

*News of the
Clinton United
Presbyterian Church
Rev. Laura E. Strauss*





Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. – Luke 4:1-2

Every novel was miserable. Dr. Erica Johnson and I each stayed at Chatham College for a year. I was there as a student. She was there as an English professor. I took a class with her every semester. And every novel that she taught was absolutely, positively, utterly, and completely miserable. One day I asked if she could explain to me why she only taught such dark texts.

“There’s beauty in the darkness,” she answered. That was all.

To this day, I’m not satisfied with her answer. But, I agree with her. There is a certain beauty in darkness. Barbara Brown Taylor writes in her book *Learning*

to Walk in the Dark that darkness is essential to our physical well-being. “We not only need plenty of darkness to sleep well; we also need it to *be* well. The circadian rhythm of waking and sleeping matches the natural cycle of day and night, which affects everything from our body chemistry to our relationships.” In fact, this rhythm of darkness and lights affects our very relationship with God.

As the Epiphany light is dimming, we are entering into a holy season of darkness on February 10 with the start of Lent. As with the night, when we are tempted to turn on all the lights in the house, it is tempting to ignore Lent and the darkness that it includes. We quickly tire of the plodding hymns, the constant mention of the cross, the incessant repetition of Jesus’ forty days, and the tiresome calling to fast in recognition of it all. But, there is beauty in Lent’s darkness.

Lent’s darkness is beautiful because Lent draws us closer to Jesus. When we fast throughout Lent, and focus our hearts on the suffering of Christ, we better understand Christ. His suffering for our sake begins to transform our souls so that we are conformed more and more into his likeness.

Lent’s darkness is beautiful because Lent draws us closer to each other. Lent is an ideal time for us to encourage one another to grow closer to Jesus. When we know that each of us is fasting in some way, we can help one another to be faithful. Lent strengthens our bond together as the body of Christ for the world.

Lent’s darkness is beautiful because Lent gives us an appreciation for Easter. One doesn’t fully appreciate being well until one has been sick. Likewise, we don’t appreciate the resurrection of Jesus Christ until we have walked alongside him on his way to Calvary. We cannot fully celebrate and sing ‘Alleluia!’ on Easter morning until we have allowed the Spirit to show us the pain of Good Friday afternoon.

Though these days are miserable, and though Lent is truly a dark time in the church year, take heart, friends. The darkness is only here for a time. The darkness does more for our bodies, for our relationships with others, and our relationship with Jesus than we could possibly know. And, morbid though it may be, the darkness is beautiful.

In Christ’s Service,

Pastor Laura





What Is Ash Wednesday?

Ash Wednesday is one of the holiest days of the church calendar. Ash Wednesday opens Lent, a 40 day season of fasting and prayer before Easter (the 40 days do not include Sundays). This holy day comes from the ancient Jewish tradition of penance and fasting. We use ashes as a symbol of this penance, symbolizing the dust from which God made us. As Pastor Laura applies the ashes to your forehead, she will speak the words, "Remember the you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Ashes also symbolize grief. In this case, we grieve because we have sinned and caused division between ourselves and God. This practice of wearing ashes as a sign of penance reaches back to at least the second-century church. **We invite you to join us as we begin this solemn season of Lent with the holy day of Ash Wednesday with worship on February 10th at 6:30 p.m.**



Why are the Hymns So MISERABLE?!

It's that time of year again: time for melting snow, gray skies and.....dirges in church. Why are we singing so many miserable songs in what is already such a miserable season? We are singing miserable songs because, beginning on February 10, we are in the holy season of Lent. Lent marks the forty days, not including Sundays, leading up to Easter. These forty days represent Jesus' forty days in the desert fasting and praying, enduring the temptation of the evil one, and preparing for his earthly ministry. Lent is a season of preparing, repenting and fasting for Easter. It's a season for self-examination, self-reflection and prayer. We cannot fully enjoy the hope of Easter until we have fully appreciated our brokenness and Christ's sacrifice in Lent. So, don't worry, the miserable hymns aren't here forever! On Easter Sunday, the chipper hymns will return and we will CELEBRATE the resurrection of our triumphant Lord for the sake of our sins!



Thank You from the Strauss Family

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Thank you for your kind and generous gift this Christmas season! Ethan and I appreciate your thoughtfulness and generosity. Not only do you make our family feel like we are YOUR family, but you have gone above and beyond to care for us as we have sought to serve this church community. Thank you very much and we look forward to serving you in this new year. In Christ's Service, Pastor Laura

Thank You from the Boy Scout Troop 830

To Our Friends at Clinton UP Church, Thank you for your generous contribution of \$50.00 to Boy Scout Troop 830. We are truly blessed to have your wonderful support not only at our Annual Pancake Breakfast fund raiser, but throughout the entire year, every year, for over forty years, now! It's our pleasure to be able to help out the church whenever you need a few extra hands. Thank You, Nancy Volk, Boy Scout Troop 830, Committee Chair

