



Good News

Morgan Hill United Methodist Church

Lent 2025: A Period of Reflection and Penance

By Rev. Dr. Linda A. Holbrook, Pastor



Lent is a period of reflection and penance. Lent lasts 40 days excluding the Sundays. Many people decide to “give up” something to remind them of the sacrifice of Jesus and the 40 days in the wilderness. If you decide to give something up, make it something you like. Some people give up a favorite soft drink or desserts. Some people give up a favorite TV show or playing video games. The thing I find most valuable right now is my time. So I am putting aside 3-4 hours one day each week of the Lenten season to be in prayer and meditation.

Other people decide to add something new. Some people decide to read a book of the Bible during Lent, or spend a specified time in prayer. Some people journal or take up walking each day. Our sermon series is on spiritual practices. I invite you to deepen a practice you already do, or find a new practice.

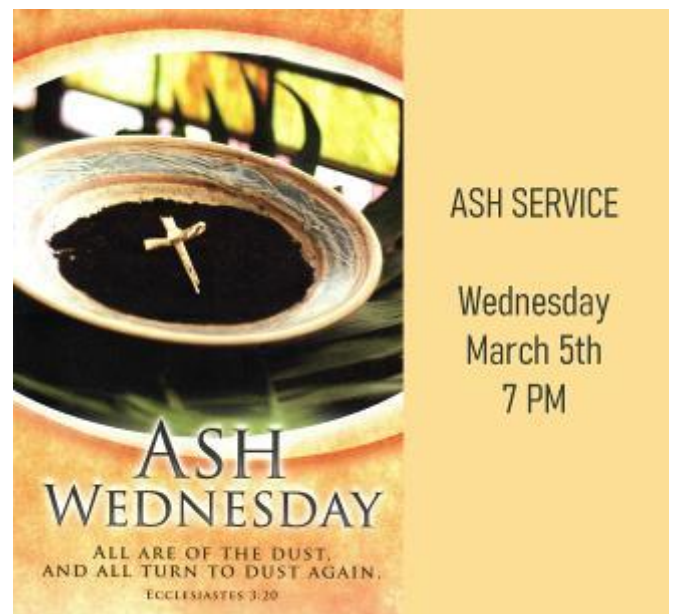
I invite you to decide to either give something up or add something, and which ever you do, do it with intention and commitment. Use this Lent to learn more about your own spirituality.

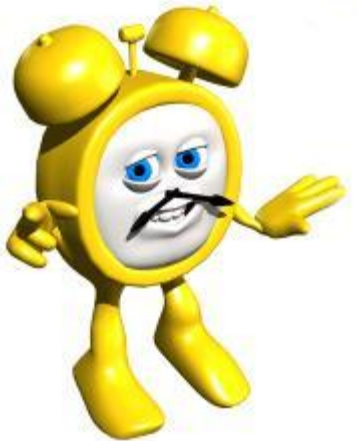
Ash Wednesday: March 5th

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. It marks the beginning of a period of reflection and penance. In the Bible, sprinkling oneself with ashes was traditionally a sign of one’s sorrow for having committed sins.

In the Christian tradition, Ash Wednesday also marked the beginning of preparation for the understanding of the death and resurrection of Christ. The particular symbolism of ashes for this day comes from a practice in the Roman Catholic churches in which the ashes from the palms used in the preceding year’s Palm Sunday celebration are burned and blessed. With these ashes, the priest on the first day of Lent marks a cross on the forehead of each worshiper. This practice has become a part of Ash Wednesday services in many United Methodist churches.

Our ashes are not from our palms, but they still hold significance for us as we begin the season of reflection and self-examination.





SPRING FORWARD

**SET YOUR CLOCKS
ONE HOUR AHEAD**

MARCH 9TH

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Worship Team Lead: Denise Melroy

Next Good News deadline:

April 25, 2025

For May-June Issue

**We are a Reconciling
Church. All are welcome!**

Pastor's Prose: A Puzzling Adventure



Pastor Linda

A couple of things about me:

At the game night a couple of weeks ago, we worked on a 300-piece puzzle. We didn't get it finished and left it for the Saturday morning meeting and possibly to work on after church on Sunday. The puzzle was still not finished. So, I

took the puzzle home and finished it Sunday afternoon.

In the service on Sunday John Armstrong told people to ask me how big was the largest puzzle I had ever completed (drumroll please). The answer is 12,000 pieces. The first thing I do is spread out all the pieces. In this case it took my dining room table, the coffee table in the living room, the end tables in the living room, and several card tables. And in the middle of completing this puzzle (which took 2 1/2 months), we needed the dining room table. I moved the puzzle in pieces to a door and took it all down to the basement. Quite a production.

