



The e_VIGIL

E electronic Communication from
the International Christian Community Churches

February Issue

February 1, 2008

A Message From Our Presiding Minister

I did not grow up in a faith tradition that observed Lent. All I knew about Lent was that my dear 6th grade friend Becky gave up something every year for a period of time. It was always something that she really wouldn't miss. If I were following Becky's example, I suppose I would give up eating liver.

One of my best friends, Dave, is not a Christian, but he gives up something every Lent. He uses the time to get back on track with his healthy eating or exercising, or to cut back on some of the things that aren't healthy for him. However, there is no calling upon God for help...Lent is a time for him to exercise his own will power and to gain control of something in his life. If I were to follow Dave's example, I probably wouldn't last all the way through Lent, because I've found that I can do little under my own power.

Neither of these examples follows the admonition that Isaiah gives us for the satisfactory fast (58:6-7): *Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?* Again, verses 9-11: *If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.*

Isaiah seems very clear about offering ourselves in spiritual discipline to God. What changes would be wrought during our time of Lent this year if each of us set about to do as Isaiah says God wants: address injustice and oppression; share food, clothing and shelter; and eliminate bickering and criticism within the family?!

For many of us, Lent is a time of personal sacrifice in which we surrender our need to have complete control over our time, energy, finances, etc. Our sacrifice is a small symbol of the sacrifice that will be made for us on a Friday in just a few short weeks. I am still uncertain about where the Spirit is leading me this Lenten season, but I find myself challenged by Isaiah's words. In my devotional time I am asking God to show me how my Lenten sacrifice might further freedom from oppression, economic justice and right relationship. I believe that God calls ICCC to be a foundation for the future and a source of repair and restoration. Isaiah is clear...if we love one another and do justice, we will be known as a foundational part of the ushering in of the Kingdom of God. We do this one soul at a time, one step with Christ at a time, one deliberate act of kindness at a time.

Let's make the promise of Isaiah our Lenten focus this year. I am praying prayers of blessing and hope as we each seek to do what God has asked us to do in our relationship with Christ.

Blessings to all,
Carlene
Rev. Carlene Wood

A CHANGE OF SEASON

On February sixth the church begins a change of season. For those churches who use the Lectionary we know that we have entered the "A" Cycle of readings. The Lectionary divides Scripture into 3 yearly cycles. A, B, and C. By using the three cycles the four Gospels, will be read. The church year begins the first Sunday in Advent. The "A" cycle features the Gospel of Matthew with some exceptions. Our new Season is called Lent. Lent is a forty-day period before Easter (not counting Sundays) . It begins Ash Wednesday and ends Holy Thursday with the commemoration of Jesus' last supper.

In some of our churches the minister place ashes on our foreheads as a sign of repentance on Ash Wednesday. We recall that we were created from dust and to dust we will return. We acknowledge that we are sinners and through confession, works of charity, prayer, scripture reading and fasting we hope to change the direction of our lives in hope of becoming Christ-like.

To help us visualize this season the color purple is used for our altar and pulpit covers as well as the stoles and or chasubles worn by our ministers. Purple the color of royalty is also the color of penance.

In Christian churches around the world Lent is a time of fasting and prayer. To help us on our spiritual journey to the cross and resurrection I recommend the following:

- ?? Follow the ancient Christian custom of morning and evening prayer. Have a nice long chat with God first thing in the morning and late in the evening. If you have a habit of taking a daily walk, you could resolve to talk to God during the entire walk, to talk things out.
- ?? It is recommended to pray at each meal during Lent.
- ?? Try fasting whenever you need intensive prayer. Your appetite acts as a prayer alarm; instead of eating your usual treat, pray. It will keep you focused all day long. Read scripture and see how important fasting was to the prophets and our savior Jesus Christ. You will read that before the major events in Christ' ministry he fasted. Jesus retreated into the desert for forty days to prepare for his journey. It was a time of contemplation, reflection, and preparation. By observing the season of lent, most Christians join Jesus on his retreat.

When were the last time you prayed for more than ten minutes? When was the last time you skipped lunch to spend time with God? editor

Where do the ashes we use on Ash Wednesday come from? Those ashes we use to mark our foreheads come from the Palms we use on Palm Sunday. After the service a few palms are taken and burned. These ashes are p[placed in a container until Ash Wednesday. They represent the great joy of Jesus entry into Jerusalem These ashes are mixed with a few drops of olive oil so that the ashes will stick to the flesh. We are reminded by the sign of the cross to repent!

Prayers Requested For Hickory Church

A court hearing was held regarding the bid that **Christ's Church of the Foothills** has submitted to purchase the building that they now lease. It is complicated because it's tied up in an estate and as often happens, there is dissention within the family. The judge who heard the case will make a decision soon..

