

## FROM REV. JOHN...

Dear Friends,

We're coming up on one of those "hinge" moments in the church calendar. Next week, with the arrival of Ash Wednesday, we'll be entering into the season of Lent. For those of you who didn't grow up in the church or in liturgical churches (churches that celebrate the traditional church seasons) – and maybe even if you did – it's a good idea to review what Lent is for our church today: Lent is a season of prayer and prayer-in-action by which we hope to prepare ourselves to celebrate the Easter resurrection of Jesus more fully. It's a time of repentance, that is, of re-centering ourselves, or rather, of asking the Holy Spirit to re-center us in the heart of God's heart.

Back in 2015, progressive evangelical author Rachel Held Evans (who died last year at the age of 37), posed these five questions for those of us preparing to observe Lent:

1. When I wake up on Easter morning, how will I be different? What am I preparing for?
2. Is there something in my life – a habit, a grudge, a fear, a prejudice, an addiction, an emotional barrier, a form of excess – that keeps me from loving God with my heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving my neighbor as myself? How might I address that over the next 40 days?
3. Lent is a time to listen to God, but sometimes God speaks through others, particularly the poor, oppressed, marginalized, and suffering. To whom should I be listening this season? How can I cultivate a listening posture toward others whose perspectives and experiences might differ from my own?
4. Is there a spiritual discipline that I've always wanted to try? How might I alter my daily routine to include one of these disciplines?
5. The cycle of death and resurrection is central to the Christian faith. In what ways is that cycle present in my life right now? Where might there be necessary change, suffering, death and decay, and how might new life emerge from those experiences?

We hope that you'll take advantage these Lenten offerings to help you respond to these questions for yourself.



**Mardi Gras Sunday, February 23 @ 10am** is an opportunity to fill ourselves with the joy of the Lord before setting out on this Lenten journey. This year, we're delighted to have an entire **Dixieland jazz band** (thanks to Peter Wells) on hand to help us get into the Spirit. The celebration will be topped off with a delicious **Pancake Breakfast** made (and benefitting, via a free-will offering) the youth ministry of our congregation.

We enter Lent proper through the door of **Ash Wednesday**, which this year is **February 26 @ 7pm**. Join us for a simple, contemplative service suitable for all ages, which will include both the imposition of ashes ("Remember that you are only human") and anointing with oil ("Remember that you are loved by God").

New this year we're offering a Spiritual Spa Day on Saturday, February 29 @ 9am-Noon to help you get into the spirit of the season. There will be a mix of scheduled events – chair yoga @ 9:30am, guided meditation @ 10:30am,

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## Once in a While Choir Singing on Easter!

We have been invited to sing at the 9am service on Easter! This service will be geared for families and will be approximately 45 minutes in length. There's a big pot-luck brunch to be enjoyed by the whole church at 10am followed by a second service at 11am.

We will have two Sunday morning rehearsals, from 9-9:50 on March 22 and April 5 in Fellowship Hall. We will gather on Easter morning, April 12th, in the sanctuary at 8:15 and sing

at 9. I hope you will be able to join in the musical celebration!!

If you know of anyone who would like to join in this wonderful music making, please pass this message along to them. No age requirement and no audition.

If you are able to come just one of those two dates, that's fine. We will keep your seat open for you.

Looking forward to our singing together.

Blessings, Cici

## FOCUS

Contributions are welcome. Please submit materials by e-mail to [office@needhamucc.org](mailto:office@needhamucc.org).

April issue deadline:  
**March 25th**

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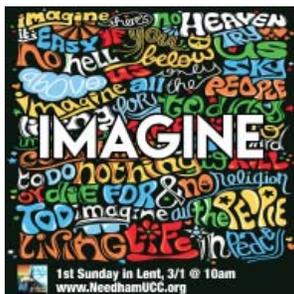
To provide feedback about any aspect of the church, email [feedback@needhamucc.org](mailto:feedback@needhamucc.org)



