

St. Mark's Episcopal Church Newsletter

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By Clifton Stringer
posted on www.ministrymatters.com

Last year on Ash Wednesday, a kind woman from the congregation I serve asked me, "Why Lent? Why should Christians observe a season called Lent?"



She was a longtime Christian, but had never before taken part in any Lenten observance, since most of her life she was a member of churches that did not "do" Lent. We had a great conversation.

So if it is not in the Bible, why use it?

It is helpful to remember first of all that Lent is just as much a part of the church calendar as are Christmas and Easter. Even many churches who do not use the rest of the church calendar celebrate Christmas and Easter. At Christmas we celebrate God's incarnation in Jesus Christ to save us, and at Easter we celebrate the victory that comes by Jesus Christ's resurrection.

The season of Lent is a season of preparation for Easter. During Lent we remember that important part of Jesus' life when he dwelt fasting in the desert for forty days, and was tempted by the devil. Where Adam and Eve gave in to the serpent's temptation, Jesus does not: even in self-denial, Jesus is victorious over temptation.

And late in Lent, during Holy Week and especially on Good Friday, we remember Jesus' suffering and death to save us. The day is so much brighter when you have been through the darkness. To see the light of Jesus Christ's resurrection on Easter, you have to acknowledge the suffering of his execution that precedes it.

In Lent, we are attentive to the parts of Jesus' life—his self control, his patience, his faithfulness even in suffering—that we hope to gain as his disciples. I have found a yearly observance of Lent helpful in this respect.

Lent is Not Like New Year's Resolutions

Many people give up something during Lent. But in our culture, fixated on self-improvement as we are, this can result in a big misunderstanding: we start (even if only in the back of our minds) to think of a Lenten fast in terms of a diet! But Lent is not New Year's Resolutions Round Two! Lent is not about us! Lent is about Jesus Christ.

In Lent we might give up something, do a specific prayer discipline, or change something to push ourselves spiritually. But the point is not self-improvement. The point is not even just self-denial. The point is to feel a little discomfort, a little pain, and by that to be constantly reminded of the love of our Savior Jesus Christ, who denied himself for our salvation.

If you observe Lent with prayer and fasting, use that prayer and fasting first of all to remember Jesus.

Eleanor's Pantry Needs Stuff

As you all know, Eleanor's Pantry provides gifts of food and other necessary items for needy families in the Paw Paw and Lawton areas. Members of St. Mark's have been consistently generous in providing various food items each week for the pantry. Here's a list of items in current need:



- Canned salmon
- Peanut butter (18 oz or smaller)
- Cereal
- Instant oatmeal
- Dry beans
- Hearty soups w/ at least 6 grams of protein
- Tuna helper
- Canned fruits: pineapple, mixed, oranges
- Canned vegetables: carrots, mixed, spinach
- 100% juice
- Ranch dressing
- Baking mixes (brownie, cake, cookies)
- Frosting
- Coffee or tea (small sizes)
- Vegetable oil (small sizes)
- Sugar or flour (small sizes)

Eleanor's Pantry would also welcome anyone who may be able to volunteer their time in activities at the pantry. There are many ways you could help with your time and talents. Contact Sue Miller at 269-657-4601 if you are able to volunteer. See their website at: www.eleanorspantry.com