Please keep the church in your prayers this week -- and pray for a positive outcome from the courts! This is a wonderful opportunity for them to own their own building, and they've been working very hard in this direction. Rev. Carlene Wood

February Calendar

February 3: World Mission Sunday

February 6: Ash Wednesday

February 10: First Sunday of Lent

February 18: Presidents Day; Martin Luther Day

Presiding Minister's Travel Schedule

February 8-9
Governing Board Meeting
Atlanta, GA

An Art Project for Lent

Add some visual effects to your worship service to visualize Lent. Lent is referred to as a Journey: a journey with Christ to his death on the cross.

Make a runner of craft paper about 6 to 8 feet long Place it down on a cloth or plastic paint cloth. Purchase some tempera paints in Black, Grays, Purple and Lavender, Brown and Red.. Have members of the congregation, especially teenagers and children, paint the bottom of their feet and walk down the paper. When everyone has done this mount it on the wall or hang it on a banner stand. This will be a good way of showing that we are all the family of God on the same journey to the cross. If you have a service on Good Friday before the service tape the banner to the floor letting the people take the journey to the cross by walking on the banner.

The Emmaus Institute

For Information about how to join this incredible
Learning community

Please contact Rev. Linda Veltheim at EmmausICCC@charter.net

REMINDER CHURCH TREASURERS!!

Please send your tithes to:

Rev. Steve Garrett
Office of the ICCC Treasurer
P.O. Box178
Greer, S.C. 29652



Pastors and Boards of Directors will be receiving information Packets from the Office of the Treasurer containing forms. Please read them carefully there have been changes in the requirements from the IRS. Please feel free to contact the treasurer if you have any questions

Governing Board

News

The Governing Board will hold its first 2008 meeting in Atlanta, GA. I have been told that they are very excited about beginning the New Year with fresh ideas and new challenges. They have added Kim McGinnis to fill the position of Clerk and will be discussing Rod Hagen's replacement.

In addition the Convocation Co-Directors will be presenting a rough outline and suggestions for Convocation 2008. "Who do you say I am"? It has been shared with me that many new programs will be developed that will aid the local churches. The scope and development of these programs will be discussed and many current programs will be reviewed. Let us keep them in prayer.

**The true function of a preacher is to disturb the comfortable and
comfort the disturbed!**

Reading Recommendations February 2008

There is a great deal of wisdom within our ICCC community of members and friends, and there is an eagerness for spiritual growth that is palpable. This leads many to search out new books, magazines and other resources that will enhance our relationship with Christ. I know from talking with many of you that you are much like Sandi and I... the line item in your person budget for "Books" is substantial!

The E-Vigil would like to offer a forum in which to share your reading recommendations, and hope that each issue will contain suggestions and reviews that will be of interest to other readers. I (Carlene) will start us out this month but WE NEED YOUR INPUT! If you have a suggestion for a good read, please send it to us to include in this new column. The title, author and a brief description or review would be helpful. Please help us share resources that you've discovered!

Where the Love Is

Valentine Day, a wonderful day of love. There will be plenty of "I Love You" cards and "Won't you be my Valentine". There will be the exchange of little gifts and fancy dinners. And all of us will wait in sweet antiiiiiiiiiiiiicipation for that special kiss. Isn't love grand?

In the cold grey days of winter love can warm many a heart. But there is a darker colder side to valentine. Jesus reminds us always of the un-loved. It is hard for us to acknowledge that even in the loving embrace of church fellowship there stand people who feel un-loved and un-wanted. Often they hide it behind a pasted smile. There will be no special card. It may be just dinner for one. Observing from their table a world of love they may never know.

Beyond our homes and churches there will be people who wander the streets with nothing at all. They may glance in shop windows seeing the bright hearts and tender words but only finding loneliness and hunger. Their stomachs aching for a simple meal rather than chocolate kisses. The poor and the homeless seek just a gentler touch of another human hand.

In the buildings with their glowing windows are children who want to be loved. Some take drugs or rebel against families, believing that they are not wanted. Some run away and wonder the streets alone. Even in the ranks of clergy, surrounded by congregations, they can feel the icy touch of loneliness. We the loved are often blinded to those who are un-loved.

There amongst the un-loved is where we will find Jesus. The World's greatest Valentine! If we but open our eyes and our hearts this is where we will find our Savior: For God so loved the world that the Creator sent the Son to be our Redeemer. What greater love is this? Editor



Here is some NEWS

from the Churches

The Men's Fellowship at New Creation, Columbia, S.C.

The Men's Fellowship at New Creation has become a wonderful surprise to all us men! Eleven months ago in February 2007 the men met for the first time to consider forming a fellowship. No one knew just what to expect and no one had any private agenda to shape the group to any personal design. That first meeting to our surprise lasted four joyful hours. We shared, prayed, planned and ate together and as a result we bonded into a unified brotherhood.

