

THE PROSPECT TOWER

Prospect United Methodist Church
A Growing Christian Community of Faith in Action

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Pastor's Page

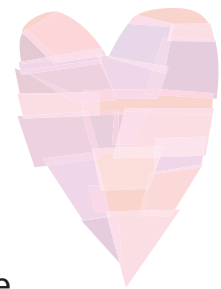
Welcome to Lent: The Most Joyful Time of the Christian Year



"Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word "lencten", which means Spring. The season is a preparation for celebrating Easter. Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts and then became a time for penance by all Christians." — United Methodist Book of Worship

"A moose walks in and sits down at a bar. The bar tender walks up to him and says, 'Hey, why the long face?'" Forgive me for bringing up this very old, and much overused joke, but there is an image of Christians, especially Christians during Lent, that we need to debunk. As stated by St. Teresa of Avila, "May God protect me from long faced saints." The image is negative, unfaltering, and even un-Christian. So, in the next few paragraphs, I am going to attempt to tell you why you should be filled with joy and why you should laugh and sing and celebrate Lent.

Lent is a time when we remember our faith. In ancient times, it was used to train converts to the Christian faith and to welcome back people who had wandered away from the Christian community. It was a time when community was stressed and people were needed to be reminded that they were not alone in this very hostile world — they were part of a nurturing and supportive community. Do you feel that you are alone to face the problems of day to day life? You're not alone. You have people who love you. You have people who care about you. You have a church that will stand by you through the ups and downs of daily life. Isn't that worth celebrating?



Lent was also a time when believers were encouraged to look at their lives and see if there were things that needed to change. I know that repentance is not something people do naturally, and it's usually associated with something negative. But the Christian faith is about starting over. We can decide to

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begin again. We can decide to be more loving, more caring and more forgiving. Lent is a time when we can focus our attention to the things that really matter. Lent boldly proclaims that, with God's help, we are not trapped in lives which can only go in one fatalistic direction. We can become a new person — isn't that worth celebrating?

And finally, Lent is a proclamation of God's love. We are reminded through our worship services and through our readings that God loves us. God loves us as a community, but God also loves each and every one of us. Each week, during Lent, we progress towards Jerusalem. We hear Jesus' teachings. We witness his conflicts with the religious authorities. We journey with him to a final supper with his disciples and we watch as he is betrayed by a friend in the garden. Why? "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (John 3:16-17) If that's not worth celebrating, what is?

Lift up your voices in praise of God's love during Lent. Come to worship with hearts filled with joy! God loves our world — God loves you. It is a time to celebrate!

Grace and Peace,
Bob Sorozan

■ Reflections on Mission Trip to Ghana ~ Jill Wilson

Those in attendance at Prospect on Sunday, February 8, were able to travel in spirit with Jill Wilson, through words and photographs, on the Volunteer in Mission trip she took last October with volunteers from Simsbury U.M.C., Asbury U.M.C., one from a conference in the Midwest, two not affiliated with a church and the Rev. Joseph Ewoodzie, our Conference Mission Coordinator. Here are condensed highlights of her reflections.



1) GROW WITH GOD

On a mission journey the growth is unseen and very personal. There is personal growth, spiritual growth, and mental growth. I found God at every turn, and every day — in me, in the people of Ghana, in my teammates, and in our activities. I could see God in action through me, and through others. I found myself more nurtured than I was nurturing.

2) WALK WITH GOD

On a mission journey, with 11 people you don't really know, and with 11 different personality styles, walking with God can be a bit of a challenge at times. We may have thought the journey was all about the people of Ghana, but we quickly learned it was also about us . . . seeing the good, no, the God, in each other even when we were not at our best.

3) WORK WITH GOD

Our work week was just five days! The days of rest afterward were much needed. However, that being said, the work days were oh, so very satisfying. And while we did physical work, like paint, lay concrete, see hundreds of patients and build tables and chairs, we worked in other ways. We worked on shared tasks, shared goals, and shared experiences with the people of Ghana.