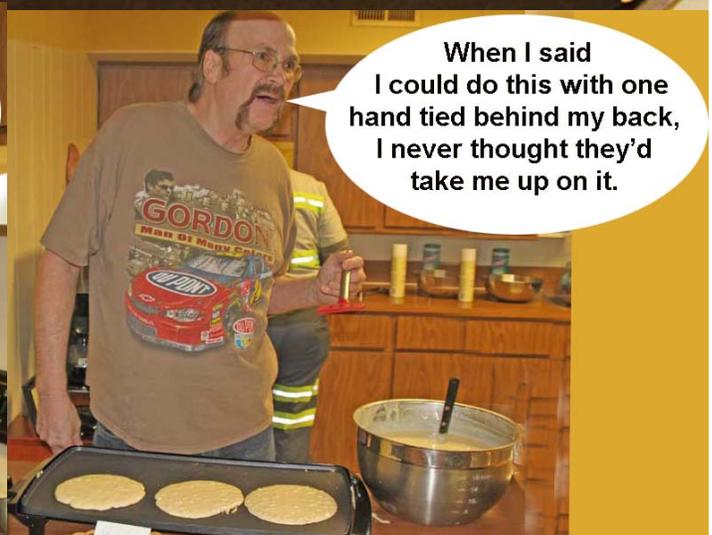
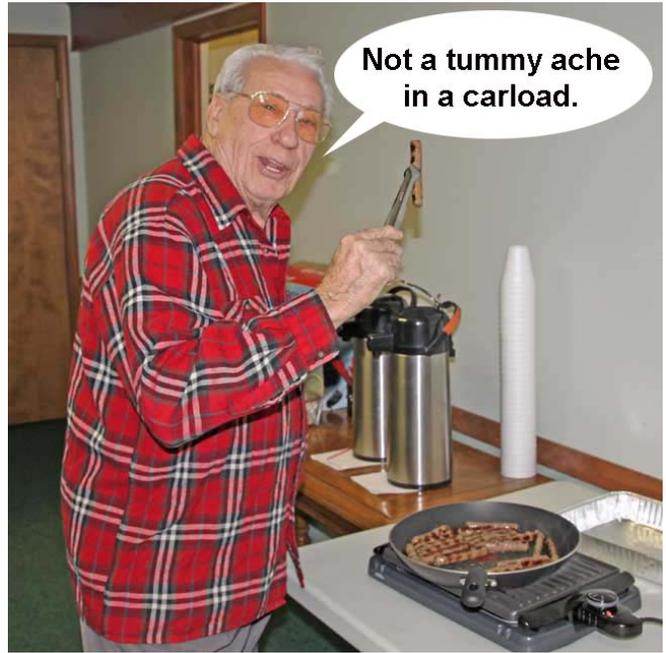
PANCAKE SUPPER HUGH SUCCESS

Thanks to all who helped make it so.
Special thanks to the Master Cooks.

[See more pancake supper pictures on the website.](#)



Tom, Bobbie, Charlie and Evan — Master Cooks All



Here is a feature I'd like to continue on a monthly basis. Each upcoming issue of the newsletter will highlight a different member of the congregation. To know them is to love them. ☺ Ed.



From cotton picker at 5 years of age to an Administrative Sales manager who traveled the world and met three presidents... that's the story of our own choir member, Doris Chase.

Doris was born in southeast Missouri where she lived with her parents and eight siblings. She picked cotton as a child and was paid \$3 per hundred pounds. (*It takes about 400 yards of cotton to weigh 100 lbs. Ed.*) At age 10, her family relocated to Michigan where she grew up and started her working career in 1971.

She spent the majority of her working life at Westinghouse where she had the opportunity to personally meet Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and Gerald Ford. Over the course of their terms in office, the three presidents visited the Westinghouse manufacturing facility in Grand Rapids where Doris worked. Her job at Westinghouse gave her the opportunity to travel all over the United States and visit London.

Doris went on a hot air balloon ride for her 30th birthday. Describing the experience she says, "it was so awesome... on the landing we bounced like a big rubber ball... I was so thrilled with it I wanted one of my own and learn to pilot it. It was a very cool experience."

Another experience Doris vividly remembers is when she was riding in a taxi cab in New York City. The cab driver stopped and bought her an apple from a street vendor. Talk about a random act of kindness — who says New Yorkers aren't friendly! ☺

Doris and Larry had their first date on Good Friday, 2005. They were married December 28th of that same year.

