

Trinity United Methodist Church

The Highlighter

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“Truly, truly I will say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.”

John 16:20, 22

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The Alien Path and Gift Of Lent

Nicholas and I recently took in the blockbuster film *Avatar*, 20th Century Fox’s production of James Cameron’s sci-fi epic about the clash of species between humans and the inhabitants of a moon (“Pandora”) in the Alpha Centauri system, human-like tribes of blue people called the Na’vi. The humans are on Pandora to obtain a precious mineral (“unobtainium”). Having set up a means of contacting and starting to develop a relationship with the Na’vi through the use of genetically-engineered Na’vi doubles (“avatars”), the human mining operation – or rather, the greed of those exploiting the unobtainium deposits – leads to a plan to seize the mineral by force, no matter the cost to the natives. The central character of the movie, Jake Sully (played by Sam Worthington), adopts an avatar for the purpose of befriending the Na’vi and learning their ways – but with the real agenda of acting as a mole to make the seizure of the mineral easier for the humans. Sully, however ends up in a profound moral and emotional quandary: he comes to love and identify with the Na’vi. His terrible choice: to remain true to his mission – and in the eyes of most, his duty and his species – or to identify with the Na’vi community which has accepted him and helped him to learn an entirely new way of being Sully.

Sully learns that the path of self-discovery and freedom may lead

through self-denial.

The film is a cinematic marvel, if only from the standpoint of computer graphics and technical wizardry. But many sci-fi movies, it’s rich in plot and character development. The combination helps to explain why it’s been nominated for 9 Academy Awards and has set records as the #1 grossing film in the USA and worldwide, beating the previous record held by *Titanic*.

Supposedly, there’s no hidden agenda message to this movie. But personally, I found several messages. Some I liked; others raised questions for me. Among what spoke to me were the themes of death and rebirth, betrayal and redemption, the interconnectedness of life and the layered richness of community. But above all there was how Jake Sully discovered his own deepest self and purpose for being, not by successfully completing a mission and forging ahead with his preset agenda, but by taking a different path. It was a path which led in strange and unexpected directions, a path which brought with it heart-stopping risks and real dangers. It was also a path which brought self-discovery and a new connection to the source of life.

Of course, *Avatar* is just a movie, however good it is. But it illustrates a principle of spiritual life that should be front-and-center for us during the season of Lent: that the way to spiritual

growth and the fulfillment of our life and calling as disciples often lies, not along the path of self-actualization but of self-denial. It is not about how we see ourselves, but how Another sees us, and how we learn to see ourselves through that Other’s eyes – through the eyes of God in Jesus Christ.

Maybe you’re wondering right now: How does this connect to Lent?

Since whatever point I started thinking about these things, Lent has always seemed to me an odd fit among the seasons in the Christian Year. Lent isn’t festive with songs and decorations like Christmas or with loud joy and bursting signs of life like Easter. Lent is not focused, as is the Season after Pentecost, on the expanding work of the Kingdom through the Church. It’s the odd season out, the one that’s “not like the others”.

Lent is an inward, reflective time. Its colors are somber; its disciplines, severe. Where Advent draws us to a Babe in a manger, Lent takes us to a cross outside town. Unlike the great feasts of the Christian Year, Lent is a period of fasting and self-denial -- which we now tip the hat to by “giving up” of some favorite food or activity. During Lent, by tradition, the “alleluias” are not sung in wor-

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It's Not Too Late to Save a Life

Trinity's Youth Group still has opportunities available for you to adopt a child through World Vision's Child Sponsorship Ministry. Your \$35 monthly sponsorship gift will provide the basic necessities that can help a child reach his or her God-given potential, including access to resources such as safe water, better nutrition, basic health care, educational opportunities, and economic development opportunities for his or her family, the community, and other children in need.

Call Carol Wunderlich at the church office (410.535.1782) or stop by the youth World Vision table between services on one of the first two Sundays in March.

You can learn more about World Vision's Ministry by visiting www.worldvision.org on the web.

Experience the Lenten Season

24 Hours That Changed the World

No single event in human history has received more attention than the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. In his new book & study, Adam Hamilton guides us through the last 24 hours of Jesus' life. During March and early April, we move towards Easter, our pastors will be focusing worship on these last 24 hours of the life of Jesus. You can enrich your Lenten journey through deeper exploration of Hamilton's book. Beginning Sunday, March 7 at 9:30 am, the Families in Faith Sunday School Class will begin a six week study based on the 24 Hours That Changed the World. The

book and daily devotional materials will be available February 28 in Room 106 for anyone wishing to join the study. (Books are \$15, Daily Devotional Guides \$10). Books and Daily Devotional Guides will be available through the church office beginning March 1 for anyone who would like a copy.

