

The Church Herald

Stony Brook Community Church (United Methodist), Stony Brook, New York



STONY BROOK COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Please send updates and information to
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The Need For Prayer

The 40 Day Prayer Challenge

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,"
declares the LORD. Jeremiah 29:11-14 (NIV)

In a little over 2 weeks from now our church will embark on one of the most important chapters in our recent history, filled with hope for our future together: The 40 Day Prayer Challenge. On Sunday, February 11th, every adult and teen in the church will receive a free copy of Draw the Circle: The 40 Day Prayer Challenge by New York Times best-selling author Mark Batterson. This book is the follow-up to his New York Times best-seller, The Circle Maker.



Please know that this book and our corresponding church-wide prayer initiative is about your relationship with God and where that can take you! It is also about being a church that prays. All too often people attend church occasionally but do not spend time with God in prayer each day. However, prayer is absolutely key to a life lived in Christ. Not only is it important to our relationship with God (and make no mistake, God wishes to have a relationship with you), but it is also vital to our ability to be the faithful, effective church of Christ together today. Our hope is to have a wonderful and respectful dialogue around the topic of prayer throughout the course of Lent - especially on Sundays.

With all that is going on in our world, I cannot imagine a more important initiative for God's children to be engaged in. I believe this prayer challenge has been prepared for our church and our community for just such a time as this. Naturally, this spiritual growth and prayer challenge is an opportunity that we don't want anyone to miss. My prayer is that it will enrich each individual participant's life as well as the life of our church and community. That being said, please feel free to invite neighbors and friends to take part in this prayer challenge and the reading of the book with us.

NYAC VISION STATEMENT

The New York Annual Conference, through the grace of God, embodies a beloved community of hope, building up a healthy Body of Christ, with heartwarmed United Methodists in mission for the transformation of the world.



In preparation for this challenge, it is important to remember that God's power is unleashed through the activity of our prayers already, for it is prayer that ultimately brings the power of God into this process, transforming lives and bringing lasting change to our church and community. The truth is, when prayer touches the fuse of God's power, amazing things can happen! So please be praying about your involvement in this initiative and for our church. Also, come to church and sign-up for this church-wide challenge this Sunday.

Whenever God determines to do a great work, [God] first sets the people to pray."

C. H. Spurgeon

Remember, prayer is the simplest form of communication that we have with God. It is during these times of reflection and quietness that we hear God speaking to our hearts and renewing us in God's presence. Although prayer is a special time of expressing our love and relationship with God, confessing our sins, and expressing our own needs to God, it is also a time to ask God to be working in the world around us and in us.

There is no more important time in the history of our church than now! This is true for many reasons. We are praying that God will send a wave of spiritual growth and peace across our community, our nation, and the world. Please remember to keep our church, our community, and our world in your prayers every day. And please don't forget to pray for our new mission initiative with our local school district over the coming months.

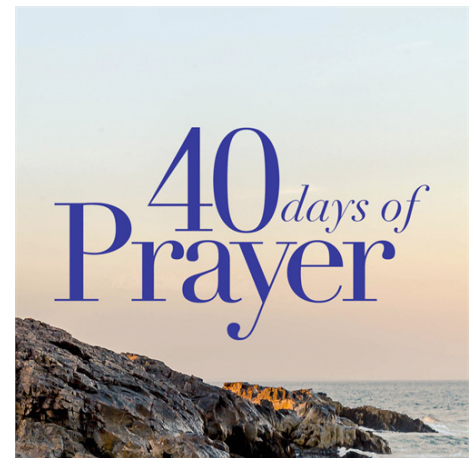
One other thing about prayer: don't worry about using the right words. Simply offer to God what is in your heart. God already knows what is there. For you are loved with an everlasting love that only God can offer. Enrich that loving relationship by making an appointment to be with God today and every day during Lent. You matter more than you could ever imagine to God, and your prayers matter during this incredible time.

When you receive your book you will notice that it will provide you with daily reflections and prayer. Read only the reflections and prayers for the assigned day. Then spend some time in prayer with God. That's it! I believe, while all of us are quite busy, the 5-10 minutes a day that this will require is not an overwhelming amount of time for each of us to commit to God. You won't regret it, and our church will be the better for it.

Again, you can sign-up to be a participant in the challenge over the coming Sundays' beginning with Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday, February 4th. You will not regret it! If you have not yet decided to take this important step, please prayerfully consider doing so this week. Your life and the church will be blessed through your participation.

