

WINDHAM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

WPC Mission Statement: "To reflect the unconditional love of Jesus Christ by providing help, hope, encouragement and joy to our community and the world."

WPC Vision Statement: "Growing in faith, showing God's grace"

MARCH/APRIL 2022 NEWSLETTER

A note from John...



Dear Members and Friends of WPC,

As I write this we are about to enter into the season of Lent. In the next several paragraphs I will explain a bit about Lent and then provide some practical disciplines in which you may want to engage during this season.

Lent is a period of forty days, excluding Sundays, to prepare for the celebration of our redemption in Jesus Christ on Easter. These days traditionally include various Christian disciplines such as fasting, prayer, and self-examination as men and women, young and old, consider what it means to be followers of Jesus.

It is no mistake that that this period of time is forty days. Throughout the Bible we see this number often with respect to days or years – the flood in Genesis, Moses' time on Mt. Sinai, the wilderness wanderings, Elijah on Mt. Horeb, Jonah's call to repentance for the city of Nineveh, as well as Jesus' time of testing in the wilderness. Often it is used not necessarily as a precise number, but simply as a round number or an estimation. Forty days or forty years are both seen as a long time. (*Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, p. 305-306).

You may wonder why the Sundays of Lent are not counted as part of the forty-day period. They are not counted because each Sunday is seen as a celebration of Christ's resurrection.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday with an act of public confession acknowledging that we have all sinned and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). We turn from our sin, acknowledging our frailty and our dependence on God's grace. We offer each person the opportunity to receive ashes, an ancient symbol of repentance.

During Lent, I would invite you to engage in one or more of the following spiritual disciplines – First, we will be having a worship service at 7:30 p.m. on Ash Wednesday which will include the imposition of ashes. In addition, for those who would like to receive ashes in the morning, I will be in the parking lot from 7:00 a.m. – 7:45 a.m. to provide ashes on a "drive-by" basis.

Second, we will have a voluntary fast. Fasting is often thought of as skipping a meal on a day or over the course of a week. However, fasting can take other forms: limiting or refraining from social media, movies, TV, desserts, alcohol, activities, etc. The point is not to simply skip something, but to spend the time engaging in prayer, study, fellowship, or silence before God.

Third, along with fasting, comes the opportunity to give the money that may have been spent on one of these activities (above) to support the work of a mission opportunity. We are providing the opportunity to give money to the work of Liberia Outreach Mission (see article on p.3 -Lenten Fast news). This mission provides wells for people who do not have fresh water.

Fourth, we are providing devotions for Lent on the homepage of our website: www.windhamchurch.org on the button "Lent Devotions." These are made available through the Presbyterian Outlook. This year the focus is: *Making the Road: Walking Through Lent*.

And fifth, on five of the Wednesday evenings during Lent (3/9 – 4/6), I will be leading a hybrid (in-person and virtual) teaching and small group experience entitled. *Reflections in Lent*. This will take place from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The focus of this will be reflecting on some of the themes in the devotions and sermons. The Zoom link will be posted on the homepage of our website on the button "*Reflections in Lent*."

I do hope that you will choose to engage in at least one of these opportunities during Lent as we journey to the joyful celebration of Easter on Sunday, April 17.

Peace,
John

WPC Historical Highlights...

Did you know... in 1742 the General Assembly of the province approved a new parish in Windham, township of Londonderry. Prior to that time, the people had attended meetings in the east and west parishes of Londonderry.

The first minister was also called in 1742, the Reverend William Johnston. He was not installed, however, until 1747, when the first church was organized and became the focal point and mainstay of the town as were all churches at that time.

They held services at three times on Sunday – morning, afternoon and evening! They held a prayer service during the week. There were very few acceptable excuses for absence from church services.

Windham townspeople of Scottish ancestry wished to follow their homeland custom of building the church in the center of town. When the first church was built in 1753 on Copp's Hill, now Cemetery Hill, a large group of people disapproved, because this was not the center of town!

In 1766 Reverend Simon Williams was ordained. At this time, he opened a private academy where many young men were fitted for college, one being Joseph McKean, first president of Bowdoin College. Reverend Williams died at age 64 and he and his wife are buried in the Cemetery on the Hill at the spot where his pulpit would have been.

At this time several prominent townspeople were slaveholders. Historical documents indicate that at least one of these slaves sat on our church's "front porch". He did not go inside. In 1785 Windham voted the use of pew 36 in the church for negroes, if their masters would pay the rates. It is not known if the masters ever paid. (Check out Black History in NH in the Mission news below for more information).

In 1798 the original meeting house was transported to Salem and became a family dwelling. This same year a new meeting house (the present town hall) was constructed near the center of town. Preaching there was provided through stated supplies for a period of 12 years.