And the story of my name. Recently, I read that some red states want to make it more difficult for women to vote. A new law would require that a drivers license or passport would have to match the woman's name at birth. All those women who changed their names to their husband's name would be out of luck.

I was named after my mother, Mary Linda Holbrook. My mother was Mary so I was always Linda. I remember the first day I went to school

and when the teacher called roll and called, "Mary Holbrook" I looked around for my mother.

After college I married and took my husband's name. When I divorced, I wanted to take back my maiden name, but I didn't want to go back to Mary. So I decided to find a middle name. Of course, my logic set in. First, I decided that my initials would be LAH. So, what is a name that starts with "A." I chose Ashley.

I was working in Tampa, Florida at the time. The office building we were in was boarded on one side by Ashley St. On another side was Interstate 4. Now one of my co-workers said to me, "I am so glad you were looking out on Ashley Street instead of the other way. You would be Linda I4 Holbrook."

Now you know a little more about me. I would love to hear your stories.



*Grace and peace,
Linda*

Children and Youth Director Needed

Morgan Hill United Methodist Church would like to hire a part-time person to lead our children's Sunday school and to work with our youth. If you know someone who's interested in working with children and youth, please contact Carol Frazer, Jeannie Clayton, or Linda Holbrook for more details about the job.



Holy Week: Schedule of Events



Palm Sunday— April 13, 10am

We celebrate Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The crowds waved palms and sang "halleluiahs." We will have a parade with the children to recall that entry. This day begins the last week of Jesus' earthly life.



Maundy Thursday—April 17, 7pm

We remember Jesus' last Supper with his disciples as we celebrate Holy Communion and are reminded of Jesus' words to the disciples.



Good Friday—April 18, 2pm-6pm

On the day that Jesus was crucified, we recall the event by walking the stations of the cross. The church will be open from 2 pm to 6 pm for individual meditation, and everyone is invited to come and reflect of the path to the cross.



Easter—April 20, 10am

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Our worship service tells with story of Jesus' resurrection in song and word.



Easter Egg Hunt—April 20, After Worship

Our children come together for a traditional Easter egg hunt in our courtyard, after the worship service.

Holy Humor Sunday: April 27

Holy Humor Sunday services not only give Christians an opportunity for ongoing celebrations of the greatest miracle in human history - Jesus' resurrection - it also gives each of us an opportunity to celebrate, and give thanks for, our own smaller resurrections in this world and this life.

From time to time in our earthly lives, many of us have been dead - from illness, depression, physical injuries, emotional wounds, the loss of loved ones, financial losses - and yet have come alive and endured while looking forward to the Great Resurrection.

Last year for the first time, Morgan Hill UMC celebrated Holy Humor Sunday. Almost everyone brought a joke or story to share. Some were about friends and/or relatives and some were fictional stories. It was evident that the jokes and stories were appreciated by the laughs that echoed throughout the sanctuary.



Holy Humor will be April 27th. Please bring jokes and stories to share. We all look forward to celebrating the miracle of Jesus resurrection, and laughing out loud.

Two Special Services: March 11/March 25

This Lenten season our sermon series is on spiritual practices. We will also have two special services on Tuesday nights before Holy Week. The first will be on March 11th. On previous Sundays, the sermon focus will have been related to the spiritual practice of listening. At this special Tuesday service, we will have the opportunity to listen to others in a compassionate and nonjudgmental way. It is also a time to practice being able to share our feelings and position in a safe and secure environment.

The second special service will be on Tuesday March 25th. This service will be a healing service.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, wrote in a letter:

"It will be a double blessing if you give yourself up to the Great Physician, that God may heal soul and body together And unquestionably this is God's design."

**Tuesday
Special Services**
March 11—7 PM
Listening
March 25th—7 PM
Healing

We will continue in this great tradition of giving ourselves to God for healing of soul and body. This service is a time of prayers, singing, anointing with oil, and lighting candles. As Christians we are called to offer intercessory prayers for one another. Join us as a community of faith as we care for each other in this service of healing and wholeness.

Both services are at 7 pm. Please join us to help share our Lenten season.

Finance Update: Starting the Year Well

By Marilyn Pifer, Finance Team Co-Chair

As of January 31, our financial picture remains strong. The **General Fund** began 2025 in an excellent cash position. At the end of January, the Fund held over \$52,000 including a \$20,000 CD.

The **Endowment Fund** status is reported to us quarterly from the CA-NV United Methodist Foundation. As of December 31, that Fund held over \$27,000.

