

West Hills

United Methodist Church Newsletter



Spring 2008

From The Pastor...

In the eleventh chapter of Luke's gospel, one of Jesus' disciples says to him, "Lord, teach us to pray..."

Jesus' response is simple and to the point: "When you pray, say: 'Father (Mother), holy is your name. Your reign come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive our sins, for we forgive those indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.'" (Luke 11:1-4)

Prayer is the heart of our life together. But most of us are uncomfortable with prayer as a central aspect of our lives. While Jesus' advice to the disciple (us) is simple and direct, it is also profound. Here there are few words but there is unlimited meaning when we understand prayer as an expression of a deeply intimate relationship.

Prayer can be words (this seems like the most familiar and most comfortable praying for us) but prayer is above all a relationship. Prayer as listening, deeply and silently listening for God's longing for us, is called contemplative prayer. Prayer as living action is also very central to our relationship to God and one another. The great Jewish scholar and mystic, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel when he was criticized by some elements of the American Jewish community for marching with Dr. King in Selma, Alabama instead of staying where he belonged and praying retorted, "I was praying with my feet!"

Prayer comes in many forms. I would like for us to explore some of these together. But above all prayer is a kind of making love with God. It is the deepest kind of intimacy. When entered into in common with one another, prayer is a sharing of that love making that can heal, inspire and sustain us beyond our wildest fantasies. If this sounds kind of erotic, it is. The erotic (love overcoming separation) along with sisterly/brotherly love and unconditional love (agape) is a very powerful aspect of prayer.

I have suggested that we as a community come together to ask God to deepen our understanding and appreciation of prayer in our lives, both as individuals and as a church.

I would like to invite all of you to join me in praying the disciple's prayer, "Lord, teach us to pray."

We are planning a number of events around prayer in the coming weeks and months. I am hopeful that we will be able to have a church retreat soon to help us focus on our church as a praying community. I am envisioning a weekend away where we can challenge and support each other in listening for God's guidance as we try and open ourselves to our prayer to be taught how to pray.

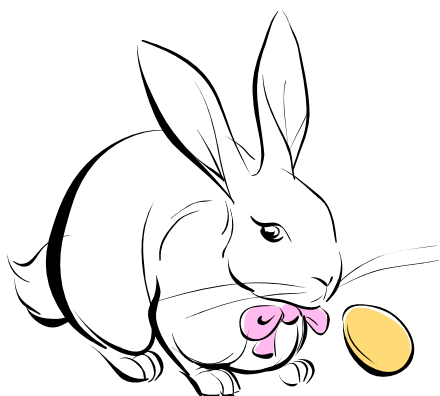
In case you think that prayer is for the weak and the feeble (if not feeble minded), let me remind you that many of the greatest women and men throughout history have been guided by prayer. Real prayer takes great courage and is not for sissies.

I want to introduce us to a beautiful and profound movie called "Into Great Silence" that I think will help us begin a journey together into a deeper and more God centered prayer life for all of us. I pray that you will join me on this journey.

Faithfully,

Bruce

West Hills United Methodist Church Sunday School Easter Egg Hunt



Palm Sunday

12:00-1:00

Fellowship hour in Jones Hall
while the children hunt for eggs.

Over 100 fun filled eggs will be hidden on the property (weather permitting, indoors if not).
The hunt will be followed by crafts and goodies

Bring a friend!!



Announcements

Extra-ordain-ary

Jeffrey Campbell has successfully passed his ordination process and will be ordained, Reverend, into the United Methodist Church at the New Jersey Annual Conference in May. We congratulate Jeff, Carrie, Cate & Mason on this wonderful accomplishment ! Jeff is Pastor at the Wharton United Community Church at St John's in Wharton, New Jersey.

Great Expectations!

Reverend & Mrs Jeffrey Campbell are proud to announce the up coming birth of child #3 ! Caroline is feeling well and we all wish her a healthy, easy pregnancy! The baby is due August 23rd . Congratulations to the Campbell's !



