



Dr. Gregory S. Neal, Senior Pastor

# The Celebration Times

"Celebrating the Real Presence of Jesus in our lives."

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Seagoville's First  
United Methodist  
Church

## *Lent and Belly Button Lint*

By: Dr. Gregory S. Neal

When I was a precocious little boy of five, before I learned how to spell "lint," I thought that "Lent" was the fuzz found in my belly-button. It was never there in the morning, when I got dressed, but at night, when I took off my clothes, I usually found a small scrap of lint in my belly-button. My mother will probably kill me for saying this, but I can remember her telling me that an angel had put it there to remind all little boys to take their baths at night. I must have believed that the "lint angel" was related to the tooth fairy because I would put my lint under my pillow before going to bed at night, even though no money ever appeared in the morning. As I got a little older, I discovered that "lint" was also what my Mom called the blue-white stuff that she took out of a special slot in the dryer door and threw away. Its origin was as much a mystery to me as was "belly-button lint;" after all, it wasn't there when you put the clothes in the dryer, but it was when you took them out! One day, Dad explained to me that dryer-lint was "left-over clothing," but that theory was never satisfying to me. (Confidentially, I have developed my own solution to this particular mystery. I believe that dryer-lint may be the remains of that proverbial sock which the dryer always seems to eat to ensure that I don't have a matching pair in the morning.)

When I got old enough to understand what was going on at Church, I learned that "Lent" was also a term that popped up just before the Easter Bunny came. Well, you don't have to be told what a little boy's imagination did with that one! The one thing I was sure of was that Lent was not a happy time in Church, and everybody seemed to be expecting me to beat on myself for all the bad things I had done. Well, as long as Mom and Dad didn't find out, I was happy.

The mystery of Lent is an on-going saga in the Church. Every year, the 40 days prior to Easter are set aside as a period of self-examination and preparation. During these days it is appropriate for us to spend some considering our lives, our Christian walk, our dreams and aspirations. When I was a child, I thought that meant that we were to "beat on ourselves" because we had done so many bad things. But, nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, "beating on ourselves" is absolutely the wrong thing to do in the Lenten Season.

As a boy I never could separate the same-sounding words

"lint" and "Lent," and confusion reigned as result. But, many Christians--not just little boys with overactive imaginations--are confused about the Lenten Season. We're not supposed to feel bad in this season. We not supposed to be depressed about our failure to follow God as faithful disciples. We are not supposed to focus upon our sins, which drove our Lord to the cross. We are supposed to be focused upon the cross, and upon He who hung upon the cross. Yes, we crucified Jesus, but recognizing this should compel us to look at why Jesus came in the first place!

Why did Jesus come? Why was he born of the Virgin Mary? Why did he grow up, hammering nails in the carpenter's shop? Why did he gather the disciples and preach and teach about the coming Kingdom of God? Why was he nailed to the cross? Why did he suffer and die? God the Son became one of us, taught us, and then died for us because God loves us all so very much. We separated ourselves from God through our sins, making it impossible for us to reach God. And so, in Love, God reached across the gap we had dug to reclaim us as His very own children. God became flesh, dwelt among us, died for us, and was raised from the dead for us because He loves us.

My mother has a wooden plaque on her kitchen wall at home. On it is a picture of Jesus, standing in the clouds, and underneath are the words:

"I asked Jesus how much he loved me, and he said "This much" ... and he stretched out his arms and died."

I can never shake these words from my mind. They echo through my head whenever I "survey the wondrous cross." That God would give His Son to die for you and me really goes beyond our ability to understand. It is part of the mystery of Lent, a mystery which we experience each and every Sunday when we come to hear the Word proclaimed, pray, and receive the blessed Sacrament of Holy Communion. The mystery of God's real presence, with us and within us through the power of the Holy Spirit, is a glorious mystery which we proclaim as a forgiven people. It is a promise of Divine presence which God desires to give to all the world, if only they will receive the gift which was offered, so long ago, on Mount Calvary. In Lent we are called to examine our lives while keeping our eyes fixed upon the cross and upon He who died for you and me.

Instead of focusing on ourselves as we engage in this self examination, let's focus upon Christ!

Oh, and a final word to all the little boys and girls out there with imaginations too big for their own good: "lint" is not "Lent." They're not even spelled the same way. But, you should still take the lint out of your belly-button.

