



CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Weekly Newsletter

February 15, 2021

Wednesday, February 17th, 7pm: Ash Wednesday worship.

Sunday, February 21st: First Sunday of Lent. Pastor Jack begins our *Words To the Cross* message series with "The Word of Contempt."

From your computer or smartphone, watch at facebook.com/waterfordcumc/live.

Dear Central Church Family,

As I write this note for our weekly newsletter, Ash Wednesday is just a few days away. This first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, begins with an examination of our lives to determine our spiritual condition as we enter this season meant to be a period of time for accelerated spiritual growth. Traditionally, Lent was a time to offer training to new converts to the faith and prepare them to publicly profess their faith and be received into the membership of the church on Easter Sunday. Lent has been described as a journey or more precisely, a wandering; it has also been described as a time of self-denial and dealing with the valleys of our lives—past and present. In contrast to Advent as a time of joyful anticipation, Lent is meant to be a contemplative time, a meaningful time of meditation.

Part of our liturgy for Ash Wednesday states, "I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to observe a holy Lent: by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word." Let me invite you, friends, into a time of spiritual growth, not only because this is Lent but because I really believe we all need to take some time, especially after the year we've experienced, to contemplate our lives at a deeper level and develop a deeper relationship with our Creator.

This year the theme of our Lenten Message series is "Words to the Cross." For many years I've been involved in commemorating Jesus' Seven Last Words from the Cross. From "Father, forgive them," to "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" to "It is finished," these proclamations reflect Jesus' agony as well as his determination to fulfill his earthly mission of bringing wholeness and salvation to a broken world. This year, as we "wander" through Lent, I invite us to think about the words that were said to the cross from passersby to the guard who gambled for Jesus' clothing to the Centurion who proclaimed, "Truly, this man was God's Son!"

I invite you to consider what words you would say as you passed by Jesus, dying on the cross. Would your words express doubt or would they express hope? What emotions would your words convey? These are the questions we will explore as we consider "Words to the Cross."

I look forward to being with you this next Sunday as we once again travel through this season of Lent together. I'll see you in worship!

Because of Christ,
-Pastor Jack

The Meaning of Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is the Wednesday of the seventh week before Easter and the first day of Lent. The day is named for the practice of imposing ashes, a practice which many Christian congregations have found to be a very meaningful part of the Ash Wednesday experience.

Using ashes as a sign of repentance is an ancient practice, often mentioned in the Bible (e.g., Jonah 3:5-9; Job 42:6; Jeremiah 6:26; Matthew 11:21). The early Christians adopted the use of ashes from Jewish practice as an external mark of penitence.

Ashes symbolize several aspects of our human existence:

- Ashes remind us of God's condemnation of sin, as God said to Adam, "Dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).
- Ashes suggest cleansing and renewal. They were used anciently in the absence of soap. On Ash Wednesday ashes are a penitential substitute for water as a reminder of our baptism.
- Ashes remind us of the shortness of human life, for it is said as we are buried: "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust."
- Ashes are a symbol of our need to repent, confess our sins, and return to God.

Here is a suggestions for how to make your own ashes. Think of something you'd like to change in your life—a transformation you'd like to work on in your life or a bad habit you'd like to overcome. Write that hopeful transformation or bad habit on a piece of paper. Place the paper into a fire-proof bowl and burn the paper. Crush the burned remains into a fine powder with the back of a spoon. To place the ashes on your forehead, wet your finger with a little olive or mineral oil, dip your finger in the ashes and then rub them gently on your forehead.

You may want to place ashes on your forehead as a sign of your faith throughout the day on Ash Wednesday or join us during our Ash Wednesday Service, this Wednesday at 7 pm. We will be Livecasting through Facebook. May this Ash Wednesday be a meaningful start to an even more meaningful season of Lent! God bless you.

Words to the Cross Study

Wednesdays, 7 pm to 8:30 pm, February 24 through March 31 via Zoom

Often during Holy Week, typically on Good Friday, the church will observe "The Last Seven Words" of Jesus. These are the last phrases Jesus uttered while he suffered and died on the cross. The late Dr. J. Ellsworth Kalas, once a professor of preaching at Asbury Theological Seminary devised a concept of Words to the Cross. These words to the cross, such as a Word of Scorn, the Word of Indifference, and a Word of Testimony will provide the basis for the messages during Lent. Dr. Kalas' work will also provide the basis for this Lenten Study. For detail on the dates, topics and scripture, [visit our website at News=>Words to the Cross Study](#).

