



### *Pastor's Column: Time for Quiet*

In Monmouth there were several sandpits that were left over from the glacial age. In the sandpits could be found all sorts of interesting rocks. I still have some that I found there. Two of the sand pits were owned by members of our churches, and I had permission to go into them. Monmouth was a rural town, similar to what Blooming Grove and Washingtonville would have been like fifty or sixty years ago, generally a quiet place. The sandpits were even quieter, though. When I went into the sandpits the sound of traffic would disappear. The sandpits were on my list of local places to go and think. When I was in them I could see green plants here and there, but mostly only around the edges. I tried to imagine what it would have been like for people at the time of Jesus to live in an environment like that. Even then, the desert was a place, albeit extreme, where a person would go to get away from things and think.

Lent is modeled after the time that Jesus spent in the wilderness prior to the beginning of his ministry. It was a time for reflection and meditation. Lent is also modeled after the forty years that the people of Israel spent in the wilderness after the Exodus, and the forty days that Moses spent on Mt. Sinai receiving the law from God. Forty is a number representing testing, representing time apart.

February and March is a time we don't always go away. February in particular is a month that we often don't know what to do with. In our congregation's life it is the month in which we hold our annual meeting, but other than that it is a month that we try to find things to do to help us

***The Newsleaf***  
***March, 2007***  
**The Newsletter of the Blooming Grove United  
 Church of Christ**  
 P.O Box 101  
 Blooming Grove NY 10914  
 www.bgucc.com  
 Tel. 845-496-9311 (office) 845-496-1393  
 (parsonage)  
 Email: ccowing@frontiernet.net  
 bgucc@frontiernet.net  
 Rev. Craig L. Cowing, Pastor

through until March. Imagine what it was like in Maine, where we often had snow through April!

None of us can sustain a pattern of continual activity for very long without feeling burned out. We can try, but before long we become less effective. Sometimes circumstances make it necessary to do that, but it isn't a good idea long-term. I have noticed in particular in this area that it is easy to get caught up in the frenzy of activity that seems to define life here. Many commute to New York City, which is obviously a huge part of the work week for those who do so. When commuters get home after a long day at work, with the fast pace that goes along with it, they are worn out. When the weekend comes they crash.

It's easy for me to say that we should take time to slow down and enjoy things in life. I don't have to commute to work, and I set my own schedule. Nevertheless, I feel that we must slow down and re-prioritize in order to maintain our focus. This is what Lent is for us spiritually. It isn't just a time to give up something that we enjoy, although if that is a helpful thing to do, then go for it. It is a time to reassess priorities, consider our relationship with God, and listen for God's voice in what sometimes seems like a wilderness.

Remember, there is an end to the time in the wilderness. Easter comes with the promise of new life and hope. Keep this in mind in whatever wilderness you may find yourself in. God is with us.

*Craig*

### Church Calendar March 2007

Date	Time	Event	Place
Tues. March 6	6:30 PM	Church Night at the Country Store	Country Store Thrift Shop
Sun. March 11	8 PM	Harmonic Healing Concert	Chapel
Tues. March 19	6:30 PM	Growth Committee s	church office.
Tues. March 19	7:30 PM	Church Council	Chapel
Sat. March 24	6 PM	Ethnic Potluck Supper	Fellowship Hall

### April 2007

Sun., April 1	11:15 AM	Palm/Passion Sunday	Starts in Chapel
Sun., April 1	8 PM	Harmonic Healing Concert	Chapel
Tues. April 3	6:30 PM	Church Night at the Country Store	Country Store Thrift Shop
Thurs. April 5	6 PM	Maundy Thursday Potluck	Fellowship Hall
Thurs. April 5	7 PM	Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service	Chapel
Sun. April 8	6:30 AM	Easter Sunrise Service	Church lawn
Sun. April 8	7 AM	Continental breakfast	Fellowship Hall
Sun. April 8	11:15 AM	Easter Sunday Service	Sanctuary

### Clara Johnson

As this newsletter was being completed (late as usual!) we received word that Clara Johnson, our long-time organist, died at home on the morning of March 7. Calling hours will be on Saturday, March 10 from 10 AM to 1 PM. The memorial service will be in our church sanctuary the same day at 1:30 PM. Our church family extends deepest sympathy to Ken Johnson and his family at this time of grief and sorrow.

### Church News

#### Bring Your Pennies to Church!

Don't forget to bring your pennies and pocket change to church! The "Pennies for People" milk bottle was recently emptied and needs to be refilled! Grants from Pennies for People benefit various organizations in New York State. Linda Bull is the chairperson for Pennies for People for the New York Conference of the UCC.