**Remember .....**

**It isn't how many people are in the pews. What counts is the amount of the Holy Spirit that is in the people.**

*Greg*

.....from the associate pastor

I don't know about you, but I get all excited this time of year. Spring is just around the corner, with the trees all turning green, the weather starting to warm up and the world just seems to be fresh after the cold winter. We also begin to prepare for Easter and the 40 days that lead up to the passion, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

One of my favorite activities is to find out what people have decided to "give up" for Lent. I know it sounds a little tacky to have this as a favorite activity but there are a lot of people that do the same but don't admit it. This year is no exception, the conversations have already started about how people are depriving themselves and some of the conversations have been quite humorous. One such conversation had to do with Girl Scout cookies and the response to the realization that Sundays were excluded as Feast Days. There are the usual withdrawals from caffeine by those giving up coffee, tea, soda and the hardcore who fast from chocolate. The most interesting this year came from a conversation after the Sunday night service (you know, that service we have on Sunday evening at 6:00 where 6-8 people usually show up). Carol Cooper told of one man who encouraged his children to give up some of their personal time and use it to do something for someone else. What a unique idea, to give up of our selves and give, to others.

Is that not what we as Christians are called to do anyway, to give up of ourselves and give to others? We seem to stay so focused on ourselves sometimes that we miss the fact that we are focused on ourselves and not others and I am included in on that "WE", after all, I gave up seconds for Lent. Our lives as Christians are not supposed to be about ourselves, it is supposed to be about others, that is what Jesus taught us. Do you think he went into the desert for 40 days because it sounded like fun? No, he did it for you and for me so that we can know that he has felt our pain and temptation. He did it for others. So, you may already be into your 40 day fast from Girl Scout cookies or seconds, but keep in mind that our walk with Christ is supposed to be about others and not about ourselves; give a little of yourself.

*Jim*

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*Prayer from Psalm 91*

I know that you are my fortress, God,  
A refuge, wherein I can stand,  
Safe in the midst of the battle,  
Protected by your mighty hand.

But sometimes I feel like I'm just outside,  
In the middle of the fight,  
With arrows flying all around  
And terrors in the night.

I want to make you my refuge, Lord,  
My fortress and my abiding place;  
But sometimes the dust of the battle  
Rises and hides your face.

Father of grace and mercy,  
Only to you will I cling;  
I want to rest in your shadow,  
Under the shelter of your wing.

Though a thousand my fall beside me,  
Your comfort alone will I seek  
Destruction cannot come near me  
When your feathers are brushing my cheek.

*Sara Wartes*

## MARCH 2007 CALENDAR

Thursday, March 8	UMW Meeting	6:30 pm
Sunday, March 11	Day Light Savings Time begins (clocks up an hour)	
	UMM Breakfast	8:00 am
Sunday, March 18	Manor at Seagoville Ministry Lay	3:00 pm
	Speakers' Commitment Meeting	3:00 — 6:00 pm
Saturday, March 24	Mother's Day Out	10:00 am — 2:00 pm
Sunday, March 25	Youth Taco Lunch (Adopt a Family)	after am worship
Friday, March 30	Family Fun Night	6:30 pm
Saturday, March 31	Wrestlers for Christ (Balch Springs)	TBA

### **FEEDING THE HUNGRY**

We are continuing to collect food items for the Breadbasket. Please add the following to your shopping lists. We are again ordering from the North Texas Food Bank which will help in keeping our shelves stocked. We are going to continue this more personal involvement and hope that other congregations will join us in this endeavor. Thank you for your continuing commitment to feed those who cannot provide for themselves and their families

<b>Sunday, March 4</b>	<b>canned meats</b>
<b>Sunday, March 11</b>	<b>macaroni and cheese mixes</b>
<b>Sunday, March 18</b>	<b>peanut butter</b>
<b>Sunday, March 25</b>	<b>canned fruit</b>

In addition to the preceding article, the following is a Bread Basket #2 accounting report for 2006:

1. Community Center costs attributed to the BB for utilities, insurance and pest control: \$3,614.00

2. Purchases made outside the N.TX. Food Bank for distribution to our clients: \$2,146.00

Total monetary payments made by FUMC, Seagoville for operating BB#2 in 2006 \$5,760.00

In addition to the actual dollars spent, our BB volunteers contributed 1248 hours valued at \$7.00 per hour for a total of:

\$8,736.00

TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS (paid or volunteer hours) made by FUMC, Seagoville \$14,496.00

Purchases made at the N. TX. Food Bank through the N. TX. Conference Advance Specials: \$5,696.00

\$20,192.00

Without the support of our tireless volunteers, our church members donating food items, the support from the North Texas Conference, the various food drives initiated by our Postal Carriers, local schools and Boy Scout Troop 96; we could not provide food to those people who so desperately need it. Keep up the good work and may God's blessing be upon this ministry.