The **Designated/Pass Through Fund** had about \$9,700. The **Building Fund** held roughly \$5,600.

The **Parsonage Rental Checking and Money Market** accounts together held over \$43,000.

Your pledged and unpledged tithes and offerings make it possible to carry out the mission and ministry of our church – thank you! Our "Giving" web page is always available at

www.mhumc.com/giving/.



What Have I Learned the Last 6 weeks

By Rev. Dr. Linda A. Holbrook, Pastor

The last 6 weeks have been one of the most challenging times for me (and I may be speaking for others in our community of faith). It feels like significant things are happening every day, if not every hour. My heart aches for the people whose lives have been directly affected. People have lost jobs, security, and peace of mind. People have been confirmed by the Senate to be in significant positions that will affect our lives, and these people are not qualified for those positions.

Continued on p. 6

What Have I Learned the Last 6 Weeks *(continued from p. 5)*

Some people have been rounded up and sent to other places. Today, I heard that the meeting to begin determining the flu vaccine for fall 2025 was cancelled and that affects our health. And it feels like the changes have just the beginning.

Individually or even as a single church we can't change everything that is happening. We can try to understand the magnitude of what is happening and decide how we are going to respond. As Christians and especially as members of MHUMC, we need to remember our values and we can decide what is right and what is wrong.

I was listening to NPR one day and whoever was speaking was talking about what he had heard from a founder of one of the indivisible groups. The founder said that everyone needs to back away from the firehose of information occasionally. But when one person takes a breath, the choir continues to sing. We are here to support one another and to remember that we are not alone. If one of us needs to take a pause, we will support that person and continue to sing.

The most important thing we each need to do is to take care of ourselves.

If that is taking a short break, then do that. If taking care of yourself is exercising, eating healthy, meditating, praying, or just going into a room and closing the door to scream for a few minutes, then do it. It is difficult to be there are others if we are drained by not taking care of ourselves.

The next thing to do is understand what is happening.

Putting what is happening in your own words is important so that you can relate to our current situation. Therapists have said that you can't deal with any problem unless you can name the problem. Words I have heard describing where we are: this is a hostile government take over; this is a revolution; this is the establishment of a Patrimonialism form of government, this is an authoritarian form of government, or this is an

oligarchy. Maybe none of these work for you. Find words that do.

Third, know that things are changing so fast that it is easy to get overwhelmed.

One of the goals of this government is to overwhelm and intimidate as many people as possible. When you are feeling overwhelmed, pause take a few deep breaths to calm yourself, and focus on what you can control and what you can't control. Try saying the Serenity Prayer that we learned one Sunday at church. "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

Fourth, it is important to maintain and build community.

God never intended for us to be alone. Relationships are key to feeling loved, trusted, and safe. We at MHUMC have a community that is warm and welcoming. This is a place where we can share what is going on with us. While our country is rapidly changing in ways we have never experienced before, many of us will find personal problems and challenges on top of what is happening. We all need to find a place where we can share our feelings in a safe and confidential environment. We will get through whatever happens together.

Finally, remember that no matter how bad things get, we are not defined by our circumstances.

We are wonderfully created in God's image, we have that divine spark within us, and we are grateful for the gift of life. Like the maidens with the lamps waiting for the bridegroom, let's stay awake, pay attention, and know that the Holy Spirit is with us always. And if you need to talk or be listened to, reach out to me.

*Grace and peace,
Linda*

Lessons From Our Sunday School Children

By Megan Richardson, Sunday School Teacher

In January we read the story of Jesus and the Woman At The Well. Lessons learned were Jesus cared for everyone by cutting through cultural barriers and he changed lives through conversation. We talked about how we can do these same things in our daily lives and put personal thoughts in our wells.



In February we learned about Saint Francis and how the idea of giving valentines became a tradition. Did you know that most citizens of Rome were forbidden to get married under the rule of Emperor Claudius? The idea was to keep

men in the Roman army instead of wanting to be at home with wives and children. Valentine secretly performed marriages and was said to leave secret messages signed "From Your Valentine." Kids made valentines to take home and to share with the congregation.

Fellowship on February 9th after worship was a Valentine Party where the children shared valentines with the congregation.



Sunday School has a new TV (donated by Ted Dubbs) and new table (donated by Darcy Foster).

Many Thanks!

Mission & Outreach Team: Making a Difference in Our Community



By Cathy Coates and John McCotter, Mission Team

The Missions and Outreach Committee is making progress on some projects.