Church DEACONS

Please keep your deacon committee in your prayers as we start a new year of service. We welcome Barb Cook and Marsha Beck to our team, and look forward to exciting church activities. We help Pastor Laura with visitations every month we host funeral dinners, we monetarily support folks in need, we keep the supply cupboard filled, we help with the food pantry, and so many more things that keep us all busy all year. Please keep in mind the food panty monthly giving item. You will find a list on the table in the narthex, **February's item is Soup.** If you know of someone that needs a visit or a meal or a phone call, please let one of us know. Clinton church is responsible for helping to pass out food items in March, please mark your calendars now for this March activity. **Distribution days and times are Tuesday March 8th 8:30 A.M. – 12:30 and Wednesday March 9th 4:40 P.M. - 6:00 and Tuesday March 22nd 8:30 – 12:30 and Wednesday March 23rd 4:30 P.M. – 6:00.** If you can donate some time to any of these days, please come and join us.

Cemetery Board

The Clinton U.P. Church is asking for a sealed bid for the mowing of the old and new sections of the cemetery. Also, sealed bids for trimming of the old section of the cemetery.



The Women's Group will meet on **Thursday evening at 6:30 pm on February 4th** when Carol Elek will talk about LOVER. We were so pleased to have so many ladies join us in January and we encourage all the ladies in our church to come and enjoy the friendship and fellowship of this very active group. **Be sure to mark your calendars for the Soup and Sandwich luncheon on February 14th.....take your sweetie to lunch that day.** We have lots of activities planned for the future including a play with the Hickery Players, in March, which includes Cheryl Smith and her son Tyler, this family was very active in our church back a few years ago. Look in the bulletin

for more info on this event. We are also getting prepared for our annual **Ladies Tea in May 7th** and our entertainment will be Cindy Speck Ventriloquist. Don't forget to mark your calendar for this wonderful activity. **Please keep up in your prayers and be sure to come and join us on February 4th at 6:30 pm.**

