

Mendon Church  
PO Box 188  
Mendon, NY 14506

# The Gleam

Mendon Church

March 2017

## 2017 Lent Devotional Available

Observed since the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Lent is a 40-day spiritual journey that gives us the opportunity to honor the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on earth. Along with the incarnation of Jesus, which is celebrated during the advent season, the resurrection of Jesus from death is one of two pillars of the Christian faith. We observe the Lenten season to contemplate the suffering and death of Jesus Christ through prayer, repentance, fasting, and abstinence from worldly entertainments, so that we may prepare ourselves for the greater joy of the resurrection of Jesus.

Christians may continue their connections, family times, and joyful events as usual, but they should be done in ways in which the suffering of Jesus Christ is remembered. Attempting to find deeper meaning in these events, choosing movies that help us consider the weaknesses of humanity and the grace of God, and having honest conversations during these 40 days can all be examples of this, and you are open to find your own creative ways to make this Lenten season meaningful to you.

To help you daily contemplate the sacrifice of Jesus, we would like to provide you with a Lent devotional from the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. (Digital copies are available from the church office by request and hard copies may be found on the table outside the office.) We encourage you to spend 15-20 minutes a day reading the included bible passages, devotionals, and prayers, as well as setting aside time for contemplation and personal prayer including intercessory prayers for others. By working through this devotional together during the Lenten season, we pray that we would fully envision the hope of Resurrection and that it would be reflected in the life of the church through the process of recovery and reconciliation. May God pour His grace and Spirit on you during Lent 2017.

- Pastor Hwang

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Weekly worship  
and Christian  
Education  
Sundays @10 am



# Session's 2017 Goals

Here is the list of 2017 Goals that were presented at the Annual Meeting on February 12. Please feel encouraged to talk to any Session member about any of these goals, or any other topic that is on your mind. Note that this is an evergreen list which may be refined as the year unfolds.

- ◆ Continue to Address Improved Communications – “Conversations with Session” (see below)
- ◆ Continue the Process for finding a Designated Pastor
- ◆ Revitalize our Youth Ministry – Collaborate with other churches
- ◆ Continue Investigation of options for building a playground
- ◆ Do more hands-on Missions projects
- ◆ Generate a list of opportunities for congregational involvement

## Conversations with Session

### Follow-Up to Annual Meeting and Moving Forward with Designated Pastor Search

**Date:** February 19, 2017

**Present:** Elders: Patric Donaghue, Wendy Hurley, and John Thomassen  
Congregation Participation: 10 Congregants

#### **Topic: Financial capacity to support a Designated Pastor**

Given our currently budgeted pledge support of \$80,000 (down from \$171,000 in 2016, \$220,000 in 2015, and \$252,000 actually received in 2014), we currently can only support a half-time Designated Pastor position for the next 2 years. There was concern expressed about our ability to grow the church back to what it was before the recent turbulent transition with only a half-time Pastor. Although there is reason for optimism that the bad times are behind us and our congregation is stabilizing for a much hoped for rebound, Session is forced to deal with the current fiscal situation. The idea of hiring a pastor yoked to us and another congregation was considered and can be explored. Pastor Hodong was received well as a stabilizing, spiritual, and peaceful presence from which to build going forward.

#### **Topic: Pastor Hodong's continued presence**

Pastor Hodong has been received very positively. There was discussion about his continued presence in the congregation. His current contract extends to 03/31/2017 as half-time Temporary Pastor. He has agreed to another Temporary Pastor half-time contract until 08/31/2017. As he is looking for a full-time position, in this contract, Session has agreed to allow him to leave with one month's notice after starting on his new contract, if he were to accept a full-time position prior to 08/31/2017. Although it is believed his preference is for an inner-city congregation, it is unknown if he might agree to some other type of arrangement with us in the future if it were possible and offered.

# Session Committee Assignments

**Clerk**—Wendy Hurley

**Discipleship**—John Tomassen

**Finance**—Patric Donaghue

**Human Resources**—Patric Donaghue  
& Wendy Hurley

**Nominating**—John Thomassen

**Outreach**—Jim Shoots

**Parish Life**—Jim Shoots

Additional Committee Chairs/Co-Chairs:

**Building & Grounds**—Gordy Benoit

**Treasurer**—Bob Moore

## Topic: Improving Church finances

There was much discussion as to ways the Church may improve its current financial situation. Caution was expressed to view the current situation as typical in transitional times for most congregations. We were particularly hard-hit given the recent challenges surrounding Pastor Janet's unsuccessful recent tenure and the circumstances of her ouster. This compounded an expected decrease in pledges and attendance with a crisis in confidence for our future. Doing the good work of the Church and communicating that with our members was seen as paramount. Suggestions for communicating the good work of the Church included frequent Deacon updates to their sectors, and a general and perhaps monthly Deacon update to the whole congregation. The latter may also include interesting activities of members both inside and outside the congregation (with their permission). Session weekly emailed updates, use of the website and Facebook pages, and more frequent Gleam editions were also suggested.