### YOU CAN HELP MAKE THE EGG HUNT A FUN TIME FOR ALL!

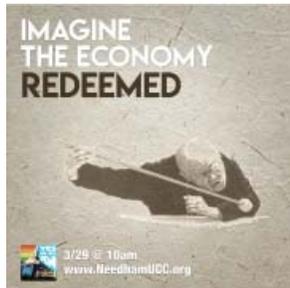
- \* **Donate candy and treats** through our Amazon Wishlist: <https://tinyurl.com/NeedhamEggs>
- \* Come to the **Egg Stuffing Event Sunday, March 29, 3:00-5:00 PM** with pizza, intergenerational fun, & stuffing over 2000 eggs!
- \* **Volunteer at the Egg Hunt** on Saturday, April 11. Volunteer 8:00-10:30 AM. Sign-up online: <https://tinyurl.com/w2g7d8x>

and Holy Communion @ 11:30am – and unscheduled activities for you to share, including walking the labyrinth, prayerful coloring, making “guerilla gardening” seed balls, and an on-going music and visual arts presentation. You are invited to take part in any or all of these, as the Spirit moves and your schedule allows. Children are very welcome, too!



**The First Sunday in Lent is March 1 @ 10am.**

Our theme for the season is “Imagine,” as in, Imagine You Are Forgiven, Imagine Racism Erased, Imagine the Earth Made Whole, Imagine Your Family Healed, and Imagine the Economy Redeemed. This will be an opportunity for us to examine where we are now in all these aspects of our lives and imagine – powerfully, creatively – how God may be calling us to change.



Over the Lenten season, we’re hoping to gather as many members and friends of the church to share a meal together, actually many smaller meals we’re calling **TableTime**



**Potlucks.** You pick one of the dates and times we’ve scheduled, and the office will put together parties of 8-10 folks for a meal of potluck “heavy hors d’oeuvres” and dessert. (Please let us know when you sign up if you can host of one these.) A pastor and a Deacon will attend, too, just to help conversation flow as we get to know one another (again) as members of this community of faith. *Look for more information and actual sign-ups in a special email coming soon and in worship on Sunday.*



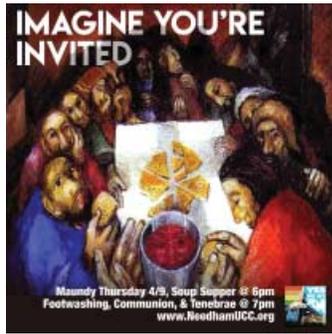
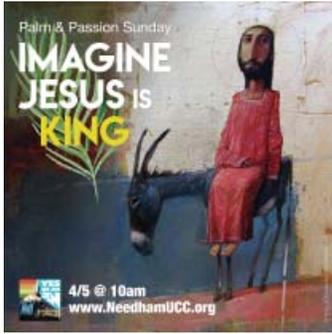
If you’re looking for more opportunities for service and fellowship during the season, we’ve got lots to choose from, including our **Lenten Soup Lunches every Thursday from February 27 through April 2 @ noon** in the church library. This year at our lunches, members will be sharing a bit about their family history to help us get to know one another better. Our congregation will be hosting **Community Dinners** for hungry neighbors **Tuesday, March 3 and April 7.** (For more info, contact the church office.) We’ll be going to **Pilgrim Church** in Dorchester to prepare and serve lunch for almost 100 more hungry folks on **Saturday, March 14,** leaving at 9am and returning by 3pm.



On the same theme, we’re hosting our second annual **10,000 Meal-Packing Event Sunday, March 22 @ Noon.** Last year more than 80 volunteers from our congregation and the community met to pack 10,000 meals in just 90min. Let’s do it again, and more!



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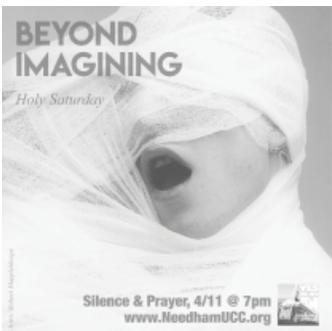


## HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

The culmination of the Lenten season is our celebration of Holy Week when we remember Jesus' last days in Jerusalem, from Palm Sunday to Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Day. Our observances this year includes some longtime traditions and some new opportunities.

**Palm & Passion Sunday, April 5 @ 10am:** Hosanna! Jesus enters Jerusalem to the acclaim of the crowd who name him king. But what sort of king do we imagine Jesus would really be?

