



Pleasant Street United Methodist Church
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"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest," Luke 10:1-2.

Grace and Peace to you in Jesus' Wonderful Name!

Thank you for your service, your prayers, and your commitment to God's mission and purpose as expressed through Pleasant Street UMC. It's an honor and a gift to walk this path of faith with you.

You are cordially invited to a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner, to kick off our Lenten season with *breakfast for dinner*. It's to be held on Tuesday February 21, at St. Luke's UMC, 63 East Broadway, Derry, NH 03038, from 5:30-7:30pm, downstairs. Hope to see you there!

Then, beginning on Ash Wednesday, our tradition as Christians and as Methodists calls us to a time (40 days) of preparation, to anticipate our celebration of Jesus' Resurrection, on Sunday April 9th. For this Season of Lent, 2023, our churches (Pleasant Street & St. Luke's) are being invited to bring a specific focus to our prayerful preparation, fasting, and discernment, namely, to lay a foundation in our hearts and minds for *missional outreach*.

Houses of Peace

During Lent, we'll be walking through a series of sermon messages on missions, based on the teaching and discipleship approach we find in Luke's Gospel, chapters 9 and 10. Beginning on February 26th, we will begin a four-week series on sharing God's peace with others, in the context of home group ministry. Home group ministry offers a context for sharing the Gospel that speaks directly into people's lives in ways that worship services and other forms of outreach *cannot*. The invitation to the families God sends our way (and to whom we are sent) will be simple: "Would you like to have peace in your home?" Who would not like to have peace in their home? Meetings would then take place in *their* home.

During our Lenten "40 days of preparation" we're laying a foundation of prayer and intercession for the home(s) that receive with joy God's invitation of Peace. It may only be one home to begin with, and that would be awesome.

That said, it is vitally important that any such missional endeavor be rooted and grounded in prayer. Here's where the Lenten Series and prayerful disciplines come in, and our congregations' main part in the mission. Our Wesleyan Methodist tradition blends prayerful introspection, fasting, confession, and Scripture reading (works of piety) with faith-filled actions (like inviting a family to receive God's peace in their home, or feeding the hungry, or visiting the sick) that extend the grace of God to our neighbors (works of mercy). The two go together: works of piety, works of mercy. Love God, love neighbor. The two great commandments.

A Lenten season of fasting and prayerful preparation to greet the resurrected Christ are all securely grounded in our tradition. It's important to note that "fasting" over this time does not mean giving up eating altogether for the full 40 days. The specifics as to ways that folks might decide to fast during Lent will also be explored during our upcoming worship services.

During *this* Lenten season, our churches will be invited to explicitly bring added focus to our prayers, to intercede (i.e., pray) for the families that will soon be taking part in our fellowship (!). And why wouldn't the resurrected Christ be made visible to us in the form of people's lives being transformed, healed, and restored, through homes that have come to know and embrace God's peace?

Through this time, it's up to us (together) to listen to God's promptings, and then go where we're called and/or support the folks who are specifically given that call. The actual people "sent" to minister in the homes that God points us to may only be one or two from the congregations. It may be more. Either way, the important thing in all of this is a solid foundation of prayer.

Please remember: this call to be missional is not another heavy burden for you to bear, yet one more of the already many tasks for you to do. Though Lent does involve reflection, and with that repentance, please hear this call with celebration and gladness in your hearts! We wait on the LORD, and trust in the Holy Spirit's timing and direction in all things. And God is faithful! In all things God gets the glory, since God is God, and we're not. And that's a really good thing!!!

Humbly Yours in Christ,
Pastor Benjamin

