

West Church News

The following is taken from UCC.ORG, the United Church of Christ Website. Sometimes, something we see strikes us as important to share. -Editor



Living Psalms Book

Psalms in the form of words and art, reborn in the specific contexts of our world, privileging the voices of historically marginalized communities and those acting in solidarity with them.

Living Psalm 51: for Ash Wednesday A Re-imagining of Psalm 51

¹ I've messed up again.
Not that I want to keep getting things wrong and violating the core of my beliefs.
I truly regret violating others and the pain that I have caused.
Dios (God), I have this affliction called "Being Human."
Ten misericordia de mi (Have mercy on me), Dios,
I know that I don't deserve your faithful love!
Yet, I am so grateful that you are Dios and my critics are not.
"Dios de Justica, ten misericordia de nosotros." ("God of Justice, Have mercy on us.")

² I'm being real, God.
I'm not going to come up with reasons to rationalize the damage I've caused.
I've screwed up and I will do it again.
I only pray that you know the sincerity of my soul and my deep regret.
I get it if you don't want to forgive me; I often don't forgive myself and then have an awful burden to carry around.
Compassionate Yahweh, people like me need misericordia.
HEAR me, SEE me, I plea.
Wash me completely of my self-loathing and to cleanse me of mis violaciones (my violations).
"Dios de Justica, ten misericordia de nosotros."

³ Liberate me from myself and my poor decisions.
I have missed the mark! I need redeeming grace.
My life is not always pretty. Indeed, it is a mess at times.

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About West Church

- We meet every Sunday at 10
- Open and Affirming Church, Everyone is Welcome
- Food Pantry hours: Friday: 10-12. All are welcome.
- Our Mission: "To increase love and hope for all through growing faith in Christ"

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Pastor's Page

Dear friends,

Our Lenten journey begins with Ash Wednesday on March 6. The season of Lent lasts for forty days (not including Sundays), beginning on Ash Wednesday and lasting through Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, until just before dawn on Easter morning. It is a time for prayer and fasting, as we mourn the impending death of Jesus Christ at the hands of the Romans.

These forty days are meant to mirror the days that Jesus spent in the wilderness before his ministry began. During his time in the wilderness, Jesus was tempted in several ways – with food to satisfy his hunger, with control of the heavenly beings, and with earthly power. For this reason, Lent is a time of introspection, when we examine our own lives for places where temptation rules. This provides us with a framework of forty days when we can intentionally work to overcome the places where our vision has fallen from godly things to earthly concerns.

We begin this time of Lent with an ancient ritual of marking our heads with ashes, as a symbol of humility and repentance. Traditionally, the ashes come from the burned palms of the previous Palm Sunday, and are mixed with anointing oil. It is a stark reminder of the last week of Jesus' life, and how quickly the joy of his triumphal entry dissolved into anger, fear, and sadness.

Fasting is another Lenten tradition that is used to signify repentance and remind us of the fasting that Jesus did in the wilderness. Some observers will "give up" a favorite food for Lent, such as chocolate. The fast is then broken with chocolates found in the Easter Basket on Easter morning. Others will fast from a hobby or leisure activity, spending that time in prayer and meditation instead. Similarly, a new practice has participants "taking on" a new spiritual practice each day, rather than fasting.

In the early church, Lent was also used as a season of preparation. New followers would go through forty days of hearing biblical stories and learning about the faith, in preparation for their baptism on Easter morning. With this in mind, I have decided to offer a final "Get to Know West Church" class for three Sundays during Lent - March 17, 24, and 31.

These sessions are open to anyone who is new to the church or who has an interest in knowing more about the UCC, the history of West Church, or what brought our church family together. Each session will be one hour, immediately following the worship service on Sunday mornings. Those who have participated in these sessions in the past have enjoyed learning more about what makes our church family so special. I hope that you will consider joining me for one or more of these sessions.

Peace, Pastor Amanda

Ash Wednesday
Service at 7:00
Please join us.

Don Quixote stands with a mirror in front of me
forcing me to recognize how I violate others
and the wrong pathways I've traveled,
saying, "Look at your life. Look at your mistakes. Own them."
I own my flaws, violaciones and weaknesses. I am human, after all.
"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

⁴ I have wronged others.
"Hhatah" (miss the mark) demands that I do the work of introspection.
I have violated many by not recognizing or affirming their dignity.
I've failed to acknowledge that these siblings are YOU;
worthy of dignity and having their names uplifted and celebrated.
YOU come in all genders and gender expressions, in all colors and cultures,
and, in you, I celebrate diverse ways of being and engaging others.
YOU speak a plethora of languages and eat foods from across the globe
and it is all good.
I've been complicit in much that dishonors you and my global siblings.
You have the right to chastise me for what I've done and failed to do.
"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

⁵ I've inherited guilt. I carry tons of it with me.
I don't want it or need it but it was gifted to me at birth.
How can I shed shame, blame and guilt that do not serve me well? ⁶
You seek truth, I am a train wreck.
Yet, as I own my stuff, I experience your embrace.
You love me.
Your wisdom comes through as you wrap me in love and journey with me.
⁷ Purifícame (Purify me),
use hyssop to sprinkle the healing, wholeness and transformative grace that I need.
Lavame (wash me) and it is over.
I am healed, transformed and full of grace.
"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

⁸ Let joy and celebration flow within and through me once again.
I have been crushed, yet, within my bones I experience rejoicing.
It will be normative once again. I am thrilled.
⁹ Thank you, gracias, merci, grazie, Danke dir,
for not focusing on my human frailty and all that I get wrong.
Help me to move away from shame, blame and guilt
to acceptance of your warm embrace of all of me.
¹⁰ Dios, create a clean corazón (heart) within me.
Ayúdame (Help me), fill me with your Spirit.
Plant seeds of faithfulness within me and let them grow roots in my heart
that are manifested in relationships of mutuality with all those I engage.
"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

¹¹ The voices loudly demand that you throw away the key
and deny me grace, mercy and compassion.
They shout that I have "no right" to experience YOU
or be in YOUR Santa Presencia (Holy Presence).
I beg that you ignore them and accept my plea for a loving compassionate response.
I know I've really messed up and am unworthy.
But YOU, HOLY ONE, embrace those who are not travelling the road that others travel.
You wrap around the flawed; you call us humans. We are your children.
"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

¹² Help me experience the Holy Ghost movement once again
even in the midst of guilt and self-loathing.
I am not perfect but I am honest and in need of revival within my life.

