



New Milford United Methodist Church

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February 2015

Pastor's Message

Renegade Gospel: The Rebel Jesus A Lenten Sermon Series About Truly Following Jesus

Let's face it. Christianity is a fallible, institutional representation of the truth that is Jesus Christ. Jesus didn't come to start a religion. The rebel Jesus came with a renegade gospel to start a revolution. Jesus challenges us to "follow" him, not just believe in him.

As Mike Slaughter writes: "Discipleship doesn't begin with one's profession of faith. Discipleship begins in the commitment to journey with Jesus." Lent is a sobering reminder that the journey with Jesus leads to the cross. And Jesus continually challenged his disciples to give up everything to follow him.

Let us journey together during Lent, dispelling the illusions about a benign Savior who serves only our personal needs and gives us eternal life. Jesus challenges us so much more than that! Let us remind ourselves of the Savior who came to "bring good news to the poor,...bind up the broken-hearted...[and] proclaim release for captives." (Isaiah 61:1 CEB).

"Discovering the Rebel Jesus," February 22 (First Sunday in Lent)

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life." (John 14:6)

Does Jesus make a noticeable impact on how you live your life? For far too many of us, our depictions of Jesus is not contagious. We have watered down what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. We have made church a building instead of a living, functioning, working community of Jesus-following believers. Showing up for worship has become the standard. We have domesticated Jesus.

The renegade gospel of Jesus was and should be a subversive movement. It's no mistake that Christianity grew at its fastest pace in its infancy when it was outlawed by the Roman Empire. Following Jesus should be risky. All-too-often, here in the U.S., Jesus is portrayed as a good-natured Mr. Rogers who beckons the tired and weary to his neighborhood for a little R&R and entertainment.

The Jesus of scripture challenges us and pushes us out of our comfort zones. He drives the moneychangers from the Temple with a whip, turning over their tables, accusing them of turning the Temple into a "den of thieves" that extorted the poor. Jesus replaces "eye for an eye" Old Testament justice with "turn the other cheek."

Jesus-following is not trouble-free. He made no promises about easy living. Jesus said his disciples must "deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." Try as I might, I'm just not sure how that can be watered down.

Claiming the rebel Jesus requires a radical reprioritization of all we deem valuable. Jesus delivers powerful teachings that are difficult to listen to and even more challenging to live out. You and I have been invited to be a part of his countercultural movement.

"Revolutionary Lifestyle," March 1 (Second Sunday in Lent)

The church has strayed from our roots as a subversive movement under radical leadership. A few years ago an article in *The Christian Century* quoted a recent convert to the Eastern Orthodox Church, as saying he was sick of "bourgeois, feel-good American Christianity."

In Acts the Apostle Paul and others with him spreading the gospel were accused of having "caused trouble all over the world..." Paul and his companions' accusers said: "They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." When did Christians stop causing trouble? When did the gospel become civilized, the rebel Jesus domesticated, and the movement institutionalized and ritualized?

Pastor's Message continued

Commitment to Jesus means a revolutionary lifestyle in which we do not subordinate our allegiance to Christ to any other priority. Our lives must be in alignment with a kingdom of God worldview, not the worldview of the nation-state, political ideologies, or the media. Likewise, a revolutionary lifestyle rejects the privatized faith of “cafeteria Christianity.” That means we can’t pick and choose between personal and social salvation—both matter.

Many claim to be “spiritual, but not religious,” attempting to design their own personal religion. But where true kingdom of God’s work is taking place, you will always find a radical community of Jesus’ followers attempting to live into the full potential of all that the rebel Jesus has designed us and called us to be.

“The Most Important Question You Will Ever Have to Answer,” March 8 (Third Sunday in Lent)

“But what about you,” he asked. “Who do you say that I am?”

I remember one year during the annual Good Friday Cross Walk on the Green here in New Milford a woman drove by us and yelled “[n]ever happened!” Some say that Jesus was a good guy, but just an ordinary man. Others say a good teacher and a prophet. Some say he died for our sins. Others attest that he was the son of God.

