



I Invite You!

by Pastor Alan Felton

I invite you, in the name of the Church, to observe a holy Lent—by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word.

This invitation is offered on Ash Wednesday as the door opens to the season of Lent. The invitation provides structure and direction during the purple-hued forty days that lie ahead. Yet, even so, Lent can be a confusing time, filled with anxiety about whether we are “getting it right” and worry over whether our piety matches the requirements of the season. If we are not careful, self-examination

can become self-condemnation, and meditating on God's Word can become drudgery. We can miss the Lenten forest for its trees, so to speak!

Lent is a serious time for Christians. Historically, it was once a period during which new converts participated in final preparations for their baptisms early on Easter morning. Lent was also a time for those who had fallen away from the faith or committed especially egregious sins to be brought back into the fold. While the Church still offers such opportunities, Lent is more broadly observed today by Christians seeking to draw closer to God and feel the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit.

These next weeks will be a time of discernment. Being open to the direction of God's will is the most important responsibility we carry with us into Lent. We may desire confirmation of something we feel, while God may be ready to change our minds. We might seek direction

toward an end we have already determined, but God may instead desire a new path for us. Openness, listening, and a spirit of obedience are important companions for us during Lent.

As we prepare to observe a holy Lent, the words of Howard Thurman might help us. In his reflection titled “How Good to Center Down,” the Christian mystic offers these words:

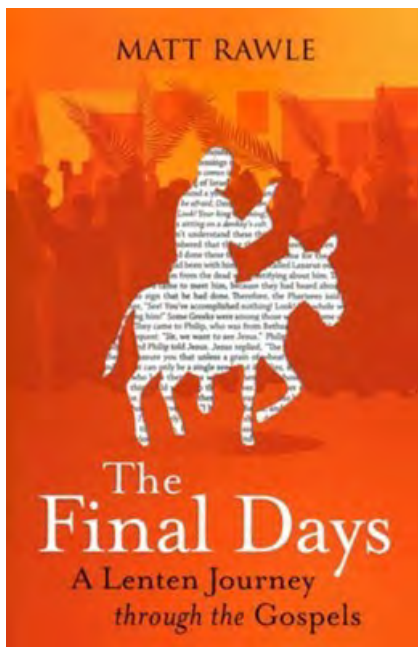
*What is the end of our doings?
Where are we trying to go? Where do we put the emphasis, and where are our values focused? For what end do we make sacrifices? Where is my treasure, and what do I love most in life? What do I hate most in life, and to what am I true?*

Lent is an opportunity to find clarity and be close to God. You are invited to enter in and be blessed along a wonderful journey.



Benson Memorial United Methodist Church, 4706 Creedmoor Road, Raleigh, NC 27612
Open office hours: M–Th 9AM–1PM | Available by appointment: M–Th 9AM–4PM / F 9AM–1PM
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Starting This Week on Thursday!

The Final Days: A Lenten Journey through the Gospels by Matt Rawle, taught by Pastor Alan Felton

Wednesdays at 6:45 p.m. and Thursdays at 10 a.m., March 5–April 9

Lent is a time for careful examination and humble reflection. One of the ways we engage in self-examination is through the study of Scripture. Reading the Holy Word brings us closer to God and prepares us for Easter. *The Final Days*, written by Matt Rawle, leads participants through a study of Jesus' Passion as recounted in the four Gospels. Each one offers slightly different insights and revelations about Jesus' journey to the cross. These differing accounts don't diminish the truth of Jesus but instead reveal it in more detail and with important nuance.

To prepare for the first session on Thursday (and for the first session on Wednesday night next week), go to www.wikihow.com/What-Animal-Am-I and take the brief quiz there. Bring your results with you to the first session.

Adult Fellowship

The Adult Fellowship Meeting will be held Thursday, March 13, 2025, at 11:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Carol Wright will serve a lunch of soup and salad for the meeting at a cost of \$3.00 per person. Donations for kitchen supplies and upkeep are also gratefully accepted.

Doug Adams will give a presentation on the macro vs. micro image challenge. Cereal product manufacturers—along with many other product producers—use a technique to show details of their packaging contents. Instead of showing the actual contents of a box of cereal, they “enlarge the content to show detail.” Showing an enlarged image instead of an image at its actual size can sometimes be confusing when you don't have an adequate frame of reference.

Doug will present a program incorporating enlarged images with limited frames of reference. There will be a contest to identify the image. Please join us for fellowship, food, and a stimulating presentation. For more information, contact Dee Springsteen at dee.springsteen@gmail.com.