#### Harmonic Healing Concert Sunday, March 11 at 8 PM

The next Harmonic Healing Concert is March 11 at 8 PM in the chapel. Come and spend an hour in meditation and relaxation as you absorb the healing sounds of Tibetan singing bowls. This event is free and open to the public. These events are informal--come as you are. Bring a pillow or cushion to sit on. Dates for upcoming concerts are March 11, April 1, May 13, 2007. Dates for later in the year will be released soon.

### Ethnic Potluck Supper Saturday, March 24 at 6 PM

On Saturday, March 24 at 6 PM we will have our next Ethnic Potluck Supper in the Fellowship Hall. This will be open to the community, and will be an opportunity to share recipes and enjoy fellowship together. Our first supper will have an *Irish* theme. If you would like to come and bring a dish please speak to Anita Hawkins who will be coordinating the supper. You may leave a message for her at the parsonage at 845-496-1393.

### Office Hours

Through May 1 Craig will not have office hours on Tuesdays. He will be teaching a class in Fishkill during that time. Regular office hours will be Wednesday through Friday, 9 AM to 12 noon.

### Share Your Talents and Gifts at Camp Medusa This Summer!

February 19, 2007

Dear UCC Family: (Pastors, Church Moderators, Committee members, Sunday School Teachers, Homemakers, College Students, Seminarians, Engineers, Computer Geeks, Secretaries, Construction Workers, Habitat for Humanity volunteers, Homeless Housing workers, Nurses/First Aid workers, Musicians, Retirees, Cooks, CPAs, Lawyers, etc.)

**Please offer yourselves for the enrichment of the campers, the staff and God's work. We are establishing a database of volunteers.**

*“Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, crushed down, full and running over, they will give to you. For in the same measure as you give, it will be given to you again.”*

The Camp Medusa Committee of the UCC Hudson Mohawk Association will sponsor “Adventures in Christian Living” again this summer. Three camps will be held under a canopy of pine trees at the foothills of the Catskills (little more than an hour away) in the month of July:

Senior Camp: July 5 – 8  
 Middle Camp July 9 – 13  
 Beginner Camp July 17 – 21

Share the gifts God has given you. Sharing has a boomerang affect; it comes back to you. Children grow through our sharing and leadership. ***Please set aside an hour or more during one day of these camps. Come! Share and touch the hearts of the campers with both your gifts and time.***

*“But Jesus sent for them, saying, Let the children come to me, and do not keep them away, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.”*

\*Skills (crafts, music (instruments, drumming, singing, cooking, woodworking, painting, writing etc.)

\*Interests & Hobbies (comedy/humor, acting, dancing, juggling, hiking, fishing, exploring, swimming, running, exercising, yoga, story telling, nature (animals, reptiles, insects), survival skills, etc.

\*Peace and Justice Advocacy, etc.

-----  
 Don't Wait! Call or write:

Carol Dooris, 12 Romca Rd. Poughkeepsie, N.Y.12603;  
 845-463-1303; cdooris@aol.com.

**Please include your name, address, phone, e-mail address; church affiliation,** and indicate what gifts and talents you would like to offer, and what date(s) and time(s) you will be available.

Blessings to you all,

Camp Medusa Advocate, Carol Dooris

## **Church World Service News A Rainbow of Caring...Church World Service Tools and Blanket Program March 4-11**

On Sunday, March 4 we will hold a Tools and Blanket

Sunday. Our money will help families in underdeveloped parts of the world in emergency situations, and families struggling to grow their own food. Arlene Roberts will be coordinating this program. It will still be possible to donate on the following Sunday, March 11.

**The Tools and Blankets program is a mission opportunity** that can involve all ages. Some 8,000 congregations and groups across the U.S. hold TOOLS & BLANKETS events, providing more than \$3.7 million to help people in some 80 nations, including the U.S. The right tool at the right time can make a world of difference in the lives of children and families faced with an emergency or struggling to keep food on the table.

**Build a Rainbow of Caring!** You. Your family. Your congregation.

**Warm blankets** for five refugee children... \$25\*

**Wheelbarrow, hoe, shovel, and rake** for a rural family... \$57

**Nets and other equipment** for a village fishing cooperative... \$100

**Family shelter kit:** a family-sized tent, ground cloth, plastic sheeting, two poles, and four blankets... \$172

Partial **secondary school** tuition for an AIDS orphan or other vulnerable child... \$300

Well pump, piping, and hardware for a village water system... \$1,000

**Tools** such as tents, bedding, plastic sheeting, and other emergency

supplies in the wake of natural disasters and human calamities... Priceless!