Since that incredible first meeting we have had several meetings that also lasted three or more hours with similar happenings. We have included Bible studies, dinners and ministries to our activities. Some of our social activities included visiting the Columbia SC zoo, Dolly Wood TN and a combined fellowship in Clyde, NC where we were guided to the Chattahoochee National Park to view herds of wild elk that had been reintroduced to the park.

The Men's Fellowship has also developed into a ministry arm of the church. Some of the things that we've done over the past year were: (1) donate materials and landscape the grounds, (2) donate materials and labor with others to accomplish the interior renovations of the church, (3) help the needy with financial aid, (4) help others by contributing time and labor to help mow yards or clean up homes, (5) provide cooked meals, groceries and fuel, (6) help transport folks when they needed assistance, (7) made visits to church members or to the family and friends of church members when they were in the hospital or ill at home.

The Men's Fellowship also has also been the core group of volunteers who have stepped out into a bar ministry in downtown Asheville. Men of the church meet for prayer and then head into a bar to be a positive presence and witness for Christ. We have had several bar visits now where contacts with strangers has produced positive witnessing encounters and contributed to the good publicity desired by New Creation in the greater GLBT community.

The men recently have agreed to additional goals: (1) start a men's fellowship benevolence fund to be one more resource to help the needy, (2) schedule fellowship meetings regularly once a month with regular Bible study and (3) plan more social activities that include the full church participation.

Two years ago our church had few to no men in regular worship and only a couple of those vital men were active in any other church activities. Today we have men in attendance in worship and in church activities on a numerical ratio equal to the women. Men have stepped up and are working together in worship, choir, pastoral care, evangelism and community impact ministries, and one has been accepted as a pastoral intern to join in ministry with our three female pastors. Several other men have touching personal testimonies about how God has shaped and is shaping their lives in service to Him. New Creation has had an infusion of new members and many are men. The congregation now has a good balance between men and women. The future looks bright with promise for new church growth and robust ministries. The men will play a vital part in making that future happen. --- **Bill Johnson, New Creation ICC**

Good Shepherd ICCC, Atlanta, GA

The Sheep are off to a new and exciting year. Special thanks to Jo Ann Jensen and Marty Martensen for the outstanding job they did on the food and clothing drive.

On January 23, Rev. Maniscalco began a two-part seminar on the Practice of celebrating Lent. What is the meaning of Lent and it's celebration. Why do we do the things we do like ashes and fasting? The seminar will conclude on February 3.

There will be an **Ash Wednesday Service at 7:00 pm** in our worship space in the YWCA. The Pulpit Players will present a reading of Psalms from Isaiah as part of the worship service. Rev. Neely, our senior pastor, will be anointing the congregation with ashes.

A let is give a special praise for **Michael Bates**, a member of our congregation. Michael was shot as he walked home last fall. The officers said that they did not believe that he would survive the ambulance ride. Michael continues to recover. He recently went through another operation to take scar tissue from his throat. Michael worshipped with us last Sunday praising God and thanking all of you for your many prayers.

News from New Day- Greer SC

January brought a new series of study for our Sunday school. Tim Dommer is leading us through some of the teachings of A.W. Tozer as we discover *The Attributes of God* and our definition of who God is. Our mission project for the first quarter is Michael's Way. Michael's Way is a local grass-roots organization that provides money for adults to return to school for the education needed for a better job and improved income. The New Day congregation will be hold several raffles and collect change for this worthwhile endeavor. The first raffle will be for a "Lover's" gift basket and a chance for the baked good of your choice.

A look at February will bring us a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, Ash Wednesday Service and of course our monthly potluck!



Rev. Steve Garrett installs Kim Brock as Treasurer
and affirms Linda Burrell as
Lay Delegate and Tim Dommer as Alternate Lay
Delegate
New Day January 13, 2008

Please note that Linda Burrell as part of her new responsibilities will be providing articles and pictures to the e_Vigil. Thank You!

Governing Board

Presiding Minister: Rev. Carlene Wood
Acting Presiding Minister: Ms. Sharon Lindenbaum
Clerk of the Board: Ms. Kim McGinnis
Treasurer: Rev. Steve Garrett
At-Large: Rev. David Strong
At- Large: Rev. Linda Simonds
At- Large: Vacant



Board of Ministry

Chairperson: Rev. Emily Bel
Rev. Mena Johnson
Mr. Ray Powell

Emmaus Institute

Director: Rev. Linda Veltheim

Area Leaders

Rev. Jerry Ethridge: GA
Vacant: NC; SC.
Vacant: AL.; TN.; WA.



Reminder:

- ?? Check your calendar for due dates for articles to be placed in the e-vigil
- ?? Please make copies of this newsletter to be distributed at your church
- ?? Governing Board Meeting Feb. 8-9

