



Open Table

Staffordsburg United Methodist Church
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Pastor John Losey

MARCH - 2010



Tradition!

I admit it: I am a traditionalist at heart! A bit “old fashioned” as the saying goes. For example during the Christmas season, I love the peacefulness of singing *Silent Night*. I enjoy the lights on the tree and the warm memories of Christmas past (maybe that’s why we didn’t take our Christmas decorations down until the middle of February!).

If you are a member of the SUMC or have visited at one of our worship services, then you have noticed how my “traditionalism” comes out in worship experiences. Some examples of this are: wearing of clerical robes over a suit and tie, the heavy use of traditional Christian symbols and reviving traditional worship experiences like Ash Wednesday and healing services.

Within the life of the Church, I believe traditions bring us joy. Traditions are comfortable because they are familiar; comforting in a way that an old pair of jeans is more comfortable than a brand new pair of jeans. The old jeans fit well and don’t cause us discomfort.

Traditions are powerful too; we are creatures of habit. Traditions are accumulated wisdom, they are like a statement of what works and what doesn’t work. For organizations like the Church, traditions are institutional memories or guideposts that keep us from straying from the values and productive patterns of the past.

The people of Israel were commanded to commemorate Passover every year so they

would remember how God delivered them FROM Egypt. Traditions are like drinking cool water from wells of the past which we didn’t dig. But what happens when the well runs dry due to climate change or when the water in the well becomes stagnant?

Sometimes tradition bound churches are so straight-jacketed by the past that they are unable to move into the future. In such a case past traditions severely limit present possibilities. Because of this not only must the Church change but we as individuals must change too because it is a fact of nature:

- Culture will change in response to fad or fashions
- Circumstance will force us to do things we’ve never done before
- Economic conditions force careers to change and maybe a need to relocate
- Physical changes in our bodies will affect our desires, our abilities, sometimes drastically

It is on this note of physical change, where like many churches, SUMC is facing some of its biggest challenges and changes. Again, like many churches we have many older members; and often they are experiencing more and longer hospital stays and as long-time members grow older many become homebound or placed in nursing care facilities. Physical restrictions keep them from participating at the same level in leadership positions or in other ministries as they had in former years. Lastly, as members retire from the workplace, their income is

severely cut and thus they cannot give at the same level as they had in the past.

Of course the Christian faith has important components that remember the past. We don't throw the baby out with the bath water and we simply don't cast people aside because of age. We recall God's saving acts of the past. We remember the foundations built by the past, but faith is only alive when it propels us to continue to live out our faith in the present.

The religious, tradition bound Pharisees of Jesus' day resisted him more strongly than anyone else and Jesus didn't mince words when he confronted them on the issue: *'This people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines'' You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.'* Then he said to them "you have a fine way of rejecting the commandments of God in order to keep your tradition!" *Mark 7:6-9 NRSV*

Sometimes I find myself interrupting Cheryl and starting to answer before she finished speaking and well... she's not too happy with that. When we are tradition bound we do that to God. We stop listening because we assume we already know what God will say and that he will not have anything new to say in the future. Our traditions can second guess God about what He wants us to do tomorrow or about how He would ask us to proceed in the situation we find ourselves in today.

What might God be saying to you and me and SUMC with the current challenges we face? Is God asking us to dig new wells in order to drink from fresh springs? Are there still old wells that produce fresh water, traditions that can still be helpful and not harmful? Let's ask God to share His dream and His vision for SUMC and for you.