Skeptics abound as to Jesus’ divinity. But, as the great Christian apologist C.S. Lewis noted, a man who said the sort of things Jesus said cannot have just been a great moral teacher: “Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse.”

Our response to Jesus’ key question requires much more than simply answering, as Peter did, “The Christ sent from God.” Responding requires a whole life commitment. Right after Peter answers, Jesus shares the most difficult concept for a disciple to embrace: “All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow me. All who want to save their lives will lose them” (Luke 9:23-24 CEB).

“Seeing Jesus Today,” March 15 (Fourth Sunday in Lent)

When Jesus was on Earth, everyone could see him in the flesh. We no longer have that opportunity. The world may not see Jesus any longer. But we who are Jesus-followers still can.

We are called to invest our gifts for Christ and see him work miracles with them. Each of us has a life mission—an audacious God-purpose—by and through which we can see Jesus today. Few of us encounter the living Jesus because many of us have made our faith pragmatic instead of revolutionary.

When we follow through on the God-purpose to which Jesus calls us, we experience Jesus. When we feed the hungry, invite the stranger in, clothe the naked, and visit those sick and in prison, we are doing it for Jesus. “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40)”

“The Way of the Cross,” March 22 (Fifth Sunday in Lent)

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

As the disciples learned, Jesus does not allow us to reduce discipleship to a theoretical belief system or a set of doctrines. To declare that “Jesus is Lord” means an all-in, whole-life commitment to follow Jesus in an alternative, sacrificial way of life. We must fully pledge allegiance to the rebel Jesus in faithfully serving the renegade gospel.

Following the way of the cross means resolute commitment to fulfilling God’s kingdom-building mission. It’s so much easier to seek the gifts of God rather than the God who gives. Following Jesus in the way of the cross means a radical reordering of priorities. You cannot follow the living God while engaging in a spiritually dead lifestyle.

We must not claim to be followers of Jesus, yet fail to follow. Too often we profess the cross without a cost. We compromise Jesus’ radical call to take up the cross and die to our personal prejudices and self-serving agendas. As Jesus himself says, “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?” (Luke 9:25)

Peace and Blessings,



Rev. Paul Fleck



LENTEN ALL-CHURCH MISSION PROJECT

The Mission Committee is sponsoring our second annual All-Church Lenten Mission project to put together Health Kits to be used by UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief). Last year, we worked with the Confirmation Class to assemble personal needs bags for the Danbury Women's Crisis Center and because of the generosity of our congregation; it was a very successful project.

UMCOR's website states: "Relief-supply Kits help provide care for the most vulnerable people during times of crisis. Kits help sustain everyday life for people who lack ready access to essential supplies. They provide vital support for UMCOR's global development work and make a tangible difference in people's lives." We decided to put together Health Kits for two reasons: the first is that UMCOR announced that they are in urgent need of Health Kits; the second reason is that the items needed for the kits are affordable and easy to find, in fact most can be found at a "dollar" store.

We will begin collecting supplies beginning on the first Sunday in Lent, February 22 and will assemble the kits on Sunday, March 29 at 1:30 pm. I will place a well-marked a box in the lobby of the church.

Below is a list of the contents of a Health Kit.

1 hand towel

- 15" x 25" to 17" x 27" kitchen cleaning and microfiber towels not acceptable

1 washcloth

1 comb

- comb needs to be sturdy and at least 8" long
- no pocket combs or picks please
- rattail combs and combs without handles are acceptable

1 metal nail file or clipper

- no emery boards or toenail clippers please

1 toothbrush

- adult size only
- do not remove from original packaging

1 bath size soap

- 3 oz. and larger sizes only
- no Ivory soap due to moisture content
- do not remove from original packaging

6 adhesive bandages

- 3/4 " to 1 " size
- common household band aids

1 plastic bag

- one gallon size sealable bags only

Monetary donations

- to purchase toothpaste (\$1 per kit)
- processing & shipping costs (\$1 per kit)