Denied the privilege of using the town hall solely for their own services, Presbyterians through their religious society voted in 1833 to start a building fund for their own edifice. After raising \$2,450, in 1834 they built the new church – our current WPC - near the center of town, and dedicated the building on January 14, 1835 with Reverend Calvin Cutler as pastor.

Lenten Fast news...



From muddy, unsafe drinking water



to safe drinking water with this well!

Since 2017 WPC has chosen Liberia Mission Outreach International founded by our friend, Rev Henry Peabody, as the recipient of our Lenten Fast giving. We will continue that tradition for 2022, as these wells have provided clean water to thousands of very needy Liberians.

As a young man, Henry was forced to leave his native Liberia and spend seven years in a Ghana refugee camp. Through God's grace, he was able to come to the US and after many years knew that he wanted to help his native country.

Liberia Mission Outreach, an international Christian ministry with the message of hope and plan of Jesus Christ, is called to the task of evangelizing, providing assistance such as school building and wells for safe drinking water, and discipleship to the underprivileged people of Liberia.

WPC has had the privilege of knowing and helping Henry in many ways since 1997, and we are thankful to be able to help him with our Lenten Fast money in the building of new wells for safe drinking water.

If you wish to give: by check, please put WATER in the memo; on line, just go to our website and click on Giving.

Library news...

Your library offers a variety of materials, from music CDs to fiction to reference books. Some are old, and others are very recent. You may browse the shelves or use the computer (to the right of the entrance) to locate a book.

Books are arranged by topic: near the main desk are biographies and parenting advice. Continuing are books on health, marriage, prayer, fiction, study guides and theology. In front of the desk is the children's section. Each section is labeled.

New arrivals are on display in the hall and in the library. Coming soon are brand new children's and youth books purchased by LBS members.

It is suggested that books be returned after a month. Choose a book, fill out the card, and you are on your way.

Women's Virtual Book Club news...

What can be better than curling up with a good book and your favorite afghan? Sharing your reactions with a group of friends, of course.

Several women have been doing just that for the past 18 months, and would welcome others to join us. We have just begun reading *The Faith Club*; in it three women discuss areas of agreement and conflict among three faiths. We meet by Zoom the first Tuesday and the third Monday. Contact Mary Beth Goodell for the link. (mb.goodell@gmail.com)

Mission news...

Did You Know?

Black History in New Hampshire

Slavery in NH was more prevalent than many of us would have thought and was an important part of its economy as it was in southern states. During the revolutionary period there were 625 slaves in the Stratham and Rockingham counties of NH and 303 free blacks living mostly along the seacoast. Portsmouth was a major slave trading port, and a relatively large black community grew up there.

According to the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) records, more than 5000 African American or mixed descent patriots served in the American Revolution. 139 blacks served from NH, and 22, a relatively large proportion, died in battle. 3 NH blacks were given certificates of merit by George Washington. Blacks and whites served under conditions of equality including equal pay. This was not true again until the Vietnam War. The British referred to black soldiers as "strong and brave fellows." They were true patriots and served with distinction. Some were granted their freedom at the end of the war.

Nevertheless, NH slaveholders were reluctant to part with the institution of slavery as it was an integral part of the economy. The abolition of slavery in NH was not official until 1857, less than 5 years before the start of the Civil War. This did not stop anti-slavery societies from being formed. Windham established its own Anti-Slavery Society on April 8, 1834. Its object was "by all means sanctioned by law, humanity, and religion, to effect the abolition of slavery in the United States..." Windham was a stop along one of the Underground Railroad routes. Those Windham residents sheltering self-emancipated slaves likely included WPC ministers and deacons who were leaders of the movement.

The unveiling of Windham's monument to its own African American residents will be in May. WPC, as the church of these residents, will have a part in this ceremony which is being planned by the Windham African American Committee. The monument will be a marker along the NH Black Heritage Trail which begins in Portsmouth (<https://blackheritagetrailnh.org>). Watch for additional information in the coming months.

Connections news...

This committee is hoping to reconnect the congregation and provide opportunities to get together as a WPC community. Friends are always welcome to all events!

Below are some upcoming events with more info to follow as the date gets closer!

Thursday Mornings in March – Griffin Park walks at 9am. Leashed dogs, babies in strollers, small children – all are welcome to enjoy a morning walk! Come one. Come all!

Friday, May 13th – Movie Night in the church parking lot – we will have a large movie screen so just bring your own chairs and we will provide the free popcorn! Movie title to be announced later.

