A Season for Forgiveness

JUST FINISHED MY LAST PIECE OF CHRISTMAS CANDY today, and now I’m going to talk about Lent! Lent is a journey, a spiritual journey in which we follow Jesus to the cross. If we fail to walk with him there, then Easter morning simply becomes “a good time had by all.” When we don’t take the time to see how we ignore him, desert him, and yes, even betray him – then we cannot absorb into our souls the costly forgiveness and new life he holds out for us.

Every church has need for forgiveness, yet there are seasons in the life of all congregations when the need is greater than other times. Westminster is in one of those seasons, and the Lenten journey toward forgiveness and renewal holds out the possibility of healing. We sometimes think of forgiveness merely in terms of the psychological and spiritual needs of individuals. It is indeed that, yet forgiveness is also communal. Congregational life throws us together in relationships that intersect in a complex web of friendships, love, miscommunication, trust and distrust, self-interest, hurt, healing, and reconciliation. Our inability to forgive another is like a thorn in the side of the whole church. It affects the healing of the entire community.

THE FIRST STEP TO FORGIVENESS IS SELF-EXAMINATION. The spiritual disciplines of the Church have always recognized that the impediment to peace in a community is our reluctance to look very closely at our own hearts. This looking requires honesty and humility before God. On Ash Wednesday we pause and consider God’s immense love for us and confess that we are fallen people.

Beyond Ash Wednesday, I invite you to practice the spiritual discipline of the daily Examen during Lent – perhaps at bedtime or any other quiet time of the day. The questions of the Examen vary according to the spiritual father or mother that you read. Marjorie Thompson, a contemporary writer, suggests the following:

- Where do I feel embarrassed or guilty about what I have done or left undone?
- When have my immediate feelings led me into unkind words or actions?
- Have I allowed others to influence me toward negative judgments of another person?
- Do I accept hearsay and gossip without checking facts?
- Where does deceit have a hold on me, and how is it expressed in my life?

ON ANOTHER NOTE AND in a different context, I have placed an article on the following page presenting another set of questions for you to consider in this church’s Journey to Renewal. It challenges us to look at the Christian church with a new set of eyes.

Peace and grace,

Rev. Judy Shipman

Ash Wednesday Taize Worship

Wednesday, February 18, 6:45 PM

Renew your spiritual life in preparation for Lent through the spiritual disciplines of Taize prayer, Scriptural reflection, Holy Communion. Prepare yourself for the journey through Lent.

Holey, Wholly, Holy: A Lenten Journey of Refinement is the title of our Lenten adult education study, meeting Sunday mornings at 9:15 and at other times convenient for small groups, beginning February 22. Learn more on page 5.
New Questions for a New Day

by Jeffrey D. Jones

It’s time to start asking new questions. Better answers to the same old questions about the church will not get us through the tumultuous times in which we live. This is a time for out-of-the-box thinking. Old questions keep us in the box. New questions invite us to move outside.

Phyllis Tickle, in *The Great Emergence*, talks about the need for today’s church to have a rummage sale so we can rid ourselves of all those practices, beliefs and ways of being that are no longer effective, and that get in the way of being the church we are called to be.

Many of the questions we have asked for centuries in the church need to be put in that rummage sale. They need to be replaced with new questions that lead us into new ways of being and doing – ways that are attuned to the time in which we live.

It’s not that the old questions weren’t valid at one time or even that they have no place in the church today. Rather, the new questions – if they are the questions that form our approach to ministry – will lead us to new insights and new learning.

One question that has been asked consistently through the years, and even more so in these days of declining church membership is, “How do we bring them in?” It would be better for us to ask, “How do we send them out?”

In these days of changing roles and responsibilities many wonder, “What should the pastor [and the staff] do?” But a more important question for congregations today is “What is our shared ministry?”

When congregations focus on strategic planning they ask, “What’s our vision and how do we implement it?” What would happen if they instead asked, “What’s God up to and how do we get on board?”

When congregations have financial struggles, they ask, “How do we survive?” Instead they might ask, “How do we serve?”

When congregations think about their mission, they often ask, “How do we save people?” or perhaps, “How do we help people?” A better question might be “How do we make the reign of God more present in this time and place?”

There are no “right” answers to these new questions that can be applied to all congregations. Every congregation needs to live with the questions, because it is only in living with them that new ways being and doing church emerge. The familiar line from Rainer Maria Rilke in *Letters to a Young Poet* can guide us: “Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, one distant day live right into the answer.”

