

# The Edge

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FOREST HILLS CHURCH

### *From the Pastor's Perspective*

#### A Call to Digital Fasting for Lent

*“Even now,” declares the Lord, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.’” -Joel 2:12*

Can you imagine an evening without a screen? What would you do? No surfing or tweeting on your phone, no checking Facebook, no watching TV, no playing games on your tablet: it seems hardly possible! Our online connectivity has been growing exponentially in recent years, and then this past year the “stay home” of the COVID pandemic has pushed us all the more to virtual portals of connectivity made possible by the “miracle” of our modern tech devices.

Our digital dependence has grown so to threaten our balance of life. The compulsion to swipe our phones the very moment “nothing” is going on, the desire to know instantly what’s happened or what’s been posted, the urge to “just quickly check” social media before starting a project or getting something done, usually locks us onto our screens, as other opportunities slowly pass us by. The pop-ups and next levels have keep us engaged, and before we know it, an hour or two has slipped by...and the chore has to wait until tomorrow. The average cell phone user in America spends a whopping four hours with their heads down, eyes fixated on their phone screens each day!

Screens have become compulsive, even addictive. They’re everywhere: in our palms, on our wrists, at our work stations, in our vehicles, even on our refrigerators! We ask Google more questions than any person, and we rely on our apps to negotiate ourselves through the day. We have become a culture of digital excess, and we’re struggling to have healthy patterns with our screens and, because of it, our lives overall! We need Lent!

Lent, which carries us to Easter, starts on Ash Wednesday (Feb. 17). It is a call to prayer and fasting: to renew our

#### Monthly Church Events

<b>Feb 1</b>	8:00am - Monday Morning Men and Prayer Knitters
<b>Feb 3</b>	6:30 pm - Echo 7:00 pm - Confirmation and Youth Group 7:30 pm - Sanctified Rehearsal
<b>Feb 4</b>	10:30am - Book Club 12:00pm - Sarah Circle
<b>Feb 5</b>	7:00am - Grow Group
<b>Feb 6</b>	9:00am - UM Men Meeting
<b>Feb 7</b>	10:00am - In-person and online Worship Service
<b>Feb 8</b>	8:00am - Monday Morning Men and Prayer Knitters
<b>Feb 10</b>	6:30 pm - Wednesday Night Programing for all ages 7:30 pm - Sanctified Rehearsal
<b>Feb 11</b>	1:00pm - UMW Meeting 6:30pm - AMT Meeting
<b>Feb 12</b>	7:00am - Grow Group
<b>Feb 14</b>	10:00am - In-person and online Worship Service 11:15am - Ashes pick up or delivery
<b>Feb 15</b>	8:00am - Monday Morning Men and Prayer Knitters
<b>Feb 16</b>	10:00am - Rebecca Circle
<b>Feb 17</b>	6:30 pm - Wednesday Night Programing for all ages 7:30 pm - Sanctified Rehearsal
<b>Feb 19</b>	7:00am - Grow Group 2:00pm - Unload Food Truck

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## Pastor's Perspective Cont.

spiritual wellness, to reprioritize our activities, to regain control of our lives and to refocus on living as we yearn to live. Our church's message series for Lent will be "Empty," and we will follow Jesus who "emptied" Himself in order to live God's way.

Fasting is an ancient Lenten practice of using emptiness (usually food: feeling the hunger of an empty stomach) in order to reawaken a spiritual hunger. Fasting has always been about freedom: severing our bondage to idols, regaining control, mastering compulsion.

This year, in our current reality of screen gluttony, I call us as a church to a fast from screens! One evening a week, let's "unplug" and not use a screen.

Do this individually, but also as a household. Agree ahead of time together as a household to set an evening to go screen-free. The evening can change from week to week, if needed, to accommodate differing schedules. Hold each other accountable: reminding each other or even collecting mobile devices into one location. Spend the evening "on the outernet" - doing things together like playing board games, going for a walk/drive, cooking/baking, cleaning/sorting, doing a project/craft, or just sitting and talking together over a warm mug. Think bigger than your own home, too. Consider doing something for someone else, calling (yes, using the phone as...gasp!...a phone) someone who needs some encouragement, going out with others or even hand writing an old-fashioned letter!

