

Dear Saints and Friends of Gregory Memorial,

## WHAT DOES LENT MEAN TO US?

**We are entering the Season of Lent, a time of prayer, fasting and self-examination in preparation for the celebration of the resurrection of the Lord at Easter.**

**About Lent.** Coming after the warm, fuzziness of Christmas, Lent is a difficult, intense season that confronts us with some really scary truths: the reality of change, the inevitability of loss, and the paradox that life and death are bound together. Try as we might, we cannot get away from these truths. They are part of us and our being human. With its themes of sacrifice and self-emptying, and its determined, unwavering march of events toward the cross and the suffering and death of Jesus, Lent has the potential to be particularly confusing and frightening. As adults, we may have figured out that these fearful realities ultimately serve a life-giving purpose. We can't have new life without death or transformation without change. So we carve out time and space in which we to ponder the meaning of these things.

As scary as Lent seems, there is still something that's essentially positive about it: ***It is a time for cleansing, renewal, healing, and transformation.*** At its heart, Lent is about the ritualistic getting rid of what we don't need—the things that don't really help us (some give up chocolate for Lent, for instance!)—so that there is space for growth and change and new life.

One of the defining stories of the Lenten season is of Jesus in the Wilderness. He goes out alone into the desert, seeking out a still place to listen and wonder about his own identity and the way he needs to go. The path he chooses is defined by making space. Once there, Jesus makes room and stretches the limits of who is welcome there. He does not cling to possessions or power or prestige or even to life; rather he empties himself to make room for something new—something better. No matter how young or old we are, we can all make more room in our lives for God to come in and do new things. This is good news!

When we think about Jesus coming into the world, what comes to mind first is usually the stories we tell about his birth with our imaginations full of images of shepherds, angels, magi, stars and a newborn sound asleep in a manger. But the Bible has other ways to talk about the coming of Jesus. ***"In the beginning..."*** That's how the

writer of the Gospel of John starts his story about Jesus. And he doesn't mean "when Jesus was a baby" or even "when Jesus was just starting out to do his work." No, he means the ***very beginning***—the beginning of space and time. Maybe the writer of the Gospel was remembering the very first words in the Bible:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."

But listen to how John starts ***his*** story about Jesus:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people."

If this sounds strange or hard to understand, think about it this way: Imagine you have a really great idea. The idea comes from you and is part of you, but if it is going to become something—to do something—it has to leave your mind and go out into the world. That's what John says happened with the Word—"God's Great Idea." The Word helped bring everything into being. But then, says John, the Word became flesh—a real human being. That's when the story about the Word becomes the story of Jesus. In other words, the life of Jesus—everything he said and did—is part of a much bigger and older story, a story so mysterious and wonderful that we need poetry to help us tell it. This is a story big enough to include everything and everyone—including you. Because the Light that was in Jesus is in you too!

So, if you ever feel small or unimportant, remember this:

When God made light, a universe lit up, a dazzling display of big, shiny stuff. And all that light—every bright golden hue is the very same light that God put inside you.

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*Source: excerpt; WALK THIS WAY: A LENTEN RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES, "The Coming of the Light", The Presbyterian Church in Canada © 2001, Laura Alary.*

*To share an article for publication in THE HERALD, please send it to the church email: office@gregorymemorial.org or drop it off in the church office door mailbox.*

**WORSHIP INFORMATION FOR DECEMBER, 2022**

**Sunday, 5 January 2023**

“5<sup>TH</sup> Sunday after Epiphany” - Liturgical Color: Green  
 Guest Preacher: Rev. Ashley Diaz Meijias

**Sunday, February 12, 2023 - -“SCOUTS SUNDAY”**

6<sup>TH</sup> Sunday after Epiphany– Liturgical Color: Green  
 Guest Preacher: Scout, BSA Troop 900

**Sunday, 19 February 2023**

“Transfiguration of the Lord” - Liturgical Color: White  
 Guest Preacher: Rev. Charles Philips

**Ash Wednesday, 22 February 2023**

**Sunday, 26 February 2023**

“1<sup>ST</sup> Sunday in Lent” - Liturgical Color: Purple  
 Guest Preacher: Rev. Marvin Daniel



**OUR PRAYER IN TIMES OF JOY AND CONCERN...**One of our great joys and responsibilities to each other and to God here at Gregory Memorial is the regular practice of praying for each other and our community. Please let the church office know if any updates to this list are needed.