Manna and Mercy with Rev. Alan Storey March 21–25, 2025

Join us for a transformative few days exploring scripture from Genesis to Revelation through the lens of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Rev. Alan Storey of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa will lead this journey, offering a fresh biblical worldview and tools for interpreting scripture's life-giving message.



Rev. Alan Storey. Read more about him at mannaandmercy.org/alan-storey.html.

Event Schedule:

Hayes Barton UMC

Friday, March 21 | 5:30–9:00 p.m. | Dinner and Teaching

Saturday, March 22 | 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. | Teaching

(includes light breakfast and boxed lunch) **Registration required.**

Cost: \$40 per attendee | \$15 for students (includes meals and materials)

Scholarships available—contact Rev. Molly White at mwhite@hbumc.org.

Southeast Raleigh Table UMC

Sunday, March 23 | 2:00–5:00 p.m. | Teaching

This event is free and requires no registration.

Benson Memorial UMC

Tuesday, March 25 | 7:00–9:00 p.m. | Discussion

Join Rev. Storey for a discussion on his upcoming book, *The bell, banners, and blasphemy*, about the Central Methodist Mission's bold stand for justice in Cape Town. **This event is free and requires no registration.**

Don't miss this opportunity to deepen your faith and engage with scripture in a powerful way!

Don't Miss These Important Events!



Celebrate Shrove Tuesday with a Pancake Supper

Shrove Tuesday, also known as Fat Tuesday, is a time of celebration and feasting before the solemn season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. While not a formal Christian holiday, the tradition of enjoying a rich meal before the 40-day Lenten fast has been observed for centuries.

Join us for a delicious, family-friendly Pancake Supper in the Fellowship Hall on **Tuesday, March 4, at 5:45 p.m.** We'll be serving up a comforting breakfast-for-dinner feast, including pancakes with blueberry syrup; link and patty sausage; biscuits with sausage gravy; fresh fruit salad; cinnamon king cake (Find the baby Jesus, and you may be crowned king or queen!); and tea, lemonade, and coffee.

This free event is open to everyone—church members, friends, and neighbors alike! Come enjoy a meal, connect with others, and take part in the festive Mardi Gras spirit before we enter the Lenten season. For more information, contact Carol Wright at crwright1004@gmail.com.

Meager Meal on Ash Wednesday

On **Wednesday, March 5, at 5:45 p.m.**, join us in the Fellowship Hall for a Meager Meal, a meaningful way to begin the Lenten season together. This free community meal reminds us of simplicity and gratitude as we prepare our hearts for Ash Wednesday.

This year, we will gather to share two delicious soups provided by the church, served with crusty French bread and butter—a humble yet nourishing meal to reflect on the Lenten journey ahead. (Sorry, no dessert!) After our time of fellowship, we will move to the sanctuary for the 7:00 p.m. Ash Wednesday service, where we will receive the imposition of ashes as a sign of our repentance and renewal.

Everyone is welcome—whether you are a longtime member or visiting for the first time. There is no cost for this meal, and we encourage you to invite family, friends, and neighbors to share in this special time of reflection and worship.

Begin Your Lenten Journey with Ash Wednesday Worship

The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, a sacred time of reflection and repentance. Benson Memorial United Methodist Church invites you to join us for worship on **Wednesday, March 5, 2025, at 12:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.** in the Sanctuary as we mark this solemn occasion together.

Ash Wednesday reminds us of our mortality and our need for God's grace. As the sign of the cross is placed on our foreheads in ashes, we are called to self-examination, repentance, prayer, and fasting. It is a moment to acknowledge our human frailty while embracing the hope found in Jesus Christ.

Wherever you are in life, whatever burdens you carry, God's love is present and available to all. Come and begin the Lenten journey in worship, prayer, and reflection.

THE 40 DAYS OF LENT



A SEASON FOR EXPERIENCING GOD UP CLOSE

We often have difficulty slowing down. Our lives are full of busyness. We are on our phones or other devices almost constantly. We rarely find an opportunity to “unplug.” The culture around us tells us that the busier we are, the more success we achieve. And, on the rare chance we do take a break, we often are left feeling guilty about it or, at least nagged by a sense of being left out and falling behind.

Somewhere along the way, we can easily lose touch with God. Yes, God remains present even if we don’t notice, but our inattention to the divine presence will eventually leave us feeling worn out and empty. All of our activities and the many achievements we say we enjoy begin to be unsatisfying. We sense something is missing. But what?

The season of Lent gives us opportunities for self-examination, prayer, reading the Bible, and fasting. We learn our limitations during Lent. Realizing that “we came from dust and to dust we shall return” humbles us so that we move closer toward God. As we continue the journey, our lives stop being filled with busyness that drains us and instead opens us to the possibilities that God offers us.