We also explored ideas to decrease cost of utilities and insurance. We discussed increasing income by marketing the building for Day Care, or other business use to generate rental income. Raising funds through organized events was also discussed. This included a Harvest Dinner, Chicken Bar-B-Que, Farmer's Market stall or Garage Sale. We may even consider using proceeds from the Spaghetti Dinner for our operating budget too.

## Topic: Using Jim Fraser bequest to make our building facility more inviting and conducive to growth

The possibility of using Jim Fraser's bequest, with its limitation to be used for our building only, was discussed. It was suggested that this gift not languish unused when it could begin to be used to grow the congregation by improving its current attractiveness, functionality and marketability to our community. The idea of external improvements like placement of one or more crosses, a dedicated path for meditation, or special uses for our one acre wooded parcel was suggested. Internal improvements to the sanctuary, hallways and classrooms was discussed. The possibility of building a smaller chapel or other building extension was considered. The possibility of setting up a task force with people from buildings and grounds committee and worship committee was suggested for this purpose and to glean specific cost-effective proposals. One congregant offered to cover the cost of the proposed plaque honoring the Jim Fraser bequest. This will be followed up by Session.

### Women's Group Temporary Change

For the month of March and April, the Women's Group will meet in the sanctuary at Church. There is an interest in submitting ideas to Session for how we can upgrade the church to look more inviting, welcoming and warm. If you know of someone in our church family who may have a talent that may help with this effort, please encourage them to join us in this effort. In general, we will begin with what we can do with what we have, then what we can do with minimal expenditure, and what ideas do we have that will require building funds.

### Finance Update

The Fraser Funds have now been invested with the Forte' Capital Group. The investment strategy for these funds is very conservative, i.e., solely in bonds.

# The Substance of Self-Denial

## A Note from Pastor Hwang

During my seminary years, one of the subjects I really enjoyed studying was interreligious dialogues. I wasn't terribly interested in comparative theology, which explored the theological commonalities between different religions in understanding the divine, the human predicament and salvation, and social ethics, but I was quite intrigued by the practices that other religions integrated into their faith systems. While being cautious of syncretism – or the belief that Christianity is only one of many ways for the salvation of humanity – I do believe that learning about other religions can help us reconsider our own spiritual practices.

One shocking experience for me was to watch Tibetan Buddhist monks creating a sand mandala when I visited Melbourne, Australia for the Parliament of World Religions conference as a seminary representative of the United States in 2009. The mandala is a kind of religious symbol that represents the universe in Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhism has especially developed the artistic work of the patterns as a religious practice by using sand dyed with different colors. It took six monks four full days to finish the masterpiece I saw in Melbourne. They created such a beautiful work of art through extremely arduous work and it was unparalleled by any other religion at the conference.

An even more shocking moment followed after the four-day project was completed: on the last day of the conference, they held a ceremony to destroy the masterpiece by sweeping the work with brushes. Knowing the time and the effort poured into the work, watching them destroy the art was totally astonishing for many of us. Some people might have had a similar experience when they've pulled apart a 5000-piece puzzle that took all of their family members working together to finish. As tremendous as the devotion and energy for the work was, the ceremony of destruction delivered a strong message to the people who were present. The destruction of the work symbolized the transitory nature of material life.

Many Christians may have heard Jesus demanding his disciples to carry their crosses to follow him. But they may not know that the precept, in fact, has two parts: to deny oneself and to take up his cross. We probably understand the latter with more clarity but overlook the former because of the vagueness of the idea of self-denial. After my experience in Australia, when I contemplate on Mark 8:34, 'Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said, "if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me," ' I think of the mandala destruction ceremony. To deny myself entails distinguishing what is permanent and what is ephemeral.

For many, self-denial is so ambiguous that they tend to fall into the trap of reductionism, which reduces complex, integrated interactions and entities to simple ideas or behaviors. For example, self-denial is often identified with humble attitude toward others or abstinence from what we enjoy. However, self-denial is a far more substantial and profound idea when we are determined to follow Jesus.

Even John Piper's explanation about self-denial does not seem quite enough. He defines self

# Easter Remembrances

Until March 26<sup>th</sup>, we will be accepting orders for your choice of Easter flowers for the sanctuary. You may print this form and mail it into the church office with payment (PO Box 188, Mendon, NY 14506), or place it in the offering at church. Order forms are also available in Sunday bulletins and on the tables as you exit the sanctuary. If you are unable to submit a hard copy order form, please contact the church office by phone at (585) 624-1457 or by email at mendonchurchoffice@gmail.com. Plants may be taken home Easter morning.

