



February 2021– Volume 32– Issue 2

GO EASY

The day my father died, I was at the grocery store buying bananas. I remember thinking to myself, “This is insane. Your father just died. Why are you buying bananas?” But we needed bananas. We’d be waking up for breakfast tomorrow morning, and there would be no bananas, so there I was.

A lot of other stuff still needed doing too, so over the coming days I would navigate parking lots, wait in restaurant lines, and sit on park benches; pushing back tears, fighting to stay upright, and in general always being seconds from a total, blubbering, room-clearing freak out.

I wanted to wear a sign that said: **I JUST LOST MY DAD. PLEASE GO EASY.** Unless anyone passing by looked deeply into my bloodshot eyes or noticed the occasional break in my voice and thought enough to ask, it’s not like they’d have known what’s happening inside me or around me. They wouldn’t have had any idea of the gaping sinkhole that had just opened up and swallowed the normal life of the guy next to them in the produce section.

While I didn’t want to physically wear my actual circumstances on my chest, it probably would have caused people around me to give me space or speak softer or move more carefully, and it might have made the impossible, almost bearable.

Everyone around you; the people you share the grocery store line with, pass in traffic, sit next to at work, encounter on social media, and see across the kitchen table, they’re all experiencing the collateral damage of living. They are all grieving someone, missing someone, worried about someone. Their marriages are crumbling or their mortgage payment is late or they’re waiting on their child’s test results, or they’re getting bananas five years after a death and still pushing back tears because the loss feels as real as it did that first day.

Every single human being you pass by today is

fighting to find peace and to push back fear; to get through their daily tasks without breaking down in front of the bananas or in the carpool lane or at the post office. Maybe they aren’t mourning the sudden, tragic passing of a parent, but wounded, exhausted, pain-ravaged people are everywhere, everyday stumbling all around us. And yet most of the time we’re fairly oblivious to them: *parents whose children are terminally ill, couples in the middle of divorce, people grieving loss of loved ones and relationships, kids being bullied at school, teens who want to end their lives, people marking the anniversary of a death, parents worried about their depressed teen, spouses whose partners are deployed in combat, families with no idea how to keep the lights on, single parents with little help and little sleep.*

Everyone is grieving and worried and fearful, and yet none of them wear the signs, none of them have labels, and none of them come with written warnings reading: **I’M STRUGGLING. BE NICE TO ME.**

Since they don’t, it’s up to you and me to look more closely and more deeply at everyone around us: at work, or at the gas station, or in the produce section, and never to assume they aren’t all just hanging on by a thread. Because most people are hanging on by a thread, and our simple kindness can be that thread.

As you make your way through the world today, people won’t be wearing signs, but if you look with the right eyes, you’ll see the signs. There are people grieving all around you. Go easy.

**IN A WORLD WHERE YOU CAN
BE ANYTHING, BE KIND**



The Beat

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Gothenburg First United Methodist Church

LENTEN STUDY

A Lenten Study will be held each Wednesday until Easter, starting on Wed. February 24th and all are welcome to attend. There will be a light supper at 6:30 pm and study will start at 7:00 pm. If you are not comfortable taking part in the meal, you can still join us for study. We ask that you sign up on the sheet on the desk outside of the sanctuary or let Becky know in the office.



ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

This service will take place on Wednesday Feb. 17th. There will be a light supper at 6:30 pm with service to be held at 7:00 pm. If you don't want to participate in the meal, that is fine, you are still welcome to attend the service.



“Anyone can find the dirt in someone. Be the one that finds the GOLD.”

