

**NEWSLETTER**

**FEBRUARY 2024**



# United Church of Christ of Toms River

*Wherever you are on lifes journey, you are welcome.*

1681 Ridgeway Rd. Toms River, NJ 08757

[tomsriverucc.org](http://tomsriverucc.org)

(732) 244-4014



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## **Our Current Services:**

### ***Sunday Worship:***

**Every Sunday at 10:30 in the church**

**Or**

### **TO JOIN US LIVE ON ZOOM**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88107809586?pwd=L1hzQ3E5Wk4yZ1RCWS9aL01JUDlqUT09>

Meeting ID# 881-0780-9586

Passcode: 889092

**ASH WEDNESDAY** imposition of ashes will be at **NOON** on 2/14/2024



## **Beloved,**

While reading my email this morning, (Yes, I do get to it from time to time), I read this article that I thought I would share its contents with you as we move into the Lenten Season. This article is written by The Rev. Magrey R. deVega, Senior Pastor of Hyde Park United Methodist Church in Tampa, Florida. What is presented hopefully will be food for thought as to what you may want to cut out of your life or cut back on during the season of centering with God.

A recent online, non-scientific survey by *Christianity Today* revealed the most popular things people give up for Lent: 1) social networking, 2) chocolate, 3) Twitter, 4) alcohol, and 5) chips. I for one am giving up the use of electronic devices at the dinner table, much to the delight of my two daughters. Madelyn is giving up playing games on her smartphone, and Grace is giving up afternoon snacks. I had to convince them that giving up homework was not an appropriate Lenten discipline.

As I've thought about it, there are some deeper parts of your life that you might consider giving up for Lent, for the sake of your own spiritual maturity and personal development. In no particular order, and by no means exhaustive, here are some things I thought of that you might want to consider as part of your Lenten journey this year:

### **Give up the need to be right all the time.**

Business author Patrick Lencioni said, "People don't need to feel like they are right, as much as they need to feel like they've been heard." Yes, claim your voice, assert your convictions, and engage the issues that matter to you. But once you've been heard, consider the possibility that you might have something to learn from someone who disagrees with you. That's often how we learn our most important lessons in life. (James 1:19)

### **Give up your reluctance to ask for help.**

It is true that giving up something for Lent requires discipline, will, and self-mastery. But it also requires the recognition that we cannot always be self-sufficient. You are not superhuman. You do not have inexhaustible reserves. Turn to loved ones for support, seek the wise counsel of others, and don't be afraid to ask for help. (Psalm 69)

### **Give up your fear of failure.**

Mother Theresa said, "God does not call us to be successful; God calls us to be faithful." You may sometimes gauge your self-worth by what you have achieved and how you have succeeded. You might subconsciously depend on the affirmation of others to feel good about yourself. But your worth does not equal your work, nor are you defined by your failures. Some people live a whole lifetime before they come to realize that. Save yourself the heartache later. Learn it now. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

### **Give up comparing yourself to others.**

Forget the Joneses. They are not worth keeping up with. Find contentment in what you have, and who God has created you to be. You do not need the envious admiration of others. You need not be

defined by what you do not have. While there is nothing wrong with being self-motivated and goal-oriented, don't evaluate your life in comparison to others. It's not worth it. (James 4:2-3)

**Give up the need to have things all figured out.**

Embrace mystery. Dance with your doubts. Acknowledge that you do not and cannot know it all. Resist the temptation to rationalize the irrational parts of your faith and recognize that some of the greatest things in life are those things that cannot be explained or fully understood. Things like God's love for you, and how God is with you even when you don't believe it. (Romans 11:33-36)

**Give up your fears of the future.**

I get it. These are frightening times for many people. There is great nervousness about the way things are in the world. And I would guess that you are dealing with fears yourself. I have learned over my twenty years of parish ministry that everyone—without exception—has something that they are dealing with. We all have our fears, but we don't need to be defined by them. For God is a God of hope. (Matthew 6:33-34)

**Give up anesthetizing yourself to pain and suffering.**

The long shadow of suffering is cast in many shades, like loneliness, grief, abandonment, and betrayal. None of us enjoys going through difficulties, and our instinct is often to numb ourselves from the pain in ways that are actually self-destructive: giving in to addictions, accumulating possessions, pursuing temporal pleasures, and cocooning ourselves from the rest of the world. These might anesthetize us in the short term, but they prevent us from allowing that pain to help us stretch, grow, and trust in God. (Romans 5:3-5)

**Give up the need to be in control.**

This one is at the heart of the season of Lent. It is a reminder that we ultimately are not in control of what happens to us. We cannot control others, and we can hardly claim to have full control of ourselves and our future. Let the Covenant Prayer of Wesley be your guide, to remind you that you are not your own; you belong to God. For we must ultimately surrender our control over to a God who has created us and claimed us from the beginning. (Matthew 16:24-25)

