

DEWITT REFORMED CHURCH



Pastor's Reflection



The Greatest Love - Jesus' Love: The Conditions of Discipleship

"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26–27, 33).

If the closest relationships of a disciple's life conflict with the claims of Jesus Christ, then our Lord requires instant obedience to Himself. Discipleship means personal, passionate devotion to a Person—our Lord Jesus Christ.

Reformed Church in America
March 2025



Monthly Church Newsletter
Rev. Dr. Micheal Edwards,
Senior Pastor

There is a vast difference between devotion to a person and devotion to principles or to a cause. Our Lord never proclaimed a cause—He proclaimed personal devotion to Himself. To be a disciple is to be a devoted bondservant motivated by love for the Lord Jesus. Many of us who call ourselves Christians are not truly devoted to Jesus Christ. No one on earth has this passionate love for the Lord Jesus unless the Holy Spirit has given it to him. We may admire, respect, and revere Him, but we cannot love Him on our own. The only One who truly loves the Lord Jesus is the Holy Spirit, and it is He who has "poured out in our hearts" the very "love of God" (Romans 5:5). Whenever the Holy Spirit sees an opportunity to glorify Jesus through you, He will take your entire being and set you ablaze with glowing devotion to Jesus Christ.

The Christian life is a life characterized by true and spontaneous creativity. Consequently, a disciple is subject to the same charge that was leveled against Jesus Christ, namely, the charge of inconsistency. But Jesus Christ was always consistent in His relationship to God, and a Christian must be consistent in his relationship to the life of the Son of God in him, not consistent to strict, unyielding doctrines. People pour themselves into their own doctrines, and God has to blast them out of their preconceived ideas before they can become devoted to Jesus Christ.



Special dates

- Transfiguration Sunday, *March 2, 2025*
- Ash Wednesday, *March 5, 2025*
- World Day of Prayer, *March 7, 2025*
- Daylight saving time begins, *March 9, 2025*

Preaching for the Month of April:

- (2) Rev. Dr. Micheal Edwards
- (9) Rev. Dr. Micheal Edwards
- (16) Elder Irma Williams
- (30) Rev. Dr. Micheal Edwards
- (30) Rev. Vivian Campbell



8th Rev. Dr. Micheal Edwards, 9th Shirley Williams, 22nd Deacon Connie Wilkerson



This is the month of Prayer for our church ministries, our church organization and church membership.



- March 2, 2025: Communion Visitation

ATTENTION: PAYMENTS FOR YOUR "2025"

ASSESSMENT (\$111.00) CAN BE PAID TO THE CHURCH. PLEASE SEE: ANY DEACON



Every Third Sunday monthly at Dewitt: 11AM



Faith and hope triumphant say,
Christ will rise on Easter Day.
—Phillips Brooks

Preparation for worship

For the Week of March 2

[Transfiguration Sunday] I love a good "mountaintop experience," Jesus, but life isn't always like that. As you call me into daily, "down-to-earth" ministry, help me follow in good faith.

For the Week of March 2

[Ash Wednesday] I am dust, and to dust I shall return — but marked with the sign of your saving cross, Lord Jesus.

For the Week of March 9

God, when I'm tempted to trust other people or things more than you, lead me by your Spirit, as you led Jesus in the wilderness. Amen.

For the Week of March 16

Lord, prepare our hearts for worship. Still our souls.
Ground us in your grace.

For the Week of March 23

"O God, you are my God; I seek you. ... Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you" (Psalm 63:1, 3, NRSV).

For the Week of March 30

As we continue through Lent — which means "spring" — prepare our heart-soil, dear Jesus, to sprout with new life and blossom in faith. Amen.

Thanks to those members who assisted with the Consistory Fellowship Reception

Words of welcome

- Welcome to worship as we journey through the season of Lent, seeking to grow in faith, hope and love.
- Isaiah announced God's invitation: "Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink ... it's all free!" (55:1, NLT). Are you thirsty for good news, peace, hope, love? Christ is the water of life. Welcome to worship.
- Welcome to worship "in the courts of the house of the LORD. ... Praise the LORD" (Psalm 116:19).



Reflective Thoughts: A word of wisdom

- "Of one thing I am perfectly sure: God's story never ends with ashes." —Elisabeth Elliot
- "Run to the Lord and be comforted." — Julian of Norwich
- "The spiritual life does not remove us from the world but leads us deeper into it." — Henri J.M. Nouwen
- "If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will escape a hundred days of sorrow." —Chinese proverb
- "If your ship doesn't come in, swim out to it! —Jonathan Winters

The Lenten desert



During the Lenten season, which begins on Ash Wednesday (March 5 this year), Christians figuratively follow Jesus into the desert. Just as our Savior spent 40 days fasting and facing temptation, we focus on self-reflection and contrition.