We'll help. Each week of Lent we'll send out a video on Monday mornings to remind us to plan a screen fast for an evening. We'll include devotions and suggestions to do that week instead of being glued to our screens. On the evening you choose: play the video on your screen and then turn the screen (and all screens) off! As a church we'll be doing this together!

I call us to a holy Lent, a Lent of prayer and fasting (from screens). Let's "give up something for Lent" (screens) so that we will become empty enough to be filled and renewed spiritually. It's time to get in control again of our time and to take back our calling to whole and holy lives.

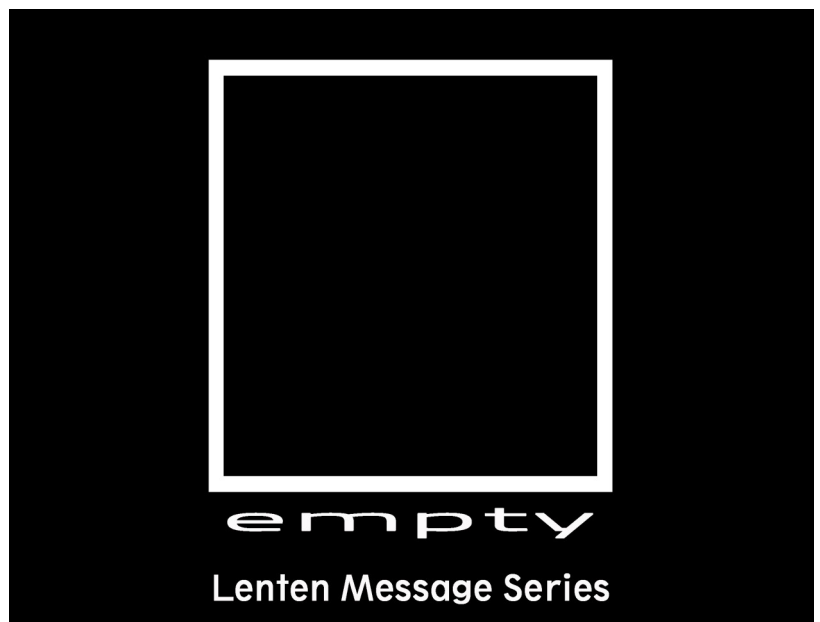
Let's slow down, and fast!

Pastor David

## Lenten Message Series (Feb. 17 - April 4)

"Empty." Philippians 2:7 says that Jesus "emptied himself by taking the form of a slave and by becoming like human beings." Jesus is many things: our brother and friend, our mediator and our highly exalted King. This Lent however, we will take a look at an ancient account of Jesus as one who came to serve and expend himself for the sake of others. He who possessed all became as one who had nothing. Through this series we consider what Christ's emptying means for us and how it has changed everything.

<b>Feb 20</b>	6:00am - Set up Community Care 8:00am - Community Care
<b>Feb 21</b>	10:00 am - In-person and Online Worship
<b>Feb 22</b>	8:00am - Monday Morning Men and Prayer Knitters
<b>Feb 24</b>	6:30 pm - Wednesday Night Programing for all ages 7:30 pm - Sanctified Rehearsal
<b>Feb 26</b>	7:00 am - Grow Group
<b>Feb 28</b>	10:00 am - In-person and Online Worship



## WORSHIP UPDATE

We have officially rolled over into the second month of 2021. In many ways this month feels like the beginning of a new year for me. We are meeting back in person on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights and although these meetings look a bit different, they cannot be compared to trying to function apart. If this year has taught me anything it is that we need each other. We are not meant to be Christians alone. God has incorporated us into part of his body, the church. Every eye needs an ear and every nose needs a foot. Whatever role we fulfill, whether flashy or behind the scenes, is crucial to the functioning of the overall body. No church has been able to operate quite correctly this last year, but as we continue to stare down the coming months, we must remain determined in our commitment to serve God.