Doris retired last August and says she's enjoyed every single day of her retirement. "Larry says it feels like he retired too because I do all the shopping etc. that we used to have to do on weekends and after work." Doris took over as Church Secretary shortly after we moved into the new building. A bundle of energy, she's a priceless asset.



"Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

Most of you will recognize that as the creed of the U.S. Postal service. You might be interested to know that the creed was translated from an ancient Greek work dating back to 500 BC. Just goes to show that there's nothing new under the sun.

There are times, however, when common sense dictates we yield to the forces of nature. Our Vestry wisely decided to postpone this month's meeting due to hazardous driving conditions. Complete minutes of Vestry meetings are posted in the *News* section of the church web site. Highlights will continue to be posted in this newsletter.

Have you noticed that the altar is now dressed in the purple of Lent? Have you noticed the stations of the cross hanging on the side walls? That's your Altar Guild at work. They don't make much ado about what they do, they simply work quietly behind the scenes to ensure the church is appropriately "dressed" for each season of the church calendar. Thanks Ginny and Jeanie for all you do.



Have you taken a close look at the stations of the cross? These were hand made by Chris Terrill some years ago — a beautiful piece of work!



Building A Cathedral

A number of years ago I attended a weeklong management seminar. At the end of the last day of the seminar, the instructor got a little philosophical and shared some personal thoughts with the class. Today I remember very little about what went on in

the weeklong seminar, but I remember vividly some of the thoughts he shared with us during that last hour we were together. Here's a story he related:

A salesman in a strange city found himself a little early for an appointment he'd scheduled with a customer. Since it was a pleasant day, he decided to kill some time by taking a walk. As he walked, he came upon a construction site where three workmen were busy laying bricks. Curious, the salesman approached the first workman and asked him what he was doing.

"I am laying bricks" the man said.

Moving on to the second workman, the salesman asked the same question. "What are you doing."

"I am building a wall" replied the second workman.

Finally, the salesman approached the third workman and asked him what he was doing.

The third man looked up, and in a tone you might have expected from Michelangelo as he sculpted the statue of David, said, "I am helping to build a cathedral."

Think about this story for a moment. Here were three men who, by any objective observer, would have been described as doing exactly the same thing. Yet each man saw his activity as something totally unique.

Which of the three workmen do you suppose got the most satisfaction from his job? Which one went home each evening feeling an internal glow that comes from having accomplished something worthwhile? Which one may have gone to work each morning with a broad smile on his face anticipating another day of personal fulfillment?

I've had many occasions to think about that story over the years. What reminded me of it most recently was an article I read on the Internet. In the article was this quote:

"There is very little correlation between the circumstances of our lives and how happy we are."

In other words, it's not the wealth or possessions we've accumulated, or our position in life that lead to happiness and contentment. It's our attitude about the things we have and the things we do that makes the difference. The brick laying workman who saw himself "helping to build a cathedral" may very well have enjoyed more personal contentment from his work than the chief architect of the building.

I can't say I'm always completely successful at "seeing the cathedral" in the activities I undertake, but I keep on trying. ☺

Ed.

ACROSS

- 3 celebrated on Easter Sunday
- 6 egress
- 9 another capital sin
- 10 imaginary lines perpendicular to equator
- 12 altar dressed for Lent (color)
- 15 largest mammal
- 17 cooked the suasage
- 18 formed when water reaches 100 C.
- 19 commemorated on Good Friday
- 21 vehicle powered by gas and electric motors

DOWN

- 1 starts on Ash Wednesday
- 2 fruit with seeds on outside
- 4 entryway into the church
- 5 church committee to manage affairs
- 7 a capital sin
- 8 coldest place on earth
- 11 auto navigation device (initials)
- 13 imaginary lines parallel to the equator
- 14 town where Jesus spent Palm Sunday
- 16 she rode a hot air balloon
- 18 to make melodious sounds with voice
- 20 one-handed pancake cooker

