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### The Journey of Lent Begins

By Chris Carrasco

Lent is a time of transformation. A time to take a spiritual inventory of our souls, to remember the preciousness of life, to re-dedicate ourselves to a deeper relationship with God, to re-commit ourselves to a life of love through service. As everything else in the Christian life, Lent is rooted in prayer and communion with God. Pray for God to guide you and show you how to take this spiritual journey this year.

Ash Wednesday signifies the beginning of Lent, a 40 day (minus the 6 Sundays) period of reflection, repentance, and preparation for Holy Week and Easter. You are invited to worship in Mulberry's Britt Stokes Fellowship Hall on Ash Wednesday, February 17 at 7:00 PM. This contemplative worship is patterned after the Taize style of worship, with meditative singing, silence, candles, and personal reflection time. A safe haven is provided so that individuals may make confidential commitments to new beginnings for the Lenten season. At the end of the service, the imposition of ashes will take place for those who wish to participate. We hope you will join us in a peaceful atmosphere as we begin this important time in the church calendar year. God bless you on the journey!

**Or Current Resident**

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# Mulberry Messenger

February 2010

## The Year of Spiritual Practices: Fasting in Lent

By Chris Carrasco

Fasting is often associated with Lent. In the traditional sense, fasting is giving up food for a time in order to focus more on God. It is a reminder of our mortality, our dependence upon God. It is solidarity with those all over the world who are constantly hungry. It is a way to constantly remind one's self of the sacrifice Christ made for us on the cross. It is a way to redirect our money that we would spend on meals to help feed those who have no food. It is a self-emptying so that God can fill us with good gifts. But just when you thought you knew what fasting entailed, I invite you to learn more.

“Fasting is not a renunciation of life; it is a means by which new life is released within us. Fasting is important in Christian experience because it deepens within the whole self a sense of one's dependence upon the strength of God. Fasting is more than an act of abstinence. It is an affirmative act; it is a way of waiting on God; it is an act of surrender.” (James Massy) When we refrain from fulfilling our every desire, we learn that the only One that can fulfill all our desires is God. We learn how to differentiate our *needs* from our *wants*.

Fasting can be accomplished in many different ways. We can completely fast from food for a brief amount of time, or fast from certain foods like meat, over processed foods, coffee, sugar, chocolate, sodas, alcohol, etc. (No, giving up broccoli does not count!) But there are other kinds of fasts. Can you imagine fasting from the television for the Lenten period? How about fasting from needless shopping, or an over packed schedule, or judging others, or complaining, or the internet, or magazines, or texting? What do you do in excess and how might you abstain from that activity in order to focus more on God?

The spiritual practice of fasting is a meaningful way to deepen our relationship and our dependence on God by eliminating for a short time those things we take for granted. What are you willing to fast from this Lenten season? How could you use that opportunity to grow closer to God? What is God's invitation to you this Lenten Season? Your answer to this question will be well worth exploring.

**January Session Highlights**

Every month, a brief summary of Session actions will be published in the Messenger as a way to better communicate the significant decisions being made at Mulberry.

- 1) The Treasurer gave the end of the year report with a surplus of \$13,234.95. \$3,397 was brought forward to pay January 1 salaries, \$800 was added to 2010 budget to fulfill Presbytery commitment, \$7,784.50 was designated for our new Capital Expense Fund, and \$1,253.45 went to savings.
- 2) Session approved the 2010 Budget which is printed in the Messenger.
- 3) Communion was set for February 7, 2010.
- 4) Jeff Whitley was hired as our new Sexton starting February 1. We are excited to have such a trustworthy and faithful person joining our staff.
- 5) A congregational meeting was called to approve the Minister's 1% raise on February 21.
- 6) After the worship service on February 21, the Business Ministry Team will go through the budget and answer any questions of the congregation.
- 7) Ronnie Williamson and Jim Brown were elected the Presbytery Commissioners on Saturday, February 13 at Steele Creek Church in Charlotte.
- 8) We approved the annual statistical report for the Presbytery. Our up to date Membership Records register 155 active members in Mulberry.
- 9) We shared thoughts and impressions about the Finding New Paths Conference. Many ideas were discussed of how we could implement some of the information at Mulberry.
- 10) After approving last month to apply for the Transformational Cluster Project of the Presbytery, we are now awaiting the Covenant to officially enter the process. This will be discussed at our next Session meeting on February 28 at 6:00 PM.