**Give up the need to make everyone happy.**

It's not like you can, anyway. You may have a knack for understanding what others want from you, but you must also claim your own convictions and understand your limitations. Your job is not to be all things to all people and please everyone you know. God calls you to live a life of integrity, uncompromising in your commitment to Jesus Christ. For God, after all, is the only one you need to please. (Galatians 1:10)

**Give up all the non-essential noise in your life.**

This may be the toughest thing of all to give up, but it may be the key to a deeply moving Lenten season for you. Your life is inundated by competing voices and blaring noises from the culture around you. Pay attention to your breath. Take walks. Drive without the radio on. Set the cell phone down when you're at the family table. Watch less television, read more newspapers and books, and look people in the eye when you talk to them. Most of all, pray to God, "Silence all voices but your own." Turn down the volume of your life and connect to a God who knows you better than you know yourself. (Psalm 46:10)

***Blessings to you on your Lenten journey!***

***I wish you enough...***

## Calendar of Events for February

February is Black History Month

February is National Heart Month

February 2<sup>nd</sup> Groundhog Day

February 10<sup>th</sup> – Lunar New Year

February 11<sup>th</sup> – Super Bowl Sunday (KC Chiefs vs SF 49ers)

February 13<sup>th</sup> – Mardi Gras

February 14<sup>th</sup> – Ash Wednesday

February 14<sup>th</sup> – Valentine's Day

February 19<sup>th</sup> – Presidents' Day

February 29<sup>th</sup> – Leap Day - *This year has a Leap Day only comes around every four years.*



***RICK BAIER – FEBRUARY 11***  
***LLOYD BALUYOS -FEBRUARY 27TH***



Pastor Ruth Harvey

Joy Ricketts

Lisa Gordon

Joe Fascia

Debbie Bennett

Bonnie Nelson

Rev. Christian Tirre

Mark Damrose

Long-term Care Facilities

James Racht

Denise Bascianelli

Linda Baumann

Jeremy M

US Government and Armed Service

Karin Mason

United Church of Christ Toms River

Elaine Yezo

Donna Appignani

James D

Betsy Gordon

Dot Dey

Mass Shootings in our Country

*If you have any changes needed to the prayer list, please email.*

***NANCY AT UCCTROFC@COMCAST.NET***

*Thank you, Marilyn Russell, for sharing*

Our offerings for Fellowship of the Least Coin added up to **\$323.00 in 2023!** That's from coins, representing prayers for peace! Bravo! One of the grants given was to Latin America. Educating for Inclusion, Ingeniero Budge Evangelical Methodist Church, Argentina. The grant was to contribute to the improvement of women's, young people's and children's lives through academic development and studies, in a setting of social vulnerability with the aim of enhancing life quality. Our coins are making an impact all around the world!

**A lovely hymn to start off the New Year**

*Wonderful Words of Life*

*The custom of singing at the bedside of dying Christians is an old and powerful tradition. For example - consider the deathbed of Rev. William Nast. Mast was born in Germany but became an effective Methodist preacher in America during an era when itinerant evangelists were scorned. Nast had to sometimes duck during sermons as hecklers threw rotten eggs at him. But during his sunset years, Mast found himself acclaimed as the Patriarch of German Methodism, and he was in great demand throughout the US. People flocked to hear him, and children were named for him, as were schools and colleges. At age ninety-two, William Nast fell ill. On May 16, 1899, a group of Methodist deaconesses gathered by his bed to sing Philip Bliss's simple song "Wonderful Words of Life." Nast responded with "Amen!" and "Hallelujah!" He then said, "Come Lord Jesus," and was called home.*

*From a Song in my Heart" by Robert J. Morgan*

Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life,  
Let me more of their beauty see, wonderful words of life.  
Words of life and beauty teach me faith and duty.  
Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life. (2X)



*Message from Lloyd and Doris Baluyos, our newest members. This is their Christmas Eve Experience♥*

It was a special and memorable service. We are truly thankful to be part of this friendly fellowship. Pastor Ruth, as well as the members of this church have been so warm in welcoming us. Our friend Joyce Ostrander was instrumental in bringing us here and getting us introduced to this Faith Community. We are also grateful to her for taking the initiative to come to this Church.



*Warmly In Christ,  
Lloyd and Doris*

## Here is another precious gratitude letter from our sponsored child, Paulene Cataylo in the Philippines!



### Dumaguete Kalauman Center for Development

Piñero Subdivision, Sto. Niño Road, Mangao Dumaguete City Philippines  
Tel. No. (035) 420-6560, email address: DKalaumanCDI21@gmail.com

January 20, 2021

Dear Auntie Marilyn and Friends at Tom's River VCC,

Hello! How are you, Auntie Marilyn and sponsors at Tom's River VCC? I hope you had a joyous Christmas and New Year surrounded by loved ones. I am writing this letter to express my genuine appreciation for the special gift that you gave me.