Scout Sunday



Boy Scout Sunday is **Sunday, February 7th**. Please join us for worship at 11:00 a.m. as the scouts participate in this special day

~~~~~

## A "Change" in Fundraisers

The youth group is collecting loose change for the mission fund of Clinton U.P. Church in the interest of their summer mission trip. You can place your loose change in the container in the container in the narthex/entryway. The youth will wrap the loose change on the evening on **Sunday, February 7th**. All change is due by then. Thank you for your support!

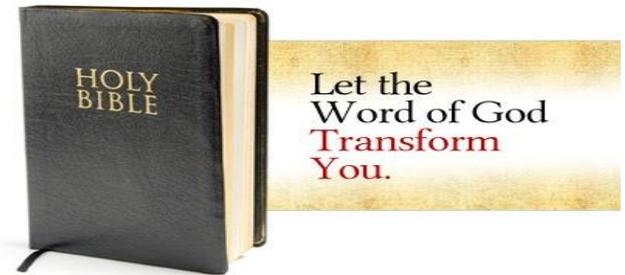




Youth Group Day of Service Update on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 18, the youth gave of their day in Christian service. They arrived at the church at 8:30 a.m. where they began by emptying, cleaning and re-organizing the two Christian Education closets across from the pastor's study. Deacon Emily Metz devoted her entire day to organizing every item in every single bin in those closets, in fact! Following the closets, the youth scrubbed the tables and chairs in the Fellowship Hall. They also scrubbed out both cabinets in the 'comfy room' Following a pizza lunch, the youth scrubbed all of the pews, vacuumed under the pews in the choir loft, and washed the windows. They completed their service by making cards for Christopher, a teenage boy with down syndrome who has been diagnosed with leukemia that Pastor Laura was connected to through Debbie Searcy. All in all, the youth served well on their day away from school!

### Youth Group 30 Hour Famine

*The youth group will be attending the 30 Hour Famine at Crestfield Camp and Conference Center from February 26 - 28, 2016. They will fast for 30 hours beginning at noon on Friday. We will meet at the church at 5:00 p.m. to drive to Crestfield and will return on Sunday following worship at the camp. While fasting, the youth will learn about local and global hunger, serve in hunger-related missions and, of course, have FUN! We will certainly keep the youth hydrated, don't worry. Cost for the youth is \$40 per person. R.S.V.P by February 14<sup>th</sup>.*



### Scripture Readings in February

February 7, 2016:

#### Transfiguration Sunday

Gospel Reading: Luke 9:28-36  
Old Testament Reading: Exodus 34:29-35

February 10, 2016:

#### Ash Wednesday

Gospel Reading: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21  
Old Testament Reading: Psalm 51:1-17

February 14, 2016:

#### The First Sunday of Lent

Gospel Reading: Luke 4:1-13  
Responsive Psalm: Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

February 21, 2016:

#### The Second Sunday in Lent

Gospel Reading: Luke 13:31-35  
Responsive Psalm: Psalm 27

February 28, 2016:

#### The Third Sunday in Lent

Gospel Reading: Luke 13:1-9  
Responsive Psalm: Psalm 68:1-8

# 3 M's Class CUP

## February 2016

Hi Folks! Our class has enjoyed some new leaders over the past months with fresh thinking and understanding of God's Word. In January we studied "Four Weddings and a Funeral" Wow! We really had some great discussions.

In February our Unit 3 is entitled "Holy Days". If you don't know too much about the Jewish Holy Days and how they can relate to us today, please join us on Sunday mornings in the Fellowship Hall at 9:45 P.M. We will be looking each week progressively at, Passover, Feast of Weeks, Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Booths. Come nourish your faith and celebrate our salvation together! God Bless!



|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| Khloe McCullough.....  | 8  |
| Rev. Bob Downs.....    | 10 |
| Lindsay Thomas.....    | 12 |
| Marysa McConnell.....  | 15 |
| Amanda Wade.....       | 16 |
| Marian McCullough..... | 17 |
| Adren Campbell.....    | 21 |
| Amanda Leonard.....    | 22 |
| Dakota Lamb.....       | 24 |
| Kevin Campbell.....    | 24 |
| Dan Heck.....          | 25 |
| Ben Collins.....       | 26 |

### Per Capita 2016

For your information, the per capita for Pittsburgh Presbytery for 2016 is \$29.10.

For God so loVed the world  
 thAt he gave his  
 onLy  
 begottEn  
 SoN,  
 thaT whoever  
 believEs  
 iN him should not perish  
 but havE everlasting life.

(John 3:16, NKJV)

Tues. January 5, 2016

Dear Clinton Church family,

Just letting you know I am moved into my new apartment in Erie. Sorry this has taken me so long to get this done, but it has been a very big change in my life. All the packing and unpacking has been overwhelming.

Since arriving here, I have had 2 trips to the ER at Hamot Hospital with episodes of "a-fib". I had to stay overnight both times. Never had this before but hopefully with the new medications I may not have anymore. I am trying to relax and get settled in. This place seems very nice and the staff and the other residents seem friendly.

I would like to thank all the sweet people that sent such lovely cards for my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in December. I got 40 cards all together with only 2 duplicates! I have read them over many times. I am thanking God for all my friends from church.

If there is any way possible, I would enjoy continuing to get the "CUP" each month so that I can keep track of all that is going on and remember all my friends.

My new address is: Betty Thomas  
 Room 225  
 Barnabas Court South  
 5416 East Lake Road  
 Erie, PA 16511

My phone number is 1-814-898-5964

**Way To Go, Nathaniel, from Your Church Family!**

**Nathaniel Elek's hockey team won the MLHA tournament, defeating Mt. Lebanon in the finals 2-1.**



**HOLY COMMUNION**

The Lord's Supper will be observed next on the **First Sunday of Lent, February 14th**. Please be reconciled to one another as we prepare our hearts and minds for the partaking of this holy sacrament.

**We Need a Responsible Adult Who Likes FUN! Our summer youth mission trips are coming up and we are in the search of responsible, fun-loving, Jesus-following adults to chaperon these mission adventures. See Pastor Laura if you'd like a part in this exciting opportunity!**



Choral Concerts at Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church The Duquesne University Choirs, with over 100 voices present, will present a choral concert on Sunday, February 21 at 4:00 p.m. They will present Leonard Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms," plus works by Handl, Gabrieli, Henderson, Clausen, and Whitacre. Admission is free for this concern.

On Sunday, March 13 at 4:00 p.m., The Pittsburgh Concert Chorale present "Elijah," Felix Mendelssohn's beloved oratorio with soloists, orchestra, and organ. Tickets for this concert are available at the door or call 412-635-7654.

The Fox Chapel Festival Chorus and The Academy Chamber Orchestra will present Haydn's "Little Chorus Mass" and Mozart's "Vespers," K. 339 on Sunday, April 17 at 4:00 p.m. Guy Russo is directing with organist, David Billings. Admission is free for this concert. Fox Chapel Prebsyterian Church is located at 384 Fox Chapel Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15238 and can be reached at 412-963-8243.

**Understanding Alzheimer's: A Conversation with Dr. Lisa Genova** Pittsburgh Theological Seminary is hosting neuroscientist Dr. Lisa Genova on **June 16, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in Hicks Chapel on the seminary campus**. Dr. Genova is the New York Times bestselling author of Still Alice, Left Neglected, Love Anthony, and Inside the O'Brien's. She says, "Stories are a way into people's hearts, and when this happens, we have more than knowledge. We have real understanding, empathy, sensitivity, the ability to be better caregivers, and maybe the motivation to get involved." Still Alice, now an award-winning major motion picture, tells the story of Dr. Alice Howland, a renowned linguistics professor. When words begin to escape her and she starts becoming lost on her daily jogs, Alice must come face-to-face with a devastating diagnosis: early-onset Alzheimer's disease.

**Individual tickets for this June 16, 2016 event are \$30 (\$25 for groups of 10+) and are available at [www.pts.edu/Genova](http://www.pts.edu/Genova) or at 412-924-1375.** This event - including lecture, Q&A, and book signing - is a great opportunity for health care providers, family and friends of those suffering from the disease, and book clubs to join the conversation.