Leap Year Birthdays (and plain vanilla birthdays)

Catherine Adele Campbell is celebrating her 4th birthday on leap day February 29. This is Cate's first real birthday, since leap day only comes once every four years.

Deborah Overbeck celebrated her 10th birthday this past February 29th as well.

Other Birthdays: Helen Kniffen—February 14th, Paul Knorr - March 7th
Todd Winch & Kim Goehring -Mach 14th

EMAIL YOUR BIRTHDAY TO: TCWINCH@OPTONLINE.NET

Spring Cleanup at West Hills

More valuable than money, your time is required at West Hills at our annual spring clean up. It is time to put God's House in order.

There are jobs for young and old at this two day cleanup up. Please set aside the first two Sundays in April for the cleanup—directly after church. The more people we have, the faster it will be.



America's Unfaithful Faithful

By DAVID VAN BIEMAM on Feb 25, 5:35 PM ET

A major new survey presents perhaps the most detailed picture we've yet had of which religious groups Americans belong to.

YAHOO! NEWS

And its big message is: blink and they'll change. For the first time, a large-scale study has quantified what many experts suspect: there is a constant membership turnover among most American faiths. America's religious culture, which is best known for its high participation rates, may now be equally famous (or infamous) for what the new report dubs "churn."

The report, released today by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, is the first selection of data from a 35,000- person poll called the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey. Says Pew Forum director Luis Lugo, Americans "not only change jobs, change where they live, and change spouses, but they change religions too. We totally knew it was happening, but this survey enabled us to document it clearly."

According to Pew, 28% of American adults have left the faith of their childhood for another one. And that does not even include those who switched from one Protestant denomination to another; if it did, the number would jump to 44%. Says Greg Smith, one of the main researchers for the "Landscape" data, churn applies across the board. "There's no group that is simply winning or simply losing," he says. "Nothing is static. Every group is simultaneously winning and losing."

For some groups, their relatively steady number of adherents over the years hides a remarkable amount of coming and going. Simply counting Catholics since 1972, for example, you would get the impression that its population had remained fairly static - at about 25% of adult Americans (the current number is 23.9%). But the Pew report shows that of all those raised Catholic, a third have left the church. (That means that roughly one out of every 10 people in America is a former Catholic, and that ex-Catholics are almost as numerous as the America's second biggest religious group, Southern Baptists.) But Catholicism has made up for the losses by adding converts (2.6% of the population) and, more significantly, enjoying an influx of new immigrants, mostly Hispanic.

An even more extreme example of what might be called "masked churn" is the relatively tiny Jehovah's Witnesses, with a turnover rate of about two-thirds. That means that two-thirds of the people who told Pew they were raised Jehovah's Witnesses no longer are - yet the group attracts roughly the same number of converts. Notes Lugo, "No wonder they have to keep on knocking on doors."

The single biggest "winner," in terms of number gained versus number lost, was not a religious group at all, but the "unaffiliated" category. About 16% of those polled defined their religious affiliation that way (including people who regarded themselves as religious, along with atheists and agnostics); only 7% had been brought up that way. That's an impressive gain, but Lugo points out that churn is everywhere: even the unaffiliated group lost 50% of its original membership to one church or another.

The report does not speculate on the implications of its data. But Lugo suggests, "What it says is that this marketplace is highly competitive and that no one can sit on their laurels, because another group out there will make [its tenets] available" for potential converts to try out. While this dynamic "may

be partly responsible for the religious vitality of the American people," he says, "it also suggests that there is an institutional loosening of ties," with less individual commitment to a given faith or denomination.

Lugo would not speculate on whether such a buyer's market might cause some groups to dilute their particular beliefs in order to compete. There are signs of that in such surveys as one done by the Willow Creek megachurch outside Chicago, which has been extremely successful in attracting tens of thousands of religious "seekers." An internal survey recently indicated much of its membership was "stalled" in their spiritual growth, Lugo allowed that "it does raise the question of, once you attract these folks, how do you root them within your own particular tradition when people are changing so quickly."

