



# Church on the Cape Newsletter



March 2025

## From the Pastor's Desk

Are we facing a Niemöller moment? Diana Butler Bass posed that question in a recent post, referring to Martin Niemöller, who was a German theologian and Lutheran pastor during the time Hitler rose to power. He is most frequently remembered for this quote:

*"First, they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me."*

History remembers him for his opposition to Hitler and the Nazi regime, but what we often forget is that he did not begin that way. At first, he was a conservative who opposed the Weimar government of Germany and supported Hitler's rise to power. He was openly anti-Semitic and opposed the Social Democrats and the Communists because of their hostility toward the church. He believed that Hitler would save and preserve the church.

It is tempting to draw parallels with our own time. This is appropriate if we ask who is being singled out, deprived of rights and protection, scapegoated, and demonized. Many of us feel secure in our situations and may even fail to see and understand those who feel threatened and stigmatized. However, when those who are

most vulnerable are mistreated by society; it is a sign that we have lost empathy. When we cannot care for those who appear different than us, the very fabric that holds our society together begins to unravel, and we all become vulnerable to those who wield power.

What we learn from Niemöller's life is that it is possible to change. We can learn from mistakes and misplaced trust. Niemöller made that transformation in his life and almost paid the ultimate price. Because he waited so long, his words rang true that there was no one left to speak out for him when Hitler's regime could no longer tolerate him. Fortunately, he was rescued in the end and was given a second chance to live and share his story.

Given the pace and extent of changes we are experiencing in our society and the direction they are taking, I am genuinely concerned for the more vulnerable people around us. People in our part of the world have already been struggling with the lack of LIHEAP funding to assist with winter heating bills. If there are reductions in SNAP funding (often referred to as food stamps), Medicaid, and Medicare, we risk endangering already struggling families and individuals. Our church is committed to supporting several ministries that help struggling people, but they will be hard-pressed to make up the difference if government aid is significantly reduced.

We have also experienced increasing negativity toward trans-youth. The recent exchange between Governor Mills and President Trump is part of this trend. Trans-youth face challenges and struggles that most of us cannot even begin to know or understand. Singling them out in this way only makes their lives more difficult and painful. These young people need and deserve our support and our compassion, not our rejection and negativity.

If we are going to stand with those who are at risk, the time is now. We should learn a lesson from Niemöller that when we see vulnerable people being harmed, it doesn't matter how we may have felt in the past; we need to come to their aid and defense. As Christians, we are called to stand with those most in need and those most at risk to defend and care for them. It is not too late for us to seek what is right and best for those around us and to do all we can to build a more loving and compassionate world.

### **OBSERVING LENT**

Ash Wednesday falls on March 5 this year and marks the beginning of the season of Lent. In the early days of Christian faith, the season leading up to Easter was a time of learning and preparation for new converts to the faith who sought to be baptized and welcomed into the full fellowship of the church. It was a rigorous and demanding time of learning and formation that culminated in baptism at Easter to demonstrate that in faith, we die and rise to new life with Christ.

Most of us now think of Lent as a time when we pay particular attention to our religious and spiritual lives as we prepare to celebrate Easter. There are traditions of fasting as a spiritual practice that many spiritual guides have advocated as a way of focusing our attention on spiritual growth. Others find it meaningful

to focus on other spiritual practices like daily scripture reading, daily prayer, and other forms of daily devotion. It can be a good time to recommit to regularly attending worship. It may also be meaningful to volunteer in a ministry of service.



It is my plan to offer weekday messages on YouTube that explore the scripture lessons we will be sharing in Sunday worship. Each day will feature a short message and prayer, which you can use in

your own personal devotion time. I won't post messages on Saturday, taking that as a day of rest or Sunday when we can join together in worship.

I pray that each of you will find a way to use the season of Lent to grow in your faith and nurture your spirituality in a way that leads you closer to God.

### **ONLINE WORSHIP**

In an attempt to improve our live-stream and online worship offerings, we are making a transition to using YouTube. We hope this allows us to offer both higher quality and easier access. If you own a smart TV, you can access YouTube directly from your TV and subscribe to the church's channel. You can also use the links posted on our Facebook page and our web page to find our YouTube channel. If you need help, just let us know and we will do all we can to support you!

