith  
Sandy Bennett  
Paul and Carolyn Rostofer

**Liberty**

Sally Lindsay  
Susan (Nancy’s sister)  
Larry Allen, his daughter Jennifer  
Janet Bryant  
Ruth and Rick Wilson  
Donna & Joe Tate  
Charlotte Vernon

### **Happy Birthday!**

3/3 Carol Rostofer, Sara Jane Walker  
3/6 Kathy Robinson  
3/15 Kim Murphy  
3/20 Dick Power  
3/21 Pauline Cliver  
3/24 Dean Runyon  
3/28 Kenneth Hale

### **Happy Anniversary!**

3/4 Lisa and Bill Davies  
3/12 Sabrina and David McComb

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### **How to Worship from Home!**

- 1) You can watch live at: [ChathamCharge.com/live](http://ChathamCharge.com/live) or at any of the church Facebook pages:  
[Facebook.com/Libertyumcjohnstown](https://www.facebook.com/Libertyumcjohnstown)  
[Facebook.com/ChathamUMCNewark](https://www.facebook.com/ChathamUMCNewark)  
[Facebook.com/StLouisvilleUMC](https://www.facebook.com/StLouisvilleUMC)
- 2) You can watch the service later at: [ChathamCharge.com/sermon](http://ChathamCharge.com/sermon) (by the way you can watch old services here as well) or at any of the church Facebook pages listed above.
- 3) We have the Sermon Line that allows people to call the number, which is **617-793-8516**. The audio of the services will be available by noon on the following Monday.