The Pew report has other interesting findings; the highest rates for marrying within one's own faith, for example, are among Hindus (90%) and Mormons (83%). The full report is accessible at the Pew Forum site. Additional information available at Time.com

West Hills United Methodist Church Nursery School 2008-2009 Pre-School Registration



PLEASE PASS ALONG TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY WITH CHILDREN AGES 2-4

Registration has begun for the 2008-2009 school year. Our comprehensive program includes classes for 2 year olds, 3 year olds and 4 year olds. Skill preparation includes word and letter recognition as well as early reading & math skills. Additional enrichment programs include creative movements, gymnastics, lunch bunch and a summer program. Flexible hours and days! For more information,

contact Deborah Overbeck at 423-8846

From the United Methodist Church...

Church offers 'ministry of presence' to shaken campus

By Susan Dal Porto*

Feb. 18, 2008 | DeKALB, Ill. (UMNS)

On the Sunday before Valentine's Day, students from the Wesley Foundation at Northern Illinois University prepared a pancake breakfast at the First United Methodist Church of DeKalb, just a few blocks from campus, to raise money for a mission trip to Puerto Rico in May.

The mood was festive and fun. "Everything was great," said Nikki Walters, 20, president of the school's Wesley Foundation.

On Feb. 14, all had changed for the students, church and school when graduate student Steven Kazmierczak, 27, opened fire in a lecture hall on campus, killing five people and injuring 17 others before killing himself.

While none of the Wesley students was among the dead or injured, the deadly shooting spree—the second in less than a year on a U.S. college campus—left the nation unnerved about school safety and filled with questions about the minds of the killers.

The United Methodist Church responded quickly to the latest shooting, providing counseling and assistance to families and students, holding prayer vigils for the university community, and opening church doors to offer support and hospitality to those shaken by the events.

'God cried the first tears'

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung of the Northern Illinois Annual (regional) Conference expressed the grief of the entire United Methodist denomination.

"As the church prays for victims and their families and friends and a troubled young man who turned to violence, we seek healing and comfort for all who are touched by this tragedy," Jung said in a statement. "We acknowledge a need for communities of faith to be a voice of healing and hope, of Christ's peace and reconciliation for a world that desperately needs peace."

“As the church prays for victims and their families and friends and a troubled young man who turned to violence, we seek healing and comfort for all who are touched by this tragedy.”—Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Listing the names of the students killed, the church's local district superintendent said God's truth and kingdom abide, especially amid tragedy. "Before the families of NIU students Daniel, Catalina, Ryanne, Julianna (and) Gayle ever got word that their sons and daughters died in that campus carnage at DeKalb, God cried the first tears," said the Rev. Larry Hilkemann.

Among the dead was sophomore Ryanne Mace, 19, the granddaughter of two retired United Methodist clergy members in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, the Rev. Eugene Mace and the Rev. Miley Palmer.

Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher, who leads the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, called the church to engage in "serious reflection about how we, the church, might contribute to the ending of the anger, rage, and violence in our society that has contributed not only to Ryanne's death but the deaths of many not only on the NIU campus but in our schools throughout our country."

The church responds

After ensuring that all Wesley Foundation students were safe Feb. 14, the Rev. Efrain Avila and other campus ministry staff joined professional counselors to talk to students at university residence halls. His wife, Laura Avila, is also a clinical psychologist and was part of the rapid deployment counseling team.

Rev. Avila, who is bilingual, later was dispatched to Kishwaukee Hospital to provide translation services and minister to the Hispanic-speaking family of shooting victim Catalina "Cati" Garcia, 20.

The Rev. Laura Crites, associate pastor from DeKalb First United Methodist Church, offered support and help at the same local hospital. The Rev. Jane Easley, senior pastor at the DeKalb church, fielded phone calls and assisted visitors with updates and information.

At noon on Feb. 15, a prayer vigil was held at the DeKalb church.

"We are gathered to grieve over bodies, injured people, and souls that are affected so deeply," Easley said. "We claim the resources of our faith. Today we need to be an Easter people, worshipping our resurrected God."

