

OAK FOREST NEWS

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An Opening Gambit, a Parthian Shot

As the Christian calendar turned from the post-Christmas season to the season of preparation for Easter, as season called Lent, I am reminded that for any journey to build toward something it sometimes must first take something apart. Consider the words from Quaker author Parker Palmer in his work entitled *Let Your Life Speak*. There, Palmer reflects, “I love the fact that the word *humus*—the decayed vegetable matter that feeds the roots of plants—comes from the same root that gives rise to the word humility. It is a blessed etymology.” A resent walk through the woods behind my house brought new meaning to Palmer’s words.

As I trudged through the snow, I heard the brittle branches crackle underfoot. Each step’s snap sank twigs and leaves deeper into the earth that they were becoming. I found myself amongst those trees looking for suitable wooden arms, selecting the right shaped stick, stripping off the excess to prepare my find for its place a snowman.

To shape a branch well, preparations are necessary. Changes are needed.

Similar to how a blanket of snow temporarily transforms our tired winter landscape into a quiet, fresh stillness; several weeks ago we entered another temporary yet transformative time. With Ash Wednesday, we started a 40-day journey of introspection and transformation.

In the early church, catechumens—those preparing for membership in the church—started a 40-day period of preparation and change, preparing for initiation into the church through a change in habits, perspective, and faith. These 40 days of preparation and change is called Lent. Echoing Jesus’ 40-days of preparation as he initiated his ministry, these soon-to-be members would prepare themselves during Lent by stripping away those unnecessary parts of their lives, reshaping themselves into the broken down, refined form that will be their essential addition to the ever-changing body of Christ.

Fallen leaves, dried undergrowth, snapped twigs become something new. Leaves, undergrowth, and twigs mix with damp dirt. They breakdown. The greens of summer become the yellows, oranges, and reds of autumn that become beiges, browns, and blacks of winter. This decaying layer forms the top of the soil called humus.

Humus is an essential layer, replenishing the dirt’s nutrients lost during the previous spring and summer. It is the layer that makes possible the promised explosion of new life that comes with spring. It is the gift from the forest back to the earth, offering thanks for another year of shared existence. Humus, as Parker Palmer reminds us above, is also the source of our English word *humility*. Humility is that posture of willfully lowering ourselves to be broken down, making us available to be used for some greater purpose. Like leaves broken down to be used for the next spring’s rebirth, so too, we must willingly prepare to be broken down so that we might be used to make something greater than ourselves when our shared spring arrives. For the church, that shared spring begins with Lent.


Our word Lent comes from an Anglo-Saxon word *lecten*, meaning spring. Over the years, this Lenten time of stripping away and introspective change has expanded to include not just those catechumens but all those within the church. Lent is a time for us all to step back from who we are and consider what must change within us to enable us to be who we must become. That change of the larger body begins first (and uniquely) within each of us. In Matthew’s discourse on discipleship, Jesus challenges his disciples to engage in such an act of self-humility. There, Jesus declares, “. . . ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?’” (Matthew 16:24b-26).

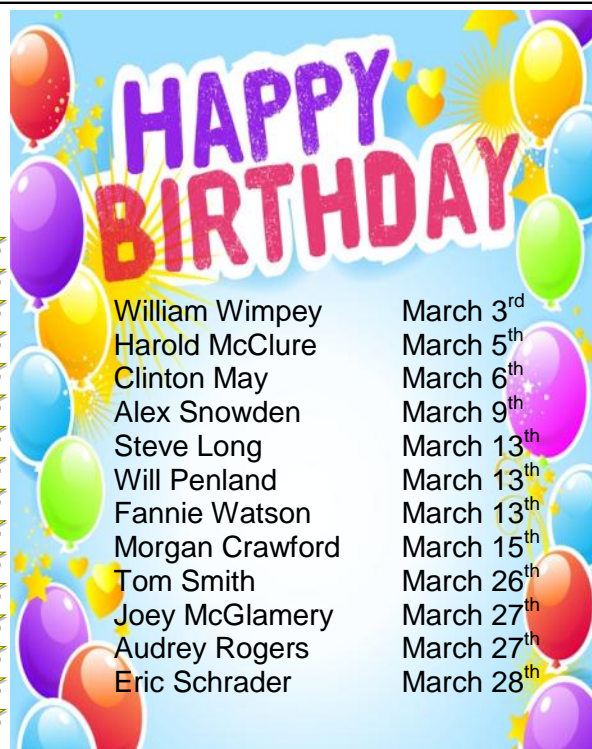
Jesus’ challenge is for his disciples to break away from past expectations about themselves, their world, and their God. This is no easy task, but it is an essential task.



It is my prayer that during this Lenten season of preparation and transformation that as individuals and as a community we are willing to risk letting go and being broken down, being made ready for what is to come. It is my hope that out of the humus of our lives something divine may come in this place as in heaven. As all Lents end at a tomb’s door promising new life, may our journey together this Lenten season arrive at the door of our new life, a new life of new possibilities for these congregations, this community, this country, and this world. Have a great and transformative Lent.

Peace, *Pastor Tim*



New Starting this month the nurture and membership committee will feature a ***“Family of the Month”***. There will be an insert with their information in the bulletin on the second Sunday of each month. The featured family will be sharing with us information about themselves. This idea is to get to know some of our church families that you may not know. Let's give them our support and appreciation for sharing with us.....I John 4:7 Beloved, let us Love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.  (KJV)



 **St. Patrick's Sweet Treat Festival**
Saturday, March 14, 2015 at 6 p.m.
Live music by Nite Lite Duo, dancing,
candy, cakes and a chocolate fountain.
\$10 per family or \$5 per person over 16 

SPUD SUNDAY
March 15th following the
Worship Service.
Please bring a salad or
dessert to share.



UMW Meeting
Wednesday, March 18th at 1:30 p.m.
Meeting will be held at Joey
McGlamery's home 206 Chatuge Dam
Rd. For directions call Joey 389-8934.
Guest speakers are refugees from
Romania, Dorel & Floare Veres.
Everyone (men&women) are welcome.



Oak Forest now has a website! Check us out online at www.oakforestchurch.org (<http://oakforestchurch.org/>)

**Administrative Council
Meeting
Sunday, March 22nd
at 6:00 p.m.**

Family Worship Night
Sunday, March 29, 2015 at 6:15 p.m.

