



**The
Sunbeam**
February
2008

**Lansing United
Methodist Church**

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Lansing United Methodist Church
32 Brickyard Road, Lansing, NY 14882
One mile north of the stoplight on Route 34B in
South Lansing.
Church office: 607-533-4070
E-mail: lumcoffice@twcny.rr.com
Office manager: Kay Thomas
To reach the pastor at home: 533-4191
pastor@lansingunited.org (in confidence)

www.lansingunited.org

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butions! Next deadline is February 15, 2008.

Please join us for Sunday worship at 8:30 and 11:00, Sunday school at 9:45

the LUMC February 2008

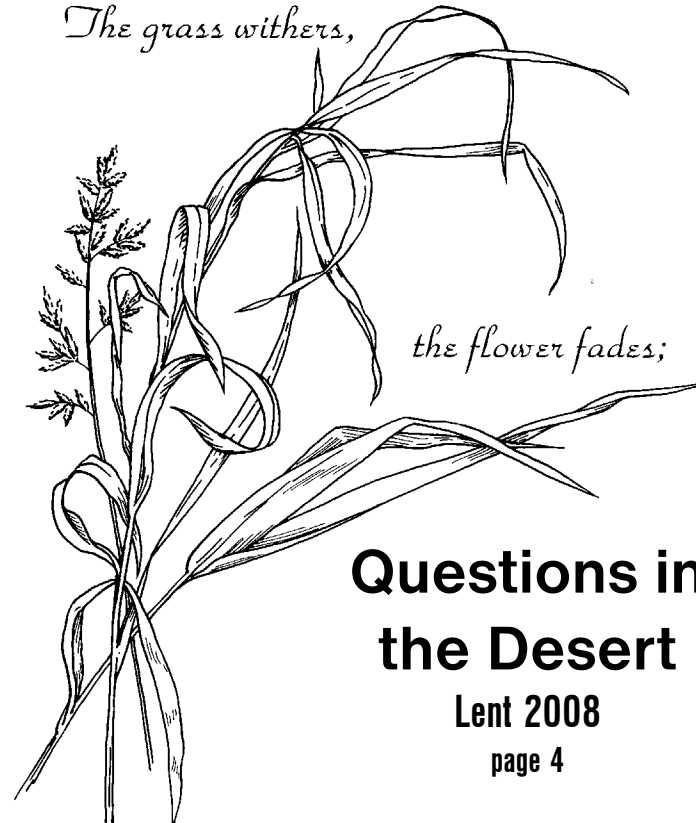
Sunbeam
lansingunited.org



Lansing United Methodist Church
Route 34B and Brickyard Road, South Lansing

Pastor: Bill Gottschalk-Fielding • Program Associate: Marilyn Paradise • Youth Coordinator: Kevin Dunn

The grass withers,



the flower fades;

*but the word
of our God
will stand for ever.*

Isaiah 40:8

**Questions in
the Desert**

Lent 2008

page 4

Worship in February

The season of Lent begins early this year—Ash Wednesday is February 6. It seems like we’ve barely gotten the Christmas tree out to curb and the lights put away. But it will be good to have this time set aside to deepen our faith. This year’s Lenten theme is “Questions in the Desert.” The biblical story behind this theme is the Temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11). The stark scene is familiar: the devil ambushes Jesus in the desert, questioning Jesus’ faith and commitments and forcing him to wrestle with doubt, fear, and uncertainty. But in the end, Jesus emerges from the desert with new clarity and courage having grapple with questions of faith in the power of the Spirit.

Back in January I invited you to share your faith questions and promised to shape my sermons during Lent in response to them. I received nearly twenty thoughtful, challenging responses from which I’ve drawn the five questions below. My hope is you and I will enter a “desert time” this Lent to wrestle with these questions. I’m not aiming to offer answers so much as to provide opportunities to stretch and deepen our faith and understanding. My hope is you and I will emerge, as Jesus did, with renewed clarity and courage to walk with Christ during Lent and beyond.—*P.B.*

February 6—7:00 PM—Ash Wednesday: We’ll begin our Lenten Journey tonight with a service of worship including the imposition of ashes.