4) IMAGINE WITH GOD

We imagined we would provide clinical care, but never imagined that we would create a clinic on the front porch of a small building, and see 700 people that week for conditions such as parasites, hypertension, diabetes, allergies, malaria and a condition we clinicians had never heard of before, called waist pain. And we did not imagine the opportunity to teach a lesson to the students there either.

5) BUILD WITH GOD

The building of our journey to Ghana started long before the time we boarded the plane. Our New York Annual Conference and our Mission Coordinator, the Rev. Joseph Ewoodzie and Bishop John Kweku Buabeng-Odoom of the Ghana Methodist Church, began to develop and build a relationship long ago. As a result of that, we were invited to Ghana with love and anticipation. Of course we built things ... but more importantly, we built relationships.

And so, at the end of a mission journey — to a place like Ghana, — it is bittersweet to leave. You arrive as strangers and leave as friends. When one of us goes on a mission journey, we all do. Some of us collect items, some of us donate money, some of us travel, and maybe most important of all, some participate through prayer. You enter the mission field as soon as you exit the doors of the church building. So I hope when you leave today you will think about how you will Grow, Build, Work, Imagine and Walk with God, for each step you take.

(A fuller version of her reflections on the Ghana mission trip can be found on our website, www.anewprospect.org.

■ Special Collection Benefits Cambodian Missionary

Following Jill Wilson's talk, a special collection was held to benefit our Cambodian Missionary, Helen Camarce.

The collection was unusual in that people were encouraged to put their money into a collection plate in the front of the church for the day of the week of their birth. (For just about all, "smart" phones were a vital resource in this regard.)

Just under \$500 was raised, with the breakdown as follows: Thursday: \$22; Sunday: \$46; Friday: \$49; Tuesday: \$59.79; Saturday: \$60.50; Wednesday: \$84.73; and Monday, the overall winner by a wide margin, \$177. The grand total was \$498.98.

Jill notes that we all can participate in mission trips even from the comfort of one's couch. She encourages church members to follow our Cambodian missionary, Helen Camarce, the beneficiary of this special collection, through her Facebook page, "Helen's Cambodian Trail."

While it's a "closed" Facebook group, Helen has encouraged us to become members as a way to follow her activities. Helen also has a blog with periodic postings. You can access it at: <http://hlcamarce.wordpress.com>. This way, we can follow her activities, from the comfort of our home.

■ Stewardship Appeal

There is good news and not-so-good news to report on the Stewardship front. While the Stewardship Committee hit its target of \$110,000 for 2015 pledges, according to John Rioux, the convener of stewardship, the church still owes \$7,000 from last year's Conference apportionment and has a \$30,000 budget deficit for 2015.

To pay bills from last year's cold winter and other urgent needs, the church delayed paying its apportionment to the Conference. The apportionment pays health benefits for retired clergy, gives administrative support for missions, and pays for other conference needs.

The church is fortunate to have a healthy endowment from past benefactors, but financial leaders recognize that continuing to use gains from the endowment is not sustainable in the long run.

A letter of appeal was sent in January relating the plight of PUMC's finances. If you want to make a special donation to help this cause, no amount is too small. Make your checks out to Prospect UMC and note in the memo line: "Year-End Appeal." If you forgot to pledge for 2015, please consider pledging as soon as possible.

■ Sandy Recovery Team 2015

The mission team that traveled to New York to help the Storm Sandy recovery effort in the fall committed to return in the spring. An initial planning meeting for the 2015 spring trip took place on February 16th.

If you were not able to attend the meeting but are interested in participating, please speak to any of the October 2014 team members: Carol Rivard, Jeanette Baker, Joyce Rioux, Susan Thayer, Laura Taylor, Susan Powers, Terri Sorozan and Pastor Bob.