Avila spoke to those in attendance about his night at the hospital with the Garcia family as they awaited news of their daughter. "Yes, students were murdered in cold blood," he said, "and right now we are all in shock. But this doesn't end here. There is a lot of pain going on, and it is going to be hard when school opens again."

On the evening of Feb. 15, another prayer vigil was held at Sycamore United Methodist Church, which is about six miles from campus and home to many students and university staff. Outside, the church's electronic sign proclaimed "NIU, we are praying for you." Inside, worshippers gathered, many in the red and black colors of the university.

The Rev. Bill Landis, senior pastor, wore a school athletic shirt and described how he called his son, Jake, a student at Northern Illinois, on the afternoon of the shooting. Landis' son was walking across campus near Cole Hall, where the shooting took place, as he spoke on his cell phone, and the elder Landis was shaken by the sound of sirens in the background.

The Wesley group will hold another prayer vigil for the community at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 19, at the DeKalb church. Tuesday evening is the United Methodist student group's regular weekly meeting night.

Seeking healing

While most Northern Illinois students had left campus by the morning after the shooting, local church staff

provided pastoral care to those who remained.

Avila expressed thanks for the messages of support and prayer coming from across the church. "While we're all caught up in 'what's next,' please remember the injured in your prayers," said Avila. "Some are still critical."

Classes and athletic activities have been suspended through Feb. 24. Before students return Feb. 25, a campus-wide memorial service is planned. Faculty and staff are scheduled to return to campus Feb. 19 to begin training on ways to help the campus return to an environment of learning and normalcy.

Avila said the school plans to follow the "Virginia Tech model" of healing and helping used after that school's on-campus shooting last April, with a licensed mental health professional and a clergy person in every classroom for every class. "We will need lots of qualified people to make this work," he said.

University President John Peters acknowledged the spiritual, emotional and physical toll on the Northern Illinois community, saying the shooting left behind "serious wounds of body and spirit." He cited a Feb. 15 prayer vigil on campus, attended by more than 2,000 people. "I personally took great comfort in the out-pouring of concern for victims and love for each other that was expressed at that event, and believe we must carry those sentiments forward in our hearts in the days and weeks ahead," he said.

For Nikki Walters, a sophomore, the reminders will include an empty chair at a Bible study she attended each Thursday night with Gayle Dubowski, 20, one of the students killed. "She was so sweet, and now she won't be there with us," said Walters.

REAR PARKING LOT PARKING RESTRICTIONS



The Board of Trustees and Church Council have asked that all parishioners who do not need to park in the rear parking lot to please park in the front lot or street. There are currently over 4 parishioners with handicapped parking permits and we only have 2 spots. We also have members who car pool with people who have difficulty walking.

The Church Council realizes that from time to time, some people may need to park in the rear lot for other reasons (bringing equipment into the church, etc.). The pastor will continue to keep his parking space in the rear lot as well. This is being done to avoid re-striping the lot to add additional handicapped parking spaces. Doing that would have a serious impact on the use of the lot to other groups and organizations that use the church Monday-Saturday.

The Church Council will review the rear lot situation in September to determine if the re-striping needs to be done.



Sunday School Update

The Sunday School has been focusing on the parables of Jesus, including the Prodigal Son, The Mustard Seed, the Lost Sheep and the Good Samaritan. Pastor Bruce made a special visit to lead the service downstairs, and even handed out gifts to the students (mustard seeds).

The first Sunday of each month, students are encouraged to bring in cans of food for our church-wide food drive. Every time a student brings in a can of food, he or she gets a paper leaf for our “food tree” in Jones Hall that represents how the Mustard Seed, though the smallest of seeds, grows into a large tree.



Students sang “Go Tell it on the Mountain” on Family Sunday in February. It has been difficult over the past few weeks practicing new songs (as well as teaching class) due to poor attendance. This seems mainly to be attributed to various illnesses and vacations.

As a help to parents, the new church web site now posts the latest information about the Sunday School program, including links to the Cokesbury curriculum and the Sunday School calendar.

Dates to Remember....

