FREE LENTEN DAILY DEVOTIONALS  The 2019 Lenten daily devotional booklet, Take Nothing With You, is available for free. Please take one of these inspirational daily meditations as you enter or leave church on Sunday. They are stacked in the back of the church.

COFFEE, TEA, AND PASTOR B MARCH DATES: March 11 from 10:30 a.m. to noon at Blackbird Baking Company (https://www.blackbirdbaking.com), 1391 Sloane Ave., Lakewood; and March 14, 7 to 8:30 p.m., at Erie Island Coffee (http://erieislandcoffee.com), 19300 Detroit Rd. in Rocky River.

JAN/FEB FROG WINNER! Congratulations to Aaron Barnes, the winner of the January/February gift certificate for Blackbird Bakery in Lakewood! Let the office know by phone, note or email (church@corucc.org) where the frog is in this issue to be entered into the next gift certificate drawing! Can you find this month’s frog?

SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE DINNER, MARCH 5, 6 P.M. in the Fellowship Hall. Sign up in the Gathering Room!

BURN PALMS MARCH 5 in preparation for Ash Wednesday. Meet Pastor Brooke half an hour before the pancake dinner, March 5 at 5:30 p.m., to help out.

LENTEN STUDY Pastor Brooke’s Lenten study is on the book Saving Jesus From the Church: How to Stop Worshiping Christ and Start Following Jesus. Margaret has a few copies available for purchase @ $6 each; buy a copy through Amazon (tinyurl.com/corlentbook); or download for free at tinyurl.com/corlentstudy. Evening sessions: Tuesdays, March 5-April 7, 7:30-9 p.m. Daytime sessions: Thursdays, March 7-April 9, 10:30 a.m.-noon.

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE MARCH 6 Join us for a special Ash Wednesday Service on Wednesday, March 6, at 7 p.m. NOTE, THE EARLIER TIME.

PASTOR BROOKE PREACHING AT ‘WEDNESDAYS IN LENT’ LUNCH SERIES Pastor Brooke will offer a simple Lenten message on Wednesday, April 3, at noon, St. Ladislas Parish Center, Westlake. The 5-week Lenten Lunch series runs March 13-April 10 and celebrates Westlake as a multi-denominational community. Plan to attend the series.

NICE TO MEET YOU! Redeemer welcomed a special visitor Sunday, Feb. 27, when Pastor Brooke’s sister, Cora Lou Gupton, was in town. It was the first time Cora Lou heard her sister preach! We’re glad you visited, Cora Lou. Please come back soon!
Lent is for study, contemplation

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. — Psalm 51:1-2

Lent is upon us. A time when many of us choose to give something up — chocolate, coffee (never!), sweets. Or perhaps we add something — a weekly or daily kindness, daily Bible reading, prayer time.

This year, I have decided to give up meat for Lent. I know it is better not only for my body, but also for the environment — and announcing it here gives me some accountability. But the scriptures remind us that we are to give up our sin and our iniquity — that’s even harder than giving up coffee!!

It is in our nature to sin, but it is in God’s nature to offer us mercy. That is exactly what the Psalmist reminds us of — that God is merciful.

Lent is a time of quiet reflection. During my time away, I realized how important it is for me to spend time outside. While we are certain to still have cold days, I was challenged by my mentor to add time outside daily as a spiritual practice. So in addition to taking away, I will also add this Lenten season.

What will change for you this Lenten season? How will you allow God to “wash you thoroughly” from your “iniquity” and “cleanse you from your sin”?

I look forward to hearing about your Lenten practices and I hope you will ask me about mine. May this Lenten season be a time of transformation for each of us and for our church.

Blessings,
Pastor Brooke

March Offerings

The Mission offering in March will support the UCC’s “One Great Hour of Sharing (ucc.org/oghs), officially held March 31. One Great Hour of Sharing carries God’s message of love and hope to people in crisis. The UCC works with international partners to provide sources of clean water, food, education and health care, small business micro-credit, advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons, and emergency relief and rehabilitation.

OGHS also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response. Several Christian denominations — American Baptist Church, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Church of the Brethren, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the United Church of Christ, and Church World Service — work together to develop common promotional materials thereby sharing ideas, costs, and a commitment to faithful service. Each denomination receives and manages its respective OGHS offering.

On average, of every dollar given to One Great Hour of Sharing, 95 cents is used directly for mission programming; and 5 cents for interpretation materials.

March In-Gathering

In March, we will be collecting jars of Peanut Butter and Jelly.

Thank you in advance for your generous donations to both the March offering and food collection.
MUSIC MINISTRIES

Marching into Spring!

Greetings! We are busy preparing for the Lenten Season and looking forward to Spring.

The Sharon Singers, under the direction of Cory Svette, will be presenting Peter Pan on Saturday, May 4, at 6 p.m. We look forward to another wonderful performance by these incredible and inspiring young people.

