



# THE BETHEL BREEZE

Bethel United  
Methodist Church

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## Ash Wednesday and the Season of Lent



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**Ash Wednesday**, in the calendar of Western Christianity, is the first day of Lent and occurs 46 days before Easter. It is a moveable fast, falling on a different date each year because it is dependent on the date of Easter. It can occur as early as February 4 or as late as March 10.

According to the canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke; Jesus spent 40 days fasting in the desert before the beginning of his public ministry, during which he endured temptation by Satan. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of this 40-day liturgical period of prayer and fasting.

Ash Wednesday derives its name from the practice of placing ashes on the foreheads of adherents as a sign of mourning and repentance to God. The ashes used are typically gathered after the palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday are burned. The Bible does not mention Ash Wednesday or the custom of Lent, however, the practice of repentance and mourning in ashes is found in 2 Samuel 13:19; Esther 4:1; Job 2:8; Daniel 9:3; and Matthew 11:21.

**Lent** is one of the oldest

observations on the Christian calendar. Like all Christian holy days and holidays, it has changed over the years, but its purpose has always been the same: self-examination and penitence, demonstrated by self-denial, in preparation for Easter.

"Lent "comes from the Anglo Saxon word *lencten*, which means "spring." Early church father Irenaus of Lyons (c.130 -c.200) wrote of such a season in the earliest days of the church, but back then it lasted only two or three days, not the 40 observed today. In 325, the Council of Nicea discussed a 40-day Lenten season of fasting. It is unclear whether its original intent was just for new Christians preparing for Baptism, but it soon encompassed the whole Church.

How exactly the churches counted those 40 days varied depending on location. In the East, one only fasted on weekdays. The western church's Lent was one week shorter, but included Saturdays. But in both places, the observance was both strict and serious. Only one meal was taken a day, near the evening. There was to be no meat, fish, or animal products eaten.

Until the 600s, Lent began

on Quadragesima (Fortieth) Sunday, but Gregory the Great (c.540-604) moved it to a Wednesday, now called Ash Wednesday, to secure the exact number of 40 days in Lent—not counting Sundays, which were feast days. Gregory, who is regarded as the father of the medieval papacy, is also credited with the ceremony that gives the day its name.

By the 800s, some Lenten practices were already becoming more relaxed. Eventually, various foods (like fish) were allowed, and in 1966 the Roman Catholic Church only restricted fast days to Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Practices in Eastern Orthodox churches are still quite strict.

Though Lent is still devoutly observed in some mainline Protestant denominations (most notably for Anglicans and Episcopalians), others hardly mention it at all.

In the United Methodist Church, members focus on their relationship with God, often choosing to give up something or to volunteer and give of themselves for others. Because Lent is a very personal time for individuals, the Methodist Church does not have official guidelines on how individuals should observe Lent.



**Sunday Worship Service**  
at 11:00 a.m.  
**Sunday School**  
at 10:00 a.m.  
**Fellowship Dinner**  
on the last Sunday of the  
month following worship  
**ALL ARE WELCOME!**



## The Word on the Street . . . February the Month with Groundhog Day, Valentine's Day and Lent



I think I know why Valentine's Day and Groundhog Day are so popular. It's because these two days come during the month of February. We long for something to divert our attention away from the harsh, cold winter. By now the luster of Christmas and New Year excitement has long worn off.

So, what to do? Let's celebrate something. Let's try to release ourselves from

the "hibernation season" and get ready for Spring. Okay, February might be a little early but who doesn't want to see the arrival of the early signs of nature's awakenings. I'm pretty sure that the groundhog doesn't care all that much about the disturbance he gets when over in Punxsutawney some guy dressed in funny clothing yanks him from the den and parades him around as if the rodent has some innate ability to predict the length of winter. Valen-

tine's Day is another special occasion whereby we can escape the winter's reality and find yet other attractions. These days in February do help pass the time and allow us to see some ending to the long days of cold.

Yes, I know that the church season of Lent begins in February, this year it is February 13<sup>th</sup> - Ash Wednesday. So, the old notions of "giving up something we

like" for Lent is not an easy sell. I read recently of someone suggesting that we "give up something bad" in our lives for Lent. This has some merit, it seems to me. What bad thing in my life could I give up for Lent? Bad attitude? Bad habit?