Important Notes

- All items must be new.
- Do not wash any of the items, as they will be considered used.
- Please remove all packaging.
- All emergency kits are carefully planned to make them usable in the greatest number of situations. Since strict rules often govern product entry into international countries, it is important that kits contain only the requested items – nothing more.
- DO NOT include any personal notes, money or additional material in the kits. These things must be painstakingly removed and will delay the shipment.
- UMCOR is now purchasing toothpaste in bulk to be added to health kits before shipping to ensure that the product does not expire before they are sent.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Tracie Nixon at 860-355-8628 or by email at tracienix@gmail.com.

the Education Center

NMUMC Family,

As January has wrapped up it seems almost too late to wish you all a Happy New Year. But it is not just the turning of the page of your calendar that I want to use the NEW YEAR analogy. Each New Year brings new excitement to what is ahead of us. This year, 2015, is full of great news for The Education Center.

The Board of Directors of The Education Center and the New Milford United Methodist Church put together a great team of people to conduct interviews for our new Director. It is with great joy and excitement that we announce our new leader.

Kristin Austin will have the word "Acting" removed from her current title. Kristin is now the new DIRECTOR of The Education Center. Please stop by her office or stop her in the halls and join us in congratulating her. We hope this is only the first page of many, literal and figurative, new years we get to share with Kristin. She brings complete familiarity to the staff, the parents, and most importantly, your children. But, we do look forward to lots of wonderful innovations that Kristin brings to everyone in her new role. Look for those changes, subtle to not so subtle, in the future.

Please feel free to reach out to me if any questions as we all welcome Kristin.

Best Wishes and Happy NEW YEAR!!

Steve Kolitz
Chair, Education Center Board

Our Daily Bread

Thanks to all who participated in the Winter White collection. The items are truly appreciated.

Bonnie Knapp kindly filled in for me at a meeting with Karen Thomas of United Way. She invited representatives of the area churches, social services, and other food distribution sites in our surrounding towns to meet and discuss their programs. This is a good start to networking, especially when fresh produce is ready this summer.

We are always looking for more volunteers to work on Thursdays from 3:00 - 7:00 p.m. or to take half of the time. If interested please contact Gene Parsons at 860-354-8885 or gparsons02@snet.net.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

February Birthdays:

- 1 – Alex S.
- 4 – Linda S.
- 6 – Joseph H.
- 7 – Peter G., Mary Prause
- 10 – Nancy M.
- 13 – Pete D., Carolyn D.
- 14 – Sidney M., Paul I.
- 15 – Chris P.
- 16 – Jan P.
- 18 – Heather M.
- 20 – Anthony M.
- 21 – Dorothy M.
- 24 – Carol M.
- 25 – Patty J.
- 26 – Tom G.

Attendance & Offerings

| | | |
|----------------|----|-------------------|
| Jan. 4 | 84 | \$2,779 |
| Jan. 11 | 98 | \$4,296 |
| Jan. 18 | 0 | \$120 |
| Jan. 25 | 85 | \$9,200 |
| Monthly Giving | | \$16,395 |
| YTD Giving | | \$16,395 |
| YTD Giving | | \$13,404 |
| | | <i>(Budgeted)</i> |

THANK YOU

To My Church Family,

Can't thank you enough for all the good treats for George and I. Also, the cards and phone calls. I really appreciate my church family.

Love to all and have a good year.

Mary E. Gunther and
George Perry

UPCOMING EVENTS

Something for Seniors

Join us on Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2015, in Fellowship Hall, at 2 p.m. for "Something for Seniors." All seniors and Baby Boomers are invited. This will be a very casual get together to discuss topics that we face as we get older. If you have any questions, please contact Bonnie Knapp at 860-355-0559.

Spaghetti Supper

The next Spaghetti Suppers will be Saturday, Feb. 14 at 5 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. Please join us for spaghetti with home-made meat sauce (vegetarian or butter available upon request), plus salads, homemade desserts, and soft drink. If you would like to volunteer to assist or see what items need to be donated, please contact Bonnie Knapp at 860-355-0559.