February 10—First Sunday in Lent: “How Can God Love Me?” The Christian faith claims God loves each of us personally and passionately. Often it’s easier to imagine God’s general love for everyone else than God’s specific love for you. How can God love you and me? How can you and I come to experience this love?

February 17—Second Sunday in Lent: “Does God have a Plan for My Life?” Is life just one random event after another or is God behind even the smallest detail, like finding a parking spot at the Mall? Or is there another way to make sense of how our lives unfold?

February 24—Third Sunday in Lent: “Can I Be Scientifically Literate and Biblically Faithful?” Since the 18th century Enlightenment much has been made of the conflict between science and religion or between reason and faith. Some claim you have to make a choice between which source of truth you will live by. An “either/or” solution to this problem seems simplistic, but how do thinking people remain faith-full people?

March 2—Fourth Sunday in Lent: “What the Heck Does a Loving God Have to Do with Hell?” Some Christians make a big deal about a place of final punishment for wrong-doers; others dismiss the idea as a medieval notion completely contrary to the teachings of Jesus. Is there a place for Hell in our theology?

March 9—Fifth Sunday in Lent: “What’s My Responsibility to the Poor and Vulnerable?” Jesus said “you will always have the poor with you.” Some have taken this to mean he didn’t want his disciples to focus on the physical needs of people, but on their spiritual needs. Others claim alleviating poverty and protecting the vulnerable is the most important work Christians do. Most of us know the answer isn’t either/or, but what’s the proper balance? And are we anywhere near living out that balance?

Note: Holy week services will be detailed in the next *Sunbeam*. The schedule is as follows: Palm Sunday, March 16: 8:30 and 11:00 AM; Maundy Thursday, March 20, 7:00 PM; Good Friday, March 21, 7:00 PM; Easter, March 23, 6:00 AM, 8:30 AM, and 11:00 AM.

A Spiritual Autobiography

If you could write about your spiritual journey or your relationship with God, what would you say? Do you, on occasion, journal your thoughts about where you are and where you are going on your path with God? Where do you find God? Well, here at church, particularly during the Season of Lent, we encourage you to spend some time reflecting on your spiritual journey. There are opportunities to study during Sunday School or if you prefer some quiet time, there are daily devotional booklets available for you to take home.

Beginning *Sunday, February 10*, and continuing each Sunday through March 9, Pastor Bill and Rich Flaville will lead the Adult Study class in a discussion of “**Spiritual Autobiography: Telling Our Story with God.**” The group will look at four examples of Christian spiritual autobiography: St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, Thomas Merton’s *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Anne Lamott’s *Traveling Mercies*, and Donald Miller’s *Blue Like Jazz*. Each week’s discussion will focus on the reading of a representative chapter

from each of these authors, with the goal being not only understanding their spiritual journey but also our own.

Women’s Ministries will gather on *Saturday, February 9*, from 9:30 AM to noon to discuss the book *Eat, Love & Pray*, by Elizabeth Gilbert. Judy Hinderliter will lead the discussion. Come and share this time together as we talk about the book. We would love to hear if the book had any influence on your spiritual journey or your search for God in your life.

A fun evening of games and food will convene on *Tuesday, February 19*, at 6:00 PM for **Family Game Night** in the Fellowship Hall. Bring your favorite game to play with your church friends and we will provide the food! See Karyn Yahn, Event Chair, if you have questions.

The **Lenten devotional booklets** are entitled *Listening to Lent* and are available in the narthex. Please take one home.

Many blessings as you journey this Easter Season.—*Marilyn Paradise*



Special Maundy Thursday Presentation

On Maundy Thursday, March 20, at 7:00 PM, the play “Lord, Is It I” will be presented in the church sanctuary. Following the play, holy communion will be served. “Lord, Is It I” is set in the upper room as Leonardo Da Vinci portrayed it in his painting The Last Supper. In addition to the cast, help is needed in the following areas: set building, set painting, costumes, and light and sound systems. Please contact Judy Hinderliter if you are willing to help. jwhinderliter@twcny.rr.com or 533-7287.

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

*February
2008*

Note: This calendar is current as of January 21.
For updates to all LUMC events, visit lansingunited.org to see our virtual church calendar, and check the bulletin when you're in church on Sunday.