Thursday, March 6th 7:30pm (Meeting Room): Board of Trustees Meeting

March 9th 6:45pm: "Journey of the Cross" presentation at St. Stephens Lutheran Church (meet at West Hills)

Thursday, March 13th 7:30pm: Lenten Study

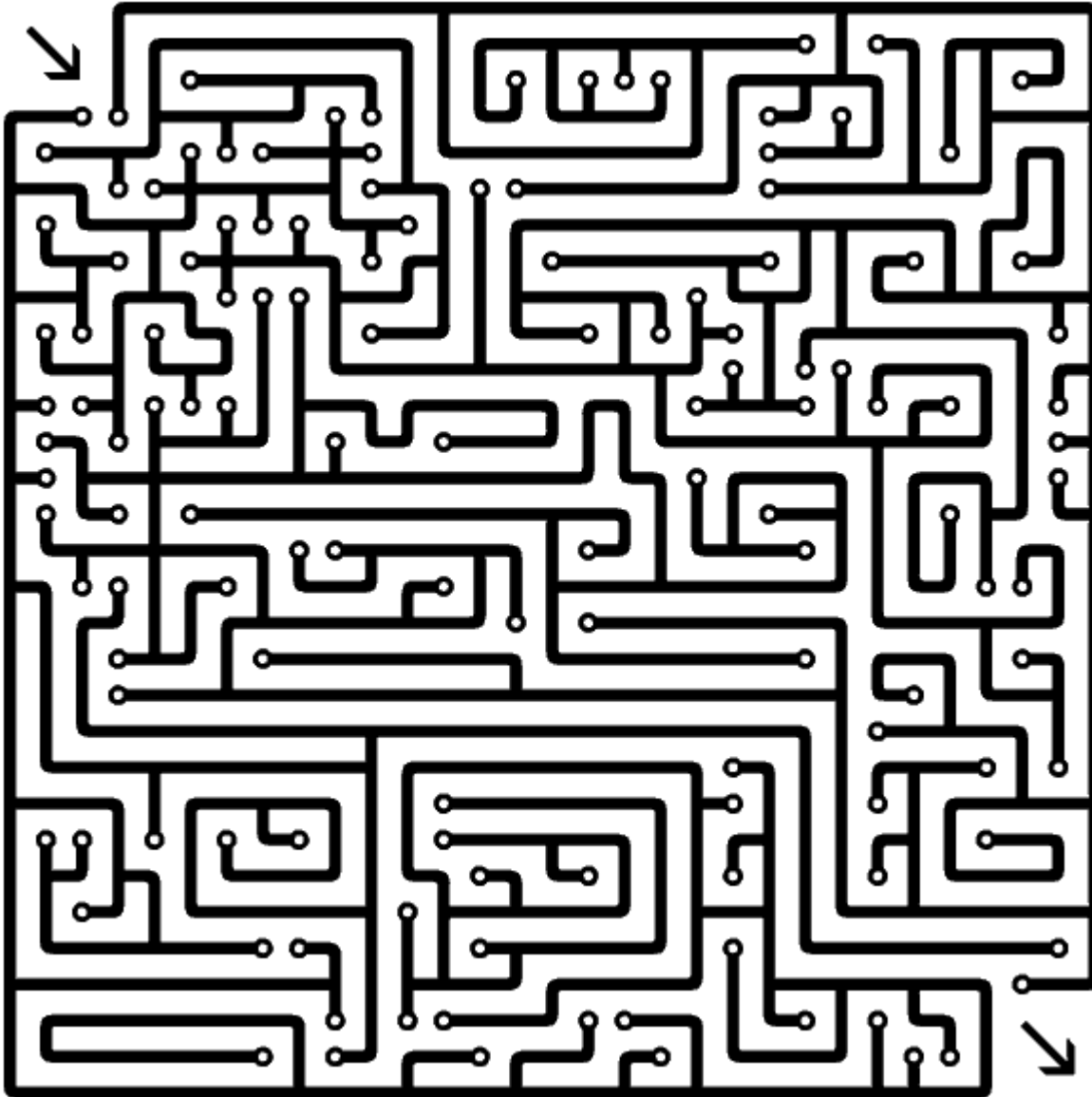
Saturday, March 15th: Trip to the Lady of the Island (to walk the Stations of the Cross) Meet Claire's house