**COMING SOON!!! MONTHLY BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENINGS!!!!**

Beginning February 28th, the fourth Sunday of every month will be Blood Pressure Sunday. Following worship, swing by the fellowship hall for a quick blood pressure screening. If you take blood pressure medication, you should have your blood pressure checked on a regular basis. If you have not been diagnosed with high blood pressure, it's still a good idea to monitor it occasionally, just to know your baseline numbers. So mark your calenders for this new offering from your Parish Nurse. Let's have a healthy 2010!!

**Weather Closings**

We will announce changes or cancellations to activities at the church, including worship, classes, meetings and rehearsals on three local TV stations: WCNC channel 36, WBTV channel 3, and WSOC-TV channel 9. Please tune into any of these stations to find out if the church office is closed

<b>2010 Budget</b>			<b>2010 Budget</b>		
<b>Acct. No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>2010 Budget</b>	<b>Acct. No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>2010 Budget</b>
100	Minister Salary	19,994.66		Fellowship	500.00
101	Minister Benefits	14,406.00		<b>Total Fellowship</b>	<b>500.00</b>
102	Minister's Car Allowance	3,000.00		Nurture	300.00
103	Minister's SECA Tax	3,533.48		<b>Total Nurture</b>	<b>300.00</b>
104	Minister's Housing Allow	19,994.66		Service Ministry	1,000.00
	Minister's Medical (FSA)	1,200.00	301	Missionary Support	733.00
	Minister's Childcare (FSA)	5,000.00		<b>Total Service Ministry</b>	<b>1,733.00</b>
	Minister's Professional Expense	500.00	217	Outreach	1,500.00
105	Minister's Education Fund	2,500.00		<b>Total Outreach</b>	<b>1,500.00</b>
	<b>Total Pastoral Services</b>	<b>70,128.80</b>	225	Stewardship	300.00
108	Music Director	15,290.39		<b>Total Stewardship</b>	<b>300.00</b>
110	Admin. Assistant Salary	10,638.33	206	Organist Supply Fund	390.00
111	Sexton's Salary	10,638.33	207	Pulpit Supply	500.00
112	Treasurer's Salary	4,236.95	208	Choir Expense	750.00
113	Overtime		229	Worship	850.00
	<b>Total Staff Salaries</b>	<b>40,804.00</b>	231a	Sound System Repairs/Parts	850.00
201	Employer's FICA	3,121.48		<b>Total Worship</b>	<b>3,340.00</b>
203	Workers Compensation	1,488.00		Capital Fund	796.00
219	Office Equip. Maint. Agree.	1,900.00		<b>Total Capital Fund</b>	<b>796.00</b>
220	Office Supplies & Printing	3,000.00		Presbytery of Charlotte Giving	1,596.00
222	Postage	1,075.00		<b>Total Presbytery of Charlotte Giving</b>	<b>1,596.00</b>
	<b>Total Administration</b>	<b>10,584.48</b>		<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>174,268.28</b>
	Personnel	300.00		<b>2010 ESTIMATED INCOME</b>	
	<b>Total Personnel</b>	<b>300.00</b>		Pledges	128,248.28
209	Christian Education	1,300.00		Estimated Non-Pledges	29,370.00
230	Youth Group Program	1,400.00		Estimated Loose Change	3,900.00
	<b>Total Christian Education</b>	<b>2,700.00</b>		Estimated Fees/Rent(AA/Alanon,other)	600.00
214	Kitchen Supplies	1,000.00		Estimated Rent House	10,350.00
214a	Janitorial Supplies	285.00		Estimated Tax Refund	1,000.00
215	Maint. Building/Furnace	4,700.00		Brought Forward (Jan. 1 Payroll)	3,397.00
226	Telephones	5,388.00		Funded from 2009 to:	800.00
227	Utilities (Power,Fuel, Water)	20,688.00		Presbytery of Charlotte	
211	Church Vehicle Repairs/Tag	300.00		<b>TOTAL OTHER INCOME &amp; PLEDGES</b>	
	<b>Total Building and Grounds</b>	<b>32,361.00</b>			<b>177,665.28</b>
210	Church Vehicle Insurance	597.00			
215a	Property Tax	2,200.00			
224	Property Insurance	4,528.00			
	<b>Total Insurance &amp; Property Tax</b>	<b>7,325.00</b>			