



VOL. 2 ISSUE 1 · LENT

THE OASIS

Seasonal Journal of Southminster Presbyterian Church

Welcome to the Oasis!

BY MATT GEARKE

Defined as a pleasant or peaceful area in the midst of a difficult, troubled, or hectic situation, an oasis provides nourishment, rest and renewal for weary travelers. Inside these pages you will find a spiritual oasis meant to provide renewal for your weary soul.

‘Oasis’ is Southminster’s new quarterly journal providing reflections, stories, and other spiritual food to nourish your soul as you traverse the difficulties, troubles, and hectic nature of life. I encourage and invite you to digest the following pages with prayerful vigor, letting the Holy Spirit reinvigorate your life. Welcome to the Oasis!

It’s no coincidence that the first edition of the Oasis comes to you as we begin Lent. Lent is a time when we are challenged to rely on God more by intentionally relying on ourselves less. Our Lenten series this year, “Life Attitudes” by Robert Warren and Sue Mayfield, invites us to consider what a life blessed by God looks like by taking a closer look at the beatitudes. Considered some of Jesus’ most challenging teachings, the beatitudes speak to what makes a disciples’ attitude beautiful to God. Each week we’ll examine two beatitudes during worship and during the adult education hour between services. All are invited to come and discover what it means to live well, live openly, live purposefully, live lovingly, and live differently as followers of Christ. Like an oasis, the beatitudes provide us with the joy of a renewed life in God. Once again welcome to the Oasis!

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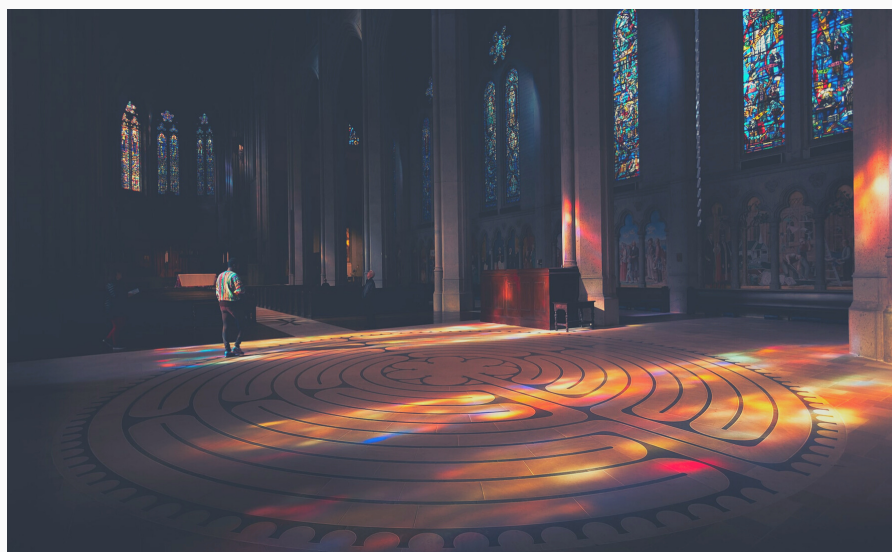
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Walking the Labyrinth Ash Wednesday

'During Lent we examine our lives and through the practices of prayer, fasting and works of charity, seek to conform our lives to Christ's. For some this conversion will be a turning from sin to grace, for other it will be a gracious turning towards the mystery of God in Christ.'

Nouwen, Henri J.M. and Bauer, J. Lent and Easter Wisdom (Liguori Publications, Liguori, Missouri, 2005)



On Ash Wednesday we invite you to walk the Labyrinth and begin your Lenten Journey with this spiritual practice. A labyrinth is simply a place to quiet your mind, center yourself, and turn yourself to God. We often find ourselves busy and rushed, however the labyrinth gives us the chance to slow down, take our time, and just be with God. As you enter, be aware that you are entering a sacred space. When walking along the twists and turns let go of the things on your mind, your hurts and worries, allowing God's presence to enter. The path will take you close to the center and then away towards the outside again and again. These turns remind us to be open to changes, and that they can be welcomed and not feared. It is a picture of life. When you get to the center you are fully present with God. Stop, breathe, pray, kneel, or even sit in silence and experience God's loving embrace. As you walk out of the center of the labyrinth remember that God walks with you. Be aware of symbols, thoughts and feelings that might come to you as a response from God. Allow God to strengthen you as you linger on the pathway out into the world. This can be a healing and renewing experience, and a way to start this season of Lent with a new understanding of God's presence in your life.

We have what
we seek, it is
there all the
time, and if we
give it time, it
will make itself
known to us.

THOMAS MERTON



Blessings: New Members & Baptisms

We celebrate and welcome these new additions to our church family!

