



Changed, Not Ended

It is not typical to celebrate Holy Communion during a funeral service within the United Church of Christ (although it is always an option, and one I recommend). In the more liturgical churches, Communion is almost always celebrated.

In the Roman Catholic funeral rite, the beginning of the eucharistic prayer includes a statement that always strikes me, no matter how many times I hear it: "Lord, for your faithful people life is changed, not ended."

As Christians, that is our fundamental belief. Our body is our earthly dwelling place. When this earthly abode lies in death, we are given an everlasting dwelling place in heaven – abiding in God through Christ. The death of our mortal bodies is not the end of life, but a moment of transformation.

"Life is changed, not ended." This is true when death comes to each of us, but it is true at many points before our earthly pilgrimage is ended.

Life is changed, not ended...

When we leave home and venture forth.

When we commit ourselves in love to another person.

When we have children.

When we lose a cherished job.

When we leave behind a hometown, friends, and family to follow a dream.

When we lose someone we love — a parent, a spouse, a sibling...

When our children venture forth on their own.

When we conclude our life of work.

When we lose some of our strength, our capabilities, our independence.

All through our lives we have moments and movements that bring one chapter to a close, almost always before we are sure what awaits us in the next chapter. Change brings loss. Even welcome change, like a marriage or a promotion to the job of your dreams, brings loss. You can't have what's next until you let go of what is.

At these transitional moments we need to cling to the faith in resurrection: "life is changed, not ended." Learning to let go of the past and our attachment to the way things are at the moment is one of the most important life tasks.

It can be fearful to accept change. It is tempting to give way to dread of the future or an unhealthy attachment to a past that has slipped through our fingers. We can become bitter and resentful when confronted with an unwanted change. We can dig our heels in and refuse to go forward with our lives, becoming stuck in a no-man's-land between an irretrievable past and unwelcome future.

All these reactions are born of fear.

We who hold to the belief that even death itself is not the end of life can be liberated from these fearful reactions. But it takes practice letting go and moving forward in trust.

As you go through your day today, be on the lookout for the ways in each day, "life is changed, not ended."

Prayer: *Like a toddler forced to let go of a toy, this feels like the end of the world to me. Still my soul, quiet my spirit, remind me that life is changed, not ended.*

A Journey Through Lent

Ash Wednesday Service

February 22, 2023

7:00pm

Ash Wednesday marks the first day of Lent. You are invited to come as you are and receive the imposition of ashes as we start the journey through Lent together.

Lenten Prayer Vigil

Sunday, February 26, 2023

You are invited to begin the season of Lent by taking an hour to pray in the sanctuary on the first Sunday of Lent. We will provide devotional material and other aids to prayer. Consecrated bread and wine will be on the communion table so you can partake of Holy Communion during your hour of prayer.

The prayer vigil is scheduled for 12 hours: from 12 noon on Sunday, February 26 until midnight. There will be a sign-up sheet available for individuals or partners in prayer to take one of the hours available. If more people wish to participate than can be accommodated with the 12 hours scheduled, the vigil can be extended, but only if there is no interruption in the hours of prayer. After the first 12 hours are filled, the remaining hours must be filled consecutively so there are no gaps in the vigil.



New day
of the week!

Lenten Soup Suppers

THURSDAYS in LENT 6:00 PM

March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

a time of worship will follow

If you are interested in any of these Lent events but cannot drive to church, please call the church office and Michelle will help you get there.



It's soon time to order your Easter Lilies that will adorn the Sanctuary on Easter Sunday. Orders will be collected February 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26. Each plant is \$9.40, and can be taken home after the Easter service. Order envelopes will be available on the windowsill in the Narthex. If you have any questions, please call Robin Federmann at 716-432-7962.



Sunday, February 19, 2023 Following Worship

Looking for something to do after football season? Please join us on February 19th for our first chili cook-off. We are looking for volunteers to cook chili and for those who want to enjoy a hearty lunch.

Please sign up in the narthex by February 12 or call the church office.

Looking forward to the fellowship and fun.

The Kingdom of God in My Backyard

It's hard to argue with Tennyson about "nature red in tooth and claw." The rule of the jungle and even the suburban backyard is eat or be eaten. Even if you are a vegan from the top of your organic head to the soles of your pleather shoes, it is still a verity that nothing lives if nothing dies.

Competition for food, for territory, for suitable mates, is part of the animal kingdom (and that includes us). That's why I was so taken with a scene in my backyard the other day. It's not unusual for the bird feeder to look like a Darwinian hellscape as larger, more aggressive birds chase away the smaller ones. In fact, backyard bird feeders can be a happy hunting ground for hawks who have no interest in seed but will happily dine on other seed-eating birds.

But when I looked out the other day I saw all kinds of different birds, from the little chickadee and titmouse to the much larger woodpecker and even a female cardinal perched on the birdfeeders all at once. Pecking side-by-side or flitting in and out of the feeders, they seemed to be taking turns.

As I watched them, it occurred to me that this scene was not evidence that our backyard birds are particularly good-natured or well-mannered. What this scene demonstrated most clearly is that there was enough for all of them. Thanks to Sandy, who shovels through waist-deep snow to keep the feeders filled, the birds do not have to compete for food. There's plenty for everyone, including the squirrels who grow fat and happy on the seeds that fall to the ground below.