In regards to the gift you sent me, I gave some of it to my parents for my father's annual motorcycle registration, benefiting all of us since it is our daily transportation. I bought a 25-kilo sack of rice, and clothing for myself. With all honesty, I was excited to receive your Christmas gift because I will be able to share some to my family and buy clothes for myself. Because of everyone's kindness and generosity, Christmas and New Year became even more special.

I celebrated Christmas and New Year with my family. It was a simple celebration and my mother and brother prepared the foods together like carbonara, fruit salad, macaroni, ham, and chicken. Before Christmas and New Year eve, my family and I attended the 9:00 pm mass in our chapel. We had a great time celebrating holidays together. After our Christmas break, classes resumed and it has been really tough. We are bombarded with a lot of performance tasks, assignments, and projects. Our 2nd quarter examination will be this coming January 22 and 23. But as I have said many times, I will continue to do my best.



and never give up.

To conclude my letter, as always, I am grateful for the support, and of course for everyone's care towards my studies and well-being. I am happy to receive letters from you and to read them knowing that you are interested in me and my family. Know that my family and I appreciate everyone's love. Stay safe and God bless!

Love,  
Pauleene



Welcome the newest ONA church in the Central Atlantic Conference!

Dear ONA family:

Please join us in welcoming Middletown Reformed Church in Middletown, NJ as an officially certified Open and Affirming congregation!

As ONA church #1,855, Middletown Reformed is now part of the largest and fastest-growing LGBTQ-affirming church movement in the world! We're proud of the congregation and grateful to the church's leadership for the hard work that led to this milestone in their history.

Please join the entire Open and Affirming movement in celebrating Middletown Reformed Church and join us in prayer that their ONA covenant will be a blessing to their LGBTQ+neighbors.

Blessings,

**The Rev. Dr. Katrina Roseboro-Marsh**  
Executive Director  
Pronouns: she/her

The church's ONA Covenant reads:

The Middletown Reformed Church is a welcoming and affirming Congregation dual affiliated with the United Church of Christ and the Reformed Church in America. We joyfully accept all persons into our community of faith who seek a closer relationship with God and who desire to express their devotion to Jesus Christ through the fellowship of the church. We welcome into the full life of our congregation all persons whom God calls to us, regardless of race, color, ethnicity, age, nationality, sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, socio-economic status, or mental/physical/emotional ability. We believe that the Church is a family and that all of God's children are part of this family.

## Help Hotline Telephone Numbers

For those facing challenges in this unstable economy, here are some helpful telephone numbers for assistance.

### Heating & Weatherization

O.C.E.A.N. Inc. (732) 244-5333 (heating)

Weatherization- (732) 244-5396

Website: [www.oceaninc.org](http://www.oceaninc.org)

NJ Shares- (866) 657-4273

### Mortgage Assistance

Hope Hotline- (888) 995-HOPE (4673)

Website: [www.njshares.org](http://www.njshares.org)

### Health Insurance, Food Stamps, Utilities

NJ Family Care- (800) 701-0710

Website: [www.njfamilycare.org](http://www.njfamilycare.org)

OC Board of Social Services- (732) 349-1500

Verizon NJ Communications Lifeline- (888) 337-3339

Ocean County Government Resource Center- (732) 370-8854

Website: [www.ocean.nj.us/socialservices](http://www.ocean.nj.us/socialservices)

Ocean County Food Bank- (732) 918-2600

Website: [www.foodbankmoc.org](http://www.foodbankmoc.org)

Angel Food Ministries- (732) 240-7543

Pick-up Location Christ Episcopal Church

1415 Washington Street, Toms River, NJ

Website: [www.angelfoodministries.com](http://www.angelfoodministries.com)

### OTHER IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Social Security- (800)772-1213

Website: [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)

NJ Unemployment Insurance- (732) 761-2020

Website: [www.state.nj.us](http://www.state.nj.us)



**Pastor...** Rev. Ruth Harvey

**Board President...** John Dowling

**Vice President...** Connie Murray

**Pastor Emeritus:** The Rev. Dr. J. Vernon (Vern) Whittenburg

**Treasurer...** John Russell

**Deacon Chair...** David Novy

**Member at Large...** Joy Ricketts

**Ministers...** The Congregation

**Financial Secretary...** Jim Padula

**Missions Global and Local** – Marilyn Russel

**Trustee Chair...** Russ Evans

**Church Clerk...** Lynne Carver

**Music Director...** Don Olson

**Musician...** Brian Wolinski

**Administrative Assistant ...** Nancy Flanagan

**Trustees...**

Susan Boothe, Russ Evans, Connie Murray, George Hedlund

**Deacons...**

Gerd Hedlund, John Dowling, Jim Padula, David Novy



## Final Thoughts



**There is always something to be thankful for, so**

***Work like you don't need money.***

***Love like you've never been hurt.***

***Dance like nobody is watching.***

***Sing like nobody is listening.***

***Live like it's paradise on Earth.***



LOVE ONE ANOTHER

AS YOU WISH TO BE LOVE