In God's love, joy, and humor,

Pastor Chuck



Personal Thanks

Thank you so much to everyone who has offered such generous help and support while I am recovering from my knee replacement. Special thanks to Jen Alexander, Gail Chase, Peter Lunde, Pat Martin, Donna Smith, and Pastor Chuck for keeping the office running smoothly, and to Gail Chase, Barbara Lynch, Karin Lynch, Carolyn Martin, Pat Martin, Donna Smith, and Susan Trawick for providing such wonderful food. Stony Brook Community Church is an exceptional place to work and I know I'm lucky to have a job here.

Liz Twiss, church secretary

Lectionary

February 4:
Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany 2018, Year B
Isaiah 40:21-31
Psalm 147:1-11, 20c (UMH 859)
1 Corinthians 9:16-23
Mark 1:29-39

February 11:
Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany 2018, Year B
2 Kings 2:1-12
Psalm 50:1-6 (UMH 783)
2 Corinthians 4:3-6
Mark 9:2-9

February 14:
Ash Wednesday 2018, Year B
Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
Psalm 51:1-17 (UMH 785)
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

February 18:

First Sunday in Lent 2018, Year B
Genesis 9:8-17
Psalm 25:1-10 (UMH 756)
1 Peter 3:18-22
Mark 1:9-15

February 25:

Second Sunday in Lent 2018, Year B
Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16
Psalm 22:23-31 (UMH 752)
Romans 4:13-25
Mark 8:31-38



SBCC Mission Outreach News

Out of a year of Visioning Meetings, the attendees of those meetings decided last spring to focus our mission outreach on a partnership with the Three Village Central School District to help families in need within the district. UMW has provided outreach in a limited way for several years through donations of Thanksgiving Boxes and Angel Tree Gifts. Going forward we hope to make a wider impact.

Last fall Pastor Chuck, Donna Smith and Gail Chase met with Cathy Taldone, Director of School and Community Partnerships at TVCSD and the School Social Workers to determine how SBCC might be of help to them. The following areas of concern were presented at the meeting by the district: holiday gifts, stocking school food pantries, PAC Scholarships (for district students), homework help, tutoring/study skills, mentoring/big brother/big sister, and minor home repairs.

The Mission Team thought the most immediate and effective way to begin making a difference was through monthly Sunday Food Drives at local supermarkets to stock the school pantries. We will need help at each drive to hand out flyers detailing the donations that are needed. We will also need folks with SUVs to transfer donations to their vehicles and then deliver them Monday during school hours. Sign-up sheets and information will be posted in the Community Room. Current members of the Mission Team are Pastor Chuck, Cheryl Davey, Karin Lynch, Anthony Sellers, Donna Smith and Gail Chase. We are excited about our mission possibilities and hope that you will join in this effort to make a difference.

February 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 5:00 MYF	29 7:00 (pm) AA	30 7:30 UMW Valentine's Workshop	31 1:00 and 7:00: Disciple classes	1 6:00 AA 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	2 10:00 AIAnon	3
4 <u><i>Souper Bowl of Caring</i></u> 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship	5 7:00 (pm) AA	6 7:30 Finance Committee	7 1:00 and 7:00: Disciple classes	8 7:00 AA 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	9 10:00 AIAnon	10
11 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 5:00 MYF	12 7:00 (pm) AA	13	14 <i>Ash Wednesday</i> 1:00 and 7:00: Disciple classes All-Day Prayer Vigil TBD Worship with imposition of ashes	15 7:00 AA 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	16 10:00 AIAnon	17
18 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 5:00 MYF	19 <i>Presidents Day Holiday</i> 7:00 (pm) AA	20 7:30 (pm) Trustees	21 1:00 and 7:00: Disciple classes	22 7:00 AA 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	23 10:00 AIAnon	24
25 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship	26 7:00 (pm) AA	27 7:30 (pm) Trustees	28 1:00 and 7:00: Disciple classes	1 6:00 AA 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	2 10:00 AIAnon	3



By Magrey deVega

A recent online, non-scientific survey by *Christianity Today* revealed the most popular things people give up for Lent: 1) social networking, 2) chocolate, 3) Twitter, 4) alcohol, and 5) chips. I for one am giving up the use of electronic devices at the dinner table, much to the delight of my two daughters. Madelyn is giving up playing games on her smartphone, and Grace is giving up afternoon snacks. I had to convince them that giving up homework was not an appropriate Lenten discipline.

As I've thought about it, there are some deeper parts of your life that you might consider giving up for Lent, for the sake of your own spiritual maturity and personal development. In no particular order, and by no means exhaustive, here are some things I thought of that you might want to consider as part of your Lenten journey this year:

Give up the need to be right all the time.

