

Lent

The season of Lent is fast approaching, but how will we observe it this year? There is much confusion about Lent. I remember a Catholic friend in high school giving up chocolate for Lent. However, I didn't really see the point as she just ate butterscotch sundaes instead of hot fudge. I've known people who used Lent as "New Year's resolutions: second attempt." And of course many people just ignore Lent all together. Let me suggest another way.

Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, February 22 this year. Traditionally, Lent is a time for prayer, fasting, and charity to prepare us for Holy Week and Easter. It is a time to deepen our relationship with God. In many traditions, it is a time of penitence, humility, and soul searching. This can get rather heavy and serious. According to Wikipedia "[Lent] is known in Eastern Orthodox circles as the season of 'Bright Sadness.'" I like this idea of adding brightness to the seriousness. After all, we are preparing for both Jesus' death and his resurrection, great sadness and even greater brightness.

While most modern Christians have some understanding of prayer and charity, many are confused about fasting. Fasting is not a hunger strike. There are many different kinds of fasts. The length of the fast also determines its severity. Historically, people gave up meat, eggs, and dairy for the days of Lent (but not Sunday. Sunday is a celebration of the resurrection and therefore, not a fast day but a break from the fast). Today we might also choose to give up sugar or coffee. Then every time you find yourself thinking about the food you gave up you refocus your attention to God. Say a prayer. Listen for the still small voice.

Another option for a fast is to replace a life stealing habit with a life giving habit. For example, if you think you spend too much time watching TV you might replace your TV time with prayer time, or calling friends to chat, or painting or gardening, whatever feeds your soul. The idea behind fasting is to practice a discipline for the season that will open you to God's love and presence, that will reconnect you to your community, and that will nourish your spirit.

Take a couple of weeks to think and pray about what you need and want to do for your spiritual health this Lent. Make a commitment to some discipline for the season. Take Sundays off. Be gentle with yourself if you slip up. Enjoy Lent as a time to know God better.

Shalom, Pastor Kim

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Special points of interest:

- Adult education 8:30 a.m.
- Sunday morning worship at 10:00 a.m.
- Children's Sunday experience 10:00 a.m.

Worship

February is a month of transitions in the church year. We will finish the season of Epiphany and move into the season of Lent. On the fifth, we will note that God renews Jesus through prayer and that renewal is available to us as well.

The second Sunday, February 12 is Evolution Sunday and our focus will be on creation stories from around the world. Then we move to Transfiguration Sunday, when God speaks to Jesus and three disciples saying, "This is my son, whom I love. Listen to him." After worship, we will hold a prayer service to burn the palms from last year's Palm Sunday so that we can prepare the ashes for Ash Wednesday on February 22. Our Ash Wednesday service will be at 6:30 and marks the start of Lent. February 26 is the first Sunday of Lent and will introduce us to the theme for this year, the doorway between the sacred and the secular.



Date	Title	Scripture
2/5/12	Jesus heals and prays God renews strength for those who wait upon God	Mark 1:29-39 Is 40:27-31
2/12/12	Evolution Sunday Creation stories from around the world	Gen 2:4b-25
2/19/12	Transfiguration Sunday Listening to Jesus Burn palms after worship	Mark 9:2-9
2/22/12	Ash Wednesday Standing at the threshold	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
2/26/12	Invited to cross the threshold	Mark 1:9-15 (1 Pet 3:18-22)

Vista Grande Community UCC is an Open and Affirming Church.

"We, the congregation of Vista Grande Community Church United Church of Christ in Colorado Springs, CO declare ourselves to be Open and Affirming. We strive to be a congregation that includes all persons, embracing differences of sexual orientation, gender and its expression, marital status, family make-up, age, mental and physical health and ability, racial and cultural identity or background, and educational and socio-economic status. We welcome all to share in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, and joys of our congregation's life in Christ.

"No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."

NEW Pastor's Hours

At the church ... drop by to chat

Monday – 8 a.m. – Noon

Wednesday – 8 a.m. – Noon

Tuesday and Thursday –

Pastor Kim works from home or out in the community.

Other times by appointment, we can meet at the church, in your home, or local coffee shop.

Pastor Kim: 719-433-4248.

2012 Steering Committee consists of

Moderator – Marcie Wegner; Assistant Moderator – Brenda Griffin-Collins; Treasurer – Elizabeth Vincent; Financial Secretary – Jimmy Collins; Secretary – Tammie Davis; Members-at-Large – Carol Wisely, Kevin Gardner

If you are interested in what gets discussed or planned at these meetings, read the minutes which are posted on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall. Minutes are posted monthly. Also, you'll find the Income/Expense report, too.

