

WOODBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

4 Church Street

Woodbury, CT 06798

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Rev. J. Michael Cobb, Pastor

Woodbury United Methodist Messenger

Thursday, March 24, 2022

March 27th: Fourth Sunday in Lent

From Woodbury to Ecuador and Back Again – Love in Action

Spotlighting on WUMC's Connection with Fellow United Methodists in Ecuador,
and a Special Lenten Offering to Give Continuing Support to their Ministries.

Lectionary Reading:

2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Liturgist and Communion Steward: Carolyn Shay

Ushers & Greeters: Barb Hunt, Sue Vindigni, Pete Vindigni

Audio Visual Technician: Theron Kissinger

Worship At 10:30 AM, Livestreaming or In Person

- **Video:** Go to <http://www.woodburyumc.net>, scroll to the link for livestreaming near the top of our home page. A link is also provided for archived videos for later viewing.
- **Audio only by phone:** dial 425-436-6391, enter pin with hash sign 2431819#. Note that these numbers have changed from what was previously used. Please mute your phones to eliminate background noise.

Schedule For This Week

Sunday, March 27th

Lenten Prayer Meeting, 9:30 AM, the room off of Fellowship Hall

Tuesday, March 29th

Lenten Lectionary Bible Study, 6:30 PM, via Zoom

Wednesday, March 30th

Lenten Lectionary Bible Study, noon, Assembly Room

Bell Choir Rehearsal, 6:00 PM, Sanctuary

Voice Choir Rehearsal, 7:15 PM, Sanctuary

Friday, April 1st

Confirmants visit B'nai Israel, 7 PM

COVID Response Team (CRT) Update

We hope you have enjoyed the resumption of congregational singing two weeks ago. We are delighted to announce that we plan to resume Fellowship Hour this month on March 27th. We are also now allowing masks to be optional during small-group meetings held in Fellowship Hall, predicated on the fact that all participants are fully vaccinated/boosted, are asymptomatic, unanimously agree to removal of masks, and use either enhanced ventilation or the HEPA air filter boxes built by BOT.

The CRT is now considering the conditions under which masks can be made optional during worship services. We hope to be able to announce such a step toward normalcy in April, predicated on continued downward trends of COVID metrics and the ability to re-open windows and implement enhanced ventilation. In the meantime, we request that you continue to be patient.

The following is a reminder of how you can do your part to protect your church family at in-person worship:

1. Pre-register for the service on our website, www.woodburyumc.net.
2. Upgrade your mask to at least a surgical mask. We strongly encourage you to wear an N/KN 95 mask for increased protection. Both will be available to anyone who needs one at check-in.
3. If you or a family member is ill, please stay home and continue to enjoy the service online at our website, www.woodburyumc.net, or our YouTube channel at http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCN-kkokTCbVE9urwgP_AEcw.
4. Maintain your distance from other family units after briefly greeting one another.

You will find a chart on our website at <https://woodburyumc.net/covid-recovery%2Freopening> to help you determine when it is safe for you to return to in-person worship after being ill or having been in close contact with someone else who is ill.

Support For the People of Ukraine

We have all likely gone through a variety of emotions as we have watched the suffering being inflicted on the people of Ukraine by a foreign invader. One question that has surely arisen is "What can we do?" The New York Annual Conference has shared that through The Advance, the donation platform of the UMC Board of Global Ministries, there are two ways that you can give support:

- **Advance #14053A: Eurasia In Mission Together -- Ukraine and Moldova.** Donations to this Advance account will be quickly transferred to the bank account of the UMC of Ukraine, which has a system in place to receive these donations, put them to immediate use, and provide reporting on the usage of these funds. To donate, go to umcmmission.org and search for **Advance #14053A**
- **Advance #982450: UMCOR International Disaster Response.** Donations to this Advance account will be directed to UMCOR, which is already partnering with agencies on the ground in Eastern and Central Europe to assist those displaced by the fighting. Donations to this account should be designated "for Ukraine."