Families, persons, entities impacted by Hurricane Ian  
 Families, persons, communities impacted by gun violence  
 People of Ukraine  
 Those in our community suffering from mental/physical illness, loss, grief or hardship  
 Amy Townson, Josh Ingram’s sister  
 Becky Scott Smith  
 Russell Heiser, Ingrid Phoenix’s grandson (health issues)  
 Butch Meade, Glenda Mayhew’s brother  
 Verne & Clara Smith  
 Peggy & Dennis Allen  
 Eddie Frankenstein  
 Grace Cibula  
 Etta Holc  
 Ruby & Jerry Hasky (health issues)  
 Lee Harsh, Valerie Harsh's brother-in-law (health issue)  
 Jennifer Caldwell, friend of Grace Cibula (health issue)  
 Reese Etheridge, Wayne Powers' uncle (health issue)  
 Dana Etheridge, Wayne Powers' cousin (health issue)  
 Randy Warthan (health issue)

Traci Wells, Glenda Mayhew's friend (health issue)  
 Larry Brown of Chesterfield, Larry Johnson's friend (health issue)  
 Billy Hudson, friend of Dianna Lykins Flaherty, Mary Lykins' daughter  
 Renee' Renier, Diana Flaherty's long-time friend (health issue)  
 Emily Henry, Mary Holc’s sister (health issue)  
 Charlie Perkins (health issue)  
 Chris Ashby, Wayne Powers' granddaughter Brittney's husband (health issues)  
 Barbara Taliaferro (recovering from double pneumonia)  
 Ruth Figg (Petersburg Home for Ladies)  
 Billy Robertson (recent health issue)  
 Shirley MacNeill (recent health issue)  
 Paula McDaniel, Pam Elder's sister (health issue)  
 Alan James, friend of A.W. & Nancy Adams (back surg.)  
 John Kephart, Grace Cibula’s nephew (heart surg., 1/12)  
 Inez Paul, Mary Holc's mother (hospice care, Riverview on the Appomattox)

### CELEBRATING HOLY COMMUNION

Our 2023 schedule for Holy Communion provides that we celebrate Holy Communion on the first Sunday in even-numbered months.

We will celebrate Holy Communion on **Sunday, February 5**. We are continuing with the practice of passing the communion elements among the pews.

### HOLY COMMUNION SCHEDULE FOR 2023

<b>February 5, 2023</b>	June 4, 2023	October 1, 2023
April 2, 2023	August 6, 2023	December 3, 2023

### THREE TREES...

Once upon a mountaintop, three little trees stood and dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up. The first little tree looked up at the stars twinkling like diamonds above him. ***"I want to be covered with gold and filled with precious stones. I will be the most beautiful treasure chest in the world!"***

The second little tree looked out at the small stream trickling by on its way to the ocean. "I want to be a strong sailing ship," he said. ***"I want to travel mighty waters and carry powerful kings. I will be the strongest ship in the world!"***

The third little tree looked down into the valley below where busy men and busy women worked in a busy town. "I don't want to leave this mountaintop at all," she said. ***"I want to grow so tall that when people stop to look at me they will raise their eyes to heaven and think of God. I will be the tallest tree in the world!"***

Years passed. The rains came, the sun shone, and the little trees grew tall. One day, three woodcutters climbed the mountain. The first woodcutter looked at the first tree and said, "This tree is beautiful. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining axe, the first tree fell. "Now I shall be made into a beautiful chest," thought the first tree. "I shall hold wonderful treasure."

The second woodcutter looked at the second tree and said, "This tree is strong. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining axe, the second tree fell. "Now I shall sail mighty waters," thought the second tree. "I shall be a strong ship fit for kings!"

The third tree felt her heart sink when the last woodcutter looked her way. She stood straight and tall and pointed bravely to heaven. But the woodcutter never even looked up. "Any kind of tree will do for me," he muttered. With a swoop of his shining axe, the third tree fell.

The first tree rejoiced when the woodcutter brought him to a carpenter's shop, but the busy carpenter was not thinking about treasure chests. Instead his work-worn hands fashioned the tree into a feed box for animals. The once beautiful tree was not covered with gold or filled with treasure. He was coated with sawdust and filled with hay for hungry farm animals.

The second tree smiled when the woodcutter took him to a shipyard, but no mighty sailing ships were being made that day. Instead, the once-strong tree was hammered and sawed into a simple fishing boat. Too small and too weak to sail an ocean or even a river, he was taken to a little lake. Every day he brought in loads of dead, smelly fish.

The third tree was confused when the woodcutter cut her into strong beams and left her in the lumberyard. "What happened?" the once tall tree lamented. "All I ever wanted to do was stay on the mountaintop and point to God!"