If you ask these questions there is no assurance that you’ll find the way to renew, revitalize or redevelop your church. It may happen. But you may just as likely discover that asking these questions takes you down a road to some other alternative that you hadn’t even thought of before. What I feel pretty confident about, however, is that asking these new questions will bring us closer to discovering what God is seeking from us in this time. I also believe asking these new questions will help ensure that whatever the future holds for us, our congregations will be more faithful in the work we are about right now. And that is a pretty wondrous thing!

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Session highlights become more visible

Beginning with this issue, Session highlights will be published in *The Link*.

In addition, each month, printed copies of approved minutes from the previous month’s Session meeting will be available in the entry to the fellowship hall for anyone interested. For example, on January 25, the approved minutes from the December meeting were available. Highlights are also available, as always, in the church library.

- The Interim Pastor Search Team has completed interviews for a long-term interim pastor and has made a recommendation to the Session. The Session has accepted the recommendation and has authorized the Administration Committee to finalize a contract. As soon as we complete the required processes and gain approvals from Presbytery, we will immediately communicate to the entire congregation.
- Looking ahead to Holy Week and Easter, the Session approved two worship services on Palm Sunday and Easter, at 8:30 and 11 AM.
- The Session approved a policy to assist committees and groups as they plan events when assistance is needed from the chef in preparing food.
- The Finance Committee introduced the 2015–2016 budget process and committees will begin the planning process shortly.
Westminster HEART shelters homeless men

Help Westminster shelter 25 homeless men from the cold, February 9–16. A few needs remain to be met: providing snacks, and providing weekend transportation.

Sign up online or on the mission bulletin board or contact Katherine Simpson or Jim Thomson.

Sharing God’s love on Valentine’s Day

Remember to write messages on the scriptural Valentines passed out after worship on February 1.

Mail or deliver cards for friends and strangers yourself, but return the completed cards for the following groups by Sunday, February 8: HEART rotating shelter guests; our brothers and sisters at Riverside Community Gathering; our church family.

Oops! You didn’t get cards or want more? Please contact Katherine Simpson. We can do that!

Hurricane Sandy recovery continues – with your help

Westminster members and friends are invited to take part in a mission trip to Point Pleasant, NJ, April 12–18, sponsored jointly by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and the Presbytery of Detroit Hands On Mission group.

Sign up as an individual or gather a group from Westminster or elsewhere. You’ll meet, serve with and grow with Presbyterians and others from the Detroit area. Cost for room and board at Point Pleasant Presbyterian Church is $200; Westminster can provide some assistance with costs.

Sign up on the mission bulletin board in the fellowship hall entry. Participants must be 14 years old or older. For more information, please contact Katherine Simpson.

Here’s an easy way to contribute to cultural understanding and global peace

The Ecumenical Center and International Residence has been a Faith Promise mission supported by Westminster for several years. This apartment style residence for U-M international students currently has 49 residents from 18 different countries. ECIR seeks to be a community of friendship and respect for people of varied cultures, religions, political perspectives, and vocational interests who learn from one another through social interaction and educational programming. Students who do not reside at ECIR as well as people from many community and religious organizations also participate in many of their activities.

Through its Global Friendship Program, ECIR matches residents (at least two) with local volunteer hosts to meet and share each other’s cultures. This opportunity to experience everyday life in the US is an important part of the program. Participants are interested in “routine” activities such as cooking and sharing a meal, watching a TV show or big game, shopping, attending a sporting or other entertainment event, enjoying a BBQ, and more like that.

To match people with similar interests, both residents and volunteers need to complete an application (available on the mission bulletin board). Completed applications will be submitted to ECIR, and someone from ECIR will then contact you. ECIR recommends that first meetings be in a public place near campus, such as a coffee shop.

ECIR and its student residents need us! There is a great need for more volunteers since not all residents have been paired with hosts for this year. A small investment on your part will reap large and long-term benefits in terms of friendship and global peace. If you’re interested, please fill out an application and return to Kay Tuttle via the mission committee mailbox in the church public office.

SAVE THE DATE: ECIR will host a talent show, ECIR’s Got Talent, Friday, February 27, at 7 PM. Residents and friends of ECIR will display their talents during an evening of fun. We hope to see you there. You don’t want to miss this!

