



St. Peter's Press

February 2023

St. Peter's Presbyterian Church - Spencertown, NY

PO Box 14 | 5219 County Route 7 | Spencertown, NY 12165

Telephone: 518.392.3386 | Email: saintpeters.spencertown@gmail.com

Website: <http://saintpeterspc.org> | Facebook: www.facebook.com/saintpeterspc

Lent as Spiritual Practice

By Rev. Donna Elia



On Ash Wednesday, February 22, we will sing, "Sign us with ashes, merciful God, children of dust, as to dust we return. Sign us with ashes, merciful God. Mark us and make us your own."

The season of Lent is both somber and hope filled. Remembering that we are children of dust, that life is fragile, invites us to reflect again on what is most important in our lives. Love, justice, and good news come to mind. What a blessing it is to make a difference in the time given to us!

I have often thought that the Jewish High Holy Day, Yom Kippur, is one we can both respect and emulate. Repentance, seeking forgiveness, reflecting upon the wrong we might have done and the good we neglected to do — all of these practices lean us in the direction of transformation, which ultimately is a gift of God.

It is precisely because we are created in the image of God that we repent. This is occasion for good news. Each day speaks the words, "Begin again! Turn again in the direction of wholeness. Nurture your better angels."

Many Christians embrace a Lenten spiritual practice. We abstain from something to cultivate intentionality, or we deliberately do good and just acts, or both. Whatever your spiritual disciplines, may you draw nearer to God and others. New life is coming!

Revs. Donna Elia and Bill Levering will share in leading Lenten Bible Study sessions for the St. Peter's, Valatie, and Hudson Presbyterian Churches each Monday beginning February 20 and concluding on April 3. Each session is from 7 to 8 PM. The Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81615859760?pwd=SHAZL1kwTmcyYm1PdkdzNVNlNUZ6dz09>.

Join us for a special Ash Wednesday service on Wednesday, February 22, at 5:30 PM. The service will be informal and reflective, with the option of the imposition of ashes.

After the service, we will share a simple meal of soup, salad, and bread (vegetarian options available).

Rev. Donna Elia will be at St. Peter's in February on the 22nd (Ash Wednesday) from 3 to 5 PM. Feel free to come chat with her in person while she is here. You can also call her on her cell phone (518-495-6795) or on the church phone (518-392-3386).

St. Peter's Congregational Annual Meeting – 1/29/2023

From the Minutes Recorded by Sandra Fischer



The St. Peter's Annual Meeting, **moderated by Rev. Donna Elia**, was held after church on January 29, 2023. Donna declared that we have a quorum (requiring 10% of the membership, which would be 10 people). The number of members attending were 20 in the Sanctuary and

6 on Zoom.

Copies of the Annual Report were handed out to members present. If you would like a copy of the report, contact the church office at email saintpeters.spencertown@gmail.com or phone 518-392-3386. Sections in the report are:

- Church Officers and Their Terms 2023-2025
- Pastor's Report
- Council Report
- Board of Deacons Report
- Clara Gott Incentive Fund Report
- Mission & Social Justice Report
- Music Program Report
- Friends of Historic St. Peter's Church, Inc.
- Women Unabridged Book Group Report
- Treasurers' Report

Jere Wrightsman presented highlights of the Council's work in 2022, including:

- Created reports on Lynn's departure and Wayne Coe situation.
- Dropped mask mandate but recommended they continue to be worn.
- Voted to resume coffee hour March 6.
- Contracted with Rev. Donna Elia to be quarter-time pastor at St. Peter's beginning 6/1.
- Represented by Teresa Barenfeld and Mary Anne Davis on the Albany Presbytery Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF).
- Helped with the Austerlitz Climate Committee's vegetarian potluck on July 10.
- Provided leadership on Sunday worship services, including pulpit supply and lay

leaders to conduct services when Rev. Elia is not there due to her being part time.

- Led pledge campaign.
- Received training for providing Communion.
- Led the effort to drill a new and separate well at the manse.

Rev. Elia mentioned that the tithes pledged for 2023 increased by \$10,000 over last year.

Attendees were encouraged to read the report rather than having it all read to them. Some of the report authors spoke about their sections.