Our Lenten calendar provides ways to help you focus on scripture reading and prayers during the weeks ahead. We will also have a “Sunday Service Opportunity” that you can do at home and then bring to the church each week. The purpose of this calendar is not to replace one way of busyness with another but instead to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us and through us during this season as we together draw close to God.

One way to do this is by using the calendar found at this link: bensonmemorialumc.org/len/.

Here is a resource that focuses our self-examination through scripture reading, prayers, spiritual reflections, and mission opportunities. The purpose of this calendar is not to fill your time with busyness but to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us and through us during this holy season.

[DOWNLOAD THE PDF CALENDAR](#)

THE 40 DAYS OF LENT

A SEASON FOR EXPERIENCING GOD UP CLOSE

We invite you to use this calendar to deepen your spiritual journey during this Lenten season. It includes readings and reflections, and actions you can take to give to our community as God has given to you. Each Sunday we will have a service project for you to participate in as a way to show God's love to others. Full details on these projects and daily reflections can be found on our website at bensonmemorialumc.org/len/.

MARCH 5 ASH WEDNESDAY Reading: Psalm 51 Meager Meal: 5:45 p.m. FH Worship Services: Noon & 7 p.m.	MARCH 6 Reading: Psalm 5 Service Opportunity for next Sunday: Make an encouraging card(s) for a "mom-to-be" at the women's prison. Drop them off at the church.	MARCH 7 Reading: Psalm 25	MARCH 8 Saturday's Selah (Based on Psalm 25) See today's reflection here.
MARCH 9 SUNDAY SERVICE PROJECT: CARDS FOR MOMS-TO-BE Bring to church your cards for the moms-to-be at the women's prison.	MARCH 10 Service Opportunity for next Sunday: Collection for Family Promise of the Triangle Cleaning supplies and mattress covers are high on the list!	MARCH 11 Prayer Practice: Play using Lectio Divina—reading, meditating, praying, contemplating. Learn more here.	MARCH 12 Reading: Psalm 23
MARCH 13 Weekly Wisdom (Inspirational quote by Howard Thurman) Read it here.	MARCH 14 Reading: Psalm 34	MARCH 15 Saturday's Selah (Based on Psalm 34) See today's reflection here.	

THE 40 DAYS OF LENT



SUNDAY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Every Sunday during the season of Lent, there will be a special opportunity for you to serve. There's something for everyone and for all ages, and you can decide to do one, a few, or all of them—it's completely up to you. Check out the information below to see how you would like to serve. If you have any questions, contact our [Minister of Families and Outreach, Cortney Babajtis](#). And as always, take pictures and tag us on Facebook or Instagram. Use @bensonmemorialumc and #bensonmemorialumc to tag us on social media when sharing your experiences!

Sunday, March 9: Cards for Moms-to-Be at the Women's Prison

During the week, spend some time creating an encouraging card(s) for a mom-to-be at the women's prison. When our Women's Prison Ministry Team goes to visit in mid-March, your card will be delivered and a mom-to-be will know that you're thinking about them and praying for them. Need supplies? We've got you covered! Just come to the narthex the Sunday before (March 2) and pick up any materials you need. Bring your completed card(s) to the narthex on Sunday, March 9, or the church office during office hours (9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Mon.–Thurs.).

Sunday, March 16: Collection for Family Promise of the Triangle

We are collecting essential items to support Family Promise of the Triangle, an organization that helps families experiencing homelessness find stability and housing. Their current needs include twin and queen bedbug mattress covers, bleach cleaners, and Fabuloso. These items help ensure that families have a clean and safe environment. Please bring your donations to the narthex on Sunday, March 16, or the church office during office hours (9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Mon.–Thurs.).

Sunday, March 23: Cards for Springmoor Life Care Retirement Center Residents

During the week, spend some time creating an encouraging card(s) for a resident at Springmoor Life Care Retirement Community. Need supplies? We've got you covered! Just come to the narthex the Sunday before (3/16) and pick up any materials you need. Bring your completed card(s) to the narthex on Sunday, March 23, or the church office during office hours (9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Mon.–Thurs.).

Sunday, March 30: Clothing Drive for Jeffreys Grove Elementary School

Many children at our partner school lack access to well-fitting, weather-appropriate clothing and shoes. By donating new or gently worn items, we can help ensure that every child feels comfortable, confident, and ready to learn. We are collecting children's clothing (sizes 4T–14), and children's tennis shoes of all sizes. All donations should be in good condition—clean, gently worn, or new. Bring your donations to the narthex on Sunday, March 30, or the church office during office hours (9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Mon.–Thurs.).