### **Our Kits at Work**

Health Kits and other kits from Church World Service have benefited people in Indonesia affected by heavy flooding. So far CWS has provided 135 Health Kits, 135 blankets, 101 School Kits, and 426 Baby Kits in addition to 36 tarps and 61 shovels and other materials for cleaning up. They have also distributed clean water to four villages, helped to clean seven wells in two villages, and provided a water purification unit in another village. The water purification unit will handle the needs of three sub-districts.

Last year our church sent 37 School Kits, 28 Health Kits and 85 Baby Kits in addition to \$285 for shipping costs. This is where your help is being distributed to people in need around the world.

## **One Great Hour of Sharing Sunday, March 18 Who Is My Neighbor? (Luke 10:29)**

### **Dear Friends:**

Many of us have been wonderfully generous in responding to the crying needs splashed on our television sets after disasters like the tsunami in Asia, the earthquake in Pakistan/Kashmir, and the hurricanes on the Gulf Coast. United Church of Christ members gave more than \$10.5 million to special disaster appeals last year. We gave eagerly to those urgent needs. Yet disasters occur every day in the lives of millions of other people — disasters of extreme poverty and chronic hunger, of terminally unclean water and no sanitation, of terrorizing war and devastating loss. We see these images from time to time, and our hearts go out to those people. But that's different, right? After all, we can't be there for everyone. Jesus might not agree. A young lawyer talked with Jesus about the command to "love your neighbor as yourself," asking, "Who is my neighbor?" In response, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan — a man who freely gave time, energy and money to help a stranger whom he didn't know and might never see again. According to Jesus, we are all neighbors to one another.

Since 1949 churches across North America have been  
\*\*\*\*\*

### **The Mary Merriam Flower Calendar**

The Blooming Grove UCC has established a flower calendar to provide altar flowers for Sunday Worship. The calendar is named in honor of Mary Merriam who lovingly and gracefully cared for the altar and flowers for many years and is warmly remembered by members of the congregation. Sharen Casazza will maintain the physical calendar and will seek donations from members of the congregation to cover the \$50.00 cost. On the first and third Sundays of the month fresh flowers from Flowers By Joan will be placed in the church's brass vases and placed on the altar in memory of or in honor of whoever placed the donation. Please contact Sharen Casazza at Box 8, Blooming Grove, NY 10914 to place a donation. Please specify clearly for whom the flowers are donated and include a check to Blooming Grove UCC for \$50.00

giving to the annual One Great Hour of Sharing offering, expressing God's love to our neighbors far and wide — not just after the major disasters that saturate the media, but also to people affected by chronic disasters that repeat themselves each and every day. Gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing support programs that help people build lives and communities that are healthy, safe and sustainable.

By giving, you will join others in:

- 1** rebuilding communities ravaged by natural disasters
- 2** creating sustainable sources of food and water for rural villages
- 3** providing micro-credit so women can start poverty-escaping businesses
- 4** teaching trades and job skills to people maimed by landmines
- 5** offering children a chance to survive past the age of 5 and attend school
- 6** and so much more.

Jesus' response to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" set a standard that isn't easy to meet. By participating in One Great Hour of Sharing on Sunday, March 18 we join together to make a world of difference in the lives of our neighbors.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Sanctuary Flowers for February, March and April**

- 2/4/07 — by Rev. Craig Cowing and Anita Hawkins  
in memory of Jose Martin-Lopez
- 2/18/07 – by Jeff & Hilarie Moore in memory of  
Wallace F. Moore
- 3/04/07 by Mary Ann Merriam Koontz in memory  
of Harriet O. Holloway
- 3/18/07 by Sharen & Jim Casazza in honor of E. R.  
& Janet Steeves, Jr.
- 4/01/07 by Mary Ann Merriam Koontz in memor  
of Walter & Mary Merriam
- 4/15/07 by Sears & Phyllis Hunter in memory of  
Robert J. & Marian Hunter

### **Easter Lilies**

Sharen Casazza will be coordinating the ordering of Easter Lilies for Easter Sunday. Please contact her at the above address if you would like to order them.

## A Lenten Meditation

By Simone Weil

(posted at  
<http://lent.classicalanglican.net/index.php?cat=68>)

The infinity of space and time separates us from God. How are we to seek for him? How are we to go toward him? Even if we were to walk for hundreds of years, we should do no more than go round and round the world. Even in an airplane we could not do anything else. We are incapable of progressing vertically. We cannot take a step toward the heavens. God crosses the universe and comes to us.

