



March 5, 2017

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me." Psalm 51

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. Most folks outside the church have no idea what Lent is. Many of us in the church are not always entirely clear either. Most people have a vague sense that it's something to do with giving something up—some behavior or chocolate—for reasons that have the best intention of making us better disciples of Jesus.

Lent has been a personal favorite liturgical season. Not just because it speaks to the dark mood of my Germanic nature. Lent begins with a day of preparation. Shrove Tuesday or Fasnacht (doughnut) Day—the day when all sugar was cleared from the home; the joy and comfort of which would not return until Easter. I was, for the first part of my life, able to consume enough grandmother-made fasnachts in one day to carry me contentedly for the forty-day season of Lent. A deeper awareness of the health risks of doing so have changed my behavior a good bit.

"Deeper awareness" and "changed behavior" are the heart of Lent. It's more than just "sinner change your cheating ways." To think and feel deeper is an awakening to the notion that our past thinking and feeling have been more shallow and self-centered than God-centered. And so, consequently, was our past acting.

It is impossible in our day to get away from sugar. It is in almost every product you pick up at the grocery store. "Epidemic" and "addiction" are the words some use to describe its presence. Let me suggest a possible Lenten disciple to deepen your discipleship. Every time you pick up something labeled with "sugar", "high-fructose corn syrup," "blackstrap molasses" and the like, put it down with the words "God create in me a clean heart." Together you and God will clean your heart AND your soul. Wouldn't that be something to celebrate?

- Rev. William P. Worley, Conference Minister

Getting to Know:

Saint John UCC

150 Pine St., Tamaqua, PA 18252

Fellowship is an important identity of St. John Tamaqua. Fellowship can mean a lot of things. Maybe another way of saying this is that we do ministry and share life together. A big part of our time together centers around food. We have a fellowship time after worship on Sunday morning. Coffee, punch, cookies, snack food, and cheese is served every Sunday. We share our stories with one another around the tables in the fellowship hall.

Our kitchen crew called "The United Citchen Crew" (that's UCC for short) also sells hoagies, soup, and halupkis throughout the year. Some of our crew is shown here. Twice that number, and more, actually serve us through the year.



We meet in the fellowship of small groups. Sunday school provides education for our children. A weekly adult bible study delves into God's Word. Choir leads us in worship. Our choir enjoys the opportunity for a more contemporary event every Christmas as they put together a band and sing a cantata.

Opportunities for serving together are also provided. We regularly donate food for the food pantry housed at Trinity United Church of Christ, also in Tamaqua. We have walked dogs and petted cats at the animal shelter. A food drive was also done for them. For more than 10 years we have provided a Christmas party for one of the cottages at Bethany Children's Home. The Christmas Pizza Party with Bethany has been a wonderful opportunity to discover how alike we are with one another.

We worship joyously on Sunday morning and we strive to make all we do a worship. We want to know Jesus better and show him to the world.



Prayers are requested for Saint John UCC in Tamaqua and Rev. J. Kevin Duffy-Guy.