

Gates Presbyterian Church

March 2023
Harbinger

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From Rev. Laura Bachmann

The Fast We Choose

*Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?*

*⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them
and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Isaiah 58:6-7*

I don't know what your experience is, but I often find that the Holy Spirit will nudge me in a particular direction by planting little signs all over the place to get my attention. Recently, this has resulted in a renewed focus on fasting – not just because Lent has begun and we often give things up for Lent, but, in a much deeper way, because I think God is calling us to return to God, to set aside the things that separate us from God's love and presence, God's comfort and wisdom, God's guidance and strength.

To fast means far more than just refraining from eating a particular food – or any food at all. It can also mean giving up behaviors that are life denying in favor of embracing a new space for God to enter our lives and begin to transform them.

In recent weeks, this spiritual practice of fasting has called for my attention, not just through this lectionary reading, but also in an article that landed in my inbox, in the thinking of one of our elders, in the worship planning of one of our guest preachers, in the traditional practices of this season, and in my own internal desire to pluck out the things in my life that are covering up my need for God's presence and my ability to absorb that presence in life giving ways.

This Lenten season, our session has invited us to participate in a fast with the dual purpose of creating space for the Holy and, more practically speaking, also helping to shore up our budget for the year. The idea is to give up something during Lent – our weekly coffee break, our streaming service add-on, our monthly meal out – and to contribute the money we saved to supporting our GPC ministries.

If our budgets do not include discretionary spending that we can give up, we can participate in something that may be even more powerful, fasting from things that harm God's world – fasting from holding a grudge or focusing on grievances, fasting from gossip or selfishness, fasting from road rage or the need to put ourselves first, fasting from clinging to our own power and ignoring those in need.

While we certainly hope that the material rewards from engaging in this community practice of fasting will contribute to balancing our budget and enabling us to meet all our commitments, particularly to our mission partners, I think our session is even more interested in discovering what spiritual benefits we may experience by engaging in this fast that we choose.

There are so many ways to fast from the things that alarm the God who loves us beyond our wildest imaginings. If we reclaim the time and space created in our lives through fasting and turn our attention instead to listening for the Holy Spirit, to noticing God's abundance surrounding us, and to looking for the places where God is acting, we may find that giving up these things of the world will result in spiritual renewal, and a cleansing of the habits of consumption and behavior that we so often employ to numb ourselves. Instead, God invites us to embrace the divine presence in all the places where we worry that pain or grief or loneliness or fear will be too much for us.

As we open this space in our lives for God's Spirit to indwell, we may also find that we feel increased energy for pursuing the fast that God chooses – the one Isaiah lifts up in the verses above – to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, free the

oppressed and house the homeless. Our world cries out for just this kind of spiritual practice. This Lenten season, we have the chance to participate in such a fast as a community and to witness the transformation that such a practice may inspire. Let us fast, and listen, and anticipate the slow work of God unfolding in our lives and in our community.

What fast do you choose?

Peace,

Laura

Mid-day Worship Service

This is a pilot project starting February 23 and will continue each month on the fourth Thursday, through May. The service will begin at 12:10 p.m. and will be followed by a time of fellowship (bring-your-own lunch). If you would like to come to this service, but need a ride, please contact Deacon Paula Sousa (748-1920, psousa0728@gmail.com) or our Office Administrator, Karen (247-5292, office@gatespres.org)



From the Office ...

- April Harbinger articles are due Wednesday, March 15.
- If you haven't yet contributed your Per Capita for 2023 (\$36.45 per member), please consider doing so. There are envelopes available in the literature rack for your convenience. You can also contribute online [here](#) (choose 'Give to Per Capita' from the dropdown).
- Still need to submit your 2023 pledge? You can do this online here: [2023 GPC Giving Intentions Card](#). Hard copies are also available in the literature rack outside the sanctuary or you can print the [PDF](#) at home

Bible Study

Whether you are new to Bible study or consider yourself well versed, we welcome you to our small group for a time of wondering about the word and sharing our wisdom and our lives together. This year we are following the Revised Common Lectionary, studying texts which will be used in worship on the following Sundays. Tuesdays at 4:00 p.m. in room 1.