~Proverbs 11:27

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAY'S

- 1– Kadie Anderson, Savanna Porter
- 2– Braeden Sabin
- 5– Patrick Moore
- 7– Ali Bartels
- 10– Kelly McCoy
- 13– Brian Weaver
- 14– Judy Vincent, Lois Johnson
- 15– McKinley McCoy
- 16– Hailey O'Keefe, Trey Bartels
- 17– John Jensen, Steven Windrum
- 18– Cora Bosch, Kathryn Bartruff, Justin Sabin
- 20– Kim Humphrey, Beth Advey, Sharon Sukraw
- 21– Carol Bartels
- 23– Preston Foster
- 24– Brian Brede
- 27– Ashley Abramson
- 28– Mike Anderson, Linda Bowman





From the Pastor's Desk

Lent Greetings,

I hope this Newsletter finds you doing well. Ash Wednesday this year will be on February 17th. That will be the beginning of the Lent season, a forty-day period of reflection, fasting and penitence preceding Easter. There will be Ash Wednesday service at 7 pm. Join us as we begin this very important season in the Christian calendar.

I am aware that some people may prefer to not observe Lent. We may be more comfortable with the joy and celebration of Easter than with the darkness that preceded it.

Some years ago, I followed a fast through the forty days of Lent and found that it changed my view of Easter, and even changed me. Fasting and meditating on my weaknesses helped me grasp the intense significance of the crucifixion and gave me a deeper and powerful longing for the resurrection, which then became joy on Easter Sunday. I have since purposed to do something big or small each Lenten season to help me remember and meditate on the events leading to Easter. Lent is a chance to remember the dark before the dawn, the sin that Jesus took to the cross. Lent helps us experience our part in the Passion (suffering) of Jesus. We face our humanity during Lent, we learn that sin still dwells in us and that we still need a savior. This makes Lent an attitude. It is an attitude of honesty and humility, as we confess our sins to God. But Lent can also be an attitude of relief and joy, knowing that our sins have been forgiven. I encourage you to consider the ways that you can remember your part in the passion play during this season of Lent.

Every Wednesday during Lent season, I will lead a Lenten study and reflection based on James Moore's book "give Up Something Bad for Lent" Please consider joining us for this study.



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Lenten reflection on repentance

What was the sort of 'hole' man had got himself into? He had tried to set up on his own, to behave as if he belonged to himself. In other words, fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms. Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realizing that you have been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor – that is the only way out of our 'hole'.

This process of surrender – this movement full speed astern – is what Christians call repentance. Now repentance is no fun at all. It is something

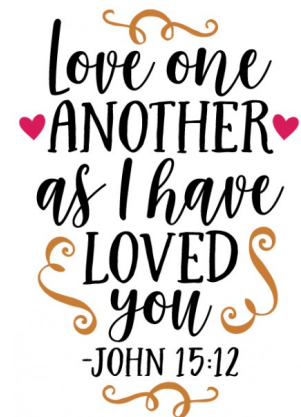
much harder than merely eating humble pie. It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death. In fact, it needs a good man to repent. And here comes the catch. Only a bad person needs to repent. Only a good person can repent perfectly. The worse you are the more you need it and the less you can do it. The only person who could do it perfectly would be a perfect person – and he would not need it." (From the book "Mere Christianity" by C.S. Lewis)

I wish you all a meaningful Lent Season.

Pastor Grace Gichuru.

FAMILY MATTERS GOING STRONG

Getting back together on Wednesday night has brought joyful noise and delicious food to the fellowship hall again. Supper is served at 6:30 pm with the older youth heading upstairs at 7:00 pm for an hour of devotions and lessons. Joe Gray and Jordan Suhler from Camp Comeca are the youth group leaders. The younger worshipers are led by Sarah Anderson. They are learning about the life of Jesus through videos, games, and activities. We will be hosts for the Ash Wednesday Service on Feb. 17th. Come and join our friendly group as we enter the Lenten season.



FACTS AND FIGURES

General Giving Thru Jan. 31 Actual: \$19,036
Budgeted: \$15,927

Percent of Budgeted: 119.2%

Paid Apportionments Thru Jan. 31
Actual: \$1,594.75 Budgeted: \$1,594.75

Percent of Budgeted: 100%



Photo credit: Lynnette Stevens