Business author Patrick Lencioni said, "People don't need to feel like they are right, as much as they need to feel like they've been heard." Yes, claim your voice, assert your convictions, and engage the issues that matter to you. But once you've been heard, consider the possibility that you might have something to learn from someone who disagrees with you. That's often how we learn our most important lessons in life. (James 1:19)

Give up your reluctance to ask for help.

It is true that giving up something for Lent requires discipline, will, and self-mastery. But it also requires the recognition that we cannot always be self-sufficient. You are not superhuman. You do not have inexhaustible reserves. Turn to loved ones for support, seek the wise counsel of others, and don't be afraid to ask for help. (Psalm 69)

Give up your fear of failure.

Mother Theresa said, "God does not call us to be successful; God calls us to be faithful." You may sometimes gauge your self-worth by what you have achieved and how you have succeeded. You might subconsciously depend on the affirmation of others to feel good about yourself. But your worth does not equal your work, nor are you defined by your failures. Some people live a whole lifetime before they come to realize that. Save yourself the heartache later. Learn it now. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Give up comparing yourself to others.

Forget the Joneses. They are not worth keeping up with. Find contentment in what you have, and who God has created you to be. You do not need the envious admiration of others. You need not be defined by what you do not have. While there is nothing wrong with being self-motivated and goal-oriented, don't evaluate your life in comparison to others. It's not worth it. (James 4:2-3)

Give up the need to have things all figured out.

Embrace mystery. Dance with your doubts. Acknowledge that you do not and cannot know it all. Resist the temptation to rationalize the irrational parts of your faith, and recognize that some of the greatest things in life are those things that cannot be explained or fully understood. Things like God's love for you, and how God is with you even when you don't believe it. (Romans 11:33-36)

Give up your fears of the future.

I get it. These are frightening times for many people. There is great nervousness about the way things are in the world. And I would guess that you are dealing with fears yourself. I have learned over my twenty years of



parish ministry that everyone — without exception — has something that they are dealing with. We all have our fears, but we don't need to be defined by them. For God is a God of hope. (Matthew 6:33-34)

Give up anesthetizing yourself to pain and suffering.

The long shadow of suffering is cast in many shades, like loneliness, grief, abandonment, and betrayal. None of us enjoys going through difficulties, and our instinct is often to numb ourselves from the pain in ways that are actually self-destructive: giving in to addictions, accumulating possessions, pursuing temporal pleasures, and cocooning ourselves from the rest of the world. These might anesthetize us in the short term, but they prevent us from allowing that pain to help us stretch, grow, and trust in God. (Romans 5:3-5)

Give up the need to be in control.

This one is at the heart of the season of Lent. It is a reminder that we ultimately are not in control of what happens to us. We cannot control others, and we can hardly claim to have full control of ourselves and our future. Let the Covenant Prayer of Wesley be your guide, to remind you that you are not your own; you belong to God. For we must ultimately surrender our control over to a God who has created us and claimed us from the beginning. (Matthew 16:24-25)

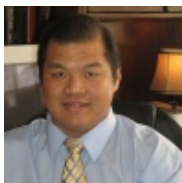
Give up the need to make everyone happy.

It's not like you can, anyway. You may have a knack for understanding what others want from you, but you must also claim your own convictions and understand your limitations. Your job is not to be all things to all people and please everyone you know. God calls you to live a life of integrity, uncompromising in your commitment to Jesus Christ. For God, after all, is the only one you need to please. (Galatians 1:10)

Give up all the non-essential noise in your life.

This may be the toughest thing of all to give up, but it may be the key to a deeply moving Lenten season for you. Your life is inundated by competing voices and blaring noises from the culture around you. Pay attention to your breath. Take walks. Drive without the radio on. Set the cell phone down when you're at the family table. Watch less television, read more newspapers and books, and look people in the eye when you talk to them. Most of all, pray to God, "Silence all voices but your own." Turn down the volume of your life, and connect to a God who knows you better than you know yourself. (Psalm 46:10)

Blessings to you on your Lenten journey!



The Rev. Magrey R. deVega is the Senior Pastor of Hyde Park United Methodist Church in Tampa, Florida. He is the author of *Awaiting the Already: An Advent Journey Through the Gospels* (Abingdon), *Songs for the Waiting: Reflections on the Songs and Stories of Advent* (Westminster/John Knox), *One Faithful Promise: The Wesleyan Covenant for Renewal* (Abingdon), and the forthcoming book *Embracing the Uncertain: A Lenten Study for Unsteady Times* (Abingdon). He lives in Tampa with his two teenage daughters and their beloved dog, Micah.