

View from the Trailhead

from Barry Petrucci



What would it be like to walk the streets throughout Kalamazoo County and pass church after church, faith community after faith community and to know that by church doctrine or congregational publicity the welcome is not extended to you unless you turn from what you understand to be at the heart of your human identity? What would it be like to not know whether walking through the door to that congregation would mean a warm handshake or the not-so-well concealed disdain of those looking at you? What would it be like to desire the fellowship of warm inclusion, but to stand in fear of rejection?

Some of you know well what those things are like. What they look like, sound like, feel like. A half-century ago people of color were still fighting back those feelings as churches struggled over inclusion or segregation. Still arguing over the meaning of the scriptures, still wrestling through wondering whether advertising the welcome of ONE group identified by skin color was appropriate. And 75 years ago the tension was around the full inclusion of women, better than half the population, in the life and leadership of the church.

In November this congregation risked going public with a desire to welcome without pre-condition ALL God's children into the life of Chapel Hill. We advertise the core belief that we are not a complete picture of the community God desires for us as long as we, in any way, block the expansion of this community of faith to include all. Some longtime, faithful members of this congregation could not go there with us. They believe that to, in any way, give special invitation to those who would understand the Rainbow Christian flag as a specific invitation to them was unfair because we are not flying similar flags to represent other underrepresented groups. Faithful minds can disagree.

As we mourn the leaving, I remind us all that those leaving will not have to worry about being welcomed into another congregation based on who they understand themselves to be. I pray that the day would come when that assumption can be made of all churches. We are not there yet. Pastorally, I grieve the pain of the process, a process that was a long way from perfect. Pastorally, I grieve those who have left Chapel Hill for other congregations...I grieve them particularly because I see signs of their faithful past labors all over this place...and I grieve them because they were willing to disagree, sometimes passionately. Such disagreement forces us to seek wisdom beyond ourselves in the moving of the Spirit.

For those who stand with Chapel Hill because of, or in spite of, the decision to fly the Rainbow Christian Flag, we are left to strengthen the conviction that brought us to that decision. Strengthening that conviction means stepping up to leadership, it means making sure that core values of mission, justice, ministry for all ages, celebrative, thoughtful and challenging worship continues and are bettered. It means digging deeper out of Spirit-driven faith to fund the many ministries of this congregation and this denomination. Having pride in the place to which God has called us MUST be coupled with the active faith to sustain the work of that place.

May God Continue to Bless You...Us...on the Journey~

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned at the bottom center of the page.

Lenten Opportunities

from Matt Weiler



Lent is a period of 40 days during which the Christian community explores the themes of sin and death, in light of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ through resurrection on Easter Sunday. As this season is approaching, I invite, and encourage you to make a deeper faith commitment by connecting through one of the many opportunities for worship, study, fellowship, and spiritual growth. In this season may we all grow together in deeper relationship with one another and so to Jesus Christ.

Peace be with you on the journey,

Food Network: Three Courses for Connection: February 21 through March 28
Gather around the table for food, and fellowship, while getting to know others from the Chapel Hill Community. Sign-ups will continue through February 14th. After the sign-ups are complete you will receive a letter or an email letting you know who will be your dining partners.

Sunday School During Lent – Sundays, 10:20 – 11:15, February 21-March 28

The Last Week by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan: The Last Week depicts Jesus giving up his life to protest power without justice and to condemn the rich who lack concern for the poor. In this vein, at the end of the week Jesus marches up Calvary, offering himself as a model for others to do the same when they are confronted by similar issues. Informed, challenged, and inspired, we not only meet the historical Jesus, but meet a new Jesus who engages us and invites us to follow him.

Trail Location: Wilderness Taught by: Hazel Winterburn Location: Music Room (#211)

New Membership Class: Participants will learn about the mission, vision, and ministry of Chapel Hill, and how to live out their baptisms as disciples of Jesus Christ through membership in the local church. Those desiring membership will participate in the membership ceremony during worship on March 14th.

Lenten Lunches at Sunnyside United Methodist Church, 2800 Gull Road, Kalamazoo

Gather at table around a light lunch from 12-1pm to on Thursdays (February 25th – April 1st) to discuss the call to reconciliation. If you or your small group would like to attend any of the lunches, please call the Sunnyside church office and indicate the date, and number of persons attending. (269) 349-3047

Lenten Luncheon Schedule:

February 25th: Rev. Matt Weiler, Pastor at Sunnyside UMC – *Reconciling Our Lives with God through the Church Year*

March 4th: John Musick, Director of Michigan Organizing Project– *Your Role in the Work of Justice and Reconciliation in the Community*

March 11th: Jen and Mike DeWaele of Peace House – *A Place of Peace and Reconciliation for the children of the Eastside Neighborhood*

March 18th: Rev. Matthew Laney, Pastor of First Congregational UCC of Kalamazoo -*Finding Reconciliation at Table with our Neighbors*

March 25th: Rev. Barry Petrucci, Senior Pastor at Portage Chapel Hill UMC– *Exclusion and Embrace: The Rhythm of Reconciliation*

April 1st: Rev. Cara Weiler, Deacon at Sunnyside UMC-*Reconciling Ourselves to God's Creation*

Lenten Worship Schedule

The 2010 Lenten season will be full of cooperative worship opportunities between Sunnyside, and Portage Chapel Hill UMC. On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday there are both midday and evening worshipping opportunities. On Holy Thursday all from Sunnyside are encouraged to worship together at Chapel Hill for a full Seder Meal experience. Matt and Cara Weiler, along with Barry Petrucci will be sharing responsibilities at the various worship opportunities.

February 17th, Ash Wednesday
12:00 pm at Sunnyside UMC
7:00 pm at PCHUMC

April 1st, Holy Thursday Seder Meal
7:00 pm at PCHUMC

April 2nd, Good Friday
12:00 pm at Sunnyside UMC
7:00 pm at PCHUMC