MISSION BUDGETING BEGINS: The mission committee is beginning work on the budget for fiscal year 2016, including reviewing budgeted and faith promise mission causes. If you have suggestions or questions, please contact one of our members: Greta Buck, Ron Fairchild, Marjorie McRoberts, Bill Sharp (elder), Katherine Simpson (elder), Kay Tuttle or Roger Vance. We’re delighted to hear from you!
Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thessalonians 5:18) Westminster Presbyterian Church is truly blessed by the generosity of its members. In addition to other strong giving in December, the church received over $55,000 in one-time undesignated donations, which will help meet the church’s financial obligations in the coming months. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Westminster finances for the year ending June 30, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income, fiscal year 2015</th>
<th>Year-to-date actual</th>
<th>Year-to-date budget</th>
<th>% actual to budget</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pledges</td>
<td>261,042</td>
<td>474,671</td>
<td>55.4</td>
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<td>Other worship offerings</td>
<td>73,545</td>
<td>49,318</td>
<td>149.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building use rental</td>
<td>9,080</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>60.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Misc income and transfers</td>
<td>8,689</td>
<td>10,815</td>
<td>80.3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total income</strong></td>
<td><strong>$352,355</strong></td>
<td><strong>549,804</strong></td>
<td><strong>64.1</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses, fiscal year 2015</th>
<th>Year-to-date actual</th>
<th>Year-to-date budget</th>
<th>% actual to budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pastors and staff salaries, benefits, office expenses</td>
<td>166,588</td>
<td>357,581</td>
<td>46.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christian education, fellowship, deacons, worship</td>
<td>2,168</td>
<td>15,038</td>
<td>14.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mortgage and property costs</td>
<td>50,360</td>
<td>128,818</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission outreach</td>
<td>24,341</td>
<td>48,367</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$243,457</strong></td>
<td><strong>549,804</strong></td>
<td><strong>44.3</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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Year-to-date excess: $108,898

Additional mission and outreach donations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>December 31, 2014 YTD</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faith Promise causes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christmas Joy Offering</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haspels medical care; Presbyterian World Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total additional donations</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stewardship expressed in acts of kindness, volunteer time and generosity

Bread for Riverside Community Gathering on the first Sunday of each month
Bags of food and personal items for Hope Clinic on the third Sunday of each month
Clothing and household goods for House By the Side of the Road
Christmas gifts for 50 people; Deacons’ Christmas Baskets

Thank you for your generous hearts!

Questions or concerns? Please contact contact Marilyn Sleder, Treasurer, or Dave Wright, Financial Secretary.

Westminster Endowment Fund

Contributions as of January 31, 2015: $195,095
Market value as of January 31, 2015: $274,574
Market value loss since Dec 31, 2014: <$10,338>
Contributions as of December 31, 2014: $191,219
Market value as of December 31, 2014: $281,035
Market value loss since Nov 30, 2014: <$1,668>
Adult learning opportunities in February

Sundays at 9:15 AM

PRESBYTERIAN UNDERSTANDING AND USE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE  Rev. Shipman leads this study seeking an understanding of Presbyterians’ use of Scripture as the rule of faith and life. It aims to formulate principles guiding the interpretation of Scripture – principles rooted in the confessional documents defining the Reformed tradition. This holds the promise for Presbyterians to regain common ground, though is not intended and should not be expected to result in unanimity in every aspect. Meets Sundays, February 1, 8 and 15 in the fellowship hall.

ECCLESIASTES  seems a mysterious book with its unanswered arguments and cynical observations about life. Yet “the Teacher” provides strong words in defense of a life devoted to the living Lord. Meets in room 32 on the lower level; led by Tom Brown.

JOURNEY TO RENEWAL: A LENTEN STUDY  There are many paths on the journey to renewal. The Adult Education and Discipleship Committee has chosen Holey, Wholly, Holy: A Lenten Journey of Refinement, by Kris Camealy for our main study during the six weeks leading to Easter.

God’s call on the life of the Christian is clear: “Be holy, as I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16) In Holey, Wholly, Holy: A Lenten Journey of Refinement, Kris walks alongside the believer and offers encouragement and hope for the journey from holey (broken in sin) to wholly (surrendered unto God) to holy, (claiming the gift of grace through Christ). The season of Lent can – and probably should – be a time of deep reflection and self-examination, as we consider our sin and the price Christ paid. Camealy’s book is a companion for such a journey. But the author never lets the reader forget that light shines on the other side of the dark, and an empty tomb waits on the other side of a wooden cross.

