

# The Word



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MARCH 2017

St. Thomas United Methodist Church

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Greetings to the people of God in St. Thomas,

Lent is a season of the Christian Year where Christians focus on simple living, prayer, and fasting in order to grow closer to God. It's the forty days before Easter. Lent excludes Sundays because every Sunday is like a little Easter. Basically, it's about one-tenth of a year (like a tithe of time). Mardi Gras is the day before Lent, which begins with Ash Wednesday. This year it's from March 1 (Ash Wednesday) to April 16 (Easter), 2017.

Ash Wednesday is the formal "kick-off" to the season of Lent. We start this time of intensive preparation for baptism or realigning our lives with the vows of the baptismal covenant acknowledging our human limitations. We are mortal. We have deeply ingrained habits marked by sin, stained by selfishness, and resistant to our own efforts to change them.

We begin in penitence. Penitence does not mean "feeling sorry" or "feeling guilty," though these feelings may sometimes accompany the work of penitence. Penitence as we embody it in this service and throughout this season means acknowledging where we are, owning up to it, recognizing we cannot fix ourselves, and seeking God's mercy and power to renew us in God's ways.

At Jesus' baptism the sky split open, the Spirit of God, which looked like a dove, descended and landed on Jesus, and a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, My Beloved, with whom I am pleased." Afterward, as told in Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus was sent into the wilderness by the Spirit, where he fasted and prayed for 40 days. During his time there he was tempted by Satan and found clarity and strength to resist temptation. Afterwards, he was ready to begin his ministry. All of us need a time to examine ourselves, and need a time to be renewed and restored.

Are you searching for something more? Tired of running in circles, but not really living life with direction, purpose or passion? It's pretty easy to get caught up in the drama of classes, relationships, family, and work. Our lives are filled with distractions that take us away from living a life with Christ. We try to fill the emptiness inside us with mindless TV, meaningless chatter, stimulants, alcohol, too many activities or other irrelevant stuff. We run away from life and from God.

Lent is a great time to "repent" — to return to God and re-focus our lives to be more in line with Jesus. It's a 40-day trial run in changing your lifestyle and letting God change your heart. You might try one of these practices for Lent:

**FASTING:** Some people have been known to go without food for days. But that's not the only way to fast. You can fast by cutting out some of the things in your life that distract you from God. Some Christians use the whole 40 days to fast from candy, TV, soft drinks, cigarettes or meat as a way to purify their bodies and lives. You might skip one meal a day and use that time to pray instead. Or you can give up some activity like worry or reality TV to spend time outside enjoying God's creation. What

do you need to let go of or “fast” from in order to focus on God? What clutters your calendar and life? How can you simplify your life in terms of what you eat, wear, or do?

**SERVICE:** Some Christians take something on for Christ. You can collect food for the needy, volunteer once a week to tutor children, or work for reform and justice in your community. You can commit to help a different stranger, co-worker or friend everyday of Lent. Serving others is one way we serve God. Prayer for others is also a great way to serve.

**PRAYER:** Christians also use Lent as a time of intentional prayer. You can pray while you walk, create music or art as a prayer to God, or savor a time of quiet listening. All can be ways of becoming more in tune with God.

At St. Thomas, we are starting a prayer meeting every Sunday morning from 9-9:30, and I am inviting all of you to join us. We have an Ash Wednesday service at 7:00 on March 1<sup>st</sup>, please come and start your Lent with the mercy of God. I am encouraging all of you to try to pick one or all three of the practices above during this Lent. May God draw you near to Him and you would be closer to God during this Lent.  
*--Pastor Jeremiah Lee*

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*Mardi Gras? What does that have to do with JESUS??*

Mardi Gras means “Fat Tuesday.” It refers to the day before Lent starts. Since Lent always starts on a Wednesday, the day before is always a Tuesday. And it’s called “Fat” or “Great” because it’s associated with great food and parties.