*Lansing united
methodist
church*

1

CCYM Retreat
Conference Council on Youth Ministry

2

Mens' Breakfast
at Linda's
7:00

3

TRANSFIGURATION
Worship 8:30
Sunday School 9:45
Worship 11:00
Children's Ministry 12:00
Children's Musical Rehearsal 12:00
Confirmation 4:00
Adult Bible Study 6:00
CCYM Retreat Concludes

4

5

Quilt Bee 9:30

6

ASH WEDNESDAY
Women's Bible Study 9:30
MOPS 10:00
Bells Angels 6:00
Ash Wednesday Service 7:00
Choir Rehearsal Follows

7

8

9

Mens' Breakfast
at Linda's 7:00

Women's Book Talk
9:30

10

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT
Worship 8:30
Sunday School 9:45
Outreach 9:45
Worship 11:00
Children's Musical Rehearsal 12:00
Confirmation 4:00
Adult Bible Study 6:00
Youth Mission 6:00

11

12

Quilt Bee 9:30

13

Women's Bible Study 9:30

Bells Angels 6:00
Choir 7:00

14

Valentine's Day

15

SUNBEAM DEADLINE
12:00 Midnight

16

Mens' Breakfast
Linda's in
North Lansing
7:00

17

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT
Worship 8:30
Sunday School 9:45
Worship 11:00
Children's Musical Rehearsal 12:00
Confirmation 4:00
Adult Bible Study 6:00

18

Presidents Day

Haiti 7:00

19

Quilt Bee 9:30

20

Women's Bible Study 9:30
MOPS 10:00

Bells Angels 6:00
Choir 7:00

21

Senior High Youth 7:00

22

23

Mens' Breakfast
7:00

24

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT
Worship 8:30
Sunday School 9:45
Worship 11:00
Food Pantry Setup
Children's Musical Rehearsal 12:00
Confirmation 4:00
Adult Bible Study 6:00

25

Food Pantry 4:00

26

Quilt Bee 9:30

Worship 7:30

27

Women's Bible Study 9:30

Bells Angels 6:00
Choir 7:00

28

29

Confirmation Retreat

Have You Any Words of Wisdom for the Younger Generation?

This year for our 11 graduating seniors, LUMC Youth Ministry is preparing a book of uplifting anecdotes and words of wisdom collected from members of the congregation. We want yours! Whether your path after high school was work, military, college, or something else, everyone has valuable wisdom to share about what that transition was like.

Some questions to get you started:

- What do you wish you knew when you were graduating high school that you didn't know then?
- What has God taught you since high school?
- How have you grown closer to Him since high school?
- What does every student need to know about college life?
- How did your faith survive (or get stronger) in college?
- What advice of God's do you wish you had followed at a younger age?
- Do you have a story or series of events that illustrates a Biblical principle?

Your entry should be a minimum of 300 words, with no maximum if you'd like to write more. Please e-mail your entries to Kevin at kevin.t.dunn@gmail.com, or place them in his folder near the church office. An accompanying photograph of you or your family would be appreciated so it can be placed next to your story. (Any photos of the church or church activities would be great as well! All photos will be scanned and given back to you). We would like these entries by the first week of April so we have time to proofread, edit, and get them printed and shipped. A reminder will be in the following issue of the Sunbeam as well. Thank you so much—we are hoping that this will be a great tool for our graduating seniors to use in the next step in their lives.

If you are a teenager, and especially if you are a senior and happen to be reading this, please don't spoil the surprise for your peers! Oh, and if you are reading this and are a teenager, please e-mail me (kevin.t.dunn@gmail.com). I've been curious about whether the youth read the Sunbeam.—Kevin Dunn

The Rock Slinger and His Greatest Hit

Retelling the story of David and Goliath

Information and Invitation

* Kids' musical 2008

* For kids in grades 3 through 8 (and 2 by permission). Rehearsals are just starting, as of Jan. 27

* To be presented during worship services on Sunday, April 6

* Each Sunday rehearsal will begin with lunch provided by participating families

* Parents are welcome to participate as much as able in with costumes, scenery, props, accompaniment, organization, direction—let us know where your interests lie

Further information available from Lisa Ryan (lar4@cornell.edu) and Diane Withiam (dwithiam@twcny.rr.com).

