

God is still speaking, at ...



THE UNITED CHURCH

of

Rockville Centre

February 18, 2010

Volume 11,

Lent, 2010

Dear Friends,

Ash Wednesday marks our entrance into the holiest season of the Christian year. With the receiving of ashes on our foreheads, we turn our hearts and minds inward to how things are between Christ and us. Ashes symbolize our own mortality as we focus on Jesus' forty days of fasting and temptation in the wilderness, leading to his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, his agony in Gethsemane, his betrayal and trial, crucifixion and death.

These events are not just a drama about someone who lived 2,000 years ago. We need to see ourselves and our own relationship to Jesus in these stories: we are tempted, we betray not only Jesus, but sometimes others whom we love the most; we abandon those in deepest suffering, we deny Jesus and deny the millions who face their own death daily; we stand by while people are wrongly imprisoned, poorly tried, and unjustly executed. Is this the whole story of our lives? No, but Lent is a time to find the Turning Points in our lives, those places where we feel called to change. Identifying those Turning Points will be the work of Lent for us this year, the goal of each piece of our Lenten program: the Ash Wednesday Service, the Bible study focus on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), the workshops on March 6 and 20, personal prayer and Zen meditation, the celebration of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter.

During Lent we dare to enter into the dark places of our own heart, and dare to be honest before God about whatever gaps there may be between the needs of the suffering and the active, selfless compassion we are capable of manifesting.

This self-reflection would not be possible without our faith and trust in our Creator whose forgiveness is absolutely and unendingly reliable. This self-reflection is not for self-flagellation but to open our hearts more fully to let the infinite love of God into our bones and blood, so that we might be channels of God's love to a broken world.

As St. Irenaeus said, "The glory of God is the human fully alive!" Our very selves, fully alive, become the very resurrected body of the Crucified One.

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Let us plunge deeply into the waters of God's grace for our own healing and the healing of this tumultuous world.

May the blessings of Christ's passion and resurrection fill us with peace and joy!

Pastor Bob

The Sunday Night Club

On Sunday, March 14th, the Sunday Night Club will host an all church brunch in Rickert Hall following our worship service. All members of the church are welcome to attend the brunch and stay for the Annual Meeting directly following the brunch.

Our next regularly scheduled meeting is on 5/16/10. It will be a supper meeting at 6pm. The supper chair is Janet Zimmerman. More details to follow. Put this date on your calendar and plan to be with us.

All church members, families and friends, whether single or married are invited to all our events.

Pat Barnes & Stan Weiner

Upcoming Program Schedule

- Zen Meditation will continue at the Parsonage, Mons, 7 a.m. & 6 p.m., Tues and Fri at 7 a.m.
 - Maundy Thursday we will celebrate the Last Supper as we have traditionally done in Rickert Hall. 7:30 p.m.
 - Good Friday we will have an informal service of prayers and Bible Readings in the Choir Chancel of the Sanctuary, 7:30 p.m.
 - Special music for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday
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The Benefits of an Altruistic Life

New York Times health columnist Tara Parker-Hope, as reported in [Work & Family Life](#) (February 2010), has found research that supports the idea that people benefit health-wise from helping others:

- A Boston College study found that patients with chronic pain fared better when they counseled other patients who were also in pain. They felt less depression, less disability, and their intense pain was reduced.
 - The Buck Institute for Age Research in California found a connection between volunteerism and longevity among older people. Elderly participants who did volunteer work for more than four hours a week were less likely to die during the study period.
 - A Miami study of patients with HIV found that those who demonstrated strong altruistic characteristics had lower levels of stress hormones.
 - A study of 150 heart patients found that those who talked about themselves at length and used more first-person pronouns did worse on treadmill tests than those who referred to themselves less.
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Dates to Remember

February

28 Reverend Gunn's Recital 4pm

March

1 Trustees Meeting 7:30pm

2 Church Council Meeting 7:30pm
Deacons Meeting 5pm

14 Sunday Night Club Brunch and Annual Meeting following worship service

Piano Recital

On February 28th at 4pm Rev. Gunn will be giving a piano recital of works by Bach, Mozart, Shubert and Gershwin. This recital is open to the public. For more information please contact the church office @ 516.766.2975.