Sunday, June 5th – Bedrock Gardens in Lee, NH (www.bedrockgardens.org) – after church we will drive to Bedrock Gardens, bring a picnic lunch and we can all lunch together on their picnic tables. Following that, all can enjoy the 20-acre property at their own pace.

Admission: suggested donation for adults and children 13 and up - \$10. Kids 12 and under are free.

Sunday, September 11th – Ice Cream Truck – available after the service to welcome back our Sunday School friends and everyone from summer vacations.

NextGen news...

Children's Ministry:

This winter, children, young and not-so-young, worked very hard to produce a beautiful and hilarious Christmas Play, entitled, "The Noise Before Christmas." It was a wonderful show with a timeless message about generosity. I am grateful for the many hours of hard work making costumes, memorizing lines, and rehearsing that were given to make this special evening possible!

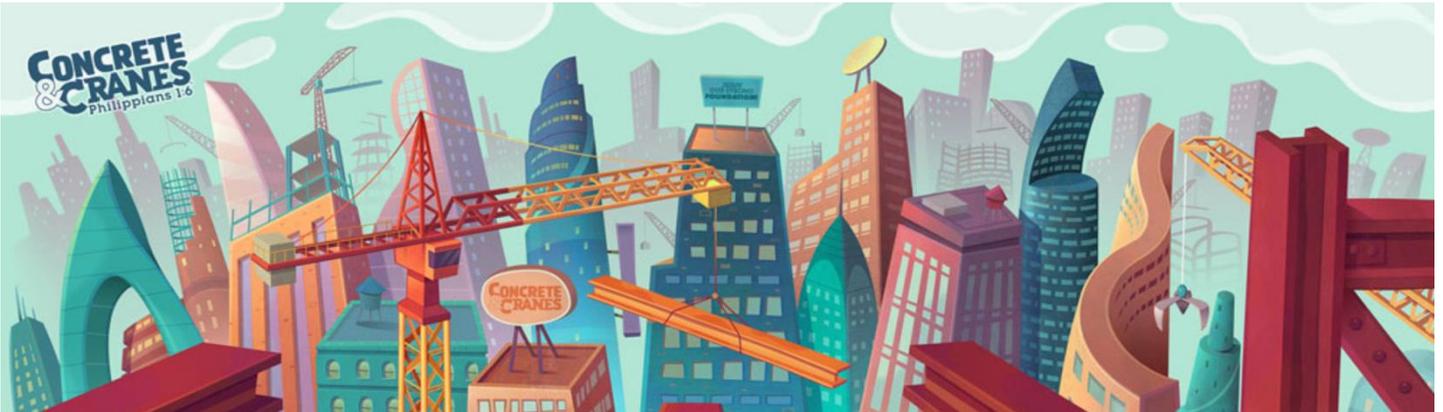




Children have been enjoying Sunday School during the worship service almost every week, as they continue to move through the story of the whole Bible. On the first Sunday of every month, children remain in the worship service for all-age-worship. Handouts are given to them to encourage them to engage with the sermon, and we will sing kid-friendly songs, as well. We are excited about these Sundays because we hope they will help children to feel that they are a part of the Church just as much as grown ups are!

VBS theme this year is “Concrete and Cranes”

In other Children’s ministry news, VBS is coming! I hope you will be a part of it July 11th-14th, from 9:00 am until 12:00 pm each day. Registration will take place online and will open soon! We are asking families to contribute \$25 per child to help us cover the costs of running VBS (a second child in the same family is an additional \$15, and for a whole family we will cap the cost at \$50). We do not want the cost to keep anyone from attending, so please don’t hesitate to reach out to Anna Hadorn if the fee is an issue! I hope that you will attend VBS if you are in grades K-5, and that you will consider volunteering if you are older.



Youth Ministry:

Middle School Youth Group is back in the swing of things after taking a break over the holidays! We have a great time together sharing snacks, playing games, sharing our “highs, lows, and buffalos, and discussing the book of Mark together. Middle School Youth Group will not meet the week of Winter Break (3/2), and will not meet during Holy Week (4/13). Other than those two weeks, we’ll be together on Wednesdays evenings from 6:30 – 8:00 pm every week!

High School Lunches are happening on the second Sunday of every month! We’ve enjoyed trips to Dunkin’ Donuts, Capri Pizza, and more. We meet from 11:00 am until noon, with rides from the church at 10:45 am. If you are in high school, we hope you’ll mark your calendars for our upcoming lunches on March 13th, April 10th, and May 8th! We also are excited to announce that we are having a Game Night on Friday evening, March 18th! It will be a great time, and we really hope our high schoolers are able to join in on the fun!

In November, our Middle & High School students collected two carloads of food for the Lazarus House Food Drive! We are grateful for the generosity of those who donated food!



Blessings to you all!