In an 1873 hymn, Claudia Hernaman wrote, "O Lord, throughout these forty days, you prayed and kept the fast. Inspire repentance for our sin, and free us from our past."

The desert experience of Lent serves a clear purpose, filling us up rather than depleting us. "This is what Lent is meant to be," writes theologian Ron Rolheiser. "Time in the desert to courageously face the chaos and the demons within us and to let God do battle with them through us. The result is that we are purified, made ready, so the intoxicating joy of Easter might then bind us more closely to God and each other."

Amid life's storms

The hurricanes that battered the East Coast in fall 2024 also battered my soul. I was over the rain and humidity. I was tired of lugging my two preschoolers through the downpours and driving through flash floods at night. Yet I had no reason to complain. Our house was still standing, with no damage.

The news around us was worrying and heartbreaking. "What if that was us?" I wondered. "Would I be strong enough?"

Then the kids asked to play outside. Even though I knew they'd get wet and muddy, I gave in. When a rainbow appeared, I'd never been more humbled as I remembered: I don't need to be anxious. I don't need to be strong enough. God watches over us all. He knows the hurt and sorrow. And he promises to be "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1, ESV).

Lord, forgive my unbelief. "Hear my cry, O God ... when my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (Psalm 61:1-2, ESV). —Kristen Greene

Resting in Jesus



An old hymn declares:

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest. Lay down, O weary one, lay down your head upon my breast."

I came to Jesus as I was, so weary, worn and sad. I found in him a resting-place, and he has made me glad. (Horatius Bonar, 1846)

Many people these days feel exhausted by division, the news, hatred that seems louder than love. More than ever, we who are "weary, worn, and sad" need to hear Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest."

Jesus wants to be our resting place — but not so we can hide forever from reality. Instead, he offers a place of refreshment where we can relax long enough to remember that not everything is bad; there is gospel to share. Not everything is hatred; God's love is stronger.

Resting in Jesus, we focus on God's goodness. We are reminded of love shown by kind people to those in trouble, bold voices speaking for justice, warm friendships that brighten our days. Gladdened by rest, we rise again. Jesus walks with us, as always. We can lean on him every step of the way. —Heidi Hyland Mann

Fasting and feasting

During Lent, consider this practical — and biblical — advice from Arthur Lichtenberger, a former presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church:

- Fast from criticism, and feast on praise.
- Fast from self-pity, and feast on joy.
- Fast from ill-temper, and feast on peace.
- Fast from resentment, and feast on contentment.
- Fast from jealousy, and feast on love.
- Fast from pride, and feast on humility.
- Fast from selfishness, and feast on service.
- Fast from fear, and feast on faith.

Living water

In the mountains, my mom and I have a favorite riverside picnic spot. Inevitably, we end up removing our socks and shoes, dunking our feet in the icy water. While seeing who can keep both feet submerged the longest, we distract ourselves by admiring the rushing water. Hundreds of gallons from melting snow cascade over rocks and around fallen trees.

Although we're in the same spot visit after visit, the water is always fresh. The same is true about God's presence and his Word. We can revisit the same beloved Scripture and experience the same truths in fresh ways, as "rivers of living water" flow within us (John 7:38).

In *The Attentive Life*, Leighton Ford describes enjoying solitude by a river. "I remembered that the ancient philosopher Heraclitus said it was impossible to step into the same river twice, for a river is always in flux," he writes.

Ford continues: "Yet Heraclitus left out an important truth. A river is more than a succession of millions of disparate drops of water. I can step into a river in this living moment and know it has *never* changed. For each moment of time, each part of creation, each aspect of my life is also lived under the eye of God and is gathered and held in his eternal hand." —Janna Firestone

Ministry priorities

In John 12:1-8, Jesus' friend Mary used a pound of costly perfume to anoint his feet. Then, in an extravagant act of worship, she wiped them with her hair. Judas was outraged by what he considered a waste of resources.

During a meeting at a church I once pastored, a woman vehemently stated that she understood the point Judas was making. Ever thrifty, this council member wanted to pare back spending on worship supplies and instead use the money for our food pantry ministry.

On one hand, her concerns — and Judas' — were sensible. Indeed, they were in line with God's Word: "I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. ... Take away from me the noise of your songs. ... But let justice roll down like water" (Amos 5:21, 23-24, NRSV). Although John paints Judas in a negative light, I'm confident the woman in my congregation had every good intention as we looked ahead to the next year's budget.

But then there's Mary. As she fills the house with fragrant worship, Jesus praises her forethought regarding his burial. I'll admit this story leaves me puzzled. Perhaps social ministry is worship, and worship can be expressed through social ministry. — Heidi Hyland Mann

Bible Quiz



Complete this sentence which introduces a well-known Bible story: "The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of ____."

- A. flowers
- B. sheep
- C. rocks
- D. bones

Answer: D (See Ezekiel 37:1, NIV.)

Puzzle!

