

News Update This Week...

Retreat Time in April: Linger in the Light, Tuesday, April 9th, 9:30-Noon at BPCC. Reflections with Mary Oliver, John Denver and more. Led by Rev. Jan Hryniewicz. Please sign up at the entry to the church.

TURNING POINT: THE QUEST FOR A CURE Saturday, March 23, 2019 Doors open at 9:30am - **Film Starts at 10am** - Sam L. Cohen Adult Day Center 30 Barra Road, Biddeford. In **Turning Point**, acclaimed filmmaker James Keach (award-winning director of *Glen Campbell...I'll Be Me*) takes us inside the quest for the first medication that could treat the underlying process of Alzheimer's disease, more than a century after Dr. Alois Alzheimer first described the brain disorder that slowly destroys memory and cognitive skills. **Refreshments will be provided.**

Broad Reach Ministries is a Coast of Maine Sailing Retreat Ministry located next door to UNE. Their retreat schedule is now listed and you can view it on their website BroadReachMinistries.com. See Pastor Norbert for a special discount before registering.

For Your Reflection: Some Thoughts on Saint Patrick's Day

The lives of the saints are full of stories passed down for generations, stories so polished that the lines between history and legend are blessedly impossible to find. And so in honor of St. Patrick's Day this year, three ancient, delightful stories – but first, a little background.

St. Patrick is one of the patron saints of Ireland. He died just over fifteen hundred years ago, reportedly on March 17, and he is closely associated with the growth of Christianity throughout the Emerald

Isle, the rise of Celtic styles of Christianity, and of course that famous shamrock (more on that in a bit).

He first encountered Ireland as a slave. Patrick was born in the Roman imperial province of Britannia (today known as Great Britain), and as a youth he was captured by Irish raiders and forced to serve as a sheep herder. After six years of captivity, he escaped and made his way home – only to return to Ireland years later as a bishop and missionary.

St. Patrick's Walking Stick

Patrick was an itinerant preacher, and it is said that he carried a walking stick made of ash wood. In his travels between Britannia and Ireland, whenever he would stop to preach, he would plant the stick beside him, upright in the ground. At the English site now called Aspatia ("ash of Patrick"), he preached so patiently, the story goes, that when at last he finished, he couldn't remove the stick. It had sprouted roots, you see. It was already on its way to becoming a tree.

St. Patrick's Bell

In his life as an enslaved sheep herder, St. Patrick was quite familiar with the sheep bell: a simple bell of hammered iron with a small handle on top. As a bishop, that bell continued to have great meaning for him, perhaps because it reminded him of his youth, or of the ringing good news of the gospel, or of his ongoing role as a pastor (from the Latin *pastorem*, "shepherd"). Whatever the reason, he was laid to rest with one resting on his breast: the dead shepherd, buried with his bell.

Sometime later, the bell was removed from the tomb as a precious relic. And in the eleventh century, artists intricately covered the bell in bronze, gems, and Celtic designs of crosses and birds – not to make the bell appear more holy, it is said, but rather to shield the eyes of onlookers from the brilliant holiness of the iron original. Now on display in Dublin's National Museum, St. Patrick's Bell is considered one of Ireland's signature treasures.

St. Patrick's Shamrock

The Christian idea of the divine Trinity – God's simultaneous threeness and oneness as Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit – has always been a great challenge for preachers to grasp and explain. St. Patrick did it this way: he looked around, and then plucked a shamrock from the ground at his feet. Three leaves, he said, and yet one stem, one life. Add to that the shamrock's vibrant shade of green, the color of growth and vitality – and while it's easy to imagine a more technical, lengthy explanation of the Trinity, it's hard to imagine a better one.

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God of walking sticks and bells, little shamrocks and big ideas, thank you for Patrick. Let us remember him not only for his sake, but most of all for your sake, and for the sake of your good and brilliant green creation. Grant us the patience to trust the work you have given us, so that it might take root, grow, and bloom. Grant us the dignity and clarity of a simple, iron bell. Grant us new eyes to see your creation afresh, out on the horizon but also down around our feet, where great mysteries dwell nearby, hidden in the grass. For we are all your sheep, and you, our good shepherd. In Jesus' name, Amen.
SALTProject.org

Serenity Prayer: God, Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen. -Reinhold Niebuhr

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If you are interested in joining Union Church or would like to set up a time to meet with our Pastor, please contact Pastor Paula directly.

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Prayer Chair Lent Week 2: "Preparing a Table"

Settle into the chair and breathe deeply.

For the times when I have put the to-do list before reaching out to others... forgive me.

For the times when I isolated myself to "just push through it" ... forgive me.

Help me find the place of balance, O God.

Help me be mindful of my need—and other's need—to be in relationship.

Help me stop and find that relationship with you as you invite me to beautiful and serene moments of life like this one.

In this moment I hear your promise: there is a place for me, and plenty to go around.

You do not ask me to work to earn a place at your table.

I am your child, and that comes with a never-ending invitation.

Regardless.

I bring my petitions to you this day, O God.
Here are the people and things I am worried about ...

Holy God, who holds me close as a Loving Parent does, I honor this life you have given me and this moment to remember what's important.

I pray that your love will reign in all the earth and in my heart.

Give me what I need to get through the next 24 hours. No more.

No less. Open me to give and receive forgiveness when and if that's needed so that serenity will return.

Your world is precious. This moment will never pass again.