Holey, Wholly, Holy is for anyone who longs to grow closer to Christ and hungers to accept the grace that His resurrection offers. Camealy’s goal in Holey, Wholly, Holy is to help you come fully alive to the risen Christ who is fully alive in us.

The study will take place starting Sunday, February 22, during the 9:15 AM education hour. We will also arrange times for groups of six to ten people to study together at their convenience.

Signup lists will be in the fellowship hall entry. Copies of the book will be available Sunday, February 15. A Kindle download is also available.

Through the week

 VANISHING GRACE: WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THE GOOD NEWS?  Philip Yancey’s book explores the question “Why does the church stir up such negative feelings?”, then offers grace-filled ways of presenting the gospel. Wednesdays at 6:30 PM in room 30 on the lower level; led by Sharon Flynn.

WOMEN’S BIBLE STUDY GROUP  is reading and discussing An Altar in the World, by Barbara Brown Taylor, the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, 1–2:30 PM. Please join us – contact Alice Chambers.

THURSDAY BOOK GROUP  is discussing The Language of Flowers, by Vanessa Diffenbaugh. This New York Times best-seller is a page-turner and romantic at times. It’s also a shattering look at how growing up in foster care can badly warp responses to life. All are welcome, for this 3-week book discussion or for any future book discussions. Meets 1–2:30 PM in room 118.

RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY GATHERING  Set the written word down and live the gospel in this faith-based community outreach. Each week we join approximately 40 people to eat, pray and share our lives. Meets Wednesdays, 4:30–5:45 PM, at First Presbyterian Church, 300 N. Washington St., Ypsilanti. Please contact Mike Beckman for more information.
Youth program dates to remember

Sun, Feb 1  Souper Bowl luncheon: prepare and serve
Wed, Feb 4  Wednesday Night Live! – arts and crafts
Sun, Feb 8  HEART orientation, 11:45 AM, sanctuary
Wed, Feb 11 Youths co-host HEART community, 6:30–8:30 PM
Sun, Feb 15 Youths prepare breakfast for HEART community; Alpha retreat RSVP and payment due
Sun, Feb 22 Faith sharing: Elizabeth Young
Wed, Feb 25 Wednesday Night Live! – Show and Tell
Sun, Mar 1 Laser Tag, NOON–2 PM
Wed, Mar 4 Wednesday Night Live! – TBD
Fri, Mar 6 Alpha retreat through Sunday
Sun, Mar 22 Camp Take Notice dinner prep and serve

Ann Arbor man receives Purple Heart 70 years later

Herman Deal says it was nothing; he was just doing his part.

Doing his part entailed being shot down on April 29, 1944 over Toulon, France by German anti-aircraft guns. During the attack Deal was hit by flak in the right shoulder and he injured his hand while bailing out of the aircraft.

After parachuting 25,000 feet to the ground he was captured by German soldiers and interned at a camp in Austria where he was a prisoner of war for 13 months.

He may have been just doing his part, but Deal was never officially recognized for his efforts by the United States government.


Rev. Shipman installed as Presbytery Moderator

Congratulations to our Interim Pastor Rev. Dr. Judy Shipman who was recently installed as Moderator of the Presbytery of Detroit.

The installation was part of the monthly presbytery meeting worship service. Many Westminster members attended, to celebrate with Judy this honor and joy. Our prayers are with you, Judy, as you take up this mantle of responsibility for us all.
Invitation extended for lay leaders
Adults and youths, consider whether you might contribute to our worship as a lay leader. Come to a short training session, Sunday, February 22, at 11:45 AM, and learn about reading scripture aloud, using a microphone, and more. You’ll be encouraged in your faith even as you help lead us in worship.

International Cuisine Nights
Saturdays, February 28 (Italian menu) and March 28 (Japanese cuisine), 6 PM
Join us for two evenings of dinner and fellowship with an international flair.
Each evening begins with hors d’oeuvres and time to mingle. We’ll then break into pre-arranged dinner groups, each at their own table in the fellowship hall.
Nursery care is provided for children under 6, and activities are planned for older children, making it easy for young families to take part. The meal is for adults, and costs $8 per person, to be collected at each event. Please sign up in the entry to the fellowship hall by February 8 so we can plan our dinner groupings. We encourage you to match your attire to the evening’s theme.
These two events replace our long-running annual Dinners of 7, 8 or 9 — and simplify your part, since there’s no hosting or food preparation involved. We invite all to participate!

