



First Word

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PASTOR'S PONDERINGS—LENT

“Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” Joel 2:13 NRSV

We are now in the season of Lent, a time of repentance. To repent means to turn around. So I often say it is our time of considering how we might turn back around to God. Traditionally people might take on an additional spiritual practice. The traditional three are: **fasting**—or abstaining from something; **praying**-- communicating more with God; or **giving alms**-- setting aside something material for someone else. These three are mentioned in Matthew 6:2-18.

Within this newsletter you will find a calendar with suggestions for collecting money to be donated. It has simple ways of daily looking around to notice our blessings and give in accordance. So it could work well with small children-- but also adults !! This is one tool you might employ for a Lenten discipline; it also incorporates prayer.

As a church we've decided that the monies collected from this Coin Collecting Calendar will be passed on to Pastor Leonardo Bactad, Jr. (brother of Palm Church member Winnie Cadiente), who is starting a second church in the Philippines, San Felipe Church. The donations will be put to good use for God's purposes there !!

The beginning of Lent is Ash Wednesday, a day we especially think about our own mortality and sin. This year it was February 22. At Palm Church a few of us gathered for Ash Wednesday service, and to lament victims of gun violence and other tragic, untimely death. In addition to doing the coin collecting exercise with my youngest daughter this Lent, I am also wrestling with the evil of gun violence in our country this season. The way that these violent acts steal lives, affect people in those communities for the rest of their lives, and add to fear for so many of us is so tragic and harmful, that I do think it is an expression of evil in our world today. We watched a video after the service (link is on our Facebook page) of Methodist Pastor Debbie Weatherspoon's research into groups who stand against gun violence across our country. There is hope in those stories. God is at work through many people in many ways, even in the face of evil.

These things are on my heart and mind these days. Where do I need to turn around ? What needs to be noticed in my own spiritual life? How can I be a part of what God is doing ? They seem very different, collecting coins for a mission in the Philippines, thinking and praying about how to end gun violence, but this Lent, these are ways I am responding to the call to return to God.

In the Northern Hemisphere Lent coincides with the beginning of spring. It is a season where we can think of our spiritual lives like a seed underground turning into budding new plant. What does it need to grow ? What needs to be removed ? Fasting, giving, and praying can be thought about like clearing soil, providing the right mix of exposure to sun and rain, so that our spirits can turn back around to God, free to grow towards that abundance of steadfast love, grace, and mercy. May it be so for you also, beloved !!

--Pastor Michelle

Pastor Michelle Magee

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<https://www.facebook.com/PalmUMCDinuba>

JOYS AND CONCERNS AMONG OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Please continue to pray for cancer warriors Jacob dela Montanya, Gerard Laquerriere (friend of Pat D.), Linda Gourley (friend of Mary Esmay), Phil Martzen, Isaac (Robert's co-worker), Joe Takeda, John Lown (Andy's father-in-law), Alicia (Brent Sadahiro's friend), Mark Delosantos (friend of Winnie), Jennifer (Clifton) Washington, Chase Glosier, and Tammy Campbell.

Please keep Phyllis Martzen, Jon Clifton, Carol Rossi-Christianson, Jamie Campbell; Rosalinda Vasquez and family; Winnie, Christine, Richard and Diane Cadiente; Bonnie Morimoto (Liz's cousin), Marcia Williams, Myriline Dogba, Romeo and Norma Lozano, Miyeko Cabello, Dianne Young's sister Connie Greenwald, Ruth Kurihara, Terry McKittrick, Bette Crawford, Sandy Hansen, Bill Allen; firefighters, first responders, and health care workers; military personnel, teachers, Dinuba Youth for Christ, refugees, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, Syria / Turkey, migrants, our country, and Open Gate Ministries in your prayers.

Congratulations to Christine Cadiente and Scott Fernandez who were married February 17 in San Diego County !! (Christine and Scott's address is in the Palm Church directory.)

Sincere sympathy is offered to family and friends of Wilma Conner, who passed away on February 17, 2023, at Sierra View Home in Reedley. Her daughters are Bette Crawford and Jolene Jones. Graveside service will be private.

NEWS BITS FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2023

ALL 10:00 am IN-PERSON SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES ARE LIVE-STREAMED VIA FACEBOOK. **As we worship in-person, masks and social distancing protocols will be observed out of consideration for the safety of all. Facebook Livestream will be available but no ZOOM dial-in. Following indoor, in-person services, Coffee Hour snacks will be served in the Social Hall.**

(Church location—438 West Tulare Street; corner Tulare & "P" Streets, Dinuba)

<https://www.facebook.com/PalmUMCDinuba/videos/>

Grace Groups meet on Thursday 3:30 PM every other week via ZOOM, young adults on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 5:00 PM, and Spanish Grace Group on 1st and 3rd Tuesdays at 5:30 PM via conference call; in-person Grace Group meets in the church building following worship one Sunday of the month. **For more information contact Pastor Michelle by phone or email.** Old Testament Bible Study convenes on Thursdays via conference call. Ad Council will meet Thursday, March 16, at 5:00 PM on ZOOM.

