

# THE STEEPLE

## FEBRUARY

### 2024



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Dear Beloved South Church

It's February – Groundhog Day  
Scout Sunday, Super Bowl,  
Valentine's Day, Installation, Leap  
Year, and ... the beginning of the  
holy season of Lent. Lent can be  
both puzzling and nurturing,  
spiritually enigmatic and  
deepening. What's it all about? To  
begin, I invite you to hold the  
following words in your  
heart:

**“The season of Lent is a gift. It  
presents an annual opportunity  
to reassess where we are in our  
relationship with God and the  
world, with self and others.”**

<sup>1</sup>

**What:**

\* Lent is the 40-day period which  
precedes Easter. This mirrors the  
40 days in which Jesus spiritually  
struggled in the wilderness  
following his baptism, tempted by  
power and a way of life that is  
counter to God. The story appears  
in Matthew (4:1-11), Mark (1:12-  
13), and Luke (4:1-12)  
Interestingly, the Gospel of John  
does not include this story. In  
John's view, Jesus was too  
pristine to ever experience a  
spiritual struggle! Which depiction  
of Jesus do you relate to?

\*The timing of Lent changes every year. Why? Because the date of Easter is different. Easter is the first Sunday after the full moon after the vernal (spring) equinox. How's that for complicated! This year, Easter is March 31<sup>st</sup>. Count backwards 40 days and you arrive at February 14 – not just Valentine's Day, but this year the beginning of Lent.

### **Why:**

- The 40 days of Lent invite us to spiritually prepare for the good news of Easter –the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Regardless of whether you joyfully embrace or deeply question the biblical accounts of the Resurrection, Lent provides an opportunity to examine your heart and your relationship with God, so you are ready for the renewal and new life we welcome on Easter. What are your “growing edges?” What do you need to change within yourself in order to live with greater love and faith?
- In doing this spiritual preparation, we can more boldly and confidently accompany Jesus during the powerful, disturbing events of Holy Week, from Palm Sunday to Maundy Thursday to Good Friday. We walk through Holy Week so that we can experience more fully the miraculous joy of Easter.

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<sup>1</sup> Mann, Rachel; “Holy Attachments” in *The Christian Century* (February 2024, p. 38)

### **How:**

- Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. We invite you to church at 5:00 pm on Wednesday, February 14 for a beautiful service of music, prayers, reading, reflection, and ... if you desire ... to come forward to receive ashes or a blessing. Ash Wednesday is a deeply powerful time. It reminds us of our mortality and also of our spiritual shortcomings as human beings. (You can understand why a lot of people avoid Ash Wednesday.) But it also is a time of blessing and grace. I hope you will join us.
- A traditional practice of Lent which you may recall from your younger days is to “give up – or fast from -- something.” Chocolate comes to mind! This actually can be a helpful spiritual practice. But rather than chocolate, what about giving up something within yourself -- despair? impatience? anxiousness? etc., etc.
- Or another approach is to “take on” something for Lent – more forgiveness, empathy, gratitude, inner peace, etc., etc. What do you need to spiritually take on?

This is just the beginning of what Lent is all about. Our Sunday worship during Lent will focus on some of the themes you mentioned in your faith resolutions for 2024. There also will be opportunities for study and contemplative prayer/worship. Stay tuned for more details.

May this be a holy Lent for you, in which you “reassess where you are in your relationship with God and the world, with self and others.”

Love,  
Sally

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### DATE TO REMEMBER

PASTOR SALLY'

INSTALLATION!!