Blessings,
Pastor John



LECTIONARY READINGS FOR MARCH – Year C (includes Holy Week)

3rd Sunday in Lent – **Mar 7** – Purple
Is. 55:1-9; Ps. 63:1-8; 1 Cor 10:1-13; Lk. 13:1-9

4th Sunday in Lent – **Mar 14** – Purple
Josh. 5:9-12; Ps. 32; 2 Cor. 5:16-21; Lk. 15:1-3, 11b-32

5th Sunday in Lent – **Mar 21** – Purple
Is. 43:16-21; Ps. 126; Phil. 3:4b-14; Jn. 12:1-8

Palm/Passion Sunday – **Mar 28** – Red or Purple
Lk. 19:28-40; Ps. 118:1-2, 19-29; Is. 50:4-9a; Ps. 31:9-16; Phil. 2:5-11; Lk. 22:14-23:56

Maundy Thursday – **April 1** – Purple
Ex. 12:1-4 (5-10) 11-14; Ps. 116:1-2, 12-19; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Jn. 13:1-17, 31b-35

Good Friday – **Apr 2** – Black or Gray
EASTER SUNDAY – **Apr 4** – WHITE
Acts 10:34-43; or Is. 65:17-25; Ps. 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Cor. 15:19-26 or Acts 10:34-43; Jn. 20:1-18 or Lk. 24:1-12

Important Upcoming Dates

March 4	Regency Manor 9:00am
March 5	Fish Fry 4-7pm
March 6	Choir practice 10:00am
March 7	Finance Mtg after worship
March 12	Fish Fry 4-7pm
March 13	Emmaus Mtg. @church NO CHOIR PRACTICE
March 14	DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME
March 19	Fish Fry 4-7pm
March 28	Palm Sunday





Ian Levi McQueen
– January 19, 2010

Here's our little "miracle" boy! He got to come home Friday, February 26th and was welcomed with a coming home party on Sunday the 28th. He still has a way to go before the NG tube can be removed but we are blessed that he is home with mom and dad, Leslie and Johnie McQueen. (As Great-grandma Jordan, I just had to brag a little – bear with me!)

Fairhaven Outreach Mission

On the third Saturday of each month a group of men from SUMC prepare a meal at the church and serve it at Fairhaven Rescue Mission in Covington. It is followed with a chapel service. There are usually about 100 meals served at the mission each month. Standard fare includes green beans, salad and a meat dish as well as sheet cakes (chocolate is the favorite.)

Our needs for each month are: 6 family-size cans of cut green beans; 6 one lb. bags of macaroni or spaghetti noodles; 5 lb. bags of shredded cheese; large cans of creamed soups (mushroom or chicken); large containers of fruit punch powdered drink mix; 10 lb. boneless hams; large cans of white chicken meat; 5 lb. rolls of ground beef. The cakes are always donated by a few of the ladies in the church, but other food donations are always welcome. Since donation needs vary, you can always ask J.B. Losey, who decides on the menu each month. It's a great mission work

for feeding men not only food for their bellies, but also food for their souls.

Lenten Services

Our Lenten Services calendar is listed below. This is a good opportunity to experience the rich traditions of this holy season by participating in the worship services and the fellowship time.

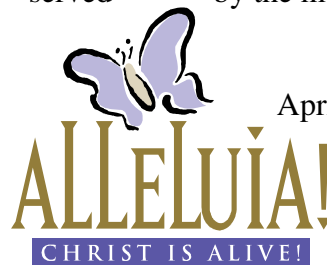
Three (3) Fish Fry Fridays – March 5, 12 & 19th

Palm Sunday – March 28th – 11:00am



April 2nd – Good Friday Tenebrae Service by the Youth Group – 7:00pm

April 4th – Easter Sunday **Sunrise** service – 6:30am followed by a breakfast served by the men of the church



April 4th – Easter Sunday
Worship – traditional
service at 11:00am

Valentine's Dinner



Thanks to all the hard work and great organization, the Valentine Dinner was a great success – despite the snow! Lisa Finnell reported that over \$1200 was donated to *New Beginnings for Women*, a group special to her heart.