Groovin' in Ghana

by Caitlin Hardie

Whew! I hardly know where to begin to tell you all about the past few weeks. My life in the town of Dambai, located in the Northern part of the Volta Region, ranges from hilarious and eye-opening to slow and frustrating on a daily basis. A few highlights from the past few weeks. Warning: this account is ridiculously long, so get yourself a good cup of coffee, and close the office door, or forget about studying for that winter session exam.

Cait's Compound Deep Clean

When I arrived in town the compound I live in wasn't quite in ship-shape condition so I spent the first few days wiping away the layers of dust that had accumulated over the past few months. It was hot, dirty and dusty work that involved a war against the critters that had been living in my house (mostly ants, a few lizards and bats that still squeak in the ceiling). Luckily I haven't come across any mice or cockroaches, both of which I've heard of other volunteers having difficulty with so I think I'm in pretty good shape. I now love my new home. It's a small compound with a living room painted neon blue, two small bedrooms, both painted aqua green, a kitchen, a tiled bathroom (no running water—I take bucket baths), and a toilet that flushes by pouring a bucket of water in the bowl. Not quite luxurious but I do have power and plenty of space to myself which compared to the other volunteers in my area is pretty lavish.

Cait Attempts to Cook

Those of you who know me pretty well know my skills in the kitchen usually are lacking, to put it nicely—ask brother #3 Adam about my exploding carrot cake. Now imagine my less than stellar cooking skills combined with a makeshift kitchen. I have two propane burn-

ers hooked up to a tank to cook on, a sink but no running water, and had a carpenter build a table with shelves underneath to hold my dishes, food, and water filter. My first attempt at cooking dinner for myself resulted in cutting my finger twice, burning a hole in a dish towel, and burning myself on hot oil—don't worry, Mom, nothing serious. Luckily I've learned to adapt and have successfully prepared such delicious culinary creations such as spaghetti with homemade tomato sauce, jolof rice with vegetables, and French toast. Now if you're worried I'm going to starve and eat nothing but spaghetti and rice for the next two years relax, that brings me to my next topic: my counterpart.

Cait's Counterpart

Agnes Asomoah (or just Aggie for short) is my Peace Corps appointed counterpart and has been absolutely incredible so far. She is a pretty cool lady—a 49-year-old widow and mother of four. Aggie lives right next door with her teenage daughter Sarwah who goes to high school and her four-year-old granddaughter Mowinah. Aggie's husband died sometime in October, so she is in a period of mourning. This mourning period entails wearing black 24/7 and not being able to leave the house after dark. There are all sorts of customs I'm trying to figure out and this mourning period is just one of the many. Aggie is the one who laughs when I tell her I am cooking for myself. She usually brings me a plate of food for dinner anyways, just in case I may starve to death, which when I burned my dinner the other night was a huge relief. She is a valuable link to my community and takes great care of me.

continued on next page

Groovin' in Ghana (continued)

Cait's Christmas Celebration!

I was worried having never spent a Christmas away from 31 Holden (home sweet home) that this December would be difficult. Luckily it seemed to fly by and while nothing beats Mom's sticky buns Christmas morning, dinner at Nana's, and a night out at the Palms, I was lucky enough to have a great, but strange Christmas here. I had six area Peace Corps volunteers over to my place to celebrate, and we enjoyed cooking Christmas dinner together and celebrating into the wee hours of the morning. So, here's how Christmas dinner works in Ghana. First you have to go "grocery shopping" which involves the following:

1. Stopping by the butcher: a guy with half a dead cow laid out on a wooden table. You point to the piece you want and he uses a machete to cut it off for you. Conditions aren't exactly sanitary but we figure if you cook it long enough you should kill most of the germs.
2. Going to the produce section: oranges, tangerines, onions, tomatoes, and bananas are everywhere here. I have a different woman I buy each from in town but each time you stop to buy something you have to stop to chat. Everyone was wildly curious about why all the white people were in town since they were used to seeing only me. I usually had to introduce all my friends and then explain that any of these male friends were in fact *not* my husband.
3. Stopping by the liquor store: there are more "spots" (aka bars) in town than there is almost anything else. They

range from elaborate two-story set ups (the only two-story building in town) to tiny little sheds with a couple chairs behind a curtain. Since women drinking in public is something that is frowned upon in Ghana I sent my male friends in to bring back a couple beers while the girls picked up the rest of our items.

