

Launching Lent: Aurora Methodists to feature Mardi Gras-style Fat Tuesday Dixieland jazz concert

Flowing Forth United Methodist Church in Aurora will stage a fourth annual Mardi Gras-style jazz concert on Fat Tuesday, Feb. 25, to open Lent, 40 days leading to Easter.

The public is invited. Admission and parking are free. Flowing Forth UMC meets at Aurora Christian School, 2255 Sullivan Rd. in Aurora. Please enter door 11. The church and school are not affiliated.

Rev. Derek Rogers, Flowing Forth pastor, said the event includes a chili supper at 5:30 p.m. followed by a worship service and the jazz concert. The supper will feature chili, cornbread and dessert homemade by Flowing Forth congregants. A freewill offering will be taken to support Methodist ministries.

The Matt Erion Dodecaband, a 12-piece Aurora group, will perform a variety of spiritual music from Dixieland to swing to gospel and R&B. Selections will include "Precious Lord, Take My Hand," "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" and "When the Saints go Marching In."



Featured musicians will be Jeff Ford, Aurora, soprano saxophone, Nate Pritt, S. Elgin, trumpet; and Michael Townley, Batavia, trombone; and Andy Hix, Batavia, drums. Featured guest will be Tony Camardo, North Aurora, on guitar. Erion founded the band in 2016 and debuted its Fat Tuesday concert in 2017.

Batavia resident Erion said, "It has been the custom in many Christian traditions to have a celebration of fellowship as believers make a final preparation for lent. In our community of believers, we will come together for fellowship and a lively worship featuring a band playing classic spiritual music."

He added, "The opportunity for me to present jazz in a worship space is a treasured opportunity for me. I have always felt the sound of jazz is about freedom, democracy and learning to bridge the gaps and find common ground between people and cultures.

"The congregation of Flowing Forth looks forward to partnering with the wonderful people of the Aurora Cluster Methodist churches on what is sure to be a memorable night of worship and fellowship."

In addition to Erion, band members are: Jeff Ford, Oswego, soprano saxophone; Roland Schuetz, Aurora, alto sax; Walt Howard, Sugar Grove, tenor sax; Randy Ream, Elburn, bari sax; Nate Pritt, S. Elgin, lead trumpet; Mark Lathan, Bartlett, second trumpet; Keith Rogers, North Aurora, third trumpet; Tim Felts, Oswego, trombone; John Klatt, Aurora, tuba and trombone; Jim Abrahamson, Chicago, piano; and Andy Hix, Batavia, drums.

The Aurora UMC Cluster, five area Methodist churches, will co-sponsor a public Ash Wednesday service at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 26, at Wesley UMC, 14 N. May St. in Aurora. Admission and parking are free.

The service will feature a combined choir, lay speakers from Cluster churches and imposition of ashes by clergy. Cluster churches are Flowing Forth UMC, Wesley UMC and Bethany of Fox Valley UMC, all in Aurora; plus Kaneland UMC and Sugar Grove UMC.

Call (630) 239-2321 for more information.

PHOTO (bottom): Matt Erion of Batavia, from left, Glen West, Geneva; and Chuck Ford, Oswego, perform in a 2019 Fat Tuesday concert by the Matt Erion Dodecaband. The 12-piece band returns for a fourth annual concert at 7 p.m. Feb. 25 by Flowing Forth United Methodist Church at Aurora Christian School, 2255 Sullivan Rd. in Aurora. (Al Benson photo)

PHOTO (top): The Matt Erion Dodecaband, shown in a 2019 concert, performs Mardi Gras-style music in a fourth annual Fat Tuesday concert at 7 p.m. Feb. 25 by Flowing Forth United Methodist Church at Aurora Christian School, 2255 Sullivan Rd. in Aurora. (Al Benson photo)