



Lent

The Steeple

March 2020



FROM THE PASTOR

One of the pastors I study with serves a church where they don't do Ash Wednesday (or observe Lent at all). He teasingly asked me if we could read the Bible passage that speaks of putting ashes on our heads. We both know there isn't one. But I told him to look at 2 Samuel 13:19, which says that "Tamar put ashes on her head."

Who was Tamar, and why did she put ashes on her head? She was a daughter of King David. Her half-brother raped her. The ashes on her head surfaced a "me-too" moment that said she was in great distress after being victimized and having her trauma ignored.

Well, that's all I could come up with. It doesn't really apply to our custom of putting ashes on our heads as a sign of mourning for our sins. There isn't anything in the Bible that tells us all to put ashes on our heads one day a year, or to observe a period of 40 days of serious self-examination and repentance. These things became customary in some places, and they can be helpful provided they're understood correctly.

I went on to tell him, "We Methodists repent for the sins of others, not our own." That was a joke, too. But it got me to wondering whether there might actually be some truth in it.

Most United Methodist congregations read aloud together long "prayers of confession" in which we express our regret for being greedy, for oppressing others, for polluting the environment, for mistreating immigrants, for ignoring the hungry and the homeless, for discriminating against persons of color, women, and gay people. Some worshipers don't like these prayers. It feels like we're repenting for other people's sins. "I don't do any of those things," someone complained to me once. "Why do I have to admit all those sins out loud when I haven't committed them myself?"

Fair question, I think. It's partly why I haven't included a prayer of confession in the order of worship in many years. I don't think it's spiritually productive to get people to confess to sins they're not genuinely convicted of yet. Personally, when I look at the list above, in my most honest moments I have to admit to myself that I have indeed been guilty of many of those things in one way or another. But I've been put through more intense spiritual training than most people have. Leading you to confess something which you aren't yet aware of, or which you don't regret, is putting the cart before the horse.

Beyond that, though, there is another dimension worth exploring. Sad to say, we have an entirely individualistic notion of sin: I'm guilty of my sins, and you're guilty of your sins; let's not get them mixed up. But from a deeper perspective, humanity in general has been sinful. To one degree or another, most of us have participated in the mass selfishness that drives the creation of ethnic boundaries, the erecting of monuments to glorify imperialist wars, and the denial of justice to the oppressed. To one degree or another, many of us profit from the theft and violence which others have overtly committed either recently or in the remote past. Rightly understood, these things suggest that we take some measure of collective responsibility. Maybe repenting for the sins of others isn't such a bad idea, after all.

CELEBRATIONS & CONCERNS



Prayers & sympathy to the family of Prescott Grout who died on February 28. After our worship on March 22 will be a memorial service in our sanctuary.

†Doris Gagnon is now at Holyoke Health Care Center, 282 Cabot St, Holyoke, MA 01040



Prayer List: Carol Brunelle, Carol Szulc, Eunice Mittler, Harry Thomas, Barbara Ryan, Doris Gagnon, Beth Dietz, Pauline Kiakis, Samantha Snopek, Adele Reynolds, Bev Pead & Family, Doug & Dee Brooksbank, Frank Hudgik, Dave Fanaras, Tom Deren, Tim O'Donnell, Vinnie Deitner

Congratulations to Tom and Carol Deren on the birth of their great granddaughter Scarlett born January 17 to Briana Deren. Proud grandparents are Steve and Brooke Deren.

2nd Saturday Fun Free!

March 14 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.
Join us at the So. Hadley Methodist Church



Make a puppy, a shamrock, make & decorate cupcakes

A Lucky Charms Race, Maybe Even A Snowball Fight?

There Will Be Crafts, Games And Snacks

You will just have to come to find out what else will be going on.



No requirements. Come as you are. Bring your friends. Everyone welcome.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Every Sunday: Worship 10:00 a.m.
Share coffee downstairs after worship..

March 2: Trustees 6:30 p.m.
March 3: Church Council 6:30 p.m.
March 7: Corned Beef Supper 5-6:30 p.m.

March 14: Fun Day 4-6 p.m.
March 13-22 Mission trip to S. Carolina
March 29: Casseroles for Kate's Kitchen due
April 2: Flower orders are due
April 5: Palm Sunday
April 9: Maundy Thursday service 6:30 p.m.
April 12: Easter Sunday

FLOWER ORDER FORM

One of the visible reminders that Easter has arrived is the profusion of beautiful flowers that we place Easter morning in the sanctuary.



If you would like to order a plant, **please fill out the form below and return it to the church office by April 2, so the information can be printed in the bulletin and *The Steeple Newsletter*.**

All plants may be taken after the service on Easter morning. If you would like to deliver a flower to a shut-in, please contact Ann at 695-1212 or email at churchoffice@thesteepelinthefalls.org or bagabones2@comcast.net.

Please order for me: _____ Daffodils _____ Tulip _____ Hyacinth _____ Lilies

Please indicate your wishes: _____ Donate to a shut-in _____ I will pick up my plant after church

Please complete for listing in the bulletin and newsletter:

In Memory of/Celebration of

Given by/from/love

All plants are **\$8.00** each.

Amount Paid _____

Your name _____

LENTEN WORKSHOP

The Sunday school made cross light catchers for our shut-ins.



AN INVITATION

Please join us on April 18, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. for the **3rd Annual Ladies High Tea** at the Second Baptist Church of South Hadley. Located at 589 Granby Rd. South Hadley, Mass.

Attendance has been growing. First year we had 55 attend, last year 86 ladies from 13 different churches, and this year we anticipate well over 125 to attend. If you have never attended, this is a wonderful morning of making new friends, door prizes, creating a craft to take home, tasting delicious homemade petit food items, and hearing a message of encouragement. Hats are encouraged but certainly not required. Cost is free but donations are greatly appreciated.



So. Hadley Methodist Church

Annual Corned Beef Supper

Saturday March 7

5:00 - 6:30 p.m.

Menu: Corned beef cabbage potatoes carrots

Irish soda bread dessert

Adults \$14 Children 6-10 \$5

Reservations: 532-0500 or 695-1212

leave name & # of reservations

Takeout available

**If you would like to help at supper call the church at 532-0500 and leave a message
Reservations requested. Invite your friends and neighbors.**

Please call, text or email to sign up. We need an accurate count for the seating, food and craft project thank you. Blessings, Jennifer Jones Cell 413-537-4776 Email jenjones2013@charter.net



SOUTH HADLEY METHODIST CHURCH

30 Carew Street

South Hadley, Massachusetts 01075-2705

Return address service requested.