- ★ Honoring the local librarians at Morgan Hill Public Library by giving them book marks and providing snacks during National Library Week in April (April 6th through April 12th.) John McCotter has been in contact with Friends of The Library for advice. Denise Melroy has kindly volunteered to paint some beautiful water color art book marks. (see photo for an example.)
- ★ The Sunday School Class is also planning to make thank you cards for the librarians.
- ★ As an ongoing project, we are still discussing the possibility of hosting Wednesday night dinners for the unhoused.
- ★ Susan Armstrong has continued to be very active in rallying support for a letter writing campaign about "The Farm Bill/Bread For The World."
- ★ We are discussing the possibility of supporting a United Methodist Global Ministries Missionary. Cathy Coates has researched that and it is feasible. We need to narrow the choices down to a region and a country, and she is researching that too.



Bread for the World Update

By Susan Armstrong, Mission Team

On February 4, Bread launched the campaign for 2025; Nourish Our Future. That evening, in the Visitors Center at the Capitol, Bread members gathered to hear legislative representatives from both sides of the aisle speak. They talked about and pledged support for this initiative. There were also 1200 of us who joined online. For me, the most inspirational part of the evening was hearing from four women who spoke from their lived experience of the Child Tax Credit, WIC, SNAP, college hunger and global nutrition.



You can read the press release with statements from these women and the legislators by going to Bread.org <<http://bread.org/>> and scrolling down to Share Bread: BFW Launches "Nourish Our Future" campaign.

As we did the last two years, we will have a Bread for the World Sunday later this spring and you will have the opportunity to write to our personal members of Congress in support of these vital programs.

Fellowship Potluck: A Methodist Tradition



Church and food – it's a relationship made in heaven. Whether it's coffee and donuts or elaborate potlucks with all the fixings, it seems like there's always something to eat or some discussion about what any given group will be eating. And it makes sense when you think about it. Holy Communion – the breaking of bread together – is an essential part of our United Methodist faith tradition. Food unites us, heals us, and sustains us.

What is a typical Methodist potluck?

- Methodist potlucks will always have some form of fried chicken.
- Methodist potlucks usually have some form of a gelatin-based dish (Usually Jello with marshmallows or fruit).
- Methodist potlucks will always have way more deserts than vegetable side dishes.
- Methodist potlucks will always have more food than everyone there can eat.



What a great evening at the MHUMC potluck on February 21st. There's talk about continuing evening potlucks once every quarter. Let's keep this wonderful Methodist tradition going!



February 19: Cottage Fence Repaired

The Wesley Cottage fence is repaired, after the incident on December 13th, when someone apparently lost control of their car and plowed through the Wesley Cottage front yard, narrowly missing the Blue Spruce tree and the Cottage itself. (No one as yet has stepped up to help identify the culprit.)

Shout out to Johnny Andrade Hauling for picking up the debris and Maya's Fences for the repairs.



Recent additions: New handicap parking sign and camera installation.



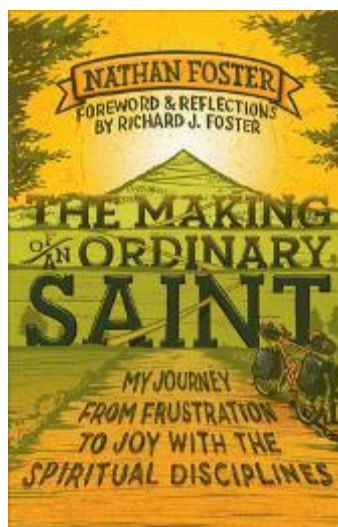
A Book Review and a Lenten Sermon Series

By Rev. Dr. Linda A. Holbrook, Pastor

For many years I have read and studied spiritual practices. Traditional practices include prayer, reading the Bible, meditation, and centering prayer among other things. Over the years I have done them all to various levels of success. For example, I have tried centering prayer (clearing your mind for twenty minutes) many times and each time after a few months, I stop. Centering prayer is just not a spiritual practice that works for me. Some of you may have tried spiritual practices that did or didn't work for you.

A few years ago, I came across a book by Nathan Foster, "The Making of an Ordinary Saint: My Journey from Frustrations to Joy with the Spiritual Disciplines." Nathan makes the case that the traditional practices aren't the only practices. Nathan explores other practices that aren't mentioned as frequently. He mentions submission, confession, guidance, worship, and service.