New Members:

Eric & Elizabeth Steckling

Megan & John Roeseler

Hamideh & Walter Youkhana

Hellen Shija

Erin & Jan Breugger

Jessica Clevering

Eric & Patricia Heimdal

Laura & Steve Kruse

Thomas & Lisa Morrow

Robert Pondelicek

Baptisms:

Truman & John Pocklington

Christopher Kruse

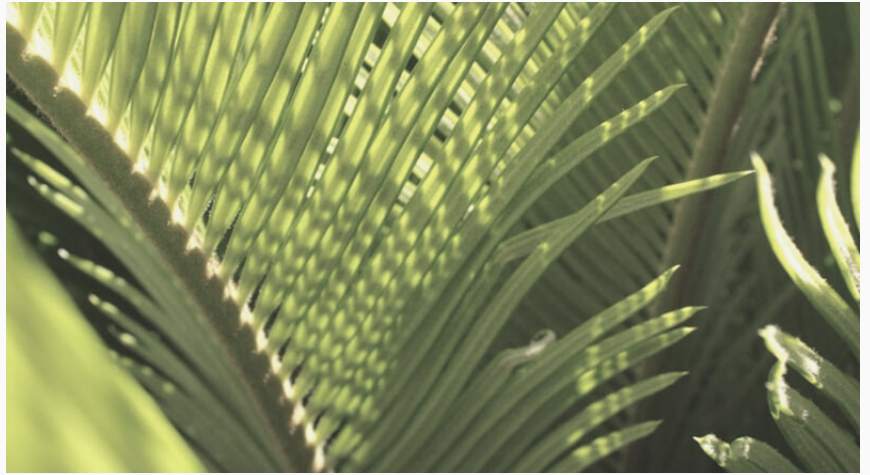
Sophie Steckling

Asher Gross

Erin Breugger

Lura Roeseler

Ryan Reibel



Lenten & Holy Week Services

Ash Wednesday, February 26th - Service at 7pm, Labyrinth 4 - 7pm

Palm Sunday, April 5th - Service at 10 am, Egg Hunt to follow

Maundy Thursday, April 9th - Service at 7pm

Good Friday, April 10th - Sanctuary open from noon - 3 pm

Easter Sunday, April 12th - Services at 9 am and 11 am

Music and Faith

BY SHARON PETERSON

As your new Organist, it is a pleasure for me to share a little about how I use music as a devotional vehicle. The texts in each worship service begin my planning of organ pieces to play, so my choices will provide a coherent atmosphere and encourage the congregation to focus on fellowship with God and each other. While the Prelude opens hearts, other music allows time for further meditation and the hearing of God's voice. The Postlude sends the congregation on its way in joyful service to God and neighbor. This planning, and the subsequent practicing, are time-consuming but valuable. As I become more deeply involved in each piece, I become more able to enter into worship even as I practice. In fact, using the talents God gave me is a form of worship. Enriching others' lives with music gives musicians the opportunity to emphasize that God's great creative presence permeates our lives.

I encourage each of you to identify and use a gift you've been given each day. Listen to music to open your heart, spirit, and mind. See what new insight your receptive, creative self can discern. You'll be an increased blessing to others, as you give glory to God by fulfilling His purpose for you.

At 4pm on Sunday, Feb. 23, I'm eager to play a Scandinavian Organ Concert for you. Although I have no direct Scandinavian heritage, I was captivated by its music during the seven years I lived in Sweden and Norway. Did you realize listening is active participation, too? Come, develop this skill more fully as you enjoy the music. I am grateful for deepening relationships with you at SPC and for your kind welcome thus far.





Youth Retreat Explores our Faith

BY LIZ NICKERSON

On a snowy Friday night in January, Southminster's youth group headed North to Covenant Harbor Bible Camp in Lake Geneva, WI. Kari Sealund, Cathleen Freels, Matt Nickerson and myself made the trip with 11 youth. We attended Winter Camp, an annual retreat for middle school and high schoolers from WI, IL, and Indiana led by the Evangelical Covenant Church and open to all denominations. There were about 500 youth in attendance for a weekend of growing in faith and having fun with each other. Brave youth even took a polar plunge into the icy waters of Lake Geneva! The theme for the weekend came from the book of John chapter 3:22-30. This is a story we don't spend a lot of time on, about John the Baptist telling his disciples that it was okay that people were now following Jesus and being baptized by Jesus rather than John. John explains in verse 30 that, "He must increase, but I must decrease." But John's disciples were kind of upset.



They felt like Jesus was stepping on John's turf because he was now baptizing people, but John explains to them that he is not the Messiah and Jesus is and this is exactly what is supposed to happen. We talked as a group about how hard it would be, if you were a leader like John, but you knew you were just leading until the real leader came, and then once the true leader arrived you would have to step back from your role. That is what John had to do and it made sense that his disciples didn't like it and did not really understand. Interestingly the youth were also studying the Beatitudes in Sunday school as we will be doing as a congregation during Lent. Kari Sealund, our youth leader, had the great insight that the Beatitudes are about us learning to decrease so that Jesus can increase in our lives. Our true happiness and peace in life comes when we can decrease our ego, wants and desires and increase God's Spirit within us. We need to see ourselves as empty vessels that God can use. When we do that, there is less of us and more of God. When we live the life that God wants to live in us and let God use us for his purposes and not our own, that is where true joy, happiness, peace and love is found. God is the only one who can fill us with his unconditional love. The season of Lent is a time to draw near to God, to contemplate the sacrifice Jesus made for you and to pray to God each day seeking God's direction for your life. So in this Lenten season pray that your ego will decrease so that God can increase within you.

John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease."