To donate, go to umcmmission.org and search for **Advance #982450**

In addition to these two ways to provide some material support to the people of Ukraine, please continue to provide your spiritual support through your ongoing prayers for protection for the most vulnerable and peace for their land.



From Woodbury to Ecuador and Back Again – Love in Action

In 2017 the WUMC began a relationship with the people and the Methodist Church in Ecuador through a connection with Sara Flores and her husband Dakin Cook, missionaries with the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). The church has supported ministry with the people of Ecuador through prayer, financial gifts to GBGM ministries (Advance Specials in Methodist lingo), sale of handcrafted items with proceeds going directly to Sara for discretionary use there or Advance Specials, and in 2018 a mission team of 12 (most of whom were from the WUMC) spent a week of service in churches in Atucucho and El Prado in Ecuador. But the love and service are not one way. In addition to the hospitality and the care our mission team received while in Ecuador, on several occasions over the past 5 years we have been the recipients of heartfelt prayer from the churches in Ecuador. The last time being on the 20th anniversary of September 11th.

With this ongoing mutual commitment to share the love of Christ between the one body in two locations in mind the **Mission & Outreach Committee will be receiving a special offering throughout the season of Lent** to provide continuing support of the ministries of Sara Flores and the Methodist Churches in Ecuador. While the needs in Ecuador are varied, which include programs for children, support for pastors, and just recently recovery from flood damage at the end of January, Sara has asked that the gifts we raise go towards the building of a church and community center for El Prado and surrounding communities. Sara writes, "To achieve this dream, we are in a campaign to promote funds for the purchase of land. **The goal is to reach \$20,000 U.S., and we have already saved \$5,000. We pray, confident that we can achieve this goal in 2022. We invite Woodbury UMC to be part of this dream.**"

Each Sunday in Lent there will be well-marked locations in the church for your gifts, such as one at the front of the church, pictured here. Gifts can also be mailed to the church or donations can be made through the church's website. If a check is written please make it out to "WUMC" with "Ecuador" on the memo line.

Lent is traditionally a time when people give something up. This Lent may we also take up this way of deepening our Methodist worldwide connection.



The Prayer Corner

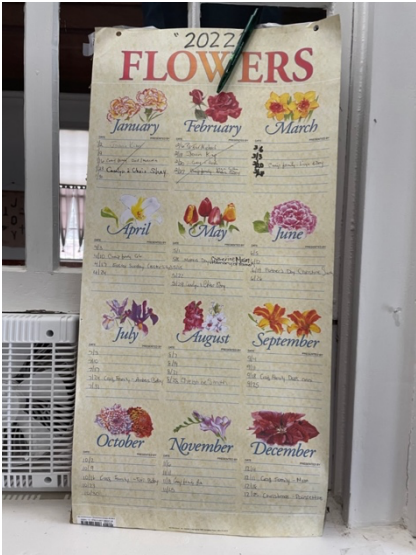
During Lent, all are invited to join together for a time of prayer prior to worship from 9:30 to 10 AM in the room off of Fellowship Hall.

In prayer, please remember: the people of Ukraine; our sisters and brothers in Christ, after recent mudslides in Ecuador; the following individuals from the WUMC Congregation: Michael Etcheto, grandson of Barbara Etcheto, Lou Calabrese (husband of Lynn Ramsden-Calabrese); our homebound members, Florence Brown and Linda Bailey;

Our Confirmands: Annabelle Cloud, Cody & Zachary Cordova, James Levario, and Matthew Shupenis

If you would like our confidential prayer team to pray with you or for you, please reach out to Carolyn Shay, 203-518-3177 or 1jerseygirl52@gmail.com

Altar Flowers



The flower ordering chart has been moved the Narthex for greater visibility. Dates can be sponsored through the end of 2022. REMEMBER: if you want to sponsor a day but don't want the flowers, you can donate and we will be sure to deliver them to one of our homebound people during that week. **Note that there has been an increase in floral pricing to \$35.00 for 2022** due to the increase of all supplies used for the arrangements.