Bowling

Family Bowling Night will be held Saturday, Feb. 21, at 7:15 p.m. at Lore's Lanes (145D Danbury Road, behind Goodwill). Please RSVP to Linda Slater at 860-354-6180 or lslater0256@yahoo.com no later than Feb. 19 to ensure adequate lane space.

Family Game Night

Join us for a casual Family Game Night on Saturday, Feb. 28 at 7 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. This is a perfect event to invite a friend or neighbor to church with you! Each attending family is asked to bring a snack to share while we play. For more information contact Roxanne Martin at mrm189@att.net or 860-355-4118.

Joys & Concerns

we are thankful:

For the birth of Juliette Maureen Diamond, daughter of Emily Nixon and James Diamond, granddaughter of Tom and Tracie Nixon. Juliette was born January 7th at 1:13 p.m. She weighed 8 lbs. and is 21" long. Mom and baby are doing well.

For the birth of Dahlia Joy, daughter of Amy and Jon Brooks, granddaughter of Ralph and Barbara Williams, born on Christmas Day!

Sandy and Denis Lybe celebrated 28 years of marriage.

Tom and Ann Tibbatts celebrated their 57th anniversary.

our prayers are with:

Marlene Davis and family as they grieve the passing of Walter.

Lyle, grandson of Ann and Tom Tibbatts, who is in Nepal with the Peace Corp and has a difficult assignment as well as health issues.

Barbara Williams, who has pneumonia.

Bonnie Knapp's sister-in-law, Linda, who is experiencing kidney problems.

Dean's Perry's sister-in-law's sister, Claire, who passed away at the age of 58.

Tim Poeti, who is recovering from his surgery.

Tyler Poeti, who is recovering from surgery.

Terri Hudak's cousin, Julie Spence in Virginia, who is battling cancer.

Terri Hudak's aunt in California who has been diagnosed with breast cancer and will have surgery February 2nd.

The Vivona family as they grieve the loss of Ben.

Jeanne Johnson, friend of Laurel Partrick, who has been diagnosed with liver cancer.

Roberta Buddle's niece, Cindy, who is undergoing chemotherapy.

Steve Bowers, who is now on dialysis and has been added to the transplant list.

Anne Meehan's nephew, Scott, whose brain tumor was found to be malignant, but treatable.

Roberta Buddle's niece, Wendy (Cindy's sister), who had a double mastectomy.

Laurel Partrick's cousin, Cynthia, is facing her third recurrence of cancer.

Emily Nixon's cousin, who has been diagnosed with cancer.

Steve and Adrienne Kern's friend, Steve, who has prostate cancer.

Marlene Davis' son, who is undergoing chemotherapy.

Kay Jones' niece, Sherri, whose cancer has returned.

Jan and Gene Parsons' friend, Brad, whose cancer has returned.

Sue Sterling's cousin, Mary, who has lung cancer.



Hospice And Palliative Care: What Is The Difference?

All hospice care is palliative; however, not all palliative care is hospice care. In the early 1990's as hospice began to grow, it became clear that many patients with life-threatening conditions would not qualify for hospice care, due to restrictions on curative treatment, uncertain prognosis, and a resistance to the idea of acknowledging the likelihood of death.

There is a team approach with staff members with both teams. Both care for the entire family. The "team" is made up of members from nursing, social work, staffing, therapist for safety and education, aides, a Medical and Hospice Nursing Director, Spiritual Counselor and Volunteers.

PALLIATIVE CARE provides many of the same the services delivered by hospices but without any requirements for prognosis or treatment limitations. An example would be a person seeking medical treatment. Another thought or term is "pre-hospice."

HOSPICE believes dying is a natural process of living and focuses on and enhancing the qualities that remain intact and that the person feel is important. An example would be music therapy or writing a life journal for those remaining family members for an individual. Provides support and care for persons in their last stages of an incurable disease so that they may live fully and as comfortably as possible. The physician certifies that in their best knowledge he/she feels the individual has a prognosis of 6 months or less.