The Local Board of Directors for Methodism Bread Basket #2

### MARCH BIRTHDAYS

#### Happy Birthday!

3-2 Lawanda Kirby  
 3-3 Jessie Hairgrove  
 3-6 Monica McBride  
 3-6 Rae Lea Nichols  
 3-13 Amber Cook  
 3-14 Keith Jeffers  
 3-15 Cheryl Wilkins  
 3-17 Carole Rhine  
 3-17 Pam Hutchins  
 3-17 James Butler  
 3-20 Heather Kirby

3-21 Gregory Neal  
 3-21 Randy Roysdon  
 3-21 Janet Chaffm  
 3-22 Gene Herrington  
 3-24 Morgan Hutchins  
 3-25 Michael Jeffers  
 3-25 Barry Chow  
 3-26 Elizabeth Chow  
 3-28 Shiann Tate  
 Happy Anniversary!  
 3-1 Gene & Jane Lewis

# ADOPT A FAMILY 2007

On Sunday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, the UMYF will have the first "Adopt a Family" fund raiser for 2007. It will be a taco bar. If you haven't stayed after church for one of the Youth lunches, you have really missed out on some good eatin'. There is no set charge for the lunch, donations are welcomed. For the past three years our youth have adopted several needy families and provided them with toys and clothing for the children and the fixings for a Christmas dinner. The goal this year is to adopt at least seven families.

Please support our young people in this very important mission. For each twenty dollars (\$20.00) that the UMYF raises, Jim and Dena Harper have committed to donating five (5) pounds of beef (up to 150 lbs.) to be distributed to the families along with the other items. The beef will be in the form of ground meat, stew meat and roasts. This is an extremely generous donation from the Harpers. Let's each of us do our best to help the youth make this the best ever "Adopt a Family" drive.

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## PUPPIES FREE TO GOOD HOMES

Marie Clendenon, Ann Marie, and Shawn have some adorable puppies who need good homes and someone to love each of them. There are 6 males and 4 females in the litter. They will be ready to leave their mama on March 14<sup>th</sup>. The puppies are going to be mid-sized adult dogs. Please call Marie at 972-287-8630 if you would like to adopt one or more of the puppies.

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## “Kids in Church”

- A little boy was overheard praying: “Lord, if you can’t make me a better boy, don’t worry about it. I’m having a real good time like I am.”
- A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin 5, and Ryan 3. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson:  
“If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, ‘Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait.’”  
Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, “Ryan, you be Jesus!”

## MISSIONS

**“...inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Matthew 25:40**

Last time this month our Breadbasket shelves were almost bare (tuna, rice and spaghetti). At this writing our shelves are stocked and we have items warehoused for future use. Our freezers are empty except for breads and sweets. Citizens of Seagoville and the Scouts did a great job this past month with the Scouting for Food Drive. The drive resulted in approximately 5000 items (2,883 last year) and \$65 for the Breadbasket. Thanks to all who gave food and to the Scouts, Leaders, Parents, and others who helped. Thanks also to Carol, Dena, Jim, Susan, Charlotte, and Hosea, who counted and sorted the food. Hopefully we will be able soon to order some meat for the freezers. The Breadbasket serves between 150 — 200 families each month which requires a lot of food. The First Baptist Church of Seagoville has helped a lot this past month. Also the items brought each Sunday to FUMC have been a great help. Please keep the Breadbasket in your thoughts, prayers and gifts.

We baked cookies for Valentine and delivered them to folks at Waterford and our local Shut-Ins. It is always a blessing for us to visit with Mrs. Juanita. We took the rose that UMM gave me and the carnations that Dalton got at the Senior Center (his birthday) to her. She is so appreciative of all we do. Although she is in bed --- she has wonderful spirit, beautiful smile, and sparkling eyes. When asked how she is, she always replies, “I’m fine.” Please keep her and all others shut-ins in your thoughts and prayers.

Dalton is always having mishaps and we have to ask for help. One of his hearing aids was sent for repair and he couldn’t hear well enough to do the Nursing Home Ministry last month. Thanks to Susan Devine and Jim Wilkins for coming to our plea for help. They conducted the service. Thanks, also, to Sara who plays the piano each month. We encourage anyone who will help in the Seago Manor Ministry to let us know. We desperately need a Song Leader and a Speaker for each month. As we go about our work at the Breadbasket, the Seago Manor, Shut-ins, and Visitation --- we are reminded of the scripture above. Help us to **PROCLAIM** JESUS this year through the Ministries of FUMC.

In His Name,  
Dalton & Billie

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THESE IMPORTANT  
COMING EVENTS!!!**

Thursday, April 5	Foot Washing Service with communion	7:00 pm
Friday, April 6	Service of the Nails	7:00 pm
Sunday, April 8	Easter Sunday	
	• Sunrise Service	7:00 am
	• Pancake Breakfast	7:30 am
	• Sunday School	9:30 am
	• Morning Worship	10:50 am
	• No evening worship service	
Sunday, April 22	F.U.M.C 125th Anniversary Celebration	
	• “Ransomed” Gospel Singers in the Morning	
	• Luncheon following Morning Worship Service	