Rev. Greg Smith



## March Lectionary

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPRESENTATIVE NEEDED

### MAR 02 | Transfiguration Sunday (White)

- Ex 34:29-35
- Ps 99 (UMH 819)
- 2 Cor 3:12-4:2
- Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)

### MAR 05 | Ash Wednesday (Purple or Grey)

- Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
- Ps 51:1-17 (UMH 785)
- 2 Cor 5:20b-6:10
- Matt 6:1-6, 16-21

### MAR 09 | 1st Sunday in Lent; Scouting Sunday (Alternate) (Purple)

- Deut 26:1-11
- Ps 92:1-2, 9-16 (810)
- Romans 10:8b-13
- Luke 4:1-13

### MAR 16 | 2nd Sunday in Lent (Purple)

- Gen 15: 1-12, 17-18
- Ps 27 (UMH 758)
- Phil 3:17-4:1
- Luke 13:31-35

### MAR 23 | 3rd Sunday in Lent (Purple)

- Isa 55:1-9
- Ps 63:1-8 (UMH 788)
- 1 Cor 10:1-13
- Luke 13:1-9

### March 30 | 4th Sunday in Lent; UMCOR Sunday (Purple)

- Josh 5:9-12
- Ps 32 (UMH 766)
- 2 Cor 5:16-21
- Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Last year, Bruce Donath was our Lay Member for the Annual Conference meeting. With Bruce's move, we need to find a new person who is willing to go to the Annual Conference to represent our church. The dates this year are June 19-21. This is an important job that we need to fill as soon as possible. Please speak to Rev. Smith if you are willing to volunteer or if you want more information.

## CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

If you would like to be a volunteer in a Sunday School program for our children, please speak to Rev. Smith. We would like to provide a program, but it will depend on having willing adult volunteers. FROM THE

## FINANCE COMMITTEE

If you have not received your annual Statement of Giving, please let the office know. 207-967-5787 or email [office@churchonthecape.org](mailto:office@churchonthecape.org).



## RESTING IN JESUS



An old hymn declares:

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest.

Lay down, O weary one, lay down your head upon my breast."

I came to Jesus as I was, so weary, worn, and sad.

I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad. (Horatius Bonar, 1846)

Many people these days feel exhausted by division, the news, and hatred that seems louder than love. More than ever, we who are "weary, worn, and sad" need to hear Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest."

Jesus wants to be our resting place — but not so we can hide forever from reality. Instead, he offers a place of refreshment where we can relax long enough to remember that not everything is bad; there is gospel to share. Not everything is hatred; God's love is stronger.

Resting in Jesus, we focus on God's goodness. We are reminded of the love shown by kind people to those in trouble, bold voices

speaking for justice, and warm friendships that brighten our days. Gladdened by rest, we rise again. Jesus walks with us, as always. We can lean on him every step of the way.

—Heidi Hyland Mann

## SPECIAL DATES

- Transfiguration Sunday, *March 2, 2025*
- Ash Wednesday, *March 5, 2025*
- World Day of Prayer, *March 7, 2025*
- **Daylight saving time begins *March 9, 2025***
- First day of spring, *March 20, 2025*

## A LENTEN HISTORY LESSON

Though the date of Easter varies, the majority of the Lenten season (March 5<sup>th</sup> through April 17<sup>th</sup>) occurs during March. In fact, the word *Lent* comes from the Anglo-Saxon words *lenctentid* (meaning "March") and *lencten* (meaning "spring").

The first reference to Lent dates back to 325 AD, in one of the 20 canons decreed at the council of Nicaea. By the eighth century, Christians started observing Lent, and a 10th-century monk named Aelfric connected the use of ashes and "the Lenten fast" to the pre-Easter period.

Lent lasts 40 days to represent Jesus' time in the wilderness when he was tempted by the devil. The six Sundays that occur between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday aren't counted as part of Lent; instead, as the traditional day of worship, they're considered "mini-Easters."

Source: Newsletternewsletter



# A Time to Share

## THE WILDERNESS STATE

The Wilderness State is John Wesley's Sermon 46, which appears in "The Complete Sermons" by John Wesley.

A common challenge facing all of us is the utmost duty to preserve and strengthen our love of God and neighbor. This sermon provides helpful guidance. Excerpts follow:

### SPIRITUAL SLOTH

"...what is the nature of this disease into which so many fall after they have believed? "... "It properly consists in the loss of that faith which God once wrought in their heart. They that are in the wilderness have not now that divine 'evidence' that satisfactory conviction 'of things not seen' which they once enjoyed." (Items just below are paraphrased.)

- They have not now a sure trust in his love.
- And as their love of God is [weakened] so also their love of their neighbor.
- Thirdly, loss of joy in the Holy Ghost.
- The loss of that peace which once passed all understanding.
- The loss of peace is accompanied by a loss of power over sin.