In earlier times, people used Lent as a time of fasting and repentance. Since they didn’t want to be tempted by sweets, meat and other distractions in the house, they cleaned out their cabinets. They used up all the sugar and yeast in sweet breads before the Lent season started, and fixed meals with all the meat available. It was a great feast! Through the years Mardi Gras has evolved (in some places) into a pretty wild party with little to do with preparing for the Lenten season of repentance and simplicity. Oh well. But Christians still know its origin, and hang onto the true Spirit of the season.

*-- Article from The Upper Room*



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**LEADERSHIP TEAM**  
*Notes from the Team Leader*

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At the last Leadership Team meeting we looked at the Team structure and who is doing what. The list of who is doing what is amazing! Thanks to many of you that are helping with various ministries within and without St Thomas UM Church. There is a gold list on the bulletin board in the narthex that lists the ministries. If your name is there—thank you for what you are doing! If your name isn’t there, we would like to have you get involved. Please tell Pastor Jeremiah or Jacquie in the Office what you would like to do. We will be highlighting various ministries during Worship every now & then so you can know what is being done--even though you don’t see some of these things being done!

We presently have a deficit budget and that makes us uncomfortable. Three people from the L Team met with the District Superintendent and asked if the Conference can give us advice about what to do. In the meantime, thank you for giving your offering in a timely fashion so we can pay the bills, thank you for turning out lights that don’t

need to be on, limiting water use, and keeping our space clean. We had hoped to hire some cleaning help during 2017, but there just isn't extra money to do that presently.

Remember that Lent begins on Ash Wednesday on March 1. Plan to come for Worship that evening at 7pm in order to focus on your Lenten journey. Holy Week begins on April 9 with Palm Sunday and Easter will be April 16.

See you in church! --*Sally Grenzow*,  
*Leadership Team Leader*

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**WORSHIP TEAM**  
*Lent: A Time of  
Preparation*

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*Psalm 51:1-2 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.*

Lent can give us a special awareness of our sin. We don't like to think about the sins we have committed or admit that we have neglected to act as a Christian. We think we are okay and want to continue on our way. Lent challenges us to consider and evaluate our thoughts, words and actions. Humble yourself before God and be open as to how you can be a witness to God's love in the days ahead.

Ash Wednesday is the day that begins the season of Lent for the Church. Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism, and later became a time of penance for all Christians. It lasts for forty days, not counting Sundays, and offers us a time for contemplating our faith journey.

Some people consider Lent a time to give up something, like chocolate or not going to movies. Perhaps you could be more creative and think about adding something

good to your days, like taking time to make phone calls to a few people you haven't seen lately or writing a letter to a shut-in.

Lent this year begins on Ash Wednesday, March 1, with Worship at 7pm. Pastor Jeremiah will help us think about this season of preparation for Easter with the imposition of ashes. He plans to visit those who are unable to come for Worship, so if you are unable to come out, give the Office a call and he will be glad to come where you are. If you are able, he would be glad to have a volunteer accompany him, so call the Office if you are available.

For Sunday mornings during Lent we will have special readings, remembering how Mary, the mother of Jesus, felt during the last days that Jesus was alive.

The cost of flowers---lilies, tulips & daffodils--will be \$10. Sign-up sheet will be on the ledge in the narthex. Be sure to mark your cash or check for "Easter flowers." The Flower Cross will once again appear, thanks to Nancy & Tricia Valenta and helpers. If you care to contribute to those flowers, please mark your cash or check "Flower Cross."

This season of Lent is a time of preparation for Easter. Take some time and think about how you can make it meaningful for yourself.

--*Sally Grenzow for the Worship Team*

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**UNITED METHODIST WOMEN**  
*March 13 Meeting*  
*1:30 at the church*

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Program by Repeat Boutique, which provides clothing & practical household goods to those in need. Bring gently used or new sheets, blankets, linens, towels, jeans of any size, and children's clothing size 6-12.