Sunday, March 16th: Palm Sunday Service, followed by the West Hills UMC Easter Egg Hunt

Thursday, March 27th 7:30 (Meeting Room): Church Council

April 6th and 13th immediately after church: Work Party

April 20th: Spring Film Festival (Jones Hall;) Movie: "Away From Her"



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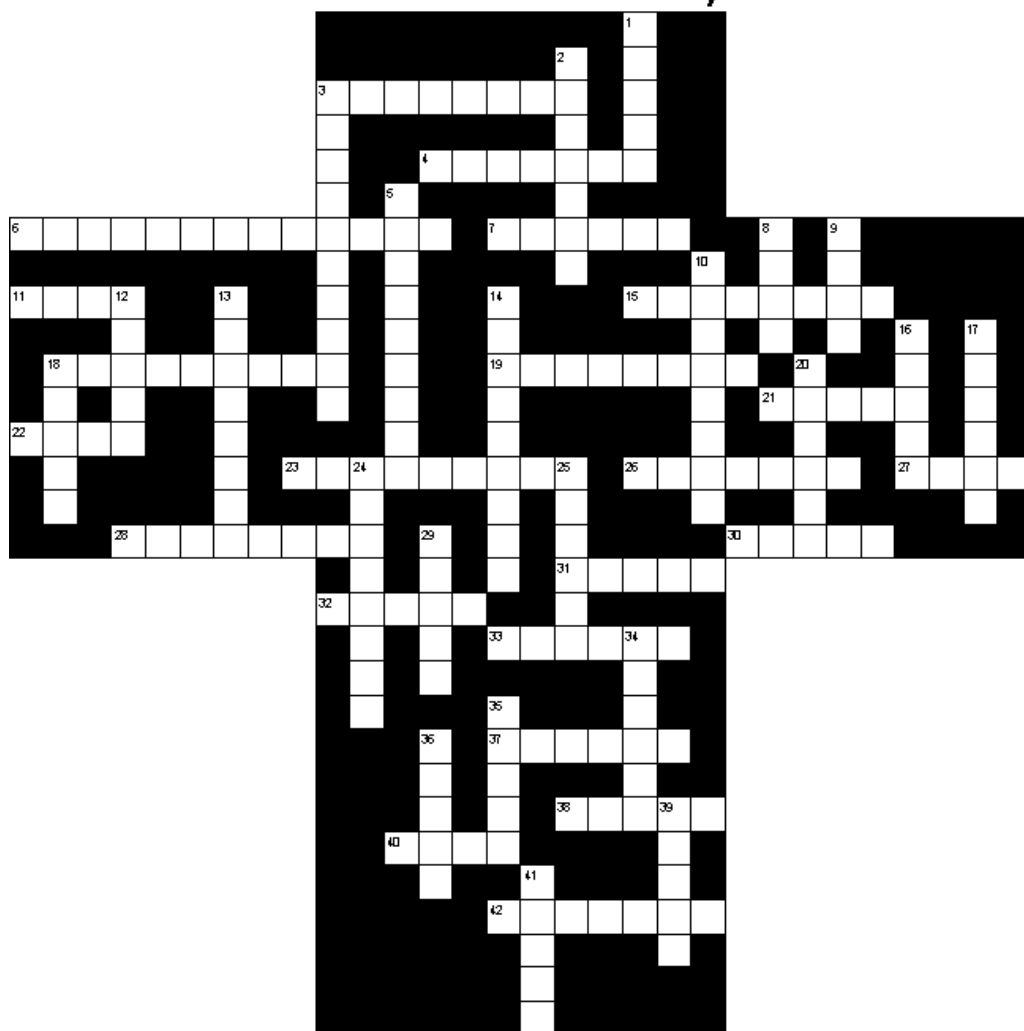
Thanks to Richard Germain (See Job 1) 12-17-2007
JOB HOPED THAT THIS WASN'T THE BEGINNING
OF A BAD DAY

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(See Numbers 14) 12-14-2007
THE MANNA AND QUAIL HAVE BEEN GREAT ...
ANY CHANCE OF SOME GOOD HIKING SOCKS AND
SHOES?