Communion will be celebrated on Sunday, March 5. March Tobans Melanie Mizuno, Liz Sasaki, Ginger Munson, Rosalinda Vasquez, Diane Domingo, Stan Davis, and Dianne Young will serve Coffee Hour on March 19. Ruth Fujinaga will serve as Worship Leader on March 5, Liz Sasaki will serve on March 12, and Phil Martzen will serve on March 19 & 26. THANK YOU !!

Join us for "Messy Church" monthly inter-active inter-generational creative worship experience on Saturday, March 18, at 3:30 PM ; masks required for indoor activities . Meal will be provided. Theme is "Love Your World." Co-Leaders are Dianne Young & Melanie Mizuno.

All-Church Work Day will be Saturday, April 1, 9:00 AM. Palm Sunday is April 2, and Resurrection Sunday will be celebrated on April 9 with egg-hunt for kids, "Flowering of the Cross," Lenten Offering collection, Coffee Hour, and group photo. (Everyone is asked to PLEASE donate 2 dozen plastic eggs or fillers.) Ikebana Flower Show & Boutique will be held Saturday, April 29, 2:00-4:30 PM.

Annual Soup, Sandwich, and Dessert Lunch February 1 to benefit Open Gate Ministries raised over \$1500 !! Thanks to all who helped, all who attended, and all who placed a pre-order !!

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS ON SUNDAY, MARCH 12 !! SPRING FORWARD !!

WAYS TO COMMUNICATE WITH PASTOR MICHELLE

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My cell phone continues to be the best way to reach me, and please know that you can call me; I would love to hear from you !! Let me know how I can pray for you and if you would like a visit !! (I will continue to wear a mask indoors for the foreseeable future, and I have received the Covid Vaccine.) Mondays continue to be my day off. Please check out our website and Facebook page !!



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MARCH BIRTHDAYS

1—Pattie Kurihara 2—Mary Esmay, Letty Lamb
3—Hankus Nagata (100 !!) 8—Steven Bulosan
12—Jason Kurihara 14—Esther Kirkpatrick
20—Peter Mesias 21—Aiko Takeda, Walter Martzen
31—Maggie Fern, Craig Yoshihara



United Methodists can contribute to relief and recovery efforts in Turkey and Syria through the [United Methodist Committee on Relief \(UMCOR\)](#) ; International Disaster Response and Recovery Fund, Advance # 982450; P.O. Box 9068; New York, NY 10087

Donations may also be made toward California flood relief at UMCOR ; California /Nevada Disaster Response Fund ; P.O. Box 980250 ; West Sacramento, CA 95798

Lent Offering for Winnie's brother, to be collected on Easter Sunday, should be designated "Lent Special Giving," also an option for online giving.

Spare Change Offering for the Local Benevolence Fund has been resumed on every Communion Sunday !! Look for the can at the front of the church on March 5 !!

**PICTURED: KATHY LAMB, KATHY ONISHI, CATHY YADA
--THE PALM CHURCH CATHY / KATHY CLUB !!**



LISTEN AND VIEW PALM CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICES
AT 10:00 am ON FACEBOOK LIVESTREAM

or you can watch a previously recorded Sunday service.

<https://www.facebook.com/PalmUMCDinuba/videos/>



- ▶ If you get the Log-in Window, Click on "Not Now."
When the Live Video appears, click on the red **LIVE** button.

Please leave a Facebook comment or an "Emoji," or a "Like," for attendance purposes
marianclifton@verizon.net . THIS IS IMPORTANT !!

GOD AT WORK IN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP !!

Our Ad Board approved continuing the scholarship of funds for books for students at Wilson School for a second school year !! Your generous giving has made it possible; and the students, staff and teachers greatly appreciated it last year. We will again be donating \$250 per grade level, TK/K—6, for a total of \$1750. Donations to the Wilson Scholarship Fund should be designated as Wilson School support.

Additionally, the school's volunteer and visitor protocols are now the same as they were before COVID, so we can resume our reader partner program and start our teacher helper program !!

For more info on any of this, contact Pastor Michelle.

2023 PALM CHURCH ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL **

**Susan Yoshimura---Education Chair, SPRC Chair, Ad Board Chair,
Annual Conference Lay Delegate Alternate

**Jerry Munson—Finance Chair

**Dianne Young—Financial Secretary, Missions co-Chair

**Arthur Anderson—Treasurer

**Marian Clifton—Missions co-Chair, Recording Secretary, Palm Leaf / First Word Editor

**Philip Martzen—Trustees Chair

**Pastor Michelle Magee—Nominations Chair

**Norma Lozano—Worship co-Chair

Dianne Young—Messy Church co-Leader

Melanie Mizuno—Messy Church co-Leader

Sandy Hansen--Webmaster

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." John 1:1-5





