



# The Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist

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[www.saintjohnsmilton.org](http://www.saintjohnsmilton.org)

The Rev. Thomas M. White, Rector

Lent 2017

Dear Member or Friend of St. John the Baptist,

Last Thursday members of the Landscape Committee and I gathered at the church for a "weeding party." I never knew that a "party" could be such hard work! And yet we did enjoy wonderful fellowship and fun together. Eight large containers overflowed with weeds by the time we were done, and we didn't finish (that will happen this week!). Many of the weeds were deep-rooted, while others were more easily pulled. One thing for sure, when the weeds were gone, the spring bulbs we planted last fall, just now bursting into bloom, were strikingly more beautiful.

So what does all this have to do with the Lent before us? Well, it strikes me that Lent is like a big, six-week weeding party (OK, maybe not a party!). Lent is a season, beginning this Wednesday, Ash Wednesday, when we are called to take a hard, honest look at the ways we have failed to live out God's will, how we have strayed from God's way, how "we have sinned against (God) in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone." While we as God's people are called to such introspection every day, this spiritual self-examination is a special focus of Lent. For Lent at its core is about striving to rid our life of sins, weeds if you will, which mar the wonderful beauty of God's image God created in us. We call this ridding of sins, repentance. Repentance, though, is far more than being sorry for our sins and confessing them. Repentance means turning our life around, away from what we say and do that grieves the Lord and toward that which pleases God. Repentance is to re-orient our life...from self-centered to God-centered. Some sins are eradicated more easily, no more cursing or lying, while others are more deeply rooted and a far greater challenge, an addiction, a prejudice, a deep-seated anger, or a long-held grudge, for example. By God's guidance and power we seek fervently with heart, mind, and soul to cleanse from our life whatever separates us from God.

The word "Lent" comes from an old English word which means "lengthening." Lent always comes with approaching spring, as the days grow longer, reminding us that through repentance and God's unceasing mercy we move from darkness to light and from death to new and unending life in Christ! As we uproot those sins, the beauty of God's goodness and love blossoms in our lives!

On Shrove Tuesday, February 28, the eve of Ash Wednesday, I hope you will be able to come to **St. John's Pancake Dinner, at 6 PM**, in the Parish Hall. You will not be disappointed, the meal will be sumptuous and delicious! The tradition of serving pancakes on this day derives from the practice of using up rich foods, like eggs, milk and sugar, as well as ridding the kitchen of animal fats, the day before the forty days of the Lenten fast begin.

The solemnity of Ash Wednesday will be observed at two **Masses, 12 Noon and 7 PM, on March 1**, which will include the Imposition of Ashes. Be sure, if you haven't as yet, to pick up your copy of "Lenten Meditations 2017," published by Episcopal Relief and Development, with daily Bible texts and Lenten devotions.

**Bible Study** continues **each Tuesday at 7 PM**. Presently we are studying the Bible readings for the following Sunday.

Our **Book Club** will gather on **Tuesday, March 27, at 3 PM**, to discuss the unforgettable story of "The Walk" by Richard Paul Evans.

Please don't forget to bring to church your offerings of **ramen noodles during March for the Milton Community Food Pantry**. Our Food Pantry provided 30,000 meals last year! Jesus and the hungry of the Milton community thank you!

Church activities and news for April will be included in my next letter, but I ask that you mark your calendars and plan to support with your help the **Spring Clean-up Day, Saturday, April 22, at 9 AM**, and the **Landscaping Day, May 20, also beginning at 9 AM**.

In closing, I pray your Lenten pilgrimage will deepen your faith and brighten your life with blessing,

Father Tom