To sign up, [email Pastor Jack \(jimanschreck@waterfordcumc.org\)](mailto:jimanschreck@waterfordcumc.org).

Lenten Small Group: Vital Conversations on Race, Culture and Justice

Eight sessions on Mondays 7-8:30pm beginning February 22nd and ending in May

This program, designed by The General Commission on Race and Religion of the United Methodist Church (GCORR) is offered as a way to begin a dialogue, face our misconceptions and fears, and move deliberately to spiritual, community and social transformation.

This small group is designed to help participants learn about systemic racism, identify racism in themselves and others around them and to begin to develop tools and techniques to compassionately address racism. Co-hosted by Rev. Cora and Robin Danek.

Learning will be cumulative for participants, so to get the most benefit we recommend you commit to a majority of the sessions. We will skip weeks with Monday night church meetings.

To sign up for this small group, please visit bit.ly/vitalconversationsone. For more information, contact [Rev. Cora](#) or [Robin Danek](#).

Lenten Spiritual Practices

Rev. Cora has compiled a list of recommended resources to help you practice devotions during this Lenten season. You can find these resources at <http://bit.ly/lentdevos>.

An Introduction to Central's New Organist/Accompanist, Aran Kim

Today, I have the joy of introducing our new organist and accompanist, Aran Kim. I know that in a normal year, you would have the opportunity to meet her and exchange a few words after service, but like so many other things, this isn't a normal year. And so, we are working hard to give you a chance to get to know Aran a little bit in other ways as she gets acclimated to Central Church. You can find out about her accomplishments, experience, and talent (all of which are evident) in other places, but today, I wanted to share a little bit about my conversations and experiences with her thus far and why I'm excited to be working with her, and you should be excited to have her as a valuable member of Central Church.



Between the interviews and a week's worth of conversations, there are two things that jump out as soon as you have a chance to speak with her: she radiates joy and kindness. As we have been finding our way through this pandemic together, you all know that we have focused on finding our personal joy in our circumstances and radiating kindness outward in all things. As we enter Lent with Aran behind the organ console, I know that we will all be blessed by the light that she radiates. Once we are back to singing together in the future, Aran will bring this light (along with her exceptional accompanying skills) to our choir, children's choir, and our congregation. As a choir director, having a partner that brings both kindness and excellence to the rehearsal space will make us a better ensemble through excellent teamwork, personal encouragement, and helping to make our rehearsal spaces fun as well as productive (which is a priority of mine that I think you all know by now). Our staff, choir, and congregation will be better for having her skills here, but more than that, we will be blessed for having such a light among us.

Aran comes to us with her husband, Song, and her children, Evelyn and Kailyn. Please show them the warmest virtual welcome to our church until we can all be together in person once again.

With Love,
-Kevin

Blessings in a Backpack

Blessing in a Backpack plans to pack food on February 17th at 4pm. There is still space for additional volunteers. It takes about 45 minutes to an hour to pack the food. If you would like to help pack this week or in the future contact Rev. Cora at cglass@waterfordcumc.org.

The Creating a Culture of Calling (C3) Initiative

Our church is one of 24 congregations participating in Vibrant Faith's Creating a Culture of Calling Initiative. This project is one of 13 hubs in the US and Canada working with about 350 congregations in the Called to Lives of Meaning and Purpose Initiative.

The Initiative leaders are inviting us to participate in their evaluation and research of the entire Initiative. You can help! Please complete this 20–30-minute survey by March 15, 2021. The Initiative and hub leaders will share the results from our congregation with us. Please help us learn about how our members understand and live out their calling and its role in a life of meaning and purpose.

Your survey responses will be anonymous. We will only know that they are connected to an attendee at your church. Nobody affiliated with your church will see your actual survey responses, and only the researchers will have access to the data. Access the online survey here: https://samford.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_56ghkV305PryL3g.