When the Church Speaks

Ever wonder what the United Methodist Church has to say about today's deep social issues? ...the environment? ...human rights? ...politics and the world order? Now is your chance to dig a little deeper into what the Church has to say about many of the things that dominate our news and hit our lifestyles close to home. Beginning Thursday,

March 4 through Thursday, April 8 at 7 p.m. in the Church Parlor, Julie Wilson will lead us through a study of the United Methodist Social Principles. If you are interested in discovering more about how your faith and church relate to the wider world you are invited to join this study. To register, please sign up in the Gathering Room. A copy of the Social Principles will be available for \$3 for participants.

Deaf Interpretation Available

Every other Sunday at the 9:30 am service we offer deaf interpretation of the worship services. Your next opportunities are March 7 & 21.

Blessings, Thanks & Prayers

Congratulations to...

- Isabella "Bella" Kay Souder who was born January 22 weighing 8 lbs. 11 oz. and measuring 18 ¾". Her proud parents are Sam & Jessica Souder
- Ashlyn Elizabeth Lagana who was born February 6 weighing 7 lb 4.9 oz. and measuring 19 ¼". Her proud parents are Jeff & Staci Lagana; grandparents: Marvin & Lori Hutchins; and great grandfather: Ralph Hutchins

Our Sympathy to the families of Josephine Littleton, Lt. Col. Edward Gates, and Lynne Starweather (daughter of Jack Williams) who passed away last month

Ongoing Prayers for Those Who Have Been Hospitalized Over the Last Month... John Callahan, Dot DeHaven, Jimmy Catterton, Clarence Monnett, Beth Emerson, William Bowen, Joyce Bell, Mike Bolton

Thank you...

Thank you so much for your generous gift to the HOPE Fund during the time of the campaign. We know that this represents second-mile giving on your part and we acknowledge the grace in which such gifts are given. When we made our appeal to finish that which we had begun, we did so in faith that you would respond, but we did not know the extent of the generosity of your hearts! We are happy to report to you that we met our goal of \$1 million...and exceeded it! This means that people of the Gulf Coast, people receiving help from the World AIDS fund, and our brothers and sister in Zimbabwean Methodist Churches have all been blessed by our generosity. When we open our checkbooks in the same measure that we open our hearts, the world is changed from hopeless to hope-filled. Thank you for making this all possible. We are privileged to serve Christ with you. ...give and it will be given to you. *Luke 6:38a*. In Jesus' Name, Your ASR Team
lanther, Chris, George, Susan, Clarence, Pam, and Sharon

Get Your Fill at This Year's Spaghetti Supper

Welcome spring and join us for our 28th annual "all you can eat" Spaghetti Dinner Saturday, March 20 from 3:30 -7:30pm.

This event is sponsored by the New Covenant class to benefit the Scrivener & Van Duzer Memorial Scholarship Funds and youth service missions to Appalachia and Camp Hope. Tickets may be purchased each Sunday between services in the Gathering Room. The cost is \$12 for adults (\$11 in advance), senior citizens \$8 (\$7 in advance), chil-



dren ages 4-10 \$5, children under 3 free. Please invite all of your family and friends to attend.

If you are interested in volunteering in any capacity during this event, you can sign up in the Gathering Room, the New Covenant, Families in Faith, JPD, middle & senior high, & young adults church school classes, as well as the Sunday evening youth group. Middle & high school youth are encouraged to participate. Thank you for your support and we look forward to seeing you then.

Auditions for Passion Play

Are now underway at St. Paul UMC in Lusby. If you are interested in auditioning, please call Andy Rogers at 410.326.4475.

Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, April 3
10 a.m. to Noon
Rain or Shine

Easter Egg Hunt, Crafts, Games & Activities & More! Children are welcome to invite friends.

Candy Donations are needed by March 28 and will be collected in the Gathering Room Sign up in the Gathering Room to help with the Egg Hunt

Blood Drive

Give the gift of life! Plan on staying after services March 21st to give a pint of blood to the Red Cross in the Fellowship Hall.



Free Movie Night : The Passion of the Christ

Trinity's next free Movie Night is Saturday, March 6. As this date is during the Lenten season, when we are reflecting on Christ's journey to the cross and what it accomplished for us, we will be presenting a special screening of "THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST". Director/producer Mel Gibson's film graphically portrays the last 12 hours in the earthly life of Jesus, The Christ. Ultimately a story of unfathomable, enduring, sacrificial love, the movie is a realistic depiction of the suffering He endured on our behalf, to claim victory over death. The movie is rated "R" for graphic violence and is not suitable for children. It begins at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary. Even if you've seen the movie before, each viewing speaks to your heart differently. Come, bring a friend, and be open to what God will show and speak to you.