Please join us on Sunday February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024 @10:00am

Installation by the Barnstable Association UCC of:

The Reverend Sally E. Norris/Senior Minister

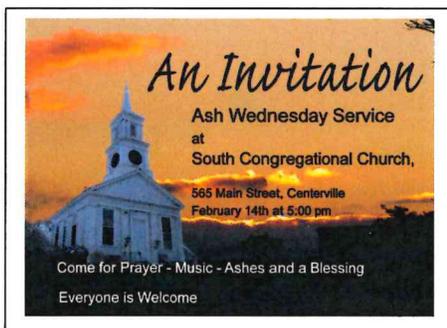
South Congregational Church

Glorious music from the choir and handbells

Reception to follow in Fellowship Hall

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BOOK CLUB IS STARTING UP AGAIN  
JOIN US EVERY OTHER THURSDAY STARTING  
FEBRUARY 8<sup>TH</sup> @ 12:30 IN THE LIBRARY



Join us on February 14<sup>th</sup>, at 5:00pm  
For Ash Wednesday Service! Come for  
Prayer, music, Ashes and Blessings!!

## CUB SCOUT BREAKFAST SUNDAY FEBRUARY 11<sup>TH</sup>

Pancake breakfast starting at 8:30am followed by worship service 10:00am and end around 11 am with cake & social time honoring the scouts!

Last week pinewood derby

January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024, CONGRATS!

To the Monroe Family!!



### FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Bill Monroe 2-2

Richard Dais 2-9

Donna Roberts 2-10

Erica Malcolm 2-11

Ginger Mochen 2-12

Marilyn Buxton 2-15

Tim Tudor 2-15

Wendy Corbiere 2-22

George French 2-22

Donald Lee 2-27

Riley Mee 2-27

Tim McLaughlin 2-28



Karen's Corner:

The rich tapestry of African American musical heritage is interwoven with a multitude of captivating melodies and heartfelt lyrics. Among these treasured music expressions is the hauntingly beautiful Negro Spiritual, "Were You There?" This iconic Spiritual carries within it the weight of history, resilience, and a profound connection to the African American experience. Delving into its origins reveals a compelling narrative that spans generations and speaks to the depths of human emotions.

The handbell choir will be playing this hymn during their offering at the end of the month.

The origins of the Negro Spiritual can be traced back to the era of American slavery, where African Americans endured unimaginable hardships as they navigated through the brutalities of bondage. It was during this time that "Were You There?" emerged as a poignant expression of faith, hope and ultimate redemption.

The exact origins of the melody for "Were You There?" are somewhat elusive, as many Spirituals were passed down through oral tradition. It is believed that this Spiritual may have evolved from West African music influences fused with the melodies of European hymns introduced to slaves by Christian missionaries.

The simplicity and emotional depth of the melody are characteristics that define the Negro Spiritual genre. The haunting and soul-stirring harmonies of "Were You There" tells the story of the Crucifixion of Jesus. Underneath this narrative, however, is a metaphor likening Jesus's suffering to the suffering of slaves. Slaves could easily see a suffering Jesus as someone whose predicament was somewhat like their own. It may also be for this reason that Spirituals about the death of Jesus greatly outnumbered those that depict his birth.

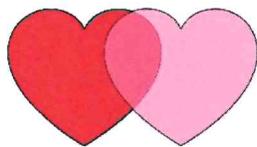
Verse two, "Were you there when they nailed him to a tree" ... Replacing Jesus' cross with a tree further strengthens the metaphor between Jesus' suffering and slaves' suffering.

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African Americans would have drawn a connection between Jesus nailed to a tree and the frightening prevalence of lynchings in their own lives.

In the lyrics, the singer is personally witnessing the crucifixion thus strengthening the likening of one's experience to Jesus'. The use of first-person pronouns in the Spiritual reflects a sense of "communal selfhood" formed by African slaves in the face of oppression.

"Were You There" stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of resilience and hope in the face of adversity. Rooted in the experiences of African Americans during the era of slavery, the iconic Negro Spiritual has captivated hearts and minds for generations. It's melodic beauty and profound lyrical themes continue to resonate with audiences, reminding us of the power of music to convey the human experience and unite us in our shared journey towards freedom, justice, and spiritual enlightenment. As we experience this rich and moving piece of music, may we ever be mindful of its source.



REMINDER ANYTHING PINK OR RED IS 50% OFF AT THE THRIFTY NICHE !!!