Jeff Kiplinger, who serves as co-treasurer with Wendy Diskin, **presented highlights of the Treasurer's Report and 2023 Budget**.

He thanked Wendy, who manages expenses; Larry Massimo, who handles income; and Ian Wing, who provides consultation and auditing. He also thanked the Friends of St. Peter's for their considerable efforts and contributions to maintain the church building.

Jeff said that we are OK to operate now. We had some extra income last year from a short-term rental of the manse and a grant to help offset the cost for the new well. We did not need to access reserve account funds last year and do not anticipate the need to do so this year. We might have a small budget surplus this year.

Election of Church Officers for 2023: The following were submitted by the Nominating Committee and elected by vote of the members:

For Council: Marion Ulmer and Wendy Diskin to first terms. Returning Council members are Barbara Conkling, Sandy Fischer, Jeff Kiplinger, Larry Massimo, David Pearce, and Jere Wrightsman. There is one open position. Teresa Barenfeld has served two consecutive 3-year terms and must step down from the Council. We thank her for her dedicated, thoughtful service!

For Deacons: Marcy Coalter and Randy Ezinga to first terms. Returning Deacons are Mary Anne Davis, Joel Dyslin, Kathy Geddie, Jennifer Thompson, and Sharon Wing. There are two open positions.

Thanks to members of the Nominating Committee, Barbara Conkling (Chair), Shirley Newsome, and Ian Wing for their hard work on finding officer candidates.



St. Peter's men have reconvened, meeting the last Sunday of each month to share fellowship and camaraderie. Look in the Church Bulletin for meeting announcements. The next meeting will be Sunday, February 26, at noon at the Chatham Grill. Contact Randy Ezinga (518-755-1510) or Paul Greene (518-758-2048) with questions or input. All St. Peter's Men are welcome. Hope to see you there!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

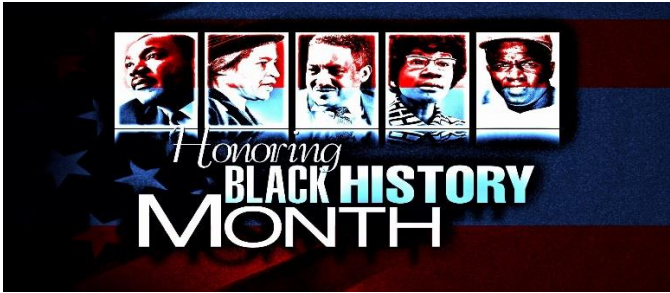
Update on New Well at the Manse

Good News!: The digging of the well at the church's manse was completed on February 1!



W. Gordon Goold, Inc., found the underground water at 560 feet. We are grateful to the company for its quick work, reasonable cost, and the 10% discount it is giving us. The final bill is not yet in, but the total cost will be approximately \$21,000. Reverend Elia submitted a grant to the Trustees of Albany Presbytery; we are awaiting the decision on that. We invite everyone to consider donating to this specific project. This money will be recouped over time by our ability to rent the manse. *Much thanks to Barbara Conkling* for doing the work to coordinate this task and make it all happen.

St. Peter's often receives email from people who are looking for information about relatives buried in the cemetery. This compliment came in one such email: *I found your church when I was researching for a Fall 2023 trip to the area. The church looks lovely, and it is amazing that it is still an operating church from the 1700s! Your congregation should be congratulated on maintaining a vibrant community for more than 250 years!*



By Rev. Donna Elia

We celebrate Black History Month because we are stronger together when we celebrate the contributions of African Americans in every aspect of society. It takes our collective work to strive for a more just society. We need all of us. Isaiah calls us to *Loose the bonds of injustice and break every yoke*. Racism is one such yoke. Racism is not our fault, but it is our responsibility.

Zero sum thinking, the idea that if some succeed others must lose, is a concept Heather McGhee challenges in her book, *The Sum of Us*. I recommend to you the upcoming study on her book, hosted by the Albany Presbytery Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF) on two Fridays in February, the 10th and 17th, at 1 PM. (Contact Mary Anne Davis for more information at mad.maryanne@gmail.com.)

At a recent webinar, Ms. McGhee told the very profound story about how beautiful public pools, such as one in Montgomery, AL, were built in the 1930s and 40s to embrace the common good. During the Civil Rights Movement, when the Supreme Court ordered the integration of public pools, many communities drained the pools or buried them, rather than integrate them. They preferred to deny themselves and their children wonderful, recreational opportunities rather than be with people of color. Heather McGhee calls this "drain pool politics."