Well, so much for these musings. I have to go shovel the driveway, again!

*Pastor Jerry*



See photos of some of the Advent by Candlelight tables on p. 4.

## Advent by Candlelight

This past Christmas season, on December 9th, Bethel and White Oak Churches decided to try something new.

Under the leadership of Cheryl Gray, Pastor Jerry's wife, we organized an event we called *Advent by Candlelight*. It entailed presenting a program of Christmas Scriptures and carols in the Bethel Church sanctuary prior to enjoying delicious desserts and conversation in

the fellowship hall at beautifully decorated tables with family and friends.

First Cheryl enlisted volunteers to decorate the tables in themes, using special Christmas pieces - collections of angels, bells, etc., and including plenty of candles to make the fellowship hall glow when they were lit on the night of the event.

The table decorators were also responsible for making the delectable desserts they

served to their guests. Other volunteers were in charge of coffee and tea and the children's table.

In all, there were 12 elegant tables filled with invited guests—80 to 90 people. The place was packed!

Everybody seemed to have a wonderful time eating and chatting and many asked if we were going to do it again next year.

Hmm . . .

## Souper Sunday Fundraiser

On Sunday, February 24, our regular fellowship dinner day, at 12:30 p.m. there will be instead a soup lunch held to raise funds for Associated Charities.

Plans are to have several different kinds of soup to chose from for the main

course. For dessert there will be make-your-own ice cream sundaes. Susie Q's ice cream will be served along with a choice of toppings.

Please invite your friends and neighbors to come and join us for this special meal.

Rather than be charged a specific fee for lunch, attendees will be asked to make a donation.

Associated Charities serves the Titusville community assisting with food, clothing, toys, household goods and other items.



# Lenten and Easter Events

This year Ash Wednesday falls on February 13. It marks the beginning of the season of Lent.

Holy Week will be celebrated during the week of March 24—30, beginning with Palm Sunday.

There will be a special service at Bethel Church on

Maundy Thursday, March 28 at 7:00 p.m.

The Good Friday service this year will be held at Rometown Church on March 29 at 7:00 p.m..

We will celebrate Easter on March 31 at our 11:00 a.m. service.

The adult class, which meets in the fellowship hall, will participate in a special Lenten Bible study entitled "Blessings of the Cross."

All adults in the church are invited to join us for this seasonal study. It will begin on February 17 and run for seven Sundays, taking us through to Easter Sunday.



## News from Around the Church

We have been enjoying our new sound system and look forward to making good use of our newly installed projectors. We already have, and, in the future, will continue to be able to watch video clips, and photos and videos when we have missionary and other speakers. We can also use our new equipment to project words

to hymns on the front walls when we have large crowds and not enough hymnals to go around, such as on Memorial Day.

There will be a Church Council meeting on February 10 at 4:00 p.m. All members of council are encouraged to attend this meeting.

On April 20 the District United Methodist Women will hold their annual Missions Study at Bethel Church from 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. It is expected that about 60 will attend.

In preparation, the District UMW Board will meet at Bethel on March 22 at 6:00 p.m. to make final plans for the April event.

### Calling All Men!

**Don't Forget the Men's Breakfasts at 7:30 a.m. on the 4th Saturday of each month!**

**Invite your friends and neighbors!**



***"We can also use our new equipment to project words to hymns on the front walls when we have large crowds and not enough hymnals to go around, such as on Memorial Day."***

## Sunday School Easter Lesson (Just for Fun!)

A group of four-year-olds were gathered in a Sunday school class. The teacher looked at the class and asked this question: "Does anybody know what day this is?"

Little Debbie held up her hand and said, "Yes, today is Palm Sunday."

The teacher exclaimed,

"That's wonderful! Now does anyone know what next Sunday is?"

Debbie again held up her hand and said, "Yes, next Sunday is Easter Sunday."

Once again the teacher praised her, then said, "Now, does anyone know what makes next Sunday Easter?"

With barely a pause to hear the question, Debbie responded, "Yes, next Sunday is Easter because Jesus rose from his grave."

Before the teacher could congratulate her, the little girl concluded, "But if he sees his shadow he has to go back in for six weeks."



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Methodist Church**

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**Sunday Worship**

**11:00 a.m.**

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**



*Advent by Candlelight*