There is one primary physician writing orders for the patient. This means the primary can call and discuss the individual's condition but the individual cannot go to another physician's office for care (with the exception of MD such as Podiatrist or Dentists). Individuals have to have an evaluation to see if criteria is met to place a person on hospice. This is done by the Hospice Team and discussed with the Primary MD. Hospice also has their Medical Director oversee care for appropriateness.

If you have questions on the subject I would be glad to discuss anything on this subject. I have been a hospice nurse since 2003 and have a passion for this type of care.

Marilyn Fuller

Board of Trustees

Thank you to Kimber Malinowski, Chris Prause, and Pat Tripp who just finished out their time on Trustees. Thanks for all your dedication and hard work!

A special thank you goes out to Priscilla Williams, for her guidance and leadership as Chair of Trustees over the past couple of years. I am fortunate that Priscilla is still serving as a member of Trustees, and graciously takes my calls and emails during the transition to my new leadership role.

Welcome to our Class of 2017, Tom Gaynor (returning) and Lynn Cannito. We currently have one open spot on Trustees yet to be filled. If you are interested, please contact Pastor Paul Fleck for consideration.

As we enter a new year, Trustees are actively planning our list of new projects for the upcoming months. These include, sanctuary video projection, dismantling the upper playground, taking down the fencing in the parking lot, line stripping of the parking areas, and repurposing the playground shed for NMUMC Men's Club. Trustees have also been working with The Education Center on the installation of the new playground on the hill, a great addition to a thriving day care.

In addition to these new items, Trustees are busy with our "day to day" items. The continual maintenance and repairs, yearly spring and fall cleanups, and "trouble shooting" the number of problems that surface on a moment's notice. It's important to recognize the many talented church members who donate their time and services to keep our campus in great shape. It's hard to measure the skill and dedication of our volunteers, their service to us is priceless.

Tom Nixon
Chair of Trustees

ASH WEDNESDAY

Service on February 18 at 7 p.m.

Ash Wednesday emphasizes a dual encounter: we confront our own mortality and confess our sin before God within the community of faith.

The use of ashes as a sign of mortality and repentance has a long history in Jewish and Christian worship, and the Imposition of Ashes can be a powerful nonverbal and experiential way of participating in the call to repentance and reconciliation. This practice is the historic focus of Ash Wednesday observance and gave the day its name.

GIRL SCOUT SUNDAY

Sunday, March 8, 2015 is Girl Scout Sunday. If there are any Girl Scouts in the congregation who would like to participate in the Traditional or Contemporary Services on that date and did not participate last year, please contact Laurie Putnam at 860-355-2550. Any Girl Scout who participated last year will be contacted to see if they would like to join us this year.

the Don Cairns Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

February 17, 5:30 p.m.

The 7th annual Don Cairns Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper is Feb. 12 and we are very excited. There will be six kinds of pancakes to choose from, along with sausage, bacon and special toppings for enhancement. The food will be prepared by our own top-of-the-line chefs. The United Methodist Men will be cooking and serving dinner beginning promptly at 5:30 p.m. Please give us a call if you would like to help or have a griddle we can borrow to cook the pancakes - we will need 7.

Shrove Tuesday is the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday which is the first day of Lent. It's a day of penitence, to clean the soul, and a day of celebration as the last chance to feast before Lent begins. Lent is a time of giving things up, so Shrove

Tuesday is the last chance to indulge yourself. In the old days there were many foods that observant Christians would not eat during Lent: such as meat and fish, fats, eggs, and milky foods. The need to eat up the fats gave rise to the French name Mardi Gras; meaning Fat Tuesday. Pancakes became associated with Shrove Tuesday as they were a dish that could use up all the eggs, fats and milk in the house with just the addition of flour.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Dave Kullgren at 860-354-1102 or send an email to dkullgren1102@charter.net.

All profits from the pancake supper will go to Don Cairns Memorial Fund.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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