The Souper Group

The "Souper Group" will be meeting during the month of February on Friday, 2/5 and Friday, 2/19 they will be cooking up batches of their delicious beef barley soup.



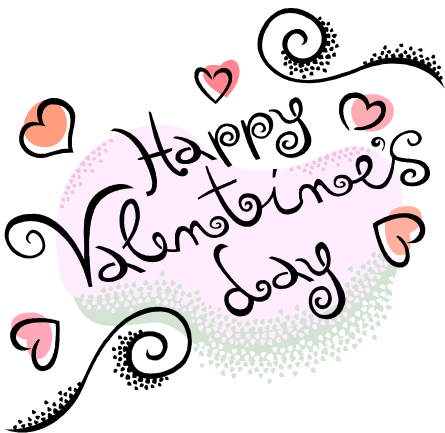
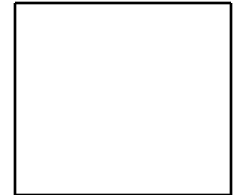
In March they will be meeting on Friday, 3/5.

Please remember that all help is welcome whether it be a donation of time, money or ingredients. And don't forget that the soup they make is delivered to the INN in Freeport which helps to feed the less fortunate in our community.



If you have any questions feel free to contact the church office at 766.2975.

United Church of Rockville Centre
430 Morris Avenue
Rockville Centre, NY 11570



Nicaragua Trip

I would like to thank everyone who donated items for the Lutheran High School Mission trip to Nicaragua. Our group of 28 people will be in Nicaragua from 2/14 to 2/21. Please keep our mission in your prayers. Photos to follow!

Turning Points: a Lenten Program

Those of us who have been reading the best-selling novel, *The Shack*, have made the intimate acquaintance of its fictional hero, Mackenzie, whose daughter was kidnapped and murdered. That event became a turning point in his life, determining the course of the rest of his life. Ultimately, his struggle with that turning point leads him to another, an encounter with God. That encounter makes him realize that there were other, earlier turning points in his life—things that happened to him and what he did with what happened to him, that deeply molded the man he had become, for better and for worse. Mack's encounter with God enables him to change in the direction of a deepening faith and a more loving and compassionate heart.

As we move through these forty days, I encourage us all to think about the turning points in our lives, how our lives have been shaped by events and decisions which may have passed by with little notice, but which, on retrospect, were completely pivotal in the direction of our lives after. As we recognize such turning points from our past, we can begin to see opportunities in the present for new turning points --decisions, attitudes and steps to take that will lead us into a closer relationship with God, with our true self, and with others, the essence of the Christian spiritual life.

Bible Study on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6, 7) Monday, Feb. 22; Wednesdays March 3, 10, 17; Monday March 22, 29. At the Parsonage, 64 Hamilton Street, 7:30 p.m.

Workshops on "Turning Points" Saturdays, March 6, 13 and 20, 10 a.m. to noon in Rickert Hall.

1. March 6 will take a close but broad look at *The Shack*. A presentation of the basic story of the book will make the issues clear even for those who have not yet read it. Then we will examine closely the issues for faith that the hero presents in his encounter with God.

2. On March 13 the theme will be *The Cross and the Bodhi Tree: Where Christ and Buddha meet in the Turning Points of our lives*. After an initial presentation on the parallels between the life and teachings of both Jesus and Buddha, we will see how such a perspective helps us identify and work with life challenges.

3. On March 20, the emphasis will be on Turnings Points from a Developmental Perspective: looking at the stages of our lives, what are the risks, dangers and opportunities as we face the changing developmental needs from growing up to creativity to wisdom and compassion.