

February 21, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For over a week now, there has been a pair of Eastern Blue Birds checking out the real estate in my back yard! Can spring be far off? I hope so. There is something about the earth being transformed from a dormant life – seemingly dead trees – to ever so gently start putting out shoots of new life.

I can easily see this as a metaphor for our spiritual lives. This Sunday is Transfiguration Sunday and the message is that we, all of us, are in need of being transformed. But we cannot partner with God to accomplish this as long as we maintain our overstuffed schedules and not making time to simply sit quietly with God. Hence, we need the season of Lent - the lengthening of days. Every day I listen to NPR and the announcer tells me when the sun will set today. Yesterday, we had 3-1/2 more minutes of sunlight than the day before.

What are we going to do with our additional sunlight? I recommend that we start a new practice, one that I have faithfully been doing since I moved to West Sand Lake. I begin my prayer time by saying, "God, You know my cares and concerns; they are quite heavy for me right now. So for now, I place them in your loving and powerful hands. Show me what I should see in this beautiful world You have created for my delight." And for the 15-20 minutes, I marvel at the wonder of creation.

Lent traditionally is a time of sacrificing something you enjoy so that when the desire arises for that thing, you pause, and remember what Jesus sacrificed for us. In recent years, the idea has come about to do something new, faithfully, for yourself or for someone else. Some ideas that you might want to undertake are: increasing your morning prayer time, or volunteering more regularly, or help your neighbors by taking them to the store. Through prayer, you should be guided by the Holy Spirit in whatever you decide to do.

We need this Season of Lent. We need this time of self-examination and extending ourselves to the good of others. We need to grow in our understanding of who Jesus was and still is and why it is so important for us to faithfully follow Jesus.

Ash Wednesday is March 1. We will have a 1:00 Service at Bethany for those who no longer drive at night. At 6:30 PM we will be at Third Reformed for a Pot-Luck Supper and then worship. There will be the imposition of ashes for those who desire them. Ashes are a visible sign that we recognize that we fall short of the mark as set by Jesus.

I pray this will be a deep and wonderful Lent for you ...

*Pastor Peggy*