"Such is the nature of what many have termed, and not improperly, The wilderness state." "The most usual cause of inward darkness is sin, of one kind or another." "...It may be hoped ... that there are not many who so despise the riches of his goodness as, while they walk in his light, so grossly and presumptuously rebel against him.

"That light is much more frequently lost by giving way to sins of commission [willful presumption of sin] and omission [failure to act when required.] This indeed does not immediately quench the spirit, but gradually and slowly." "Perhaps no sin or omission more frequently occasions this than the neglect of private prayer." Nothing can be plainer than the life of God in the soul, which does not continue, much less increase unless we use all opportunities of communing with God and pouring out our hearts before him."

"Another sin of omission, which frequently brings the soul of a believer into darkness, is the neglect of what was so strongly enjoined even under Jewish dispensation:" "Thou shall not hate thy brother in thy heart."

"A third cause ... is giving way to some kind of inward sin. "The same effect may be produced by giving place to anger, whatever the provocation or occasion be.

### STAY THE COURSE

"Let us only be careless or faint in our mind; let us be easy and indolent, and our natural darkness will soon return and overspread our souls. It is enough; therefore, if we give way to spiritual sloth, this will effectually darken the soul. It will as surely destroy the light of God, if not so swiftly, as murder or adultery."

### SECOND CAUSE OF DARKNESS

"Another general cause of this darkness is ignorance, likewise of various kinds. If men do not know the Scriptures, if they imagine there are passages either in the Old or New Testament which assert that all believers,

without exception, must sometimes be in darkness, this ignorance will naturally bring upon them the darkness which they expect.

### THIRD CAUSE OF DARKNESS

"A third general cause of this darkness is temptation. When the candle of the Lord first shines on our heads, temptation frequently flees away and totally disappears. But commonly, it is otherwise. In a short time, winds blow, the rains descend, and the floods arise anew.

"The force of those temptations which arise from within will be exceedingly heightened if we before thought too highly of ourselves as if we had been cleansed from all sin. How ready are we to believe that God has fulfilled in us the whole work of faith with power?

### WHAT IS THE CURE?

"What is the cure for it? For instance, is it sin which occasions darkness? What sin?

"If upon the closest search, you can find no sin of commission which causes the cloud upon your soul, inquire next if there be not some sin of omission]. [bullet points added]

- Do you not suffer sin upon your brother?
- Do you reprove them that sin in your sight?
- Do you walk in all the ordinances of God?

If not, if you habitually neglect any one of these known duties, how can you expect that the light of his countenance should continue to shine upon you?

"But perhaps you are not conscious of even any sin of omission which impairs your peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Is there not then some inward sin, which as a root of bitterness springs up in your heart...? [bullet points added]

- Have you not had the root of pride come against you?
- Have you not thought of yourself more highly than you ought to think?
- Have you not in any respect sacrificed to your own net and burned incense to your own drag?
- Have you not ascribed your success in any undertaking to your own courage or strength or wisdom?
- Have you not gloried in anything save the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ
- Have you not sought after or desired praise of men?
- Have you not been offended by any of your brethren?

"Then look unto the Lord, that you may renew your strength; that all this sharpness and coldness may be done away; that love, and peace and joy may return together, and you may invariably be kind to each other, and tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

"Lastly. Suppose darkness is occasioned by manifold and heavy and unexpected temptations. In that case, the best way to prevent this is to teach believers to always expect temptation, seeing they dwell in an evil world, among wicked, subtle, malicious spirits, and have a heart capable of all evil.

"Convince them that the whole work of sanctification is not, as they imaged, wrought at once that when they first believe they are but as newborn babies who gradually grow up and may expect many storms before they come to the full stature of Christ. **Above all, let them be instructed when the storm is upon them, not to reason with the devil, but to pray; to pour out their souls before God and show him of their trouble.**" [emphasis added]

## **Church on the Cape A United Methodist Church**

We of The Church on the Cape represent various religious and cultural backgrounds and lifestyles. We are young, old, middle-aged, single, married, widowed, divorced, parents, grandparents, and members of extended families.

Above all, we are people who take risks, make mistakes,  
confess, repent, and try again.

At the center of our community is Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection are the reasons we are together. The life and hope in this community have more to do with Christ's faithfulness to us than ours to Christ.

Whether you are searching for a faith community or just passing through, we want you to feel at home. Whoever you are, whatever your history, your scars, your gifts;  
You are among persons like yourself.

Join us from wherever you call home. If you like what you see here, we post our virtual Hymn Sing and Sunday Worship Service on our website, [www.churchonthecape.org](http://www.churchonthecape.org).

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