These and more are listed at www.BensonMemorialUMC.org/Lent/. Visit today!



[\(complete church calendar is here\)](#)

Sunday, March 2

- 8:45 a.m., Worship Service
- 9:45 a.m., Sunday School
- 11:00 a.m., Worship Service
- 11:00 a.m., Livestream Service
- 12:00 p.m., Chancel Chimes
- 3:00 p.m., Prayer Shawl Group

Tuesday, March 5

Shrove Tuesday

- 10:30 a.m., Women Who Read Book Group
- 5:45 p.m., Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

Wednesday, March 5

Ash Wednesday

- 7:15 a.m., Coffee and Prayer
- 5:45 p.m., Meager Meal
- 7:00 p.m., Ash Wednesday Service

Thursday, March 6

- 10:00 a.m., Thursday Bible Study
- 5:00 p.m., Chancel Choir

Sunday, March 9

- 8:45 a.m., Worship Service
- 9:45 a.m., Sunday School
- 11:00 a.m., Worship Service
- 11:00 a.m., Livestream Service
- 12:00 p.m., Chancel Chimes

Monday, March 10

- 6:30 p.m., Worship Committee

Wednesday, March 12

- 5:45 p.m., Wonderful Wednesday Fellowship Meal
- 6:45 p.m., Bible Study
- 7:00 p.m., High School Bible Study

Thursday, March 13

- 10:00 a.m., Thursday Bible Study
- 11:30 a.m., Adult Fellowship
- 5:00 p.m., Chancel Choir



Set your clocks ahead one hour on Saturday, March 8.



Campus Cleanup Dates

Our spring workday schedule is as follows: **March 15, April 12, May 17, and June 21.** We plan to continue pruning shrubs and spreading mulch at the March and April work sessions. We start at 9:00 a.m. and finish around noon each Saturday. Mark your calendars and join us—the campus needs your attention!

The trustees have marked off the areas being considered for additional handicap walkways from the front parking lot into the sanctuary and the fellowship hall. Take a look and share your thoughts with any trustee.

FEMA Project Update

The upheaval continues in our federal government departments and agencies. The structure of our grant requires us to pay for the projects when completed and then request reimbursement from FEMA. Our FEMA grant team is moving forward steadily but cautiously to prevent a negative financial impact on the church. Watch for updates on the project.

Jack Crum Conference on Prophetic Ministry
Sunday, March 23
2:00 to 5:30 p.m.
in the Fellowship Hall



Featured speakers for this conversation about Christian nationalism and faithful responses to it include Rev. Dr. Lester Ruth from Duke University, Rev. Dr. Jennifer Copeland, executive director of the NC Council of Churches, and Rev. Dr. Joey Shelton who has extensively written and taught on the topic.

Learn more about each speaker:

[Reverend Dr. Jennifer Copeland](#)

[Reverend Dr. Joey Shelton](#) | [Reverend Dr. Lester Ruth](#)

The Jack Crum Conference on Prophetic Ministry is an annual event sponsored by the Methodist Federation for Social Action's NC chapter. This year's conference is also co-sponsored by Benson Memorial's Church and Society Team. The conference is named for Rev. Jack Crum who was a tireless advocate for racial and social justice. He served as a pastor in North Carolina for 37 years.

We are asking for a minimum donation of \$10 and for students it is free. For registration and more information, check <https://www.mfsancc.org/>.



Easter Lily Order Form

As Ash Wednesday approaches next week, it is time to consider ordering Easter lilies to adorn the sanctuary for Easter Sunday services. These beautiful white lilies, available in 6.5-inch pots for \$12.50 per plant, can be ordered using the form provided here in *The Beacon* or on the welcome table in the narthex. The deadline for placing orders is Sunday, March 16. Those who purchase lilies may pick them up following the 11:00 a.m. Easter Sunday service. Any unclaimed lilies will be shared or planted in the Memory Garden.

Order deadline: Sunday, March 16

To order online, please use this [Easter lily order form](#) (also located on our website under [Member Resources](#)).

Who are the lilies from (names to be listed): _____

In memory of: _____

In honor of: _____

Number of plants: _____

Cost: \$12.50 each Total enclosed: _____

*Please mail to the church office: Benson Memorial UMC, 4706 Creedmoor Road, Raleigh, NC 27612
Make checks (marked "Easter Lilies") payable to Benson Memorial United Methodist Church.
Indicate on envelope of cash payments that it is for Easter Lily orders.*