In lieu of flowers, money may also be donated to the music program in honor or memory of a loved one.

\_\_\_\_\_ Lilies - \$7.75

\_\_\_\_\_ Tulips - \$5.70

\_\_\_\_\_ Hyacinths - \$5.70

\_\_\_\_\_ Daffodils - \$5.70

\_\_\_\_\_ Music Program Donation - \$\_\_\_\_\_

In Memory/Honor (*circle one*) of:

\_\_\_\_\_

From:

\_\_\_\_\_

-denial as 'renouncing all means to abandon our pursuit of everlasting joy in earthly things'. I agree with him about renouncing our desires for richness, power, honor, and lust. However, I think even our emotions, appetites, joys, or concerns need to be renounced, relativized, or secondarized in order to follow Jesus. For example, even though most people perceive emotions to be volatile, temporary, and subject to change, many are still driven by and justify them by employing the rationale to defend them. More often than not, emotions and the misinterpretations of others' emotions ruin relationships and the ministry in the church. When we are not bound by our own desires and affections, we can create a space for others in our lives, making ourselves available to them. Self-denial is not a virtue or attitude but an active and creative effort to love others.

As we enter the Lenton season of 2017, we need to come to Jesus Christ on the cross where he showed the ultimate form of self-denial. While he accepted his path to crucifixion, he still maintained his compassion and forgave the very people who had accused him by saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) His prayer manifests the relationship between self-denial and forgiveness of and love for others - even those who persecuted him. In our faith journey, to learn self-denial from Jesus Christ is the key to our spiritual growth.

May God bless and inspire all of us during the Lenton season of 2017, so that we may become more intimate with Jesus Christ, our Lord.

## Upcoming Grace Choir Programs

**Sunday March 12**—Grace Choir will present the seventh annual Community Christian Choral Festival at 4pm at the Church of the Transfiguration in Pittsford. n offering will be taken to support missions in Nicaragua.

**Sunday, March 26**—Grace Choir will be joined by the AKOMA Gospel Choir to present a concert called "Total Praise" in Rochester. For these concerts, Grace Choir will be singing some of our favorite gospel songs.

## Birthdays

|                    |      |
|--------------------|------|
| Cristie Rydzynski  | 3/1  |
| Eric Holton        | 3/4  |
| Haden Eby          | 3/7  |
| Nelson Parker      | 3/9  |
| Cora Vandebout     | 3/17 |
| Kate Batz          | 3/18 |
| Nick Hodownes      | 3/19 |
| Tony Crego         | 3/21 |
| Jonathan Alcorn    | 3/22 |
| Gordon Benoit      | 3/24 |
| Jeanette Detraglia | 3/27 |
| Deanne Hardy       | 3/29 |
| Nancy Middleton    | 3/30 |
| Lara Baronsky      | 3/31 |
| Cris Kerekes       | 3/31 |

## Anniversaries

No March anniversaries



## Prayer Requests

- Nan & Jim McRae's son, Brian, as he recovers from back surgery
- Elsa Bretherton, as she mourns the loss of her brother
- Phyllis Shoots' father, as he recovers from back surgery
- Doris Naundorf's friend Walter
- Shirley Snyder's sister-in-law
- Gregg Miller's family member with medical issues
- Tara Nickel's friend, Chris
- Lynne Templeton's daughter-in-law Karie with cancer
- Cindy Westfall's mother & sister
- Lynn Willard
- Christians facing persecution
- Our Nation's service men and women and their families
- People of Watsa, Congo, especially the orphans
- Refugees, and those suffering in 3<sup>rd</sup> World countries
- The President, Congress, our Nation and our World

**Those who are homebound:** *Peggy Avery, Susan and Allen Beauregard, Doris Naundorf, Shirley Snyder, and Ann Wood*

**Our Missionaries:** *John and Beaj Reed with SIM; The Shalhoub's with the Navigators; The Robinsons in Haiti; The McKees with SIL/Wycliffe*

**Our College Students:** *Jonathan Alcorn, Jessica Apthorpe, Alex Baronsky, Brooke Cheyne, McKensie Galusha, Katie Kerekes, Meredith Rogers, Kyle Schultze and Julia Smith*

**Those in the Military:** *Killian Anstee-Sgt. US Army, currently stationed/Ft Polk, La.; Nick Hodownes, US Navy on the USS George H.W. Bush; Garrett Koek - 1st Lieutenant US Army, currently stationed/Ft Polk, La.*