

# The Messenger



Newsletter of the Ridgecrest United Methodist Church

March, 2011

## PASTOR'S POINT

This year, as you probably already know, Easter comes very late—April 24. From year to year, the date varies widely, by as much as 4 weeks. The reason for this is the convoluted method by which the date for Easter is determined. According to Roman Catholic practice, Easter always falls on the first Sunday after the Paschal Full Moon.

Prior to the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, Easter fell on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Vernal Equinox, the first day of Spring, when the time of daylight equals the time of darkness.

The Paschal (Passover) Full Moon date is now determined by an official schedule finalized by the church in 1583, and it may or may not be the date when there is an actual full moon in the sky. Such a date is known as an "ecclesiastical full moon." Usually the date of the Paschal Full Moon does not differ from the date of the actual first full moon of Spring by more than 2 days.

Clear as mud, right? Isn't this human? We take something that's meant to be simple and we make it into something that's complicated. It would be much more rational to simply set Easter as the first Sunday of Spring. Why does the date of a full moon have to be thrown in, anyway? To me it bears a faint aroma of astrology, but never mind.

Counting backward now 40 days from Palm Sunday, April 17, we arrive at March 9—Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. Lent, which comes from the German Lenz, meaning "Spring," remembers the 40-day sojourn of Jesus in the wilderness following his baptism when he was tempted. (Matthew 4.1-11)

This Ash Wednesday, we will again offer a special service of Holy Communion and Choir-led music drawn from the Taizé Community, founded by Jacques Berthier in Saône-et-Loire, Burgundy, France. The Taizé Community is composed of roughly 100 brothers who come from Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions.

Come and share this special time of meditation and communion March 9, 7 pm.

## STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

At the end of last month's article I promised to attempt to discuss some of the non-financial aspects of Christian Stewardship. I'd like to share a few verses that for me demonstrate the scope of stewardship.

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (Genesis 2.15) Now I interpret this verse to mean that we were placed in the midst of God's creation with the task of taking care of it. Wow! Or how about I Corinthians 4.1-2: "Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy."

Wow again. We are charged with being stewards of God's mysteries. I must admit I needed help with this one. Most commentaries I read interpret "God's mysteries" as the truth or knowledge revealed by the Gospels. So between these verses, we are charged with taking care of God's creation (isn't that everything?) and revealing the truths of the Gospel. What an awesome responsibility. What a privilege and an honor to be chosen for such an important and encompassing job!

Some of us may feel intimidated or burdened with such responsibility. If so, I encourage you to check out Romans 12.4, which states, "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function..." As members of the Body of Christ, or Church, we have been blessed with gifts to perform a specific function, not every function of the Body.

Another one of my favorite verses is Matthew 11.28-30 where Jesus says, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Yes, we have been charged with great responsibility, but we have been blessed and assured by our Savior. Next month I hope to discuss some specific ways one can become more involved as a steward.

Thanks,

Al Bradford