**Maundy Thursday, April 9 (soup @ 6pm and worship @ 7pm):** We remember Jesus' last supper with his disciples and his last hours with a moving service of holy communion and tenebrae ("shadows") with music from the choir.



**Good Friday, April 10 @ noon-6pm:** To remember Jesus' death, we'll keep vigil with prayers and readings in the sanctuary, an hour at a time, for anyone who cares to drop in for a time of reflection. Contact me if you're interested in taking a turn.

**Holy Saturday, April 11 @ 7pm:** Easter has already happened, of course, but for many reasons – grief, loss, confusion, pain – some of us aren't ready for a hallelujah just now. This will be a quiet, contemplative service of prayer and reflection for anyone feeling they're still in the shadow of the tomb

at the moment.

And then on **EASTER SUNDAY, April 12** we'll share **two worship services**: a more informal service @ **9am** (~45min) especially good for families with small children, with music from the Once-in-a-While Choir; and a more traditional service @ **11am** (~1h15m) with Holy Communion. In between, we'll celebrate the day with an **all-church Easter potluck breakfast @ 10am**.

**NOTE:** We'll be sharing our traditional **Egg Hunt** with the entire Needham community this year on **Saturday, April 11 @ 9am**. (See more later in this newsletter.)

I look forward to sharing this special season in faith with you all.

Peace,  
Rev. John



## MUSIC FOR THE SEASON!

Share your love of music during for the Lenten season and Easter. The Choir is looking for a few additional singers for this special season. Music will range from "Imagine" to "Ubi Caritas." It's a friendly group - no long term commitment required.

Rehearsals are on Thursday evenings March 5, 19 and April 2 We practice at 8:30 to 9:40 on Sunday mornings, March 8, 15, 22 and 29, April 5 and April 11 (Easter), Choir also sings on Maundy Thursday April 9 for the 7 PM Service and then 8 - 9 PM to polish up Easter music.

# Lent for Families

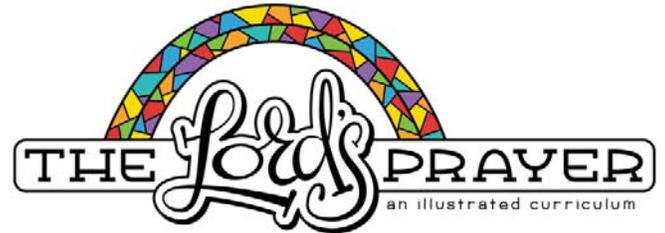
## LENT AT HOME: Family Devotional & Button Challenge

An Illustrated Lent: Reflections on Prayer will be distributed to all families throughout Lent. Students will receive the weekly devotional during Sunday School beginning on Sunday, February 23 through the beginning of Holy Week, Sunday, April 5. This illustrated devotional uses short readings, activities, and coloring pages to be done at home one night of the week. Students bring their completed coloring page in the following Sunday to receive a button. Collect all 7 buttons during Lent & Holy Week!



## IN SUNDAY SCHOOL: The Lord's Prayer

**Kindergarten through Grade 5** will learn about pieces of the Lord's Prayer during each week of Lent. Younger students may learn the Lord's Prayer for the first time while older students are exploring more deeply what this prayer means and the different versions of this prayer we know and love.

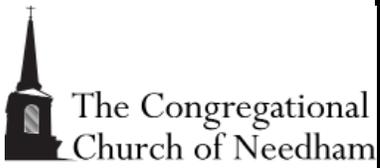


**Grades 6 through 8** will use our worship theme of "Imagine" to explore spiritual practice during this season of reflection.

## ASH WEDNESDAY & HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Children of all ages are invited into worship during these services. Children's bulletins will help kids learn about these special services and why they are important days for us to observe. Children in Sunday School will receive a Holy Week passport on Palm Sunday and can journey through the last week with Jesus and get a stamp at each service.





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of Needham UCC



**Sunday, April 12**

9am Family Casual Worship  
10am All-Church Breakfast  
11am Easter Fanfare Worship

[www.NeedhamUCC.org](http://www.NeedhamUCC.org)

address

stamp

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