MARK'S MESSAGE

Phillippians 3: 17-4:1 - *So my brothers whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown do stand firmly in the Lord, and remember how much I love you. Let me be your example here, my brothers: let my example be the standard by which you can tell who are the genuine Christians among those about you. For there are many, of whom I have told you before and tell you again now, even with tears, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. These men are heading for utter destruction-their god is their own appetite, their pride is in what they should be ashamed of, and this world is the limit of their horizon. But we are citizens of Heaven; our outlook goes beyond this world to the hopeful expectation of the savior who will come from Heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change these wretched bodies of ours so that they resemble this own glorious body, by that power of his which makes him the master of everything that is.*

Hello, Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

As part of our continuing education program, this month I would like to describe how Corporate Food Technology (CFT) at the Kroger General Office develops new products. To this point, The Kroger Food Company remains a 'fast follower', rapidly duplicating successful products already in the market. For example, Marketing wants a new dinner roll. They describe what they want, and if CFT is lucky, provide an actual example of the product they want.

Once we have a benchmark, we keep it in front of us as we try to re-create it. The goal for the food scientists (like your writer) is to match the target before Marketing changes its mind, and modifies its target, or switches to a new one altogether.

Once the food scientists think we have the desired product, Marketing people are brought in to confirm it is indeed what they want. If they approve, the product is presented to a Sensory

Panel. At least 80 people (consumer volunteers, like yourselves) use a computerized questionnaire to compare the product side by side to its assigned benchmark. Statistical analysis then determines if there are significant differences between the proposed and benchmark samples. Once it is proven the proposed sample is equivalent to the benchmark, packaging and labels are composed, and plant production begins.

There are similarities between this product development process and our own Christian development. The first step in our Christian education is receiving an example to follow. Christ's disciples and the apostle Paul (from the above text) are presented as examples in Christian Education hours, church services, and hopefully at home. Christian faith examples like these are not subject to change, becoming moving targets. They present stars to guide us, not the lights of a passing ship.

I can reasonably assume anyone reading this column already has in mind a Christian example to follow. Readers, I also know you have a good understanding of what has to be done to move closer to following their example. You may have written steps down as Lenten resolutions, or pray over them in your devotions. This is tremendous, but not enough!

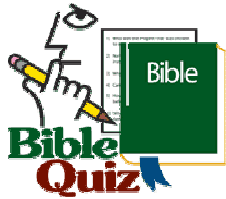
We have to put these thoughts and aspirations into action. We must present ourselves as Christian 'products' with pride and without hesitation. At the end of our story, there is not going to be a statistical assessment evaluating the probability we lived a Christian life. More likely, there will be a series of questions resembling responses and affirmations during church sacraments:

Did you reject evil powers of the world?

Did you confess Jesus Christ as your savior, and promise to serve him? Did you remain faithful members of Christ's holy church?

I don't think this exam will be graded 'on the curve'. It will more likely be graded 'Pass/Fail'. De Colores!

Mark



1. Who was the mother of Samuel? 2. What does the Lord require of you? (see Micah 8) 3. Where (city) were the Jews first called Christians? 4. At what event was the first miracle of Jesus? 5. What was the miracle?

Staffordsburg UMC will be serving Fish Fry dinners on Friday, March 5, 12 and 19th. All events are from 4:00pm until 7:00pm. This is a great time to get a great meal and to invite your friends and neighbors to share it with you. Below is the “Dine-In Menu” – carry outs are also available, but no drinks provided with carry-outs!



Dine In Menu

- All orders include Cole slaw**
 - One Piece fish meal with two sides... \$7.00**
(drink and dessert included)
 - Two piece fish meal with two sides... \$8.00**
(drink and dessert included)
 - Fish Sandwich ... \$5.00**
(drink and dessert included)
 - Chicken strips with one side ... \$3.00**
- (Sides include: Green beans, macaroni & cheese, or French fries)



The Nail reminds me I was a sinner condemned to die. The Nail also reminds me of my great worth. Esteemed worthy of the sacrifice of God’s only son. Jesus Christ regarded me precious enough that He endured the pain with agony of the cross and shed His blood to give me life. The Nail reminds me to take up my cross daily and follow Him.

**The Nail didn’t hold Him to the cross,
it was
His Love
For
me!**

“and He Is the propitiation for our sins...and for the whole world.”
1 John 2:2