Serving God and maintaining our spiritual health requires a few things:

- \* If you are able, attend church! We have taken precautions to ensure that everyone is reasonably safe and distanced.
- \* Join a Grow group! There is more information to come on what will specifically be offered, but your contribution to one of these groups is needed!
- \* Serve others! There are still plenty of needs to be met.

In the midst of lock-down measures and pandemic statistics, we, the Church, still have a crucial job to do! We are still mandated to reach the lost, to bring up the next generation of believers, to be the salt and light of the world. We still need to make disciples! Our methods of doing ministry might change, but this call remains the same.

This past year has brought many challenges and we will see more in the year(s) ahead. And though it is a cliché, it remains ever true: The Lord has never promised us that it would be easy. So, in the midst of the struggle, let us be found faithful.

For the King,

Pastor Andrew



### Ash Wednesday

On Wed., Feb. 17 at 7 p.m. we will start Lent with a traditional Ash Wednesday worship service. It will be offered both in-person and as a live Zoom “meeting.” Simply click on the link (if you don’t have Zoom, it’ll download for you) and join the “meeting” before 7 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83372516680?pwd=RjV5VTNsUklic2xqU2NPVGRBWkRYUT09>

Meeting ID: 833 7251 6680      Passcode: 811039

We will use the ancient biblical practice of imposing ashes as a mark of our sin and repentance before God. **For those not able to attend in person, ashes will be available for pick up or drop off on Sunday, Feb. 14th, between 11:15 - Noon. Simply call or email the church office to schedule a drop off.** Usual Wednesday groups will join the service that evening.

## Grow Groups Update

Grow groups will start again in March and carry on through April. There will be a variety of options offered: in-person and remote, topics, days, times, and hosts. Grow groups are a key “method” that Methodists grow spiritually. Watch for sign ups later this month.

## Youth Group

**THE EVENT!!** Feb 3rd, we have a Live Event via Zoom with music, games, and a great message at 7p.m. We will be meeting here at church to watch the UMC Event Zoom together. We will be down in the youth room.

Next week, we will be back to our normal time 6:30pm. We will be discussing Lazarus (mentioned in the sermon this past week). This parable, found in Luke 16:19-31, is thought provoking, forcing us to consider questions of heaven and hell, faith and sin, and who and what we value. Do we see those around us with God's values or the world's? Taking a deep look at Luke 16:19-31, this message examines the parable of the rich man and Lazarus by first addressing who the audience was, cultural and historical significance to the story, and finally asking the questions, are we making the right choice with our first love? And what is our legacy when it comes to things of faith with our loved ones?

The following week, Feb 17th, is Ash Wednesday. We will still be meeting but instead we will be joining the rest of the church for a Ash Wed. Service. This will also be available virtually.

On Feb 24th, we will begin our Lenten series. "Standing at a Crossroad" is a four-week series that looks at several different stories from the last week of Jesus's life. Four people were standing at a crossroad. They had to decide what they were going to do with Jesus. Would they choose to follow Him or go in the other direction?

Message Topics:

- (1) Palm Sunday Christians
- (2) Following at a Distance
- (3) Playing Games at the Foot of the Cross
- (4) I Doubt It

Cassi Betker - Director of Youth Ministries



## Feb. Birthdays

May your special day be blessed and filled with joy! If your birthday isn't listed, please call the office and let us know so we can add you to the list!

Harris Miller 2/3 (96 yrs old!)	Rebekah Werner 2/4
Pat Rosenbaum 2/5	Sarah Dittberner 2/7
Glen Geving 2/8	Tracy Bonsell 2/8
Harold Berg 2/10	Chuck Yetter 2/21
Joyce Betz 2/23	Nick Thoen 2/25