Date	Scripture	
March 7	Exodus 17:1-7 Psalm 95	Romans 5:1-11 John 4:5-42
March 14	1 Samuel 16:1-13 Psalm 23	Ephesians 5:8-14 John 9:1-41
March 21	Ezekiel 37:1-14 Psalm 130	Romans 8:6-11 John 11:1-45
March 28	Palms: Matthew 21:1-11 Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29	Passion: Isaiah 50:4-9a, Psalm 31:9-16 Philippians 2:5-11 Matthew 26:14-27:66 OR Matthew 27:11-54



Worship Services Schedule for March

Date	Liturgist	Elder Greeter	Usher Team	Trustee Lock-Up
March 5	Christine Cook	Eric Vail	1	Tom Ward
March 12	Kay Harder	Vicki Gutheil	2	
March 19	Jan Brewer	Jan Beutner-Shirtz	3	
March 26	David Weber	Mary Beth MacKenzie	4	



MEMORIAL BRICKS

Spring is time again to order bricks for the memorial garden walkway. Please fill out the order form and send with your payment of \$100 to the church by April 30th. Hard copy forms are available at church in the literature rack, or you can download the form [here](#).

Rebecca Circle will meet on Wednesday, March 15 from 10:30am - 12:30pm in the Junior High Lounge. Join us as we strengthen fellowship bonds using a women's Bible study called "Group Hug". Please bring your lunch and a drink! Hope to see you there!

MISSION NEWS

The monthly food collections continue to provide much appreciated items for SWEM, St. Joseph's, and the YWCA. The March collection will be from 11:00-1:00 on Saturday, March 25th. Check the bulletin and Monday email blasts for lists of food items in particular need at SWEM.

GPC provided a Saturday meal to the clients of St. Joseph's in February. This was in addition to the Monday lunches prepared and delivered by our dedicated team of GPC volunteers.



And in more food news - the Lenten wall of food is back and growing in the foyer! Add as much as you "can" throughout the season of Lent.

The Mission team is charged with responsibly distributing 10% of the total church budget annually. The team approved the allocation of funds across the mission line items after discussion at the February meeting.

The next mission meeting will be a hybrid format (Zoom and in person) on Monday March 6th at 7:00. Everyone is welcome!

From the Deacons

Please keep in thought & prayer ...

- Don Chapin, who had surgery on Friday, February 17.
- Tim, from the St. Joe's community, recovering from a stroke and an assault, at Strong.
- Ed Coons' friend, John Reatz, dealing with a serious health issue.
- Cam Mossgraber asking prayers for a family friend, Jim Terhune, who has been diagnosed with leukemia.
- Angelika Alvarez's mom, Beverly, who had a biopsy.
- Prayers for all the people in Turkey and Syria who have suffered so much loss after the earthquake and the rescue workers who have worked tirelessly.
- Prayers for those who suffer due to gun violence, including the recent shooting at the Michigan State University.



Continued prayers for ... Buz Bauman, John Belt, Debbie Schnabel, Hannah Walker, Angelika Alvarez's brother, E.J., Janice Bilohlavek's niece, Tyanna, Peter & Irene Derry, Fran and Bob Paro's sister-in-law, Patricia Withrow, Whit Beckett's brother, Bob, Eric Pacquin, Art Brooks, Julie Seide, Paula Sousa's sister-in-law, Maureen Munroe, and Robert Reynolds.



Do you or someone you know need a ride to church on Sundays? Contact Paula Sousa to get your name added to the list (748-1920 or psousa0728@gmail.com). Anyone willing to help with picking people up are also asked to contact Paula.

Prayer Shawls

Anyone who needs a prayer shawl for themselves or for a friend or family member, can contact Dorothy Mundt at 247-3782 or email quilter2@twc.com.