Altar Easter Flowers 2022

Every Easter, our sanctuary is decorated with the flowers of the season. If you would like to place a plant on the Altar, we are now taking orders for Easter Lilies, Daffodils, and Tulips. A list will be printed in the church bulletin on Easter Sunday.

If you are interested, all flower orders must be paid in advance. Order forms are in the worship bulletins and at the church office. All checks should be made payable to Woodbury United Methodist Church, with "Easter Flowers" in the memo.

We will be placing the order on March 30th, so **you need to have your order placed by the close of day Tuesday, March 29th**. Call the office at (203) 263-4775 or email at wumc@woodburyumc.net.

FORUM ON FAITH

On Lent, the 'Ghost of Kyiv' and finding hope

By The Rev. J. Michael Cobb

Less than 48 hours after the Russian assault on Ukraine, a folk hero was born. As an overwhelming military force invaded, stories began to circulate about the Ghost of Kyiv.

This unnamed individual was said to be an exceptional fighter pilot, who had engaged far superior Russian planes in aerial combat, single-handedly bringing down six of them.

This is unheard of, and if true would be the first time such a thing had happened since the Second World War. The pilot was named the Ghost of Kyiv for appearing out of nowhere to defend the country and then vanishing just as quickly once the task was done.

There is no evidence this Ghost is a propaganda hoax, nor is there any proof that he exists, but this doesn't seem to matter. The Ghost of Kyiv



The Rev. J. Michael Cobb is pastor of the Woodbury United Methodist Church and resides in Danbury with his family.

has become a very powerful symbol of hope to a people who face odds that leave little room for hope.

As I've read about the Ghost, my favorite comment about him from an unnamed Ukrainian was this: "If he is real, may God be with him; if he is fake, I pray for more like him."

This story about an unnamed resistance fighter arose just a few days before the beginning of the Chris-

tian season of Lent. During this time, Christians are encouraged to engage in active reflection — on our souls, our actions, and our relationships with God, with the church, and with one another.

"Some people give up enjoyable practices during Lent as a way to encourage more frequent, active contemplation, with abstinence from chocolate or alcohol or even social media being common.

As if that wasn't enough, Lent begins and ends with a focus on mortality. For many Christians, this includes clergy putting ashes on your forehead while speaking words most commonly used at a funeral.

The ashes are applied in the shape of a cross, our most powerful symbol of our faith. In the middle of all that focus on death and mortality, we are reminded of hope that persists through everything.

Intentionally contemplating one's mortality can be challenging, and as we enter the third year of a worldwide pandemic, many of us have been contemplating mortality to a great degree.

And yet, Christians do this with a reminder of hope at the center of it all. Once Lent is underway, it is no longer on one's forehead for all the world to see, but the intent is to keep in your heart the reminder that hope persists, no matter what. Kind of like an avenging fighter pilot, striving against impossible odds, yet refusing to give up.

This year, I am mindful of how the season of Lent overlays everything else happening in the world. As I write this, mask mandates are beginning to relax. The sensible precautions we were following when Lent began will likely no longer be necessary at its end.

The weather is getting a little warmer, feeling like

winter is finally giving way to the spring. Like many churches, my congregation will celebrate the end of Lent with an Easter morning worship service held outdoors, unthinkable just a few weeks ago but likely to be warm and beautiful when we reach that point.

While Lent focuses on mortality, it always ends the same way, in a celebration of new life and new beginnings that we call Easter. Perhaps it is easier to turn one's attention to somber matters when we know with certainty that it will end in joy and light.

When you know for sure where things are going, it is easier to put your faith and trust into a humble ashen symbol of hope. As I write this, no one knows what will be the outcome for the Ukrainian people. I do know that in a time characterized by incessant partisanship and bias, most of our nation, even most of the world, has united in support of

the Ukrainian people. Against the odds, hope persists.