(Continued)

¹³ I will soak in your compassion and mercy
and will model that love and compassion to others.
They will experience YOUR loving openness to the flawed
and they will know that coming home is a safe and sacred place of encountering YOU again.
"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

¹⁴ Deliver us from those whose starting place is one of condemnation;
save us from the righteous who think they have exclusive rights to you.
They believe that they can deny our dignity and your compassionate love.
I will sing a Gospel of love and extravagant welcome I received
so others experience YOU as the lover of all lives.

¹⁵ In the midst of everything,
I dare to open my mouth and uplift, celebrate,
and proclaim that YOU are the God who welcomes and embraces the flawed.
My life and mouth praise you even when I don't use words.

¹⁶ We do not need sacrifices to wipe away guilt, shame and blame.

¹⁷ You simply desire that we come as we are;
flawed human beings who love you and are trying to live faithful lives.
Our brokenness is our sacrifice. Our naming our flaws is our part of the healing.
"Dios de Justicia, ten misericordia de nosotros."

¹⁸ Honor the sincerity of our souls; uplift us.
Help us to be the instruments of peace and justice who open doors to community.

¹⁹ Owing our stuff,
the sincerity of our souls and engagement with YOU and OUR SIBLINGS
are the hinges of right relations.
Our lives, our truth telling and engagement are the burnt offerings and they are complete.
"Dios de Justicia, oye nuestra oración." (hear our prayer)

Living Psalm 51, for Ash Wednesday, was written by the Rev. Justo González II, Interim Conference Minister, Illinois Conference.

Living Psalms Book is created by UCC Witness & Worship Artists' Group, a Network of UCC connected artists, activists and ministers bridging the worship and liturgy of the local church with witness and action in the community.

Logo is detail from *Living Psalm 80* by Sophia Beardemphl, Redwoods, CA. Recovering from significant bullying, Sophia, age nine, read Psalm 80 and thought of brokenness that needs mending. She drew this broken and mended bowl.

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Board of Missions

Thanks to the assistance from several wonderful people, 288 Church World Service school kits were assembled and packed after church February 17th and 24th. On the church's website (www.westcongr.org) you can see a photo of some of us hard at work on assembling kits. We appreciate the donation of time assembling the kits as well as many folks' donation of purchased school kit items over the past several months. The total value of these kits, by CWS calculation, is \$4,305. For more information about these kits, including a graphic of where kits were distributed worldwide by CWS during 2018, please refer to their website www.cwskits.org

Board of Christian Education

We have scheduled our Review of the Safety Manual for all Teachers and assisting volunteers for Sunday March 14, 2019 following Worship in the Sanctuary.

MARCH 2019

SUNDAY Ush-ers/Flowers	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Eric/Pat AA *q Sunday @ 7 pm T/R Hall Laurie Clark 229-7550	Bell Choir-Pastor & Music Minister, Manchester		Girl Scouts 5:45-7:15 pm JH Clara Cleveland room B Witham 978-5433 (2,3,5 th Wed.)	Pastor Office Hours 1-6 pm q Thursday	1 Food Pantry 10-12 q Friday	2
3 Diaconate	4 Pastor Amanda off Monday/Saturday	5 	6 Ash Wednesday Service 7 pm Choir Rehearsal q Wed. 6 pm	7 Mystery dinner Meeting 7 pm	8 AA *q Fri @ 7-9 CC Rm JH Dana Gourley 783-0370 344-1619	9 Scarsilloni T/R Hall
10	11	12 Game Night 6:30-8 pm	13 Clergy Group & COMC 6 pm	14 Paula	15	16
17 Baptism Doucette, 2 Get to know WC Series #1	18	19 Bible Study Tuesday 7-8:15 pm	20 <u>Trustees 5-6pm</u> IBEW 10 am Bob McNeff McKeage Rm 753 -6679 3 rd Wed	21	22	23
24 Get to know WC Series #2 Merrimack Assoc. 2 pm 1 st Cong. Church, Meredith	25	26 Church Council 5-7 pm Bible Study Tuesday 7-8:15 pm	27	28 Kenny Discernment Team 4 pm Church Office	29	30
31 Lay Sunday Get to know WC Series #3						

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry He calls Peter, Andrew, James, and John to leave their fishing nets and follow Him. They listen to His call, respond immediately, leave everything, including the biggest catch they have ever made, to follow Him.

Michael helps build a boat!



Food Pantry— Ongoing Mission

	Households	Children
March	30	12
April	30	14
May	20	7
June	38	13
July	23	9
Aug	32	26
Sep	26	35
Oct	35	28
Nov	29	30
Dec	22	12
Jan	28	29
Feb	27	44
12 months	340	259



Game Night and Pot Luck West Church

at
Hutchins Street Entrance
Tuesday,
March 12, 2019
6:30 - 8:00 pm

