



## What Do You Want?

by Pastor Alan Felton

I was once at the end of a very contentious and stressful time serving a church that, in my opinion, did not want to be served. God had made it clear to me that I needed to part in peace and move on to another place of ministry. I also needed a bit of time to catch my breath, heal some wounds, and rest, so I reached out to my district superintendent and discussed some possibilities. After discussing a few options for a short renewal leave, my superintendent asked, "OK, what do you want?" I settled on four weeks of leave as I prepared for a new appointment.

Lent is a time for asking, "What do I want?" as part of the serious self-examination we are urged to undertake in this season. This is not a selfish endeavor. We are not to respond to the question as a child might and make a list of a hundred different things, like ice cream, a new car, or a dream vacation.

Instead, asking "What do I want?" is a serious spiritual effort to discern what God is calling us to be and to do.

The Christian mystic Howard Thurman spoke of "the inward journey," which helps us with the process of self-examination. Thurman encourages us to ask ourselves: What is the fundamental thing I am after? What is my point? What is it that I really want? These are questions appropriate for Lent. They help us cut through the clutter of the many things we might have or want to achieve and lead us to discover the most essential thing that will bring us joy.

If you have already considered such questions at an earlier point in your life, it might be wise to ask them again. Your answers may be different as you enter new seasons of life or as circumstances change. Of course, we do not ask such



questions alone. These sorts of questions often spark a holy discernment guided by God.

I think Jesus might have asked himself similar questions from time to time during his ministry. He faithfully answered that what he really wanted was the cross. He certainly did not want it for himself. Jesus went to the cross for us. What Jesus truly wanted most was to love others.

What do you want?  
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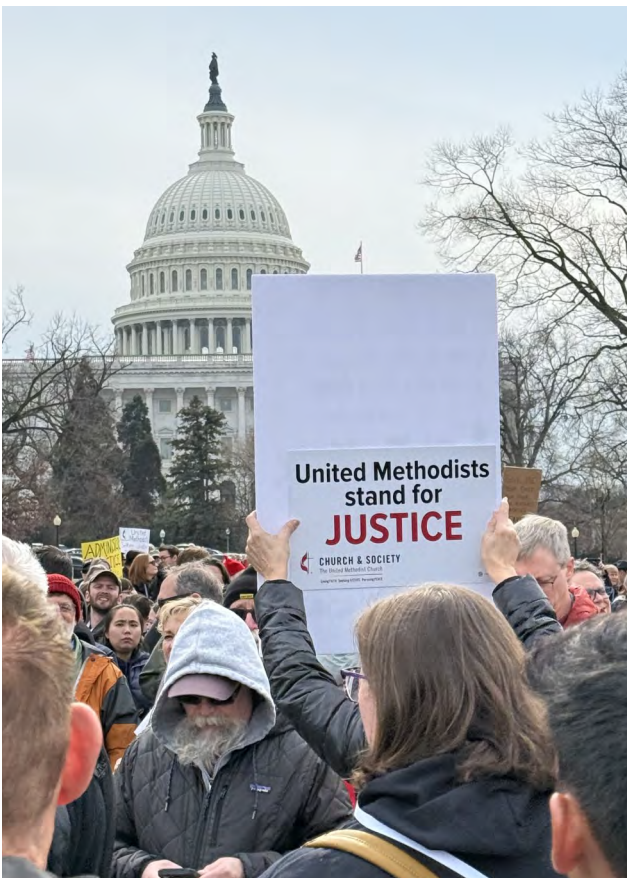
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# United Methodists Advocate for Justice for Immigrants

Over 1,200 United Methodist laity and clergy gathered in Washington, DC, on February 26 to advocate for justice for our immigrant neighbors. A worship service at Capitol UMC, streamed to other nearby churches, began the day before a march to the

U.S. Capitol, where participants heard from several speakers, including Congresswomen Mary Scanlon (PA) and Delia Ramirez (IL), and Congressman Shri Thanedar (MI). Throughout the afternoon, United Methodist leaders met with various

congressional leaders to advocate for change and justice. Bishop Connie Shelton, Pastor Alan Felton, and more than 100 United Methodists from the NC Conference took part in the day.



2026

## Lenten Devotional Booklet

As we enter the season of Lent, we're offering a Lenten devotional as a gentle companion for the weeks ahead. Inside, you'll find brief prayer practices, scripture, and reflections rooted in the values we share as a church—*hospitality, community, discipleship, open-mindedness, diversity, and justice.*

These daily offerings are meant to create moments of slowing down and paying attention to where God is present in our lives and in the wider world. There's no right way to engage this calendar; use it as often or as lightly as feels life-giving, on your own or with others. Our hope is that these practices invite deeper listening, thoughtful reflection, and compassion for ourselves and for our neighbors.