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**OUTREACH MINISTRIES**  
*March Blood Drive...*  
*A Change of date!*

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Our originally planned date of March 20<sup>th</sup> turned out not to be available, so the next St. Thomas Blood Drive will be Monday, **March 27<sup>th</sup>** so there's an extra week to concentrate on those iron-rich foods! We now have our schedule for the rest of 2017: subsequent drives will be held on June 12<sup>th</sup>, September 11<sup>th</sup>, and December 11<sup>th</sup>. You can schedule online yourself or ask Karen Littlefield (630-424-0140) to sign you up. Either way, remember how important a blood supply is to those in need: a single donation can save three lives.

*--Karen Littlefield*  
*St. Thomas Blood Drive Coordinator*

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*Helping Us Out of a  
Hole*

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"This guy's walking down the street when he falls in a hole. The walls are so steep he can't get out.

"A doctor passes by and the guy shouts up, 'Hey you. Can you help me out?' The doctor writes a prescription, throws it down in the hole and moves on.

"Then a priest comes along and the guy shouts up, 'Father, I'm down in this hole can you help me out?' The priest writes out a prayer, throws it down in the hole and moves on.

"Then a friend walks by, 'Hey, Joe, it's me can you help me out?' And the friend jumps in the hole. Our guy says, 'Are you stupid? Now we're both down here.' The friend says, 'Yeah, but I've been down here before and I know the way out.'"

This story exemplifies one of the reasons for the incarnation of Jesus. We have someone to walk with us in our most troubling times.

We've all been there and for some of us, more times than we would care to admit. But every single time, no matter how alone we might have felt, we came to realize that we were never truly on our own. Jesus was always there and will always be with us.

The ancient Greeks and Romans viewed their gods as malevolent beings that played with humanity like a bunch of toys. But for our God, humanity is God's creation and so important that God was willing to take on human form in order to be with us. God's Son give up his godliness and took on our humanness.

But at its heart, the incarnation is a gift from God to us. An imbuing of the secular and profane with the holy and sacred. It is the ultimate show of love for God's creation. The resurrection destroyed evil but it was love coming to earth that showed us the way out of sin and death. Love guides us out of the holes we fall into.

So we celebrate Jesus' birth, his living, and we even celebrate his death because it wasn't the final answer. What an incredible God we serve.

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**OUTREACH MINISTRIES**  
*CROP WALK*  
*May 7<sup>th</sup>, here at St.*  
*Thomas*

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We will be hosting this year's CROP WALK! Glen Ellyn/Wheaton CROP Hunger Walk fights Hunger in our own Communities and Throughout the World with the help of CWS (Church World Service) and YOU!

This is a win-win for our congregation. As the host site St. Thomas will be hosting the church and un-church from our local community who come together to fight hunger and change the world for the better. We will have opportunities to participate in ways other than walking. We will need greeters and those to welcomes our

returning walkers, people to set up registration tables and food packing stations. We will need people to serve ice cream and water. We have been active participants in this event since its onset and are excited to host this year. Stay tuned for how you might be involved (in addition to walking and pledging) as we get closer to the date.

--Nancy Leguizamon  
STUMC CROP Walk Coordinator

*Pick-up a copy of the St. Thomas monthly calendar for March from the greeter's table as you enter the church building..*

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## OUTREACH MINISTRIES

### *Midwest Mission Distribution Center*

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The Midwest Mission Distribution Trip to Chatham, IL is coming April 9-12. I am happy to report that 20 people have signed up to go and do mission work that will help many people locally and internationally. We ask for your support with your prayers, money donations and items that will be used while we do our work. In the narthex there is a list of items that we would like to take with us, including these special needs--

- protractors, Crayola (these don't melt like the cheap ones) crayons - 24 count,
- bathroom hand towels - 15" x 25" to 17" x 27" and receiving blankets - 28" x 28" to 32" to 32".

Even if you are unable to go with us, you can do mission work by contributing your help. Thanks for sending us off to do God's work!

