

ALTAR DESIGN: Repentance is the main theme for Lent. This is a season for turning back towards an inward/outward journey that leads us farther and deeper into our relationship with our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer God. The idea is that discipleship is a journey that is first lived inward, introspectively, mindful reality-check, and then lived outward in service to God for the transformation of the world. The embodiment of these Lenten concepts by our congregants is what we hope to inspire with the physical elements gathered on and around our church altar.

The altar has been covered with the base cloth of burlap referencing the ancient practice of covering oneself in a burlap robe expressing sorrow during a period of mourning, repentance, contrition and/or humiliation. The dark and light beige fabric pieces represent the path Jesus takes toward Jerusalem; which in turn symbolizes the faith path beneath our own feet. This path has become increasingly rougher as we approach Holy Week. The three large stones placed at the foot of the altar represent the three "tabernacles" (dwellings) Peter proposed at the mountain top after witnessing the "Transfiguration" of Jesus and the encounter with Moses and Elijah. These three stones have been joined by other large stones characterize all the other obstacles we place between us and God's will for us.

The shiny brass cross is slowly fading away drawing our attention to the rougher textures of the wooden cross above the altar. A dark purple tulle foreshadows the Passion of Christ as it makes its way on and around the altar replacing the gray tulle representing the ashes from which we came and to which we shall return.

The dry branches and palms standing in for the barren fig tree Jesus offers to pay special attention to its needs so that it may produce fruit. How often we have let God down, saying that we will do something, believe something, serve in some way, and then we have not produced the "fruit" of that stand. Yet it is Christ who intercedes for us, who reminds us that we have been given special attention - a time to look again at what needs to be done, a chance to turn things around and serve fully and well, bearing fruits that will nourish not only us and our loved ones but all of God's children.

cover image: collage by pastor alex

liturgy: adapted from text and prayers by John van de Laar @ Sacredise; childrens sermon.com; prayer posted at lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu; Nancy C. Townley @ ministrymatters.com.

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Brinna Koltz, Youth Leader | Lay Leaders: Marylyn Fuller & Pat Tripp

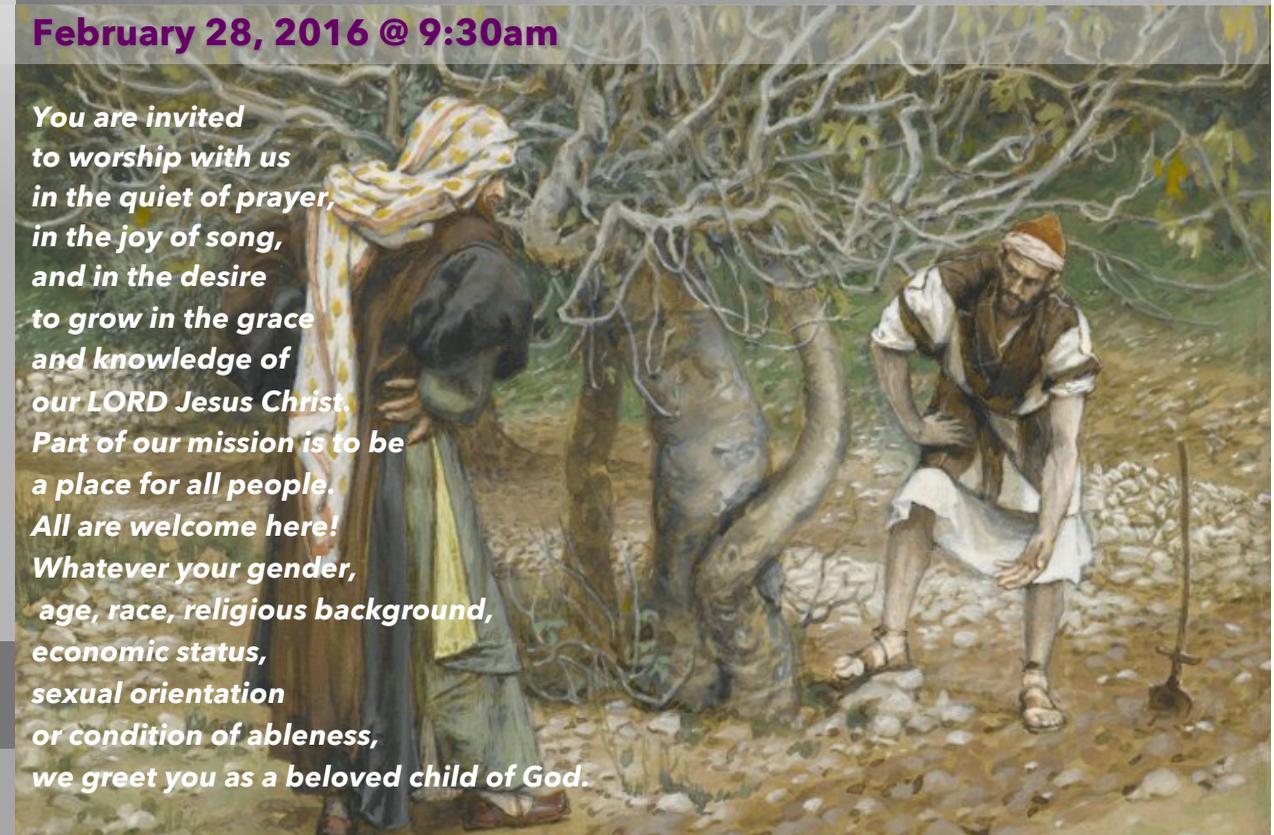
Ministers: All members of the New Milford UMC