MISSION OF THE MONTH: ZAWADI FUND, INTERNATIONAL (ZFI)



Vista Grande's support of ZFI is our way of supporting street orphans who reside in the Children and Youth Empowerment Centre (CYEC) in Nyeri, Kenya. These vulnerable young people reside in this safe environment, receiving education and learning skills that will provide a foundation for them to become productive members of society.

CYEC began in 2006, providing a safe environment, food, shelter, medical care, education, and the sense of being valued. Over the years, the young people have developed gardens and now are self-sufficient in growing all the greens that are staples in their diets. Girls have learned to sew shoulder bags to generate income and savings. Sponsors have provided tuition for worthy students to attend secondary schools.

During 2011, gifts from friends (such as VGCC!), have allowed the development of the following programs:

- a financial literacy program, explaining and training students in the need of saving for the future;
- a drop-in-center, which allows even more vulnerable young people in Nyeri to benefit from the programs of CYEC;
- designing and developing jewelry and art made from electronic waste – benefiting the environment and helping the youth;
- development of record-keeping skills and identifying potential for growth in their agricultural enterprises, which has allowed the sale of their produce in local markets;
- the development of a micro-financed fund which allows youth to finance expansion or creation of a small enterprise, after having participated in classes teaching the basics of money management.

Because we know the folks who are in leadership positions with this program (i.e. Max Hale's daughter, Mary), we can be sure that all gifts will be used to develop the potential of these children and youth so they can lead happy, productive lives!

Interfaith Hospitality—Hearts for the Homeless Luncheon and Silent Auction

Sunday, February 12, 2012 from Noon—2:45 p.m.

Crowne Plaza Hotel, 2886 South Circle Dr

Gathering and Silent Auction at 12 noon.

Master of Ceremonies—Tim Glenn, Director of USA Advocacy Compassion International.

\$39 per person.

Please RSVP by Monday Feb. 6 by calling 719-329-1244

Menu choices are posted on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall.

Mission to our neighborhood children

Vacation Bible School – July 30 – August 3, 2012

Mark your calendars for VBS. We'll need lots of helpers; before and during.



The curriculum will be chosen this month and the serious planning will begin. This will be our community outreach to our neighborhood kids.

Christian Education/Faith Formation

Kids' Circle ... Curriculum – Seasons of the Spirit

We continue with the Season of Epiphany. In this season, our focus is on the words of joy and a call to all creation to make a joyful noise to God.

Beginning February 26, during the Lenten Season, we'll hear some foundational stories of God's promises from the Hebrew Scriptures.

February 5 Sustaining Ministry

Focus: To follow Jesus' example in praying and serving others.

February 12 Healing Presence

Focus: To follow Jesus' compassionate example in building community.

February 19 Thin Places

Focus: To hear an amazing story of Jesus on the mountaintop and explore ways of listening to Jesus.

February 26 Blessed Connections

Focus: To discover ways to take part in God's promise of renewal for all creation.

Lenten Study...The BIBLE

Some Christians seem to worship it. Some Christians seem to discount it. Some say it is history, some literature, some the word of God. Many of you have questions about our holy text. During Lent, we will hold **Bible 101**, a class that covers the basics of this amazing collection of books.

The class will meet for six weeks on Wednesdays starting February 22, from 5:15 to 6:15. As of the date of this writing, I am still reviewing books to aid us in our learning. Once I have chosen the book there will be a sign up in Fellowship Hall. You can sign up for the class and the book, or, if you are unable to attend but want to follow along, you can sign up for the book. I will order them to hand out on Sunday February 19. If you want a book but can't buy one right now, please let me know and I'll see that you get a copy.

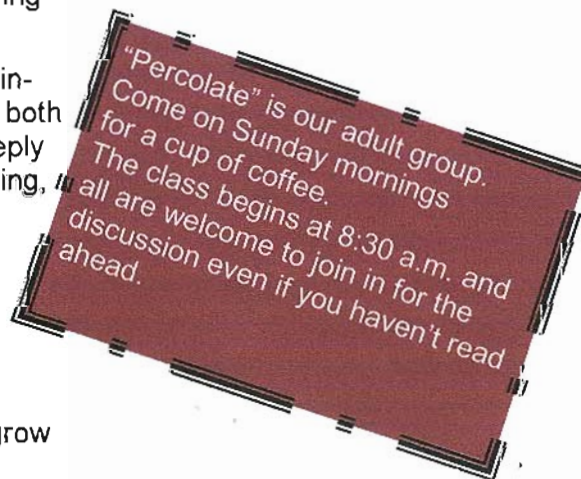
Hope to see you on Wednesday nights! Pastor Kim

Adult CE – a.k.a. Percolate

Percolate has started a new book, *The Gift of Years – Growing Older Gracefully* by Joan Chittister.