Many, many days and nights passed. The three trees nearly forgot their dreams. But one night, golden starlight poured over the first tree as a young woman placed her newborn baby in the feed box. "I wish I could make a cradle for him," her husband whispered. The mother squeezed his hand

and smiled as the starlight shone on the smooth and sturdy wood. "This manger is beautiful," she said. ***And suddenly the first tree knew he was holding the greatest treasure in the world.***

One evening a tired traveler and his friends crowded into the old fishing boat. The traveler fell asleep as the second tree quietly sailed out into the lake. Soon a thundering and thrashing storm arose. The little tree shuttered. He knew he did not have the strength to carry so many passengers safely through the wind and rain. The tired man awakened. He stood up, stretched out his hand, and said, "Peace." The storm stopped as quickly as it had begun. ***And suddenly the second tree knew he was carrying the King of Heaven and Earth.***

One Friday morning, the third tree was startled when her beams were yanked from the forgotten woodpile. She flinched as she was carried through an angry, jeering crowd. She shuddered when soldiers nailed a man's hands to her. She felt ugly and harsh and cruel. But on Sunday morning, when the sun rose and the earth trembled with joy beneath her, the third tree knew that God's love had changed everything.

It had made the first tree beautiful. It had made the second tree strong.

***And every time people thought of the third tree, they would think of God. And that was better than being the tallest tree in the world!***

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 "The Tale of Three Trees - A Traditional Folktale" by Angela Etwell Hunt. Chariot Victor Publishing, copyright 1989.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Feb. Guest Preachers:**

Feb. 5: Rev. Ashley Diaz Meijias

Feb. 12: SCOUTS SUNDAY; worship service by Scouts

Feb. 19: Rev. Charles Philips

Feb. 26: Rev. Marvin Daniel

**Scouts Sunday – Feb. 12;** the congregation is invited to the Appreciation Reception hosted by the BSA Troop 900 in the Fellowship Hall after the worship service.

**Stated Session Meeting** – at 12 p.m. (est.) after worship service on Sunday, Feb. 19.

**Annual Reports to Presbytery** – due Mar. 1.

### **STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING**

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

*Robert Frost*

## FEBRUARY, 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p><i>Order Easter Lilies</i> <i>Feb. 26-Mar. 19</i></p>			1	<p>2 6a Clean Church 1p Worship Cmte</p>	3	4
<p>5 9:30a Sunday School</p> <p>11a Worship Service &amp; Holy Communion</p> <p>Guest preacher: Rev. Ashley Diaz Meijias</p>	6	<p>7 6p GSA Tr. 5000 (Fellowship Hall Reception Area, Kitchen, Meeting/ Dining Rm.)</p> <p>7p Cong. Care Cmte</p>	8	<p>9 6a Clean Church 7p Faith Cmte</p>	10	11
<p>12 <b>SCOUTS SUNDAY</b></p> <p>9:30a Sunday School</p> <p>11a Worship Service given by BSA Tr. 900</p> <p>12p Appreciation Reception hosted by Scouts (Fellowship Hall)</p>	<p>13 6p BSA Crater Order of Arrow Dinner Meeting (Fellowship Hall Reception Area, Area, Kitchen, Meeting/Dining Rm)</p>	<p>14 <b>St. Valentine Day</b></p> <p>1p Circle (Location: TBA)</p>	15	<p>16 6a Clean Church 2p News articles due 7p Finance Cmte</p>	17	18
<p>19 <b>Transfiguration of the Lord</b></p> <p>9:30a Sunday School</p> <p>11a Worship Service</p> <p>Guest preacher: Rev. Charles Philips</p> <p>12p Session Meeting</p> <p>Moderator: Rev. Philips</p>	<p>20 <b>Washington's Birthday</b></p>	<p>21 <b>Shrove Tuesday</b></p> <p>6p GSA Tr. 5000 (Fellowship Hall Reception Area, Kitchen, Meeting/ Dining Rm.)</p>	<p>22 <b>Ash Wednesday</b>  <i>Begin Lent</i></p> <p>2p Send Clerk's 2022 Annual reports to Presbytery</p>	<p>23 6a Clean Church 2p Newsletter out</p>	24	25
<p>26 <b>1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent</b></p> <p>9:30a Sunday School</p> <p>11a Worship Service ➤ 5C Meal Offering</p> <p>Guest preacher: Rev. Marvin Daniel</p> <p><u><i>Order Easter Lilies</i></u></p>	27	<p>28 2p Cmte reports due</p>				