I decided to use some of the practices he writes about for our Lenten sermon series. We all need to find spiritual practices that work for

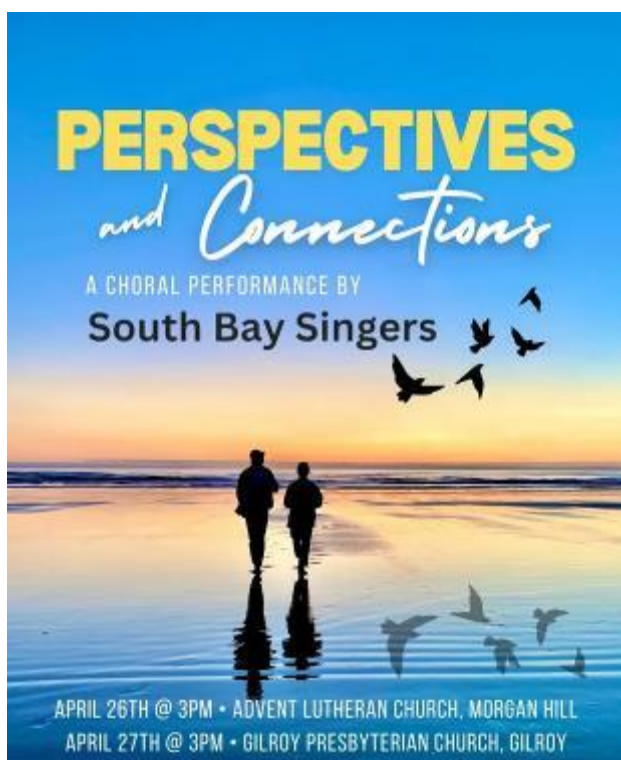


us. During this Lenten season, I invite you to deepen a practice that you are already doing or develop a new practice.

Our sermon series will be the practice of Listening on March 9th, Fasting on March 23rd, and Solitude on April 6th. In addition to these worship services, we will hold two Tuesday night

special services. On Tuesday March 11th, we will have a service of "Listening Posts." Every one of us needs to have a safe place to share what we are feeling, what we are concerned about, and where we might be finding our joy. Join us Tuesday March 11th at 7 pm to listen to others. On Tuesday March 25th, we will hold a healing service. If you or someone you know is in need of physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual healing, come and we will light candles and offer prayers.

If you need some help in selecting a spiritual practice or questions about spiritual practices, please reach out to me.



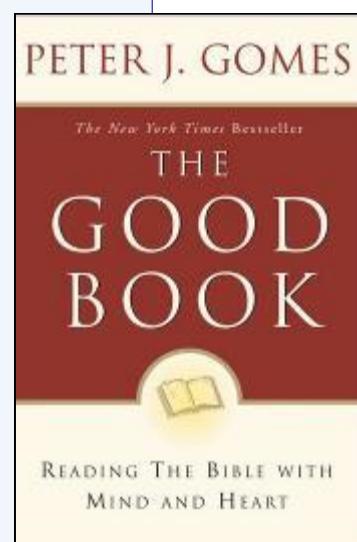
Good Reading: "The Good Book" Study Wrap Up

By John Braslin

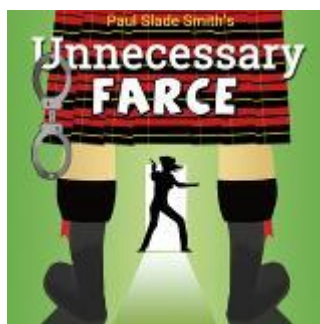
We are continuing and wrapping up a book study based on "The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart" by Peter J. Gomes, Chair of the Harvard Divinity School. This book offers a progressive look at developing relationship with the Bible.

Meet in Wesley Cottage after Worship. Here's the upcoming study date:

- 3/30 Discussion on Afterword



South Valley Civic Theatre: Upcoming Shows



April 26 — May 17



June 21 — July 13

For more information,
go to svct.org.

Birthdays and Special Days



Edith Ohene-Nyako

March 5

Dave Tuttle

March 13

Bill Tindall

March 19



Tim Richardson

April 4

Sophia Odneal

April 9

Marilyn Pifer

April 19

Other Upcoming Special Days

March 5 [Ash Wednesday](#)

March 9 [Daylight Savings](#)

March 17 [St. Patrick's Day](#)

March 21 [Crunchy Taco Day](#)

March 29 [Earth Hour](#)

April 1 [April Fools Day](#)

April 13 [Palm Sunday](#)

April 17 [Maundy Thursday](#)

April 18 [Good Friday](#)

April 20 [Easter](#)



See all holidays and special days at nationaltoday.com/

You are welcome here!

As a Reconciling Congregation, we celebrate God's welcome to us and to all people, including any who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender and their families. At Morgan Hill UMC, your friendship is valued and safeguarded. You are accepted for who you are. You have a home! *Reconciling Ministries Network* www.rmnetwork.org