Joan Chittister, one of our most celebrated spiritual writers, invites us to embrace older age as a natural part of life that is both active and contemplative, productive and reflective, and deeply rewarding. *The Gift of Years* reflects on many aspects of aging, the purposes and concerns, the struggles and surprises, the potential and joys. It is a panoply of central issues that emerge with age to bring us to the fullness of life. And perhaps the most important dimension of older age, Joan Chittister illuminates, is to become aware of its profound purpose.

Come on Sunday mornings at 8:30 a.m. to explore how to grow older with grace.



Fellowship



Our Annual Friendship Dinner

Friday, February 10 at 6 p.m. at TGI Friday's (I-25 and Woodmen)
We have a private dining room and will be able to order off the menu.

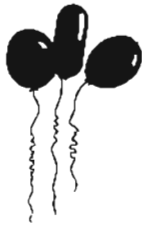
Please sign up at the church so the appropriate setup can be made by the restaurant.

Upcoming Women's Fellowship

Saturday, March 24th 8:30 a.m. Breakfast at Mountain Shadows Restaurant in Old Colorado City.
2223 West Colorado Ave. Mark your calendars now.

February Birthdays

- 1 Faith Davis
- 17 Shirley Rushing Vitela
- 27 Lori Gardner
- 27 Mike Gauthier
- 28 Jim Povelite



Youth

Youth Group will meet on the 1st and 3rd Sundays

Youth CE will meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays

The annual report is available for pick up at the church.
Read through the report and take pride in how Vista Grande lived its core values throughout 2011.
We all made it happen!

Thank you!



Stewardship

Cleaning Schedule

Jan. 28 and Feb. 4 – Dave and Donna Bristow

Feb. 11 and 18 – Roland and Faith Davis

Feb. 25 and March 3 – Jerry and Jackie Moore



Recycling Aluminum Cans

We recycle cans at VGCC. When our congregation is actively involved we can pull in \$100 or so per year from this activity. Many of our folks contribute regularly. While doing this we help our bank account as well as the environment. So save up your cans and bring them in any Sunday. Deposit them in the marked container at the bottom of the ramp in Fellowship Hall. They are collected, crushed, and saved until we have over 100 pounds (the price is better for larger amounts), then sold to a recycle collection point.



2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<u>Sunday Morning Schedule</u> 8:30 am Adult Christian Education 10 am Worship with CE for Kids 11:15 a.m. Fellowship			6:30 pm Choir and Prayer Shawl Ministry	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Sunday Morning Schedule Youth Group	9 am Sanctuary Arts	6:30 pm Steering Committee	8 am Men's Breakfast 6:30 pm Choir and Prayer Shawl Ministry		6 pm Annual Friendship Dinner	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Sunday Morning Schedule Youth CE	9 am Sanctuary Arts	Valentine's Day	6:30 pm Choir and Prayer Shawl Ministry			
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Sunday Morning Schedule Youth Group	Presidents' Day		5:15–6:15 pm—Lenten Study 6:30 pm—Ash Wednesday 7 pm Choir and Prayer Shawl Ministry			
26	27	28	29			
Sunday Morning Schedule Youth CE			5:15–6:15 pm—Lenten Study 6:30 pm Choir and Prayer Shawl Ministry			



**VISTA GRANDE COMMUNITY
CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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Rev. Kim Schwartz, Pastor

COME, GROW WITH US

We are a caring church for thinking people, an inclusive community of faith, united in our common quest to know God, inspired by the spirit of Jesus, and committed to sharing that love in ways that will make a difference in the world.

We are the Open and Affirming (ONA) Church in Northeast Colorado Springs.

MISSIONS at Vista Grande

Missions of the Month for 2012

January – Prayer Shawl Ministry

February – Zawadi Fund International

March – One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS)

April – Los Pobres

May – Strengthen the Church

June – Inside/Out Youth Services

July – Northern Churches Care (NCC)

August – Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)

September – Youth Mission

October – Neighbors in Need (NIN)

November – One Nation Walking Together

Dec – The Christmas Fund

Mission of the Month for February—Zawadi Fund International

(Read the article on page 3.)