Junior & Senior High Sunday School

We are starting up a monthly during-worship Sunday school program for youth in 7th - 12th grades. The class will meet in the Junior High Lounge (room 16) right after the children's message. Since we don't formally have a Junior or Senior High Sunday school program at this time, the first class will provide an opportunity to design something that gives you what you want. If you are interested and have questions please contact Pastor Laura, Mary Hadley (maryahadley@gmail.com) or Kecia Binko (binkokecia@gmail.com). Here are the class dates:

- March 19
- April 16
- May 21

Come to one or come to them all. Whatever works for you! And feel free to bring a friend or two!



Holy Week Service Schedule

Palm Sunday: April 2 at 10:00 a.m.
Maundy Thursday: April 6 at 7:00 p.m.
Good Friday: April 7 at 7:00 p.m.
Easter Sunday: April 9 at 10:00 a.m.



The Coffee House is coming back to GPC! March 11th, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Your MC's for the night are ...

Alex McKeel & Graham Wohlers



Tickets:

- \$12 each
- Children 5 & under are free.
- Families of 3 or more pay a flat \$30.
- Price includes entertainment & unlimited coffee, hot chocolate, tea & water.
- Cash or credit card accepted at the door. Or pre-pay online [here](#). Choose "Give to Coffee House" from the first drop down menu.

If you have a talent to share on-stage, please sign up here: [Performer Sign Up](#)

If you would like to help behind the scenes and/or would like to donate a dessert, please sign up here:

[Volunteer Sign Up](#)

Dessert donations: Please mark any "tree nut free" desserts, so we can have options for all to enjoy! Drop off Friday evening during set-up (6:30-9 p.m.)



Easter Flowers

Opportunity in bloom!



Worship bulletins for March 5th, 12th and 19th will include a form to order Easter flowers in memory or in honor of loved ones. The listing of loved ones will be included in the worship bulletin on

Easter Sunday, April 9th. Cost of flowers is \$10 per pot. Forms and payment may be placed in the offering plates or mailed to the office. Orders will be accepted until March 22nd.

Last year the Public Worship team purchased flowers for the sanctuary and arranged for several of them to be delivered to some of those who had been unable to rejoin us for in person worship. This resulted in joy beyond expectations for those receiving flowers and, perhaps more, for those who delivered them. We would like to do this again this year.

Participation is completely voluntary; if you would like to take your flowers with you after Easter worship, please do. If you are willing to “donate” your flowers to be delivered to another of our GPC family, please indicate this on the order form. If you would like to help with flower delivery, please indicate this as well.

**Your
Name** _____

In Honor of: _____

OR

In Memory of: _____

_____ **I will be taking my flowers home** _____ **I am willing to donate my flowers**

_____ **I am available to help with flower delivery. I can be reached at:** _____

March

Sunday, March 5	9:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m.	Choir Rehearsal (1) Worship, <i>Communion</i> Jr. Choir Rehearsal (2,3)
Monday, March 6	7:00 p.m.	Mission (Zoom)
Tuesday, March 7	1:00 p.m. 4:00 p.m.	Prayer Shawl Group (16) Bible Study (1)
Saturday, March 11	6:30 p.m.	Coffee House
Sunday, March 12	9:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m.	Choir Rehearsal (1) Worship Jr. Choir Rehearsal (2,3)
Monday, March 13	1:00 p.m. 6:00 p.m.	Library Ministry Trustees (Zoom)
Tuesday, March 14	4:00 p.m. 6:30 p.m.	Bible Study (1) Deacons (1)
Wednesday, March 15	10:30 a.m.	<i>April Harbinger Due</i> Rebecca Circle (16)
Sunday, March 19	9:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m.	Choir Rehearsal (1) Worship Jr. Choir Rehearsal (2,3)
Tuesday, March 21	4:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m.	Bible Study (1) Session (1)
Thursday, March 23	12:10 p.m.	Mid-Day Worship Service
Saturday, March 25	11:00 a.m.	Mission Collection
Sunday, March 26	9:00 a.m. 10:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m.	Choir Rehearsal (1) Worship Jr. Choir Rehearsal (2,3)
Monday, March 27	1:00 p.m.	Library Ministry
Tuesday, March 28	4:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m.	Bible Study (1) Personnel (Zoom)