We remember saints of Black History. The Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon, the first Black woman ordained in the Presbyterian Church (1976), said, "Even when they call your truth a lie, tell it anyway." Let listening be our commitment, and prayer and action be our daily work.



Love in the Bible

By Kathy Geddie

As we mark Valentine's Day this month, let us reflect that there is much in the Bible that celebrates the importance of love in its various forms. Think of 1 Corinthians 13:13 (NRSV):

AND NOW FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE ABIDE, THESE THREE; AND THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE.

On the Learn Religion website, Jack Zavada writes, "The Bible says that God is love and that humans crave love from the moment of existence. [I think animals do too; just look into your pet's eyes and say that is not so.] But the word *love* describes an emotion with vastly differing degrees of intensity.

"Four unique forms of love are found in Scripture. They are communicated through four Greek words (*Eros*, *Storge*, [pronounced *STOR-jay*], *Philia*, and *Agape*), and are characterized by romantic love, family love, brotherly love, and God's divine love [respectively]." He later mentions Jesus' command to "love one another." The author expounds on each of these types of love, which you can read online at <https://www.learnreligions.com/types-of-love-in-the-bible-700177>.

My favorite passage about love in the Bible, and it's high among favorites from all of literature, is the very familiar passage from 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. It's included in many cards I've sent to newlyweds. It says:

LOVE IS PATIENT; LOVE IS KIND; LOVE IS NOT ENVIOUS OR BOASTFUL OR ARROGANT OR RUDE. IT DOES NOT INSIST ON ITS OWN WAY; IT IS NOT IRRITABLE OR RESENTFUL; IT DOES NOT REJOICE IN WRONGDOING, BUT REJOICES IN THE TRUTH. IT BEARS ALL THINGS, BELIEVES ALL THINGS, HOPES ALL THINGS, ENDURES ALL THINGS. LOVE NEVER ENDS....



Women Unabridged Book Group

Women Unabridged had its annual day out on



From left, June Houghton, Denise Davis, Kathy Geddie, and Lee Armstrong

January 21 with a delicious lunch at the Water Street Grill in Williamstown, MA, followed by a fun and interesting visit to the Clark Museum.

The February book is *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead for Black History month. This #1 *New York Times* bestseller chronicles a young slave's adventures as she makes a desperate bid for freedom. Our next meeting is February 21 at 7 PM via Zoom. (We're switching from our normal Monday meeting due to the Lenten Bible Study on that day.)

The book club always welcomes new participants. For questions, contact Denise Davis, 518-392-9690, or Teresa Barenfeld, 518-755-3273.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Food Donations for Kids



For the month of March, the Deacons are asking for food donations for Sandy's Food Pantry (that is our Sandy Fischer who keeps snacks on hand, which she purchases, for her students) and the *free* Morris Memorial Afterschool Program snack supply. This would involve healthy snacks for kids, e.g., granola bars, fruit cups, juice drinks, fruit leather, protein bars, trail mix, applesauce cups, and the like. Many children in our community need a little help getting the food they need to thrive. We can be part of that help!

Banana Pudding Recipe **From Magnolia Bakery**

Something mysterious and delicious looking was discovered in the fridge before the January 29th potluck was to begin. Upon closer look, a



label was spotted that said *Magnolia Bakery Banana Pudding*. Just looking at it, you *knew* it was going to be amazing. Some of us had

delightful memories of banana pudding from childhood, but had not seen or tasted it in decades. We speculated, “who made this intriguing concoction?” During our meal, someone yelled out, “who made the banana pudding?” “I did,” confessed Barbara Smith. We thanked her profusely; it lived up to all the imaginings of its deliciousness. Barbara sent the recipe to share (12 to 16 servings):

Ingredients

- 1 14-oz can sweetened condensed milk
- 1½ cups ice-cold water
- 1 ¾ oz package instant vanilla pudding mix
- 3 cups cold heavy cream
- 1 11-oz box vanilla wafer cookies
- 4 to 5 ripe bananas, sliced