Project ECHO's Empty Bowl Supper Set for March 27

Plans are underway for Project ECHO's 10th annual Empty Bowl Supper Saturday, March 27 from 4:30-7:30pm at St. John Vianney's Family Life Center. Although our Trinity UMC congregation provides a monthly meal for ECHO (Ecumenical Council for the Homeless), many of you may not know about the Empty Bowl Supper. In 1990 students in a Michigan high school art class initiated this project to raise funds for a food drive. Since its inception, the "Empty Bowl" concept has spread across the U.S. fighting hunger; here in Calvert, we're helping the homeless and providing food.

Our Empty Bowl Supper is a totally volunteer event, where local potters donate bowls and area restaurants provide food. Each guest chooses a handmade bowl and enjoys a delicious meal in exchange for a cash donation. Hopefully, every time the bowl is used, it will be a reminder of the homeless and hungry in our own back yards. If you have a special artistic talent or would like to contribute an item to our silent auction, please contact Linda Murphy at linda@murphytreefarm.com or call 443-532-1970. And remember to mark March 27 on your calendar so you and your family can enjoy this year's Empty Bowl Supper.



Breakfast is Back!

Great news! First Breakfasts are back beginning Sunday, March 7. Come downstairs and enjoy a free cup of coffee and a hot breakfast with all breakfast donations going to our VIM fund. Breakfast is served from 8:30-11 a.m. Contributions of home baked goods for us to have available at the bake table would be appreciated. Why go to Bob Evans and wait for a table when you can enjoy good food and fellowship and have your money go to a great cause? This month there will be cheddar-egg casserole and plenty of fresh sausage links from Nick's.

Haiti, Russia, New Mexico—Helping the Least of These

Providing Help for Haiti

You can still contribute to relief following the devastating earthquake in Haiti. Money can be given through UMCOR (the United Methodist Committee on Relief); make your check out to Trinity UMC and put in the memo line "Haiti: UMCOR Advance #418325". One hundred percent (100%) of your donations for this purpose will go directly to UMCOR and to this critical, timely relief work.

Volunteer in Mission Team to Russia

Trinity will be participating in and providing leadership for a VIM (Volunteers in Mission) team to Russia again this year, as part of our continuing supporting relationship with Millennium UMC in the Russian city of Orel. This multi-church team will include time both in Orel and at the UM camp near Voronezh. Dates are August 2-16, 2010 (approximate). If you are interested in going (or think you might be – a firm commitment is not needed yet), please contact Pastor Charles (Charles@TrinityUMChurch.org).

VIM - New Mexico

This summer (dates being established soon) a Trinity VIM (Volunteer in Mission) team plans to return to RoughSide of the Mountain UMC to continue our relationship with the members of this church and community. Trinity UMC's first VIM team went to this location in 2008. RoughSide of the Mountain is located on the Navajo Nation (Sheep Springs, New Mexico). Community outreach (such as VBS or youth rally) and possibly some construction project may be involved. Details are being worked out - if you have any questions or feel you would like to serve on this team please contact MissionsTrinity@aol.com.

West River Work Day - March 6

The next scheduled work day to help with renovations at West River Center where many of our children and teens spend their summer days is March 6. If you are available and willing to give a day of your time to help please respond to MissionsTrinity@aol.com for details on the tasks to be worked on that day. Drywall finishing, painting and hanging drop ceiling are likely tasks for that day - any ability level is welcome, we can train you! We will plan to meet at Trinity and leave in the morning and return home that evening.

UMW Continue Study of the Sudan

March – can you believe the first day of spring is March 20? Hold that thought, everybody – spring is just ahead!! The Rachel Circle will meet on Wednesday, March 10 at 9:30 a.m., in the Church Parlor. We will continue our study of the Sudan. Everyone is encouraged to read Chapter 3, "The Politics of War and Peace," pages 37-53, in our study book, "The Beauty and Courage of Sudan." Study books are still available if you would like to join us. All ladies are invited.

The General UMW does not meet in March.

Washington-East District UMW, Cluster I, Annual Meeting – A study of "Food and Faith," Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Rodney T. Smothers. This will be held at Wards United Methodist Church (2265 Ward Chapel Road, Owings, MD 20736) on Saturday, March 13, with registration at 8 a.m., study at 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Fee is \$15 (includes study book, continental breakfast and lunch. Registration forms are available; call Wanda Wells at 410-394-3344.

The Alien Path and Gift Of Lent Continued from page 1

ship, and one avoids scheduling festive occasions such as weddings or parties.