■ Lenten living

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18 this year. Christians have observed this season of the church year since the fourth century.



It's traditionally a time of reflection, penitence and spiritual renewal before Easter.

During Lent, some Christians give up something that hinders their relationship with God. Others do something extra for their spiritual growth or make a special sacrifice. The key is to make Lent a memorable season of sincere spiritual growth — a time that can set the tone for the rest of the year.

History Corner

PROSPECT IN EARLIER DAYS

Scout Troop History: December 1939 Tower - Kathy Dube

The troop of Boy Scouts organized at Prospect Methodist Episcopal Church — now Prospect United Methodist Church — established in 1910 was said to be one of the oldest in continuous existence, according to the December 1939 Tower.

The troop was established by Rev. Dr. Ernest G. Richardson, who was appointed pastor of Prospect Church in 1910. Shortly after coming to our church, Dr. Richardson created the troop in part because the Boy Scout organization was instrumental in his own development.

“Dr. Richardson, who is now resident bishop of the Philadelphia Methodist Church, was appointed pastor of the local church in April of 1910. Shortly after coming to Bristol he started the scout troop, so this troop is now in its thirtieth year.



“A native of Barbados who landed in New York City as a homeless youth of 16, Dr. Richardson always felt as a young pastor that there should be some properly guided organization for boys to help them become self-reliant along lines for which they showed an aptitude. When Lieutenant-General Robert S.S. Baden-Powell, hero of the Siege of Mafeking during 1899-1900 in the Boer War, started an organization in England in 1908, and early 1909, called the ‘Boy Scouts’, Bishop Richardson followed the movement with keen interest.”

Baden-Powell came to America in 1909 to meet with Daniel Carter Beard, who had started another organization for boys called “Sons of Daniel Boone.” The two joined forces and started the “Boy Scouts of America.” The organization was incorporated in February of 1910. Bishop Richardson started a Boy Scout Troop at the Fleet Street Methodist Church in Brooklyn shortly before his assignment to Prospect Church. One of his first innovations at this church was to organize the Boy Scout Troop here, naming himself Scoutmaster.

Editor's Note/By Gerald Lee:

Not many people know that Boy Scouting officially started in Connecticut in Bristol and that our church played a key role in the start of Scouting here in Bristol. Boy Scouts were founded in 1910 and our church, along with First Congregational and Bristol Baptist, started Boy Scouting in Connecticut shortly afterwards. The three churches put three numbers into a hat, and each church pulled a number out of the hat that became its Scout troop number. The numbers were 2, 3 and 4. Our church drew the number 2, First Congregational was number 3, and Bristol Baptist was number 4. If all of these troops were still meeting, they would be over 100 years old. Troops 3 and 4 both folded in the late 70s and Troop 2 folded about 10 years ago.

Last year our church picked up the sponsorship of Cub Scout Pack 30, which meets at Edgewood School. At that time, the PTA at Edgewood chose not to sponsor the pack, which turned 50 last year, so Prospect assumed the sponsorship. Pack 30 is doing well and still meeting at Edgewood School. It's open to children in the first through the fifth grade. First graders are Tiger Cubs, second graders are Wolves, Third Graders are Bears, and Fourth and Fifth Graders are Webelo Scouts. After that they cross over into Boy Scouting programs. I check in on them at least once a month to make sure everything is still going well.

[Among his positions in Scouting, Gerald Lee is the Assistant District Commissioner responsible for the City of Bristol, the Charter Organizational Rep for Pack 30, and liaison between Prospect and Pack 30.]



Saluting Our Scouts

Upcoming Dates for MYF

MARCH

- March 8 make posters for can and bottle drive
- March 22 during church announce can and bottle drive. Meeting at night also.
- March volunteer at Zion Soup

APRIL

- April volunteer at Zion Soup

MAY

- May 9 Car Wash
- May 17 Progressive Worship
- MYF to participate in Youth Sunday
- May volunteer at Zion Soup

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