Preparation

1. Beat the condensed milk and water on low speed until blended, then increase the speed to medium and beat until well combined, about 1 minute. Add the instant pudding mix and beat until the mixture is smooth, about 2 minutes. Transfer the mixture to a medium bowl, cover and refrigerate until firm, at least 1 hour or overnight.
2. Whip the heavy cream on medium speed for about 1 minute, until the cream starts to thicken, then increase the speed to medium-high and whip until stiff peaks form. Be careful not to overwhip.
3. With the mixer running on low speed, add the pudding mixture a spoonful at a time to the whipped cream. Mix until well blended and no streaks of pudding remain.
4. Set aside 5 cookies aside for garnish.

5. In a wide glass bowl (or in 12 8-oz ramekins), spread ¼ of the pudding mixture at the bottom of the bowl and layer with 1/3 of the cookies and 1/3 of the sliced bananas (enough to cover the layer). Repeat the layering twice more. End with a final layer of pudding mixture.
6. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 4 to 6 hours. Cookies should be tender when poked with a knife.
7. To serve, garnish the top with the reserved cookies or cookie crumbs. **Note:** *This dessert is best served within 12 hours of assembling.*



St. Peter’s will be participating in Ecumenical Lenten Services with Paine AME, Ghent Reformed, Chatham UMC, and St. James RC Churches. Soup and sandwiches will be served at 6 PM, with the service following at 7. The schedule and who will be preaching for each service is:

- March 1 at St. James, with Rev. Gloria Jipson
- March 8 at Chatham UMC, Fr. Steve Matthews
- March 15 at St. James, Rev. Donna Elia, Payne AME, host
- March 22 at Ghent Reformed, Rev. Karin Squires
- March 29 at St. Peter’s, Elder Bonnie Pflgel



We received notice from Loren Kaiser that her dad, Rev. Bob Kaiser, died on 1/3/23 at the age of 88. Rev. Kaiser was pastor at St. Peter’s from 7/1965 – 2/1970. A memorial service will be held for him early this spring.

If you would like to share a memory, story, or photo that might be displayed at the memorial, contact Kathy Geddie who will send the information to the family. His obituary is at <https://www.jamesrgray.com/obituary/RobertBob-Kaiser>.

**February Worship
Sundays at 10 AM**

(In-person and via Zoom)

5th: Rev. Donna Elia, Communion

12th: Rev. Donna Elia

19th: Lay Leader Mary Anne Davis

29th: Rev. Donna Elia

~~~~~

**February Lectionary Readings**



**5th:** Isaiah 58:1-9a,  
Psalm 112:1-9,  
Matthew 5:13-20

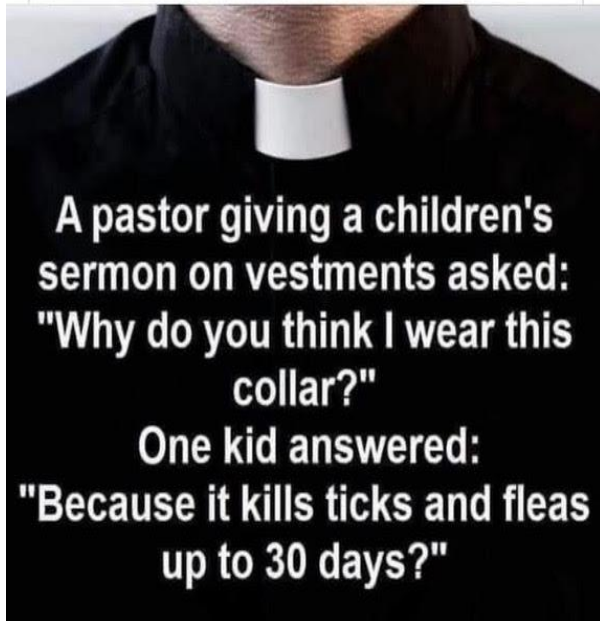
**12th:**  
Deuteronomy  
30:15-20, Psalm  
119:1-8, Matthew  
5:21-37

**19th:** Exodus  
24:12-18, Psalm 2,

Matthew 17:1-9

**26th:** Micah 6:1-8, Psalm 15, Matthew  
5:1-12

~~~~~



From Friday, April 28, through noonish on Sunday, April 30, Rev. Donna Elia will lead a retreat for members and friends of the St. Peter's, Valatie, and Hudson Presbyterian Churches. Kirkridge Retreat Center (Kirkridge.org) is in the Kittatinny Mountain Range, overlapping with the Appalachian Trail. The property is stunning, has many places to take in nature and quiet reflection, and also has an outdoor labyrinth.



