

our Lord, Jesus Christ. It is a day that is good because God was drawing the world to Himself in Christ. In John's gospel, God was not making the best of a bad situation, but was working out His intention for the world: winning salvation for all people.

Holy Saturday (April 15 this year) is the eve of Easter and marks the end of Lent. A service is usually held on this day.

Easter

Easter for Christians is not just observed on Easter day (April 16 this year), but rather a 50-day period. The season of Easter, or Eastertide, begins at sunset on the eve of Easter and ends on Pentecost (June 4 this

year), the day we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birth of The Church.

The initial purpose of the 50-day Easter season was to continue the faith formation of new Christians.

Today, Christians rejoice and experience what it means to say "Christ is risen." It's the season to remember our baptisms and how, through this sacrament, we are "incorporated into Christ's mighty acts of salvation." We also celebrate and ponder the birth of The Church and gifts of the Spirit (Pentecost), and how we are to live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

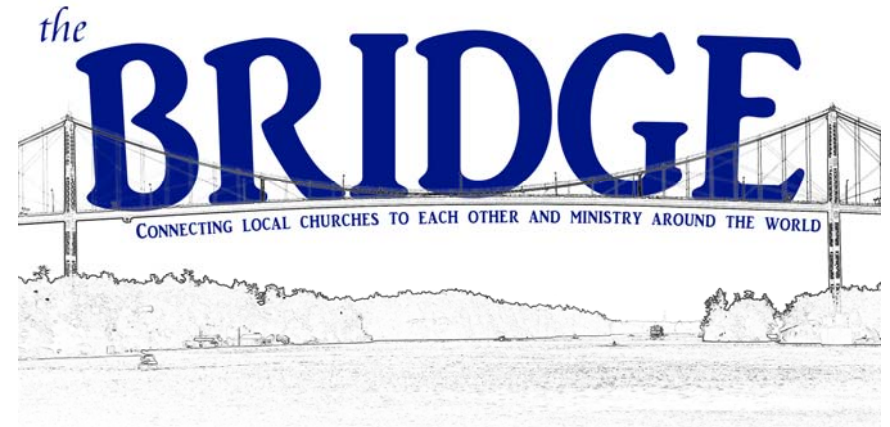
Editor's note: *Information from this article came from www.umc.org.*



The **Bridge** is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world.

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March is Women's History Month. Visit <http://bit.ly/UMCwhm2017> for resources and more information.



The Upper New York Conference's vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

A look inside!

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Lent and Easter 101

The seasons of Lent and Easter are upon us. Find out more about what these seasons mean in The United Methodist Church and how both are recognized and celebrated below.

Lent

Lent is a season that lasts 40 days — not counting Sundays because each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter" and the reverent spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful anticipation of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ — that begins on Ash Wednesday (March 1 this year) and ends on Holy Saturday (April 15 this year).

The 40-day period represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his ministry.

Lent is a time of repentance, fasting, and preparation for the coming of Easter. It is a time of self-examination and reflection. In observance of Lent, many

Christians focus on their relationship with God, often giving up something or volunteering.

The day before Lent begins, Mardi Gras, or "Fat Tuesday," is celebrated. It is called "Fat" or "Great" because it's associated with great food and parties. In earlier times, people used Lent to fast and repent. Because Christians did not want to be tempted by sweets, meat, and other distractions in the house during Lent, they made meals with these items and rid their houses of temptations.

Ash Wednesday usually begins with a service where we recognize our mortality, repent of our sins, and return to our loving God. We recognize life as a precious gift from God and return our lives toward Jesus Christ. We may make resolutions and commit to change our lives over the next 40 days so that we might



Many receive a cross of ashes on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday, an ancient symbol of our humanity.

Photo courtesy of www.umc.org



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be more like Christ. At the service, a pastor usually marks the sign of the cross on a person's forehead with ashes because ashes are a sign of mortality — when we die, we become dust, dirt, or ashes — and repentance — people used to put ashes on their heads to show remorse.

The last week of Lent is referred to as Holy Week.

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, or Passion Sunday, which commemorates the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. It is also often called Passion Sunday, marking the beginning of the passion or suffering of Jesus leading to and including the crucifixion. This year, Palm Sunday is April 9.

Maundy Thursday, or Holy Thursday, is the first of the three days of solemn

remembrance of the events leading up to and immediately following the crucifixion of Jesus. This year it takes place on April 13. The word "Maundy" comes from the Latin "mandatum," which means "commandment." In John's gospel, on his last night before his betrayal and arrest, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and then gave them a new commandment: To love one another as he had loved them (John 13:34). This is why services on this night generally include the washing of feet or other acts of physical care.

After Maundy Thursday is Good Friday (April 14 this year), a day that proclaims God's purpose of loving and redeeming the world through the cross of

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