

Lyons Muir Church  
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## “Learning God’s Mother Tongue”

*Again Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. (John 10: 7-10)*

Sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus,

When I read this passage from the Gospel according to John, it points me to the idea that our spiritual lives must be intentional. While a team of staff and lay leaders prepares what the church offers for public worship on Sundays, it’s up to each one of us to figure out what worship looks like when we’re all by ourselves. There’s a word that sums up this concept: devotion. The word implies that we have to devote time, and thought, and energy to worship when we’re not being guided by others. The problem is that Sunday morning worship offers us immediate emotional and spiritual results: we enjoy being with our fellow Christians, we enjoy exploring the scriptures under the guidance of a pastor, we enjoy singing the songs of our faith, and so many other aspects of public worship. But in private, we ourselves must choose to focus on behaviors and forms of speech and thought which do not promise immediate relief or gratification. And our reality remains that the pandemic and the political tension in our country and world bring us to moments of psychological stagnation and exhaustion. Our need to choose the practices of private study and prayer are in conflict with our feelings of fatigue. And fatigue does not come about overnight, nor can it be reversed overnight. So when we make plans to devote ourselves to private worship, we need to think small and start small. As my physical therapist once said, “Do not overestimate what you can do in a month, and do not *underestimate* what you can do in a year.” Facing our individual and communal sense of languishing requires that we become intentional about taking baby steps towards flourishing and joy.

### Attendance:

*The average attendance for the month of March was 37.*

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

SUNDAYS	Worship on the Lord’s Day, 11
MONDAYS	No regular events
TUESDAYS	Office Hours, 9-12
WEDNESDAYS	Bible Study, 6:30-7:30 Ionia First UMC, Cafe
THURSDAYS	Office Hours, 9-2 Bible Study, 12-1

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Board of Governors meeting**  
Monday 4/11 at 7 P.M.

**Easter Egg Hunt**  
Saturday 4/16 at 10 A.M.

**Easter Sunday 4/17**  
Breakfast at 9:30 A.M.  
Followed by our  
Easter Service

You'll remember my argument from March's newsletter, that it's our small everyday choices that define us, and not the big existential ones. You can change your schedule, or change jobs, or relationships, or churches... but none of those big choices will change how you feel when you're alone. For this we have to adopt a specific program of activities which promote wellbeing, and give that program of activities authority in our lives. Not surprisingly, this will require a holistic approach. We cannot imagine that working on our bodies but leaving our spirits and our minds in languishing will lead us to life abundant. We need to be smart about this: we need to work in constant, little, everyday ways on the whole of ourselves: body, mind, and spirit.

The problem for us is that the body and the mind are pretty well understood, whereas human spirituality remains a somewhat nebulous concept. We can think carefully about a menu for the week on Sunday nights and choose foods that give us a more balanced intake of calories and nutrients. And intellectually, we can choose to read a book instead of watching more Netflix or Hulu or Disney or Fox or CNN or what-have-you. But when it comes to the spirit, when it comes to the parts of reality that can't be proved with the five senses, we're going to struggle. This is true, because for too long we have relied on religious organizations to spoon-feed us our spirituality. But unless we become active, curious, and intentional about our own private spiritual practice, we will continue to wonder why life has yet to feel truly abundant.

I have a good friend in the ministry, the Rev. Mike Potter. Mike is a United Methodist pastor, a Hospice chaplain, and a practitioner of Contemplative Outreach, an ecumenical program of spiritual formation designed to help ordinary folks discover and become conversant in the practice of private prayer and scripture reading. As part of his work, he wrote an article about verses 5 and 6 in Matthew chapter 6:

*And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

In verse 5, the “reward” of those who pray to be seen by others is a sense of pride in social standing. The Greek word there is *μισθός* [*misthos*], which means “wage or recompense”. By contrast, the “reward” of being utterly alone with God in verse 6, is that our spirits begin to flush with life. The Greek word there is *ἀποδιδόμι* [*apodidómi*], which means “restoration”. Mike points out that this distinction is also true in the Syriac translation of the New Testament, which is even closer to the original Aramaic oral tradition than the Greek. Inasmuch, Rev. Potter helps us perceive a piece of ancient Christian wisdom: that our performative acts of religious devotion are self-referential, whereas our unscripted acts of private devotion refer to the very source of Being. Performative Religion provides wages: a sense of the self as a function of our place in the community. Mystic Spirituality, however, provides restoration: a sense of the self as the mended vessel of the Divine Image. The former has immediate, but no lingering effect on languishing. The latter is the gateway to abundant life. The latter provides us with an ongoing experience of the truth that our lives “are hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3: 3).

If we're going to flourish we have to pray, but not in the scripted words of Sunday morning—however beautiful our poetry might be. To move toward abundant life, we must pray in the Mother Tongue of the Divine Being, which is silence: private, uninterrupted, deliberate, patient, open, consensual *silence*. Salvation has to do with passing through the grace of Christ into an unutterable communion with the Almighty. And this means imitating his form of solitary prayer. Moving beyond our languishing to a new normal means reaching out with our feelings toward the Source of Being, whose power to restore us is unique, unmatched, and undefined. May we all claim the freedom to seek this flourishing as we follow Jesus through this wounded world.

Dear brothers and sisters,

I wish you well: in body, in mind, in spirit.

Thanks be to God.

Jonathan

# LENT & EASTER

## ASH WEDNESDAY LENT BEGINS



Emphasizes our mortality and our need for ongoing repentance.

## PALM SUNDAY



Commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem.