On Sunday, May 19, at 3 p.m., the Chancel Choir will be presenting Spring Sing, a Pops Concert. It will feature choral as well as specialty numbers, including Another Op’nin, Another Show; a choral montage of songs from the 1920s—such tunes as Bye, Bye Blackbird, Charleston, and Tea for Two; and a medley of The Best of the Beach Boys (just to name a few).

Please mark your calendars for these two special events!

Thank you for your continued prayers and support of our music ministry.

Blessings to all,
Carol

FAITH FORMATION MINISTRIES

Springing into March with Faith Formation

During March our children and youth are filling coin boxes for the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. (Read about the OHGS offering on page 2.) They have each been given a calendar which has been designed to help us acknowledge our blessings but also think about and pray for others. They can express gratitude by donating a designated number of coins each day.

Share a Little Kindness Our children and youth have decorated the Faith Formation hallway with sayings about Kindness. There have been popular campaigns in our public culture like “Do a Random Act of Kindness,” “Pay it Forward,” and “What Would Jesus Do”: WWJD. But we need to look no farther than our scriptures to hear Jesus tell us — “Do unto others what you would have them do unto you.” Take some time to read the thoughts from our young people. And then follow their example and share a little kindness with someone you encounter this week.

The youth had fun crafting Valentines to go with donated stuffed animals to give to their Bolton Elementary Buddies. They look forward to finding ways to bring joy to these second graders in the city of Cleveland. Stop by the youth room to see the most recent photo of these special kids. There are 14 children in their adopted class. If you ever want to donate treats or gifts of books, art supplies, or learning resources for this class, see Margaret Borrelli.

Redeemer UCC March Birthdays

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CAREGIVING/COMMUNITY NURSE MINISTRIES

Circuit Rider, Water

How much water did you drink today? Water is an essential part of healthy life every day and in all seasons. Thirst is not always the first sign of dehydration. Often we will recognize hunger and fatigue before thirst.

The aging process decreases our sense of thirst. Some chronic diseases and medications also affect our ability to conserve water. We must be proactive and remember to drink plain water during the day.

God has been very generous with us and provided us with living water for both body and soul. As you drink each physical glass of water today, consider how God is also filling you with living water. Isaiah 44:3b, 4; 58:11; John 4:10.

Have you had your blood pressure checked? Leave me a message in the church office or send me an email and we can schedule a convenient time to meet!

Senior Living education and tour. Brighton Gardens of Westlake, 27819 Center Ridge Rd., is inviting you to a light lunch, with speaker from Caring Transitions and a tour, on Thursday, March 21. The program is scheduled from noon till 2 p.m. Please call 440-808-0074 to reserve your seat. Brighton Gardens offers assisted living, Alzheimer’s and memory care, hospice care and short-term stays. Please call me at 440-331-7676 if you have questions. I am planning to attend.

Safe Senior Living will be the topic for a Brown Bag Lunch and Learn on April 4 in Gathering Room. Sunset Memorial will be sponsoring the talk. Just a few of the topics to be covered include safety in the home, medication, communication and financial safety. Please sign up on the bulletin board list by Monday, April 1. Beverage and desert will be provided. Questions? Please leave me a message.

More than we can imagine
One Great Hour of Sharing

UCC DEVOTIONAL

Yes. Period.

By the Rev. Jennifer Brownwell

Do I make my plans according to ordinary human standards, ready to say “Yes, yes” and “No, no” at the same time? As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been “Yes and No.” For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not “Yes and No”; but in him it is always “Yes.”

— 2 Corinthians 1:17b-19

For too long we were convinced that the only word was “no.”

Every thought or action was governed by a rule or restriction, ranging from the purely ridiculous to the downright dangerous. No dancing. No meat on Fridays. No reading comic books. No women in the pulpit. No marriage for LGBTQ people. No saying “gee whiz.” (That last one is a real restriction imposed by father’s childhood boarding school. Because gee whiz was short for Jesus’ whiskers, obviously).

Understandable. It was confusing out there. So often what we heard seemed contradictory. It was almost like some people were telling us two completely different things at the same time, and expecting us to believe them both. It was easier to believe in a God who only said one word, even if that one word was “no.”

But, look again. “No” isn’t the word. Instead, the scripture tells us, “it is always ‘yes.’” So dance and feast and laugh and share the good news and love one another and even, if you are ready to really let ‘er rip, shout “gee whiz!” Because our Savior says yes. Yes. Yes. Period.

Prayer:

Brother Christ — You say yes to me. May I say yes to you, too. Amen.

About the Author:

Jennifer Brownell is the pastor of First Congregational UCC of Vancouver, Wash., and the author of Swim, Ride, Run, Breathe: How I Lost a Triathlon and Caught My Breath.

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