Prayer Matters
We offer four avenues for prayer support for you or a loved one:
• Sunday printed worship guide (posted online as well, as a PDF)
• rotating prayer list: individuals with continuing health concerns are added to the printed worship guide list several times through the year
• prayer chain: prayer requests are emailed to 70 Westminster prayer warriors
• confidential prayer requests may be shared with pastor and staff members
To request prayers, please contact April Wright, deacon (761-9320 or alwright@westpresa2.org). You can also join our email prayer chain by contacting April. Please continue to share updates on those for whom we are praying for accurate postings.

Men’s Breakfast
Saturday, Feb 14, 8 AM
“Conquering the Impossible” is the theme at the next Men’s Breakfast. Find out how wounded veterans are using their hearts and minds to summit some of the world’s tallest mountains and overcome the disabilities war has dealt them.
Please sign up each month in the fellowship hall entry to help us plan for food.

Showflake Snow
Sixty Plus Club, Friday, Feb 21, NOON
Tom Clark, aka Dr. Snowflake, presents “Eden in Snowflakes.” All are invited to lunch, followed by our program.
RSVP to Phoebe Vance or sign up in the fellowship hall entry, so we can plan for food. Everyone is welcome, plus or minus age 60.
And for an extra treat: Tom Clark’s annual exhibit at the U-M hospital has been extended through April 5. It’s a stunning collection of many of Tom’s intricate snowflakes. University of Michigan Health System Gifts of Art Gallery; Taubman Health Center, N. Lobby, floor 1; 1500 E. Medical Center Drive, Ann Arbor; 734-936-2787.

Everyday Extraordinary Life films
Saturday, February 21, at 7 PM
Everyday, ordinary people living their ordinary daily lives are depicted in the four films in this series; in the midst of their faithfulness, the extraordinary happens. Lives are changed. The world around them is healed in some remarkable way, and nothing will ever be the same again. Their stories give us hope, renew our faith and inspire us to live our everyday lives with great expectation that each day has the potential to become extraordinary.
The movie (TBA) will be followed by potluck desserts and discussion. Sign up later this month in the fellowship hall entry.

Do you know our elders and deacons?
The complete list, with committee, care group and contact information, is on the Contact page of our web site. Yes, do contact us with questions and concerns!
Westminster Presbyterian Church
1500 Scio Church Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103

734-761-9320
wpcoffice@westpresa2.org
www.westpresa2.org

Sunday worship, 10:30 AM;
Classes for all ages, 9:15 AM

Wednesday Night Live!
Dinner, classes, choir rehearsals
for all ages beginning at 5:45 PM

The Link

February 2015

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
<th>SATURDAY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Worship with Communion, 10:30 AM; classes for all at 9:15 AM</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4:45 PM Riverside Community Gathering</td>
<td>5:45 PM Wednesday Night Live! dinner and activities</td>
<td>7:30 PM Choir Rehearsal</td>
<td>8 AM Morning prayer</td>
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<td>Worship; Sunday Detectives, 10:30 AM; classes for all at 9:15 AM; Offering counters’ training; Heart orientation, 11:45 AM</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>NOON Sarah Circle</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>HEART rotating shelter week</td>
<td>1 PM Women’s Bible study</td>
<td>1 PM Thursday book group</td>
<td>8 AM Morning prayer</td>
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<td>7 PM Missional Monday committee meetings</td>
<td>6:45 PM Riv Cmty Gath</td>
<td>5:45 PM Wed Night Live! dinner and activities</td>
<td>7:30 PM Choir Rehearsal</td>
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<td>1 PM Thursday book group</td>
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<td>8 AM Men’s Breakfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worship, 10:30 AM; classes for all at 9:15 AM; Deadline for March issue of The Link</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>HEART rotating shelter week ends</td>
<td>ASH WEDNESDAY</td>
<td>1 PM Needlecrafters</td>
<td>8 AM Morning prayer</td>
<td>6:30 PM Everyday Extraordinary Film</td>
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<td>7 PM Session meeting</td>
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<td>6:45 PM Riv Cmty Gath</td>
<td>8 AM Morning prayer</td>
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<td>5:45 PM Wed Night Live! dinner and activities</td>
<td>NOON Sixty Plus Club</td>
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<td>6:45 PM Ash Wednesday worship</td>
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<td>7 PM Deacons meeting</td>
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<td>Worship; Sunday Detectives, 10:30 AM; classes for all at 9:15 AM</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>8 AM Morning prayer</td>
<td>6 PM International Cuisine Night</td>
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