Puzzle!



Fill in the blanks with the tiny creatures mentioned in each verse (all NIV). Then search for those words in the puzzle below.

Proverbs 6:6	_____	
Psalms 78:45	_____	
Matthew 23:24	_____	
Judges 14:8b	_____	
Acts 12:23	_____	
Leviticus 11:22	_____	
Leviticus 11:22	_____	
Deuteronomy 7:20	_____	
Exodus 16:20	_____	
1 Samuel 24:14	_____	
Isaiah 50:9	_____	
Isaiah 59:5	_____	
Leviticus 11:22	_____	
Leviticus 11:22	_____	



M	O	T	H	S	G	N	A	T	B	H
A	N	T	A	L	L	C	H	P	E	O
G	R	A	S	S	H	O	P	P	E	R
G	F	C	R	I	C	K	E	T	S	N
O	L	S	P	I	D	E	R	S	B	E
T	E	C	L	O	C	U	S	T	O	T
S	A	E	F	K	A	T	Y	D	I	D
G	F	L	I	E	S	W	O	R	M	S



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Two-way benefits

"When you do nothing, you feel overwhelmed and powerless," observed Connecticut politician Pauline Keezer. "But when you get involved, you feel the sense of hope and accomplishment that comes from knowing you are working to make things better." Indeed, it's impossible to shine light in someone else's life without lighting up your own.

We might think being generous toward another with our time or possessions leaves us with less. But as Jesus said, "Whoever loses their life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39, NIV). How common it is that when we minister to others in Christ's name, we find we have also — or perhaps even more so — received ministry. This is the miracle of God's love at work.

Tell your story

In his *Confessio*, St. Patrick shares his fascinating biography, placing Jesus at the center. Believers should follow suit, especially in a culture that is "ignoring and forgetting the Christian story," states Father Billy Swan. At WordOnFire.org, the Irish Catholic priest writes:

"Our calling is to retell the greatest story ever told and to help people find their place within the drama in which God has created them to participate. Like St. Patrick, we retell that story not as detached bystanders but as witnesses whose lives have been changed by being drawn deeper into the dynamics of the great love story of God and his people."

Patty Breen, a lay minister in Michigan, also finds inspiration from the fifth-century saint. "The journey and life story of St. Patrick invite us to wrestle with and consider these questions," she writes. "Who is God for me? How do I contribute to the coming of the kingdom of God? What is God's plan for my life? Where am I invited to serve?"

Writing down our own *Confessio*, or faith story, is "a way to remember and see God's presence with you at each step of your life," adds Breen, "even at times when you weren't necessarily following God."

Jesus, the model of salt and light

In Matthew 5:13-16 Jesus tells his followers, "You are the salt of the earth. ... You are the light of the world." Through his example, our Savior showed us what that means.

"The remarkable thing is that Jesus brought it all into reality in his own person," writes Bible scholar N.T. Wright in *Matthew for Everyone*. "He was the salt of the earth. He was the light of the world: set up on a hilltop, crucified for all the world to see, becoming a beacon of hope and new life for everybody, drawing

people to worship his [F]ather, embodying the way of self-giving love which is the deepest [fulfillment] of the law and the prophets."

On the path to victory

After moving to a college town, Pastor Kendra Thompson learned about the athletic phenomenon known as March Madness. And after a nondenominational upbringing, as a young adult she learned about Lenten traditions.

Lent and the NCAA college basketball tournament, which usually coincide, both point to the divine, Thompson argues. "In Lent, with each day we are drawn closer to the crushing reality that we've crucified our God. And yet we are also faced with an impossible victory: that death did not win, that our God is raised in Jesus Christ," she writes. "Likewise, watching college basketball invites us into a season of hoping in unlikely possibilities, marveling at upsets, and giving thanks to God for the connection we find as his people."

Like fans swept up in high-stakes games, Jesus' disciples abandon everything to follow him. Lent might be "holy madness," Thompson muses. It's "an opportunity to 'feel' our religion, not just in our heads but with our skin, our voices, even in the anxieties of our prayers."

Christian symbol



ANKH, OR ANSATE CROSS — Originating in Egyptian hieroglyphics, this symbol represented life and regeneration. The shape and meaning made perfect sense to ancient Christians, who appropriated it as a sign of eternal life.



FROM WORD TO WORLD

Words are important! God spoke and created all things.
What does the psalmist declare about creation?

Directions: Using the word clues, unscramble the letters to complete Psalm 102:25, NIV.

A preposition	NI	--
An article	HTE	---
Genesis means this	NINBGEIGN	-----
A second-person pronoun	OUY	---
Past tense of to lay	IDAL	----
An article	HET	---
A plural noun meaning base	SODTAINFONU	-----
A preposition showing possession	FO	--
An article	TEH	---
A concrete noun meaning world	HRTEA	-----

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Psalm 102:25, NIV