Over the infinity of space and time, the infinitely more infinite love of God comes to possess us. He comes at his own time. We have the power to consent or refuse. If we remain deaf, he comes back again and again like a beggar, but also, like a beggar, one day he stops coming. If we consent, God puts a little seed in us and he goes away again. From that moment, God has no more to do; neither have we, except to wait. We only have not to regret the consent we gave him, the nuptial yes. It is not as easy as it seems, for the growth of the seed within us is painful. Moreover, from the very fact that we accept this growth, we cannot avoid destroying whatever gets in its way, pulling up the weeds, cutting the good grass, and unfortunately the good grass is part of our very own flesh, so this gardening amounts to a violent operation. On the whole, however, the seed grows of itself. A day comes when the soul belongs to God, when it not only consents to love but when truly and effectively it loves. Then in its turn it must cross the universe to go to God. The soul does not love like a creature with created love. The love within it is divine, uncreated; for it is the love of God for God that is passing through it. God alone is capable of loving God. We can only consent to give up our own feelings so as to allow free passage in our soul for this love. That is the meaning of denying oneself. We are created for this consent, and for this alone.

Divine Love crossed the infinity of space and time to come from God to us. But how can it repeat the journey in the opposite direction, starting from a finite creature? When the seed of Divine Love placed in us has grown and become a tree, how can we, who bear it, take it back to its origin? How can we repeat the journey made by

God when he came to us, in the opposite direction? How can we cross infinite distance?

It seems impossible, but there is a way—a way with which we are familiar. We know quite well in what likeness this tree is made, this tree that has grown within us, the most beautiful tree where the birds of the air come and perch. We know what is the most beautiful of all trees. “No forest bears its equal.” Something still a little more frightening than a gibbet—that is the most beautiful of all trees. It was the seed of this tree that God placed within us, without our knowing what seed it was. If we had known, we should not have said yes at the first moment. It is this tree that has grown within us and become ineradicable. Only a betrayal could uproot it.

When we hit a nail with a hammer, the whole of the shock received by the large head of the nail passes into the point without any of it being lost, although it is only a point. If the hammer and the head of the nail were infinitely big, it would be just the same. The point of the nail would transmit this infinite shock at the point to which it was applied. . . .

He whose soul remains ever turned toward God though the nail pierces it finds himself nailed to the very center of the universe. It is the true center; it is not in the middle; it is beyond space and time; it is God. In a dimension that does not belong to space, that is not time, that is indeed quite a different dimension, this nail has pierced cleanly through all creation, through the thickness of the screen separating the soul from God.

In this marvelous dimension, the soul, without leaving the place and the instant where the body to which it is united is situated, can cross the totality of space and time and come into the very presence of God.

It is at the intersection of creation and its Creator. This point of intersection is the point of intersection of the arms of the Cross.

—Simone Weil

**Blooming Grove United Church of Christ**  
**PO Box 101**  
**Blooming Grove NY 10914-0101**

**Address Service Requested**



*In this issue of The Newsleaf:  
 Lots of Church News!  
 . . . and more!*

**Revised Common  
 Lectionary Texts for  
 March/April 2007**

**4 March 2007:**

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18  
 Psalm 27  
 Philippians 3:17-4:1  
 Luke 13:31-35

**11 March 2007:**

Isaiah 55:1-9  
 Psalm 63:1-8  
 1 Corinthians 10:1-13  
 Luke 13:1-9

**18 March 2007:**

Joshua 5:9-12  
 Psalm 32  
 2 Corinthians 5:16-21  
 Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

**25 March 2007:**

Isaiah 43:16-21  
 Psalm 126  
 Philippians 3:4b-14  
 John 12:1-8

**1 April 2007:**

Palm Sunday  
 Isaiah 50:4-9a  
 Psalm 31:9-16  
 Philippians 2:5-11  
 Luke 22:14-23:56 or

Luke 23:1-49

**8 April 2007:**

**Easter Sunday**  
 Acts 10:34-43  
 Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24  
 1 Corinthians 15:19-26  
 John 20:1-8 or  
 Luke 24:1-12

**15 April 2007:**

Acts 5:27-32  
 Psalm 150  
 Revelation 1:4-8  
 John 20:19-31

**22 April 2007:**

Acts 9:1-6 (7-20)  
 Psalm 30  
 Revelation 5:11-14  
 John 21:1-19

**29 April 2007:**

Acts 9:36-43  
 Psalm 23  
 Revelation 7:9-17  
 John 10:22-30