It is next to Columcille, a property with megalith stones placed in a way reminiscent of Stonehenge.

Rev. Donna Elia served on the Kirkridge Board for 6 years and has a 30-year history of going on retreats there.

Although there will be some programming, there will also be free time for walking, reading, and writing. The cost includes meals and lodging and will be about \$350 per person, with limited scholarship assistance available. Please talk with Donna if you are interested.

~~~~~

***Still I Rise (last 2 verses)***

*By Maya Angelou*

Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.  
  
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

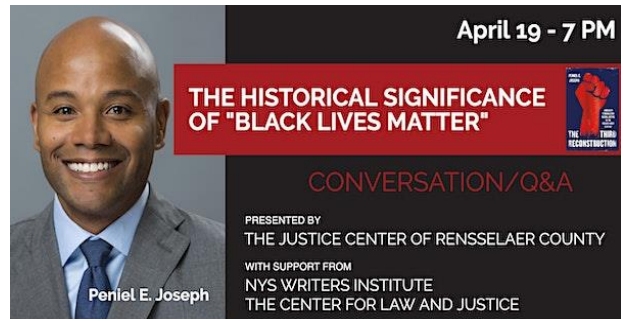
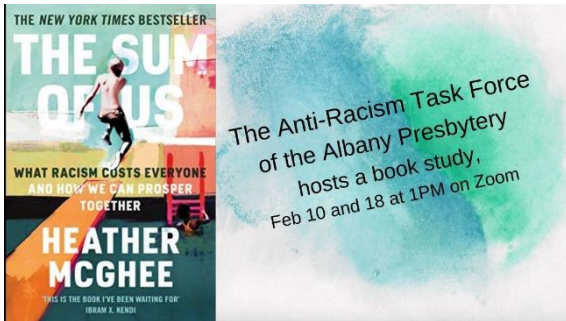


♪ Happy Birthday to: ♪



|               |      |                |      |
|---------------|------|----------------|------|
| Laura Corsun  | 2/2  | Owen Barenfeld | 2/23 |
| Linda Bolluyt | 2/6  | Peggy Antos    | 2/24 |
| Emily Gaylord | 2/6  | Margy Quinn    | 2/25 |
| Paul Davey    | 2/12 | Marie Fischer  | 2/27 |
| Donna Staron  | 2/16 | Carol French   | 2/28 |
| Casen Waldorf | 2/19 | Samuel Lareau  | 2/28 |

*Did we forget your birthday?  
If you would like to be added to our birthday list, please contact one of our Deacons.*



**Above Left:** The Anti-Racism Task Force of the Albany Presbytery will host a book study of “The Sum of Us,” by Heather McGee, on two consecutive Fridays, Feb 10 and 17, at 1 PM. Contact Mary Anne Davis for more information and registration, [Mad.maryanne@gmail.com](mailto:Mad.maryanne@gmail.com). “This is the book I’ve been waiting for,” said Ibram X. Kendi, author of “How to Be an Antiracist.” Join us to learn more about the history of the economics of racism and its effects on all and what we might do to better. There is also a podcast on Spotify on Professor McGee’s research and message, <https://www.thesumofuspodcast.com/>.

**Above Right:** The Justice Center of Rensselaer County presents a free conversation / Q&A with Peniel E. Joseph, renowned historian of racial justice movements and author of “The Historical Significance of ‘Black Lives Matter.’” The event will be at the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, 30 2nd St. Troy, NY on 4/19 at 7 PM. See details at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/dr-peniel-e-joseph-the-historical-significance-of-black-lives-matter-tickets-512154767697>.



Also see the Calendar at the end of the newsletter for **Lenten Bible Study** dates and **Ash Wednesday Service**, and other things going on at St. Peter’s.

# MILESTONES



Happy **1st** Birthday to Mylo Edward Davis, born January 11, 2022! He celebrated with his parents Katie and Rob Davis, his proud grandparents Denise and Tim Davis, and other family members. Grandma Denise says (with no bias) “He is a cutie and super smart and busy.”

Happy Birthday to Ian Wing who turned **70** on January 26, which, coincidentally, is also Australia Day (the equivalent of the U.S. July 4th); everyone in his home country partied with him. Ian had an early celebration, full of warmth and fun with his daughters, sons-in-law, grandchildren, and friends in Atlanta over the holidays.



Happy Birthday to Bella Waldorf who turned **21** on January 28! She is the daughter of Marcy Coalter and granddaughter of Joel Dyslin. We so appreciate all of her help with the Election Day dinner on November 8. Bella had a wonderful celebration with her family.



# Photo Album

*Photos taken at the January 29 potluck, which followed the Annual Meeting (thank you, photographer Barbara Smith). As always, we had wonderful food from all the food groups with delicious entrees, side dishes, and desserts.*



*A bunch of people gathered to share a delightful meal and convivial conversation.*



**Left:** Emma Jensen (back to the camera) with her “kids” Wendy Diskin and Scott Jensen, as well as Vicky, Scott’s wife. **Right:** From left going around the table, Nona Lange, Barbara Conkling, and Nancy Ordman enjoying their meals and each other’s company.

*From left, around table, Jeff Kiplinger (back to camera), John Lange, Mitzi Lobdel, Pat Meess, Jennifer Thompson, David Pearce (hidden), Luke Olivieri (half hidden), and Jere Wrightsman. Kathy Geddie is standing, filling her plate; she will soon be stuffed.*