In writing this, I learned that more than 70 percent of Ukrainians are Christian, a higher percent of the nation than in the United States, so many Ukrainians are also observing Lent while fighting this invasion. I pray that the hope that is such an important part of this time is an encouragement to them. Churches have become accustomed to gathering online during the pandemic, bringing faraway believers into community. Like all religions, believers share a bond with one another, no matter how distant they are from one another. The lesson of Lent is that hope persists, even in the face of grim odds, and I pray that it may help sustain Ukraine during this time when it is so urgently needed.

Rev. J. Michael Cobb is pastor of the Woodbury United Methodist Church, and resides in Danbury with his family.

Pastor Michael was asked to contribute to the *Danbury News-Times* "Forum on Faith" column and offered these early Lenten thoughts on finding hope when hope seems to be in short supply, published earlier this month. The purpose of the column is to introduce readers to aspects of the writer's faith tradition that may be unfamiliar to the general public.



Delegates sing during a 2019 worship service of the Special Session of General Conference, held in St. Louis.

Delegates Urge Hope For Denomination's Future

Key points:

- **Denominational division has been the hot topic since the announcement of General Conference's postponement to 2024.**
- **More than 275 General Conference delegates and other church leaders have signed an open letter sharing their commitments to strengthening The United Methodist Church.**
- **"We look forward to a bright and exciting future together," the letter concludes.**

Since the postponement of General Conference to 2024, much of the news has been about church disaffiliations and denominational divisions. No question the rhetorical punches are flying on social media and in newsletters. However, many United Methodists see no reason to throw in the towel on the church they love.

More than 275 General Conference delegates and other church leaders released an open letter March 18 that shares their hopes for the denomination's future and their commitment to stay United Methodist.

"Ministry is happening now!" said the Letter to the Connection upon the Postponement of General Conference. "With each of you, we will do the work of Christ that will lead our church into Easter resurrection."

Most of the signers come from across the United States. Other United Methodists are invited to sign.

The Rev. Eric Swanson, a delegate from the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, said he and the letter's other writers wanted to present a positive vision while acknowledging there is still work to do.

"We care deeply about the future of The United Methodist Church," said Swanson, lead pastor of Grace United Methodist Church in Pekin, Illinois. "We care that it continues to grow and is prospering, and that it's strengthening effective witness in ministry."

In the letter, signers commit to healing the wounds caused by division. The letter also says signers will:

- "Hold in our hearts our LGBTQIA siblings and commit to the celebration and welcome of all God's children, now.
- "Commit to prayerfully and steadfastly dismantling the sins of racism, tribalism and colonialism.

- “Envision and will work toward a church that is regional in structure, where United Methodists in Africa, Europe, the Philippines and North America can do ministry based on their own cultural context.
- “Commit to practicing Wesley’s advice — ‘Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike?’ Recognizing the theological and cultural diversity in our church, we commit to moving forward with a focus on the ministry that unites us.”

The letter signers also join with the United Methodist bishops’ “Narrative for the Continuing United Methodist Church” in committing to be “... one people, rooted in Scripture, centered in Christ, serving in love and united in the essentials.”

The letter points out that it arrives during Lent, a somber season of repentance and remembering Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. The letter also comes at a time of anxiety for many United Methodists.

After decades of intensifying debate over LGBTQ inclusion, many expected the coming General Conference to adopt a formal plan for the denomination to separate along theological lines. The most endorsed proposal would have allowed congregations and annual conferences that support the denomination’s current bans on same-sex weddings and noncelibate gay clergy to leave with property and \$25 million in United Methodist funds to start a new denomination.

Now that legislation is in doubt. Earlier this month, General Conference organizers announced that because of long visa waits, the lawmaking assembly — already postponed twice by the pandemic — would not be able to convene this August as scheduled. Instead, organizers are planning for the assembly, which draws delegates from four continents, to meet in 2024.

With the postponement, organizers of the new theologically conservative denomination — the Global Methodist Church — have moved up the launch date to May 1. The United Methodist Council of Bishops has made plans for how it hopes to handle congregational disaffiliations. The bishops also have asked the Judicial Council, the denomination’s top court, whether annual conferences — church regional bodies — can leave the denomination under current United Methodist law.