The Easter Story



Down

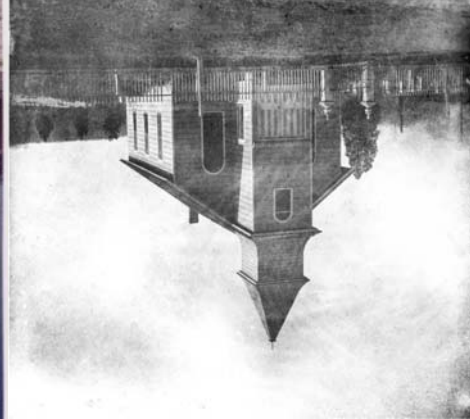
1. The father-in-law to the high priest. Jesus was first brought to him
2. Another name for the place of His crucifixion.
3. The garden where Jesus prayed before He was arrested
5. And it was the third hour, and they _____ Him.
8. This was written and set over His head: "_____ of the Jews"
9. Judas betrayed Jesus with a _____.
10. "Go ye into the world and preach the gospel to every _____."
12. Joseph took His body down and wrapped it in fine _____.
13. The prisoner released by Pilate instead of Jesus
14. The pharisee that brought spices for His burial
16. The apostle who betrayed the Christ
17. "Why seek ye the _____ among the dead?"
18. He was taken up; and a _____ received Him out of their sight.
20. Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of _____.
24. And they crucified Him, and parted His _____, casting lots:
25. He appeared to two disciples on the way to this village.
29. Jesus told Peter to feed His _____.
34. The Roman governor who washed his hands of the whole affair
35. This was rolled in front of the tomb and then sealed.
36. and His sweat was as it were great drops of _____.
39. The soldier pierced His side with this
41. He is not here: for He is _____ as He said.

Across

3. It means "A place of a skull;" Where He was crucified
4. These guys were crucified on each side of Him.
6. And He was numbered with the _____.
7. Jesus was anointed with precious ointment in preparation for His _____.
11. This part of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom
15. And when the sixth hour was come, there was _____ over the whole land.
18. This Roman said, "Truly this was the Son of God."
19. The high priest who said it was expedient that one man die for all.
21. The _____ of blood was purchased with the betrayal money
22. The disciple that took Mary home as his own mother
23. He appeared first unto Mary _____.
26. "Father, _____ them; for they know not what they do."
27. He shed His blood so our _____ would be forgiven.
28. The Last Supper was a celebration of this Jewish holiday
30. The ruler of Galilee
31. This was sent to strengthen Him when He was praying in the garden.
32. This apostle denied that He knew Jesus three times.
33. This wealthy man of Arimathea buried Him.
37. The doubtful apostle
38. "A spirit has not _____ and bones as ye see me have."
40. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet _____.
42. They gave Him this to drink when He was on the cross.

The purpose of the West Hills United Methodist Church is to be a living church, where we can learn about our Lord, love Him, worship Him, and serve Him. We want our church to emphasize fellowship with a sense of sharing one another's concerns and joys. We want our church to reach out to the needs of our youth, and encourage them to participate in our programs. We want our church to be actively involved in the world community, with outreach programs to help the needy and less fortunate, and to attract others in our community who are not currently attending worship service.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

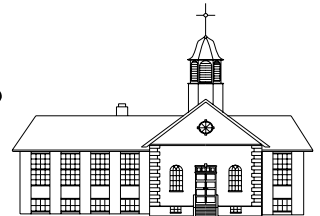


Visit us On-line at www.westhillsumc.com



West Hills United Methodist Church

Newsletter



Bruce Anspach, Pastor

Todd Winch, Newsletter Editor

Easter 2008

West Hills United Methodist Church

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Easter Letter Enclosed!



Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®