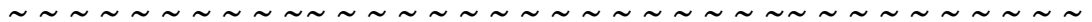


*Photo Album, Continued*




*From the other side of the table in previous photo, we now see all of David Pearce, Luke Olivieri, Jere Wrightsman, and Jeff Kiplinger. In the table behind them are Sharon and Ian Wing and Randy Ezinga*

*Willard (aka Bill) and Marion Ulmer enjoying their meal. Winter gives them a break from working in Bill's big garden. This coming August, they will celebrate their 64th anniversary.*



*Women Unabridged at the Clark: Lee Armstrong and Denise Davis strike a pose with Degas' "Little Dancer Aged 14."*

# FEBRUARY

| Sunday<br>(Service at<br>10 AM)                                                                                                                                                    | Monday                                                                                                                                      | Tuesday                                                                                          | Wednesday                                                                                                                                                                  | Thursday  | Friday                                        | Saturday                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Won't it be wonderful when black history and Native American history and Jewish history, and all of U.S. history is taught from one book. Just U.S. history. — Maya Angelou</i> |                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                  | <b>1</b><br>Council Meeting 7 PM via Zoom                                                                                                                                  | <b>2</b>  | <b>3</b>                                      | <b>4</b>                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                  | <b>5</b><br>Rev. Donna Elia<br>Communion<br><br>Full Snow Moon                                                                                                             | <b>6</b>  | <b>7</b><br>Deacons' Meeting<br>7 PM via Zoom | <b>8</b><br>Choir Practice 7 PM |
| <b>12</b><br>Rev. Donna Elia<br><br>At 9 AM, Rev. Elia to meet with those thinking about becoming a member.                                                                        | <b>13</b>                                                                                                                                   | <b>14</b><br> | <b>15</b><br>Choir Practice 7 PM                                                                                                                                           | <b>16</b> | <b>17</b>                                     | <b>18</b>                       |
| <b>19</b><br>Lay Leader Mary Anne Davis                                                                                                                                            | <b>20</b><br>Lenten Bible Study<br>7 PM via Zoom<br><br> | <b>21</b><br>Women Unabridged meeting 7 PM via Zoom                                              | <b>22</b><br>Ash Wednesday Service with simple supper, 5:30 PM<br>Choir Practice 7 PM<br>Rev. Elia office hours 3-5 PM                                                     | <b>23</b> | <b>24</b>                                     | <b>25</b>                       |
| <b>26</b><br>Rev. Donna Elia<br>Men's Group lunch at Chatham Grill, 12 noon                                                                                                        | <b>27</b>                                                                                                                                   | <b>28</b>                                                                                        | <i>Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.</i><br>— Barack Obama |           |                                               |                                 |