Many of those planning the Global Methodist Church have responded to General Conference’s third delay with anger at United Methodist leaders and frustration with the uncertainty.

The March 18 letter strikes a different tone, speaking of excitement for the continuing United Methodist Church.

Derrick Scott III, a delegate and campus minister in the Florida Conference, said the United Methodist witness to the world matters more as some begin their departure from the denomination.

“So embodying the key points of this letter is most important right now,” he said.

Fred Brewington, one of the letter writers and a delegate from the New York Conference, said his prayer is that United Methodists not try to get back to business as usual. “Instead, we should take this opportunity to see the new thing that God is doing and that through our collective and shared vision, we live into a bright and exciting time of mission and ministry,” he said. “The focus on faith, inclusivity and what God’s mosaic can do to reshape a very broken world is the aim.”

The Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai, a delegate from the Michigan Conference, said she hopes the letter will help people think about what they can do without legislation. She is the chief connectional ministries officer for the Connectional Table, a leadership body that backs legislation to create new regional structures in the denomination. But even as that legislation awaits consideration, she said United Methodists have work to do.

“We can continue to build relationships. We can repair trust. We can claim and ground ourselves in identity,” she said. “We can begin to imagine the future of our church. Such visioning work is crucial. If we can’t imagine it, we can’t achieve it. We have to start thinking now about who we are becoming.”

The Rev. Dalton Rushing, a delegate from the North Georgia Conference, said it was a no-brainer to join in signing the letter. “I hope fellow United Methodists will take heart. If anything, the pandemic has helped me see the resilience and flexibility of God’s people,” said Rushing, the senior pastor of Decatur First United Methodist Church. “Even as I acknowledge the ‘feelings of powerlessness, abandonment, and anxiety’ described in the letter, I particularly resonate with the line, ‘leadership cannot be relegated to legislative processes at a quadrennial meeting.’ We are called to be God’s hands and feet in the world, now!”

The Rev. Katie Dawson, a letter signer and delegate from the Iowa Conference, said congregants at Immanuel United Methodist Church in Des Moines have started this year revisiting who they are as United Methodists. “It has helped us to remember our task to be united in the essentials and to think theologically, to put faith into action, to claim the freedom and power God gives us to resist oppression and exclusion,” said Dawson, the congregation’s lead pastor. “I think all of that has helped to re-center and recommit ourselves to the daily work before us.”

By Heather Hahn, *UM News*, March 18, 2022. (<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/delegates-urge-hope-for-denominations-future>)



PALM SUNDAY – APRIL 10

10:30 a.m. Worship Service

MAUNDY THURSDAY – APRIL 14

Communion Service at 7:00 p.m.

ECUMENICAL GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE – APRIL 15

Worship Service at 7:00 p.m.

St. Paul’s Episcopal Church

EASTER SUNDAY – APRIL 17

Community Sunrise Service 7:00 AM @ the Hollow – Woodbury, CT

Coffee and donuts will be available immediately after worship.

Continental Breakfast at WUMC

Fellowship Hall beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Sponsored by Family Nurture Ministry Team

10:30 a.m. Traditional Easter Worship Service



Church Yard Clean-up... Raking, Mulching, Pruning

Please bring a rake, a wheelbarrow, gloves...

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**Volunteers Needed ... All Ages**

**Saturday April 9th**

**9am - 12noon**  
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Church Building Clean-up.... Washing Windows, Organizing Fellowship Hall

Please bring gloves...

For Additional Information or To Let Us Know You Will Be There Contact:

Bud Behlman

budbehlman@charter.net

203-206-9276

Help a Refugee Family
Get a New Start

New Start Ministry CT is getting ready to resettle another family! Volunteers are needed in several areas including ESL, Transportation, and Technology.

Learn more and fill out a volunteer application:
newstartministryct.org



Mission Statement

We are a welcoming Christian fellowship who celebrate and share God's love with everyone. We seek a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. Inspired by His example, we strive to be God's hands in this world. Empowered by God's word, we proclaim the Gospel and serve through worship, study, mission, and community support.