Dinner ended up being pan-seared beef, green beans, jolof rice, cabbage salad, fresh veggies with a lime-mayo dressing, stuffing, and cranberry sauce (both someone had sent from home but arrived too late for Thanksgiving).

Overall I was blessed to be with such a great group of people, we were all missing home but it was nice to be with each other.

New Years Eve

People here were shocked to hear that Americans usually do *not* go to church on NYE (I was surprised to hear that they all *do* go to church)! It was a little strange to be in a church filled to the rafters with singing, drumming, and dancing Ghanaians as my timex beeped to tell me we had entered 2008. I spent around six hours listening to sermons and prayers in Twi and Ewe (the primary languages spoken in my area), attempting African dancing and since I go to bed around 8:00 PM most nights was thrilled to finally crash into bed sometime around 2:00 AM.

Cait Watches Football

I was invited by a friend from a nearby village to come watch a soccer game of high school boys playing against their older brothers. Before the game the field was "mowed" by children with machetes, but the grass was so sparse and the dust so thick there was a hazy cloud of dust

covering the field, the players and the crowd by half time. I was given a seat of honor (one of the few in the shade) and taught both teams "high five" after the game. Most of the players had shoes (which for here is a rarity), and they even had jerseys for each team. Never mind that both teams wore yellow so I couldn't tell them apart—they were all proud of their jerseys. My favorite part was the excessive celebration by the women and children on the sidelines with each goal (picture the LHS crowd after winning sectionals).

Even better than watching: Cait Plays Football

A few days after I got to watch the game I was invited to go play a game in the same village. This time it was small boys vs high school aged girls. I was one of the only players with any kind of footwear, most of them played in bare feet and most of the girls played in skirts! Never in my life have I seen a 7-year-old do a bicycle kick not once but twice in a game. The small boys dribbled circles around us since most of the girls rarely ever play and usually only get to watch the games.

Cait Goes Exploring

The other day I thought I would ride my bicycle around town and go explore some of the parts of town I haven't had the chance to go yet. I rode my bike and parked it at a friend's house and immediately had a 15-year-old girl latch herself on to me and offer to introduce me to her part of the community. She was incredibly helpful and had fairly good English. We proceeded to every household in the area and at each place I introduced myself in bumbling Twi while she chatted away telling them all about me. At every stop we picked up a few more children who were fascinated with the white lady who had come to town (for many of the young ones I was the first white person they've ever seen). After a short time my tour guide says she needs

to go fetch water and leave me in the hands of her 7-year-old sister, who speaks four words in English. She diligently leads me by the hand from house to house as I hold squirming babies, meet plenty of toothless grandmothers, and have 10 offers to come back for dinner. After around three hours of this I look behind me and see that my original clump of following children has grown exponentially. I stop and somehow manage to get them all to stand relatively still so I can count them. 35 children (and I just stop counting at that point). They range in ages 2 to 12, most don't wear shoes, a few wear nothing at all, and they're all covered with a solid layer of dust. It was one of those moments where you can't help but laugh at just how incredibly fantastic life is. A blessed chain of events has plopped me down in this dusty village of mud huts on a beautiful lake where most of the residents have cell phones, I'm being followed around town by children because I'm the closest thing there is to a local celebrity, and I couldn't be happier.

Enough is enough. Thanks for sticking with me to the end (for those of you who did). I'm happy and healthy and hope this finds you all are too. Really miss me? Send letters, pictures, new music/movies, tasty goodies and crystal light or Gatorade mix!

Wishing you all a very Happy New Year and hope that 2008 will be as blessed a year as 2007 has been.

Love and miss you all.

CBH

Caitlin Hardie, PCV
Peace Corps, Ghana
P.O. Box 5796
Accra-North, Ghana
West Africa