As we make our way toward Easter together, may this season help us become more grounded, more open, and more attentive to God's movement among us.

[Download the Lenten Devotional.](#)



Benson Memorial United Methodist Church

# LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

WELCOMING • COMMUNITY • DISCIPLESHIP  
OPEN-MINDEDNESS • DIVERSITY • JUSTICE

### AN INVITATION FOR THE SEASON

*This Lenten devotional is an invitation, not a checklist. Over the weeks of Lent, you'll find simple prayer practices, scriptures, and reflections shaped around our shared church values: welcoming, community, discipleship, open-mindedness, diversity, and justice. Each day offers a small way to pause, notice God's presence, and reflect on how faith takes shape in our lives and in the world. We hope you'll use this devotional in whatever way fits your season—daily or occasionally, alone or with others, with curiosity rather than pressure. Our prayer is that these practices will create space for listening, for unlearning, and for compassion. As we journey together toward Easter, may you find yourself a little more grounded, a little more open, and a little more aware of God at work within you and among us.*

## Mission Meals in Lent

Throughout Lent, our Wednesday evenings will take on a different rhythm as we gather for Mission Meals. We'll come together in the Fellowship Hall at 5:45 p.m. to share dinner and then spend time serving alongside one another through a hands-on community project.

These evenings are an invitation to slow down, connect more deeply, and remember that following Jesus is something we practice with our hands as well as our hearts. Lent calls us to pay attention to the needs around us and to respond with care and intention.

All are welcome. Come as you are, invite a friend, and take part in this simple, meaningful way of sharing food, purpose, and love together.

## Sunday Service Projects

Throughout Lent, we'll have weekly Sunday Service Projects that can be done individually or as a household during the week. These projects are rooted in our shared church values (*welcoming, community, discipleship, open-mindedness, diversity, and justice*), as we seek to live out our faith beyond Sunday morning. Each week, you'll be invited to reflect, pray, and respond through tangible acts of care.

We hope that these practices will help us grow as disciples who notice the needs around us, honor the dignity and experiences of others, and respond with compassion and humility. As you bring these items with you to worship on Sundays, remember that we are called to gather as a community shaped by shared values and a faith that is practiced with intention and love.





## The Pathfinders Are Having a Baby!

Well, actually, it's Isabella Gyimah and Joseph Gakpo who are expecting a baby girl at the beginning of April. The Pathfinders Sunday School class is excited to host a baby shower on Sunday, March 15, during the 8:45 Sunday School hour, and we are inviting the church family to celebrate with us.

Drop by the Pathfinders' classroom (Fellowship Hall Room 111) anytime from 8:45-9:45 a.m. to celebrate this new arrival with Isabella, Joseph, and big brother Joey. Isabella is registered at Target under her first name if you would like to give a gift.

We will be serving refreshments, so please let Carla Bernstein ([carlastuart@msn.com](mailto:carlastuart@msn.com)) or Sandy Robinson ([sktfr46@gmail.com](mailto:sktfr46@gmail.com)) know that you will be coming so we will have enough.

We look forward to sharing this joyous celebration!



## Sunday Service Project for March 1:

### Donations for Family Promise of the Triangle

Throughout the week, collect your donations for Family Promise of the Triangle and bring them to the worship service with you. Much-needed donations are: pillows, paper towels, c-fold paper towels, Fabuloso cleaners, can openers, and sensitive-skin laundry detergent pods.



## Lenten Mission Meal

Join us next Wednesday, March 4, for our first Lenten Mission Meal! We'll gather for our usual Wednesday night dinner at 5:45 p.m., and after we eat, we'll put our faith into action by packing care packages for our unhoused neighbors.

Each gallon-sized Ziplock bag will include helpful essentials like Hot Hands, snacks, socks, Chapstick, and other practical items to offer comfort and care. These are wonderful bags to keep in your car so that when you see a neighbor asking for help, you're ready to respond with kindness and dignity.

Come share a meal and a hands-on service project as we care for our wider community together. Please contact [Cortney Babajtis](#) with any questions.

