

"LENT AND EASTER AT CCM"

When the month of March rolls around, we know that spring has arrived. But *this* year, we'll be experiencing *more* than just the coming of spring! Since Easter comes earlier than usual, we'll be observing the remainder of Lent (which began in February) *and* the celebration of the Easter reality in the *same month*. Since, at CCM, we often find *fresh* ways of celebrating traditional religious customs, this year will not be an exception. Usually, Lent (the 40 days before Easter) is observed in many churches by encouraging people to practice two things: fasting and penitence. Indeed, Christians through many centuries have found--or at least hoped to find *meaning* in those two observances. However, I have observed over the years that numerous people I know have attended Lenten services, fasted, and asked forgiveness for perceived shortcomings, but their *lives* seem not to have changed! So I couldn't help wondering about the *value* of their investment of time and energy in those *particular* observances. Is it possible, I wondered, to find *other* approaches to observe Lent that might be more helpful?

The result is that, at CCM, we have tried a number of fresh ways of observing the Lenten season that *appear*, at least, to be a bit more profitable. Fasting and praying for forgiveness are entirely valuable practices with great *potential* worth, but, perhaps, not necessarily profitable for *all* people.

So *this* year, we'll be reflecting on aspects of Christianity that may have potential for being *transformative*. It just so happens that the little book on Progressive Christianity that we've been discussing focuses beautifully on that incredibly important reality; so, when we gather on Sunday, March 13th, we'll be exploring in-depth what is really involved in our experiencing change *from* the life most of us now know *to* a quality of living and relating that can give our lives increased vitality and joy. Could you use a little more joy in *your* life? We'll be looking at that possibility on March 13th.

Then, on Easter Sunday, March 27th we'll *continue* that theme as I share with you what I hope will be a particularly significant message: "THE BEST EASTER EVER" Actually, that *title* strikes me as a bit trite and unimaginative, but it deals with *a way of experiencing Easter about which*

you probably have never heard. Surprisingly, it is hidden in plain sight, sandwiched into the biblical accounts of what we today call Easter; yet, it usually is overlooked! But it won't be *this* year. Not at CCM! Not on March 27th!

I look forward to sharing this special season with you. And if it *does* pay rich dividends of transformation and joy, this just might be an Easter we'll never forget!

In the meantime, please remember how much I love and believe in you!

**Your pastor and friend,
John**

IT'S HAPPENING AT CCM

Sunday, March 13 (2nd Sunday of the Month)

10:00 a.m. LENTEN REFLECTION GATHERING

Our last gathering to discuss some helpful aspects of Progressive Christianity probably was one of the most important sessions we've ever had-- or ever *will* have. Why? Because it is impossible to be *authentically* Christian without being aware of the major issue that we discussed: non-dual Christianity. Sadly, many good people who have gone to church all of their lives have never heard about it. That is because Jesus did not *use* the words "non-dual Christianity." That is a modern phrase used to describe a reality which is at the very heart of *all* Jesus's teaching; and in our last gathering, we explored its eye-opening implications in great depth. Consequently, we had an extremely meaningful time together that, if taken seriously, could be life-changing for all of us.

But we hope that our *next* gathering will be special, too. Already, you have read about it in the Pastor's Paragraph in this newsletter. This upcoming session will be an especially important part of our Lenten/Easter celebration; so we hope it will be of value to you.

Sunday, March 27 (4th Sunday of the Month)

10:00 a.m. ANNUAL EASTER GATHERING

Traditionally, Easter Sunday has been considered the most important day of the Christian year, and it, together with Christmas, almost always generates the largest attendances of the entire year. That, no doubt, is a result of the fact that the sermon topic for the day generally is considered to be of overwhelming importance. An Easter sermon may be poorly done, but the *subject itself* should be immensely important and this year it *will* be. The possibly banal *title* of the message, "THE BEST EASTER EVER," could never convey the immense significance of the content for everyday life in our sometimes chaotic world. So this time together should be a potentially joyful eye-opener. By all means, bring someone to this special Sunday opportunity with you!

Since, on Easter, we traditionally do not have our usual talk back to the message, we will be out earlier than usual today-around 11:30 a.m., or before.)