Yet for all this starkness of appearance and habit, the season of Lent is a gift. It is a gift which holds special blessings of its own. It is the strange, somber, "alien" path that clears away the debris of self-absorption so we can be open to the holiness of God, and the joy of living in the Holy Spirit.

In Lent, we focus on what is of first importance. Jesus said, "Seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness" (Mt 6:33).

In the ancient Church, Easter was the chief day of the year for celebrating baptism. It was also the time when those under the discipline of the Church for some serious sin after baptism were restored to full fellowship. Both those preparing for baptism (catechumens) and those showing sorrow for sin (penitents) submitted to a discipline of prayer, study, and spiritual preparation -- a discipline shared by the clergy and others also involved in the teaching process. Over time, Lent became a forty-day period of preparation for the whole church. (Because every Sunday or "Lord's Day" is like a "little Easter" when the resurrection of Jesus is celebrated, Sundays are never included in the Lenten fast, even though we refer liturgically to the "first Sunday in Lent", etc.) In the sixth century, it was Pope Gregory I ("the Great") -- a very progressive leader who also expanded the role of music in the church and guided the evangelization of Britain -- who introduced the penitential practice of being marked with ashes as a sign of our repentance on the first day of Lent, now known as "Ash Wednesday". But for all that, these customs are only a means to an end. The goal is not to observe them for their own sake, but to center ourselves once again on our first love, Jesus Christ, and to be open to God's cleansing work and guiding power in our lives.

The spiritual disciplines of Lent are means of stripping away the grime and setting aside the distorted priorities that so easily overtake our lives, and of recalling ourselves to Christ as the beginning, the center point, and the goal of our lives.

In Lent, we repent of our sins, and become pilgrims walking the way of the passion, and sitting at the foot of the cross. "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Ro 3:23). When we observe the Christian Year by going through its seasons, it becomes for us a cycle which takes us through the whole story of redemption in Christ once more: His taking flesh, His ministry, His suffering, atonement, and resurrection, His commissioning of the disciples as His Church. But it's not meant to be a drama that we merely watch as passive spectators; it is one into which we enter as actors ourselves. As we hear the passion story again, we know that we, like the first disciples, have been slow at understanding. We often have abandoned Jesus at the critical moment. We have withheld kindness when it might have been offered. We have conspired in His crucifixion. So we also meditate on the cross, thankful that our sins have been borne away, eagerly awaiting the joyous tidings of the resurrection. "For if we are united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Ro 6:5).

But for all its somber colors and tones, Lent is not a season just for sorrow, but for gratitude that the struggle we all find ourselves in during this life, has its outcome won already in Christ Jesus. The sorrow is for our wrongdoing and failure to reach the full promise of our new life in Christ; the gratitude is that its fact and effect have been dealt with decisively in Christ: "He breaks the power of cancelled sin; He sets the prisoner free."

In the medieval Church, much was made of the distinction between attrition (being sorry for sins because of fear of God's wrath), and contrition (being sorrowful because of our love for God, whose Spirit grieves over us). The idea developed that if we could just work up the right contrition, and make confession, and offer satisfaction for our sins, then we would earn merit with God. The Reformation dismissed all this talk of earning our way to God -- and the language in our old Communion service describing Jesus as a "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world" comes directly from that reawakened awareness. We don't have to persuade God that we are worthy of His love. We don't have to defeat sin. He already loves us beyond our understanding; sin and death have been defeated in Christ. Lent, then, is a season when, with grateful yet serious hearts, we look to adjust our lives to this wonderful reality, by God's grace, and with the Spirit's help.

Lent may look like an alien presence when compared to the joyful seasons of Christmas and Easter. Its path of self-denial may seem strange in the light of Jesus' teaching about abundant life. But for all that, Lent is a gift in the life of the Church, and a gift in the life of every believer who uses its disciplines. We are not trying to earn God's favor, but to widen the light of God's presence in every corner of life. There are many guides and devotionals which can help to focus this process for you. The pastors are also available to speak about your particular journey, and offer prayerful suggestions as you seek to live more fully in the light of Christ. My prayer is that this will be a time of renewal for you, of re-centering, and of realizing the Presence in a deeper way than ever before.

Yours for a holy Lent,
Charles

Cemetery Clean-Up

The Prince Frederick Methodist Cemetery Corporation will be holding its annual spring clean-up at the cemeteries the week of March 14. Any decorations you wish to save should be removed before that time. Spring decorations may be placed on the gravestones after March 21st. Thank you for removing all grave decorations as they become unsightly. And as a reminder, it is very helpful during mowing season if decorations are kept to a minimum. Thank you for your on-going cooperation.

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Heath Wilson, assistant pastor

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The Empty Tomb

Don't miss the *Spaghetti Supper Saturday, March 20!*
Get your tickets now!

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