-- Sally Grenzow  
St. Thomas MMDC Coordinator

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## OUTREACH MINISTRIES

### *World Relief Concert Prayer*

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Eight St. Thomas members attended the concert to benefit the refugees of Syria, sponsored by UMCOR and the local World

Relief organization. At the concert they learned of some prayers needed in this effort and they share them here:

**Pray for the Displaced:** An estimated 60 million people are displaced in the world today, fleeing persecution and violence in places including Syria and Iraq as well as Sudan and South Sudan. About half of Syria's pre-war population has been forced to flee their homes, and many are displaced within Syria. Pray for God's provision for basic needs and protection from ongoing violence.

**Pray for Refugees:** Pray for refugees in Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East. Pray for those seeking refuge in Europe. Pray also for those being resettled in the U.S. Pray especially for vulnerable children, who make up nearly half of the refugees in some countries, and for women who are especially at risk of exploitation and gender-based violence.

**Pray for Churches:** Pray for churches around the world, that the response of followers of Christ will be characterized by hospitality, compassion and love toward refugees and the displaced. Pray that churches are moved and empowered to serve the most vulnerable in their communities.

**Pray for Peace:** Pray that God would bring peace to areas of conflict and instability and that churches would act as peacemakers.

**Pray for World Relief:** Pray that we will continue to fill the role of servant, facilitator and agent for the local Church and most vulnerable. Pray that World Relief will mobilize churches and communities to effectively serve the vulnerable.

-with thanks to Nancy Leguizamon  
for sharing this important message

Just a little reminder –  
if you order online with [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com), please go  
to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and choose St

Thomas United Methodist Church as the recipient of an Amazon contribution.  
Do some good with your purchase!  
If you have questions, ask Rolland Grenzow

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## RESOURCE MINISTRIES: Stewardship/Finance Team

### *Medicare*

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**How Medicare Covers Preventive Health Services:** *Does Medicare cover 100% of all preventive health care screenings? I'm due to get a colonoscopy and a few other tests, but I want to find out if I'll have to pay anything before I proceed.*

Medicare currently covers a wide array of free preventive and screening services to help you stay healthy, but not all services are completely covered.

You also need to be aware that the repeal of the Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare) - which helps financially support Medicare - may very well cause these free preventive services to be eliminated in the future. But in the meantime, here's how it works.

**Free Preventive Services:** Currently, most of Medicare's preventive services are available to all Part B beneficiaries for free, with no copays or deductibles, as long as you meet basic eligibility standards.

Mammograms; colonoscopies; shots against flu, pneumonia and hepatitis B; screenings for diabetes, depression, and heart conditions; and counseling to combat obesity, alcohol abuse and smoking are just some of Medicare's lengthy list of covered services. But to get these services for free, you need to go to a doctor who accepts Medicare "on assignment," which means he or she has agreed to accept the Medicare approved rate as full payment.

Also, the tests are free only if they're used at specified intervals. For example, prostate cancer PSA tests, once every 12 months for men over 50; or colonoscopy, once every 10 years or every two years if you're at high risk.

Medicare also offers a free "Welcome to Medicare" exam with your doctor in your first year, along with annual wellness visits thereafter. But don't confuse these with full physical examinations. These are prevention-focused visits that provide only an overview of

your health and medical risk factors and serve as a baseline for future care.

For a complete list of services along with their eligibility requirements, visit *Medicare.gov* and click on the "What Medicare Covers" tab at the top of the page, followed by "Preventive & screening services."

**Hidden Costs:** You also need to know that while the previously listed Medicare services are completely free, you can be charged for certain diagnostic services or additional tests or procedures related to the preventive service. For example, if your doctor finds and removes a polyp during your preventive care colonoscopy screening, the removal of the polyp is considered diagnostic and you will likely be charged for it. Or, if during your annual wellness visit, your doctor needs to investigate or to treat a new or existing problem, you will probably be charged here too.

You may also have to pay a facility fee depending on where you receive the service. Certain hospitals, for example, will often charge separate facilities fees when you are receiving a preventive service. In addition, you can be charged for a doctor's visit if you meet with a physician before or after the service.

To eliminate billing surprises, talk to your doctor before any preventive service procedure to find out if you may be subject to a charge and what it would be.