Questions? Please contact Nancy Going ngoing@vibrantfaith.org.

Jail and Outreach Ministry Collection

Instead of packing Easter baskets, we are collecting funds through March 18th to purchase items for Easter baskets and Easter dinners for families of inmates. Please mark your check JOM on the memo line.

What Does It Mean to Be Welcoming Waterford? A Session of Listening and Sharing

Sunday, February 21st, 3:00–5:30pm via Zoom

The Waterford Refugee Welcome Alliance is hosting this event to help Waterford residents understand what it means to be welcoming of families to our community. Everyone is invited to attend. To get the Zoom link, please email drcapacker@gmail.com.

Song of the Week

I hope this week is filled with love in all of your lives. I think you all know how I love Valentine's Day, and I appreciate any reason to celebrate love in our lives, whether it is romantic, familial, friendship, or spiritual. We all need love to make life special and exciting, and there is never a bad time to be appreciative of all the special people that grace our lives. I hope your Valentine's Day this year is a day to reflect and celebrate all of the love in your life as well.

Today, I want to continue highlighting Black contributions to our shared culture through one of my favorite singers in popular music, Sam Cooke. Sam Cooke was the son of a minister in Chicago and grew up singing gospel in the church before breaking out on the gospel circuit at the age of 19 with the Soul Stirrers. He was at the top of the gospel scene when he decided he wanted to cross over to popular music to expand beyond a segregated audience. He was billed as the Black Elvis initially but quickly showed that he was something wholly unique to the scene and had appeal across racial lines. He had 43 top 40 hits from 1957–66 which includes two hits years after his untimely death by homicide

in 1964 at the age of 33. In this short career, he would change the course of popular music. He was a singer and songwriter who wrote and had chart-toppers sung by others as well as himself. He was one of the few early recording artists to have creative control over his work during his career and the first Black man to build his own recording label. He influenced—and in some ways fathered—the modern idea of what rock music is through his versatility and range, drawing in influences from gospel and the blues as well as adding to the popular music scene of his day. He influenced a generation of singers, from Aretha Franklin and Lou Rawles to Smokey Robinson and Little Richard. But he had a wider influence as his songs were covered by everyone from Paul McCartney, The Rolling Stones, Tupac, Amy Winehouse, Mandy Moore, Green Day, Van Morrison, and even topped the country charts with Mickey Gilley's cover of *Bring It On Home to Me*. No matter what kind of music you listen to, Sam Cooke has influenced artists in that genre. But beyond that, he was also someone who was able to walk the line of appealing to a white audience during the civil rights era while also writing one of the anthems of the movement in *A Change Is Gonna Come*. Sam Cooke sits at the nexus in the history of popular music, and you can read more about him at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam_Cooke.

What I love about him is that he is such a clear, yet evocative voice. He is easy to sing along to, yet difficult to imitate. He helps you soar to the high notes because he understands how to navigate every register with clarity and ease, but he never lacks an emotional connection to the text. His love songs might feel dated in some ways in the simplicity with which they approach the subject, but that is always the case of love songs from previous eras, regardless of the genre. The love that he sings about has a purity and simplicity that can't help but draw you in and make it seem so uncomplicated if only you could capture the right moment with your special someone. And so, I am sharing with you one of my favorite love songs to sing along to this week. Please enjoy *Cupid*, by the inimitable Sam Cooke.

[Cupid - Sam Cooke \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S28tLQjelo\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S28tLQjelo)

With Love,
-Kevin

Born to Eternal Life

Daniel Aldrich, February 2, 1933–February 13, 2021

Our prayers are with Daniel's sons Gene Aldrich and Christopher Aldrich.

Sue Pearsall, September 4, 1938–February 14, 2021

Our prayers are with Sue's daughters Sandra (Robert) Cooper and Penny Lewis, and her grandchildren Robert, James, Joshua, and Justin.

Dear Friends at Waterford Central UMC

On behalf of Methodist Children's Home Society, thank you for your donation of \$225 toward our mission of supporting foster children, foster families, homeless mothers, and everyone else who comes to us needing support.

This donation was made as part of Central's Christmas offering. Thank you for your generosity to Central's missions and ministries.