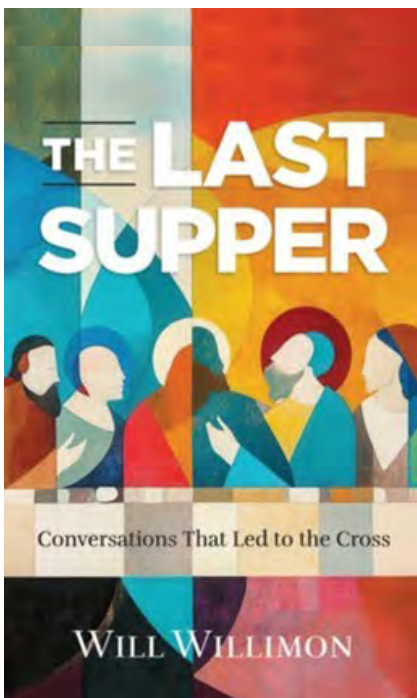




## 'Identify the Baby' Contest

Friends of all ages, please come to our Adult Fellowship gathering on Thursday, March 11, at 11:30 am for lunch and an entertaining challenge: *identify the baby!* The fee for lunch is \$4.00. Be sure to bring your baby picture to the meeting for the challenge. Each baby picture will be displayed and numbered, and each attendee will get a numbered sheet to use to identify the pictures. Whoever identifies the most baby pictures will win a prize.

We hope to see you there!



### ***The Last Supper: Conversations That Led to the Cross***

by Will Willimon  
Led by Pastor Felton

**Thursdays at 10 a.m.  
Starting March 26**

Travel with Jesus on the road to Jerusalem in this profound six-week Lenten study that explores the parables and stories Jesus told at tables along the way to his final meal. Will Willimon invites readers to experience how these table stories—about searching shepherds, welcoming hosts, prodigal sons, and rejected invitations—illuminate the deeper meaning of the Last Supper and Christ's sacrifice.

[Books are available on Amazon.](#)



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

### **Sunday, March 1**

8:45 a.m., Children's Sunday School  
8:45 a.m., Pathfinders Class  
10 a.m., Worship Service  
11:15 a.m., Benson Discussion Class  
11:15 a.m., Brightsiders Class  
11:15 a.m., Chimes Choir Rehearsal  
3 p.m., Prayer Shawl Group

### **Tuesday, March 3**

10:30 a.m., Women Who Read

### **Wednesday, March 4**

7:15 a.m., Coffee and Prayer  
11 a.m., Lay Pastors Meeting  
5:45 p.m., Community Dinner  
6:45 p.m., Adult Bible Study  
7 p.m., High School Bible Study

### **Thursday, March 5**

10 a.m., Thursday Morning  
Bible Study  
4:45 p.m., Chancel Choir Rehearsal

### **Sunday, March 8**

#### **Daylight Saving Time Begins**

8:45 a.m., Children's Sunday School  
8:45 a.m., Pathfinders Class  
10 a.m., Worship Service  
11:15 a.m., Benson Discussion Class  
11:15 a.m., Brightsiders Class  
11:15 a.m., Chimes Choir Rehearsal

### **Monday, March 9**

6:30 p.m., Worship Committee

### **Tuesday, March 10**

Office Closed (Staff Training)  
5:15 p.m., Women's Prison  
Quarterly Visit

### **Wednesday, March 11**

Office Closed (Staff Training)  
5:45 p.m., Lenten Mission Meal  
6:45 p.m., Adult Bible Study  
7 p.m., High School Bible Study

### **Thursday, March 12**

10 a.m., Thursday Morning  
Bible Study  
11:30 a.m., Adult Fellowship  
4:45 p.m., Chancel Choir Rehearsal

# Celebrate Easter Sunday with Flowers

Ash Wednesday marked the beginning of Lent, and on Easter Sunday, the Sanctuary will be decorated with beautiful flowers: donated Easter lilies and the Flower Cross.

Easter lilies can be purchased in memory or in honor of loved ones and friends. The order forms for Easter lilies will be available on the welcome table in the Narthex. Easter lilies can then be picked up after our Easter Sunday service by those who ordered them. Those lilies not picked up will be shared with shut-ins and others in need of a smile.

The Flower Cross, once again, will be created with donated spring flowers to be part of our Easter Sunday service. Flowers can be from your yard, the store, or even your neighbor's yard (with their permission, of course!). Flowers can be dropped off the Saturday before Easter or anytime Easter Sunday before service (the earlier the better). The Flower Cross, thanks to all of you, has always added such beauty to our Easter celebration.

If you have any questions about Easter flowers, please contact Ginny Wise (919-608-9204).



## Easter Lily Order Form

It is time to consider ordering Easter lilies to adorn the sanctuary for Easter Sunday services on April 5. These beautiful white lilies, available in 6.5-inch pots for \$13.00 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 8. Those who purchase lilies may pick them up following the Easter Sunday worship service. Any unclaimed lilies will be shared or planted in the Memory Garden.

### Order deadline: Sunday, March 8

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

**Who are the lilies from (names to be listed):** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**In memory of:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**In honor of:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Number of plants (\$13.00 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.