I think all of us know that when we perceive scarcity it does not bring out the best in us. If we fear that there will not be enough to go around, we become anxious and fearful. This fear can lead to hoarding and selfishness – and larceny and worse.

Most of you reading this are not plagued by real threats to food supply or safe, warm shelter. (It's good for those of us so blessed to remember that there are many for whom hunger is not a metaphorical condition, and to help them in all the ways we can - individually and societally.)

For most of us, our greatest sense of scarcity is the shortage of time – the scarce resource of life itself. How can we reconcile the number of items on our bucket lists with the actuarial odds against our accomplishing them?

Unlike the birds, it's a different kind of hunger that makes me feel existential scarcity. Even as I am reading a great book, I often feel like there are so many books I should have read, so many I want to read, so much I will never know. Dying in my ignorance looms before me as a tantalizing hunger that I know can't be satisfied in this short life.

But there's an answer to this hunger. I believe that there is an eternity to keep learning and growing. There will be time for all that a soul could desire and plenty to supply our deepest needs and hungers.

I don't know what triggers your sense of 'not enough-ness' that reminds you of how brief this life is. It's probably not unread theology books. But I do know that the promise of the Kingdom is that there will be enough for all.

We still need to help the poor and open the books on our shelves here and now, but there's coming a time when all will find a sufficient supply of all we need.

Prayer: *You keep my feeder full. I shall not want. Amen.*





Please keep in your prayers: Don Brown, Lola Donner, Eugene, John & Karen Kaitanowski, Molly, Pat Nagel, Linda Velazquez; our elderly members & friends in assisted living or homebound: Marilyn Fenske, Jessie Gillette, Jewell McFarland, Reta Rauker, Jean Roth, Peggy Scales, Helen Wilson; those serving in the military: Alex Steinbronner, Aydan Stormer



Steve & Nancy Jankowski (2/1/1969), Clayton & Dolly Errington (2/15/1955), Ken & Sharon Mooney (2/18/1965)



1. Prior to being called the Big Mac, what was this McDonald's menu item's previous name?
2. What was the first message sent by morse code?
3. Why do winter hats have pom-poms on top?
4. What was the name of Eddie Murphy's character in Beverly Hills Cop? *(answers on next page.)*



Brown Bag BIBLE STUDY

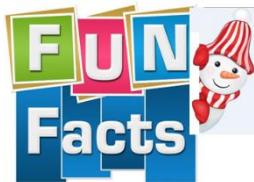
Wednesdays 12 noon

Come with your lunch and bible to the Council room to visit with each other and learn and grow in the Word with Pastor Lynn.

All are welcome ... bring a friend!

Offering Envelopes

2023 offering envelopes are still in production. Apparently, paper and employee shortages at the manufacturer has lead to the delay. We'll hang on for a few more weeks and let you know when they arrive. Until then, please use a pew envelope or send a check or make an online donation – whatever is easiest for you. If you have questions, contact Vanessa Rich, St. Matthew's Financial Secretary. Thanks for your patience and thank you for your financial support of the ministry of St. Matthew's.



The tallest known snowman was taller than a 12-story building.

A snowflake may take up to two hours to fall from a cloud to the ground.

The North Pole is warmer than the South Pole.





The amount of copper on the Arizona capitol building roof is equivalent to nearly 5 million pennies.

Thank Offering Boxes

As a way of showing your gratitude throughout the year, you can deposit your coins in a Thank Offering Box. In November, we will collect the boxes and donate to a local mission.

How about each time you put in coins you think of something you're grateful for and say "Thank You, God."



1. Blue Ribbon Burger
2. "What hath God wrought" (sent by Samuel F.B. Morse on May 24, 1844)
3. Most of the time it's just for style but actually they had a real function at one point in history. French sailors used to wear hats with pom-poms on them so they wouldn't bang their head on the low ceilings of the ship and/or get hurt while out on the rough waters of the sea.
4. Axel Foley

(Trivia & Fun Facts from LaDonna Painter)



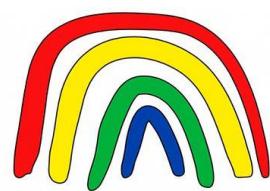
Local Food Pantry Donations

As some of you may have heard, there was a fire in the building that houses #feedhamburg (Iris Complex). There was heavy smoke damage so the food pantry is currently closed.

We will, however, continue to collect non-perishable items for when they re-open.

Needed Items: (Please check expiration dates.)

- Cereal (adult type)
- Oatmeal
- Pancake mix
- Applesauce
- Cookies/snacks
- Paper towels
- Tissues
- Jelly
- Mac & cheese
- Spaghetti sauce
- Pasta
- Canned vegetables
- Boxed potatoes



#feedhamburg

Nearly 250 million roses are grown in preparation for Valentine's Day each year. There is a science to ensuring that there are enough fresh roses to go around when it comes to February 14. In an effort to provide the flowers for the holiday, countries including Ecuador, Kenya, or Columbia ship the roses to the U.S., since they do not grow in the colder temperatures we experience in February.

St. Matthew's United Church of Christ

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