New Milford United Methodist Church



February 28, 2016 @ 9:30am

*You are invited
to worship with us
in the quiet of prayer,
in the joy of song,
and in the desire
to grow in the grace
and knowledge of
our LORD Jesus Christ.
Part of our mission is to be
a place for all people.
All are welcome here!
Whatever your gender,
age, race, religious background,
economic status,
sexual orientation
or condition of ableness,
we greet you as a beloved child of God.*





* **The order of service is** subject to change at the leading of **the Holy Spirit.**
Italicized Bold print invites congregational response in unison.
 † Means you are **invited to stand** if able and comfortable.

ENTRANCE & PRAISE

Prelude musical selection by Michael Gardner

Welcome & News

† **Opening Hymn #519** "Lift Every Voice and Sing" [v.v. 1-2] LIFT EVERY VOICE

† **Call to Worship** [adapted from; north = pulpit side] Ann Tibbatts

One: Wrap yourselves in the healing love of God!

North: We seek God's presence in our lives.

One: Know that God continually surrounds us with patience and persistence.

South: Even though we haven't always produced the "fruits" of hope that God seeks, All: yet God forgives and heals our weakness.

One: Rejoice! Great is the Light of the World, and greatly to be praised!

All: We will turn our lives again to our Master Garden.

In Jesus' name we will serve and seek God's presence. Amen!

Prayer of Invocation [adapted from prayers by Nancy C. Townley @ ministrymatters.com] Pastor Alex

Hymn of Praise #121 "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" [v.v. 1-2] GUDS KÄRLEK

Prayer of the People & Lord's Prayer [adapted from "Help as We May" by John van de Laar]

[Prayers of the People, concludes with LORD's Prayer]

And as Jesus taught his followers we now pray saying...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Hymn of Praise #121 "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" [v.v. 1, 3, 4] GUDS KÄRLEK

PROCLAMATION & RESPONSE

Prayer for Illumination

**God of infinite goodness,
 throughout the ages You have persevered in claiming and reclaiming Your people.
 Renew for us Your call to repentance,
 surround us with witnesses to aid us in our journey,
 and grant us the time to fashion our lives anew,
 through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.**

Children's Message "I'll do Better Next Time" Pastor Alex
 [adapted from concept by childrens-sermons.com]

[All children are invited to Sunday School for the lesson "Women Follow Jesus" from Luke 8:1-3]

† **Gospel Reading** "Luke 13:1-9" [NRSV] Ann Tibbatts

Listening for God's Message "If Not Now... When?" Pastor Alex

Hebrew Bible Reading [in unison] "Isaiah 55:1-9"

† **Hymn of Response #375** "There Is a Balm in Gilead" BALM IN GILEAD

Invitation to Offering

Offering of Tithes and Gifts musical selection by Michael Gardner

† **Doxology #95** "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise Him, all creatures here below;
 praise Him above, Ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

Offertory Prayer Pastor Alex

GOING FORTH

† **Closing Song #370** "Victory in Jesus" [v.v. 1-2] HARTFORD

† **Commission, Benediction and Passing of the Peace** Pastor Alex
 [adapted from liturgy by Nancy C. Townley @ ministrymatters.com]

God has called you to bear witness to hope and goodness.

Know that you have been healed of all that prevents you from serving God.

Go forth with God's love and blessing to bring Good News to this hurting world.

**We go now to live as followers of Christ, as people of compassion,
 as those who seek to serve and heal the world. Amen!**

Postlude musical selection by Michael Gardner