**Cost Sharing Services:** Medicare also offers several other preventive services that require some out-of-pocket cost sharing. With these tests, you'll have to pay 20% of the cost of the service after you've met your \$183 Part B yearly deductible. The services that fall under this category include glaucoma screenings, diabetes self-management trainings, barium enemas to detect colon cancer and digital rectal exams to detect prostate cancer.

**Medicare Advantage Members:** If you have a Medicare Advantage plan, your plans are also required to cover the same free preventive services as original Medicare as

long as you see in-network providers. If you see providers that are not in your plan's network, charges will typically apply.

**Savvy Living is written by Jim Miller, a regular contributor to the *NBC Today Show* and author of "The Savvy Living" book. This article is offered as a service and there is no endorsement of any product.**

*Source: United Methodist Foundation of the Northern Illinois Conference.  
Published February 17, 2017*

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## WITNESS MINISTRIES

### *Going Green*

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#### **Using disposable wipes and paper towels.**

Using a high-quality microfiber cloth and water to tackle your household chores not only saves you money over time, it's much more planet-friendly. For example, did you now that up to 51,000 trees a day are used to manufacture the amount of paper towels discarded in the U.S. alone in just one day? Or that the antibacterial alcohol in disposable wipes also kills the bacteria and enzymes that break down solid waste in landfill sites and septic tanks? In addition, the combination of plastics, wood pulp and cotton in disposable mop pads and wipes resists breaking down and can remain in the sewers and seas for year.

#### **Unplug One Thing**

We use a lot of energy as part of our daily living. However, conservation is an essential part of energy efficiency. No one's implying you go without your iPhone or laptop but I bet there is at least one thing at home that you could unplug without noticing. How about that cell phone charger, when it's not being used? (Ever heard of vampire energy?) Or the alarm clock in your guest room? Energy conserved, without hardly trying.

**Use a Reusable Water Bottle or Coffee Mug**

Every hour, 2.5 million plastic bottles are thrown out. Each year, about 50 billion disposable coffee cups end up in landfills. That's a staggering mound of waste. Recycling doesn't solve the waste problem as styrofoam and even paper coffee cups cannot be recycled. Plastic bottles can be but that still requires energy and water (there's a reason "Recycle" is the last of the Three R's). Be kinder to the planet today by using a reusable water bottle or coffee mug. There are so many kinds these days, you can pick one to match your style. (source: Carry Your Cup)

**Say "No" to a Store Bag for Carryable Items**

Rethink your bag use next time you go to the store. If you are at the store for only a few items that can easily be carried (in your arms or purse/backpack), tell the cashier that you don't need a bag. Same thing goes for bags for leftovers at restaurants. If you're just moseying out to the car, do you really need a bag to hold the one or two containers of leftovers? I'll bet not. Each bag, however recyclable it may be, requires resources to be produced and recycled. Only use a bag if you really need it. Be kinder to the earth, one bag at a time.

**Pick Up 5 Pieces of Litter**

One simple way to help reduce litter is to pick up 5 pieces of litter on your next walk. Litter clean up doesn't have to be a big event. If that seems like a drop in the bucket, no act is too little. Eventually it adds up to make a big impact!

--Notes from SCARCE 2/2017

"The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in our hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face us with the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares..."

Henri Nouwen

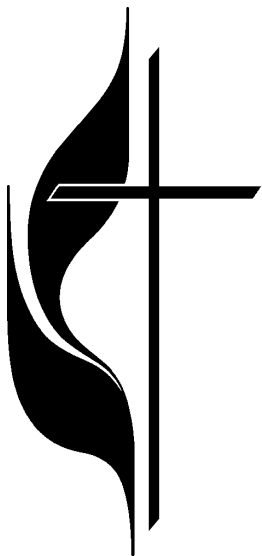


# The Word

St. Thomas U M C

*St. Thomas United Methodist  
Church*

*2 S 511 Route 53  
Glen Ellyn, Illinois 60137  
(630) 469-1214*



*Join us for  
Worship  
Every Sunday  
10:00 a.m.*