## HOLY THURSDAY



Celebrates the Last Supper with the disciples and Passover.

## GOOD FRIDAY



We remember the Passion and Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross.

## EASTER SUNDAY HE HAS RISEN!



Alleluia!  
The principal feast of the ecclesiastical year. Jesus has risen!

Easter is an 8 day celebration leading to Easter Season, which ends on Pentecost.

## DAYS OF FASTING

ASH WEDNESDAY  
GOOD FRIDAY

### WHAT IS FASTING?

One full meal and two smaller meals.

## DAYS OF ABSTINENCE

ASH WEDNESDAY  
GOOD FRIDAY  
EVERY FRIDAY DURING LENT

### WHAT IS ABSTINENCE?

No meat.

# 40

The 40 days of Lent are based on two accounts: the 40 years of wandering by the Israelites and our Lord's 40 days in the wilderness at which point He was tempted by Satan.

## PILLARS OF LENT

PRAYER  
FASTING  
ALMSGIVING

The key to understanding the meaning of Lent is simple: Baptism.



Source: Catholic Online



## 2022 Adopt-A-Highway

This year the Adopt-A-Highway dates are April 23-May 1, July 16-24 and September 24-October 2.

Our Adopt-A-Highway area runs down M-21 from the Maple River, through Muir, past our church, to Westbrook Road which is three miles. Volunteers are needed to help with the trash pickup, as the volunteers able to help are dwindling. Last year, there were four people to pick up the three miles and having more volunteers will help. If you would like to volunteer for this community service, please contact Barb Davarn at 989-224-3849.

**We are in desperate need of volunteers for this event.**



### Community Garden

Dawn Kemp is gracious enough to get our community garden up and going again!!

Be on the lookout for more information regarding starting seeds and getting together to work in the garden. You can also find info on Facebook at LMC Community Garden!!



## MAKE MUSIC TO THE LORD

People of the Bible used many different instruments to worship God through music.

*Directions: Using the clues, unscramble the names of instruments found in Psalm 150. Then write the circled letters in order in the spaces below to complete verse 6.*

	A type of horn	___ _ _ _ _ <input type="checkbox"/>	MURTETP
	Played by King David	<input type="checkbox"/> _ _ _ _	PRHA
	Plucked to make sound	_ <input type="checkbox"/> _ _ _ _ _	IGSNSTR
	Similar to a tambourine	_ _ _ _ <input type="checkbox"/> _ _ _ _	MRBELIT
	A type of harp	_ _ _ _ <input type="checkbox"/>	ELRY
	Blown through to make sound	_ _ _ <input type="checkbox"/> _	EPPI
	A percussion instrument	_ _ _ _ _ <input type="checkbox"/> _	YBLACMS

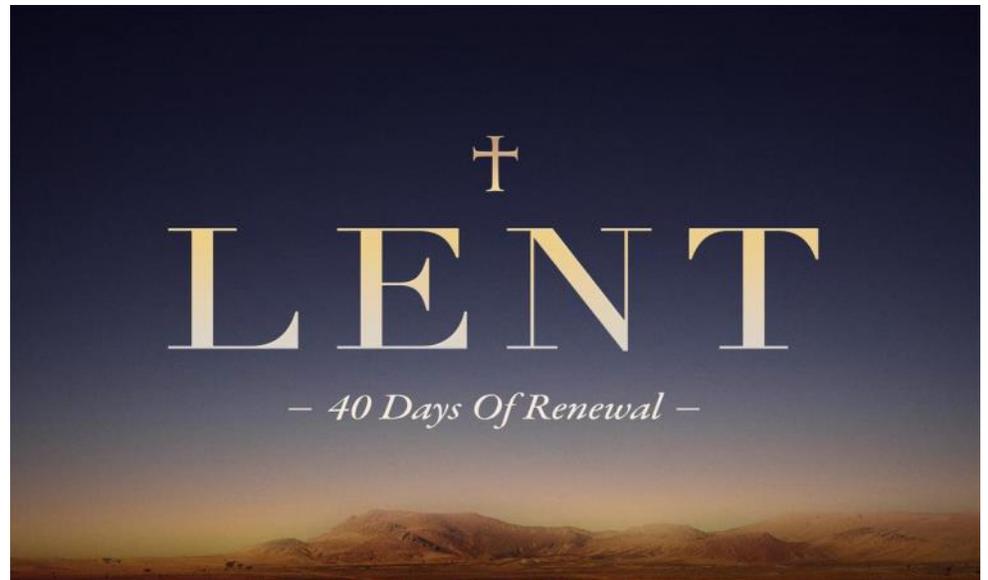
Le\_ everyt\_ing tha\_ has \_r\_ath  
 \_raise the \_ORD. Psalm 150:6, NIV

Answer: trumpet, harp, strings, timbrel, lyre, pipe, cymbals; Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Psalm 150:6, NIV



## MISSION STATEMENT

*The Lyons-Muir Church is called to be God's healing and hope-filled congregation, and to make followers of Jesus Christ for the positive transformation of our community through lives of prayer, love, forgiveness, honesty, acceptance, and trust.*



## JOINT HOLY WEEK SERVICES

### **April 14: Maundy Thursday**

6:30 p.m. IOFUMC  
Holy Communion

### **April 15: Good Friday**

12 Noon IOFUMC

### **April 16: Saturday**

Easter Egg Hunt at 10 a.m.

### **April 17: Easter Sunday**

Hot Breakfast at 9:30 a.m.  
Worship at 11 a.m.

