



the Spire

Newsletter of the
Oak Tree-Iselin
Presbyterian Church

March 2024

Rev. Chris Houtz, pastor

1295 Oak Tree Road
Iselin, NJ 08830

Tel: (732)283-1188

www.oaktree-iselinpres.org

E-mail:

info@oaktree-iselinpres.org



'Like' us on Facebook
'Subscribe' to YouTube channel
'Follow' us on Instagram
[@oaktreeiselinpresnj](https://www.instagram.com/oaktreeiselinpresnj)

the Spire is published for distribution electronically the first day of the month and sent by post the next business day. The deadline for submitted articles is the previous Wednesday.

We welcome any news you would like to share with the congregation. Please e-mail your WORD documents to:

Betsy Christensen, editor,
at Betson42@comcast.net or leave written articles in the mail box marked "*the Spire*".



✝ A Message from our Pastor,

Rev. Chris Houtz

Friends of Oak Tree-Iselin Church,

I want to take some time and reflect on our Lenten Bible study for this year. Some of you have been coming, but for those who are not able to make it out on a Wednesday night, I want to share a bit about why this study is so important.

Crucifixion was, truly, a terrible way to be executed. Speaking would have been nearly impossible to do. Jesus would have had to lift himself up by his hands in order to expand his diaphragm just to breath, let alone speak. So, the fact that the gospels give us the seven last words of Jesus on the cross, means that Jesus found these to be very important. He was willing to feel the agonizing pain of trying to speak to say the following things:

1. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."
In the midst of being taunted, beaten, spat at, and mocked, Jesus prays to God to forgive everyone there. But it reaches beyond his own time and is also forgiving each of us of our sins today. This is important because he could have prayed silently, but because he said this prayer out loud, he must have wanted us to hear the prayer. This is a wondrous example of what it means to follow Christ. Jesus shows us the importance of forgiving others.
2. "Today, you will be with me in Paradise."
This passage in Luke is one of my own personal favorites. Luke portrays Jesus being crucified along with two criminals. One of the criminals joins the crowd in mocking Jesus, but the other one seeks forgiveness and grace. He asks Jesus, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And in response, Jesus tells him they will be in Paradise together. Even at our lowest point, Christ is there for us to call us into Paradise and join him in eternity.
3. "Behold your son...behold your mother."
Only in John's Gospel do any of the disciples remain at Jesus' side. And in John, it is only John. However, all the gospels have a collection of the women in Jesus' life at his side. This is an especially powerful word about Mary, Jesus' mother, who stood by her son's side as he was brutally killed.

(Continue on page 7)

WELCOME



Join us
on Sunday morning
at 10:30 am
in the Sanctuary,
on our website,
or on Facebook.

Sunday Morning Bible Study

Led by
Elder Ron Stamboly



at 9:00 am
in
Fellowship Hall



CHRIS ALONSO 3/01

KAY PINTAK 3/29

Session Actions of February 22, 2024

Motion to approve the Transformation Church led by Rev. Chandra to hold bible study classes on the 2nd and 4th Friday evenings at 7:30 pm.

Motion to allow Grace Lee to hold a piano recital at the Oak Tree Campus on Saturday, June 15th from 12:00 pm to 3:30 pm.

Motion to provide a Johnsonburg camp scholarship from Spencer-Bloemeke Fund for Seychelle Gilzean in the amount of \$600

Motion to approve a Potluck Luncheon on Sunday, June 9th.

Motion to approve the Sunday school lessons for remainder of year as presented in report

Motion to support Camp Johnsonburg as the April Mission Focus.

Motion to approve May Mission Focus on Blanket Sunday, May 12th, proceeds to go to Church World Services.

Motion to approve Minute for Mission blanket demonstration during Children's Chat on May 12th.

Motion to approve to support Child Fund as the June Mission Focus, with minute for Mission on June 2nd.

Motion to publish all motions in the Spire.

Sunday School

EASTER EGG HUNT

**Palm Sunday,
March 24th
During
Sunday School**



Liturgy for March



March 3rd

Exodus 20:1-17
Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 1:18-25
John 2:13-22

March 10th

Numbers 21:4-9
Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22
Ephesians 2:1-10
John 3:14-21

March 17th

Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 51:1-12 or
Psalm 119:19-29
Hebrews 5:5-10
John 12:20-33

March 24th Palm Sunday

Mark 11:1-11 or
John 12:12-16
Psalm 118:1-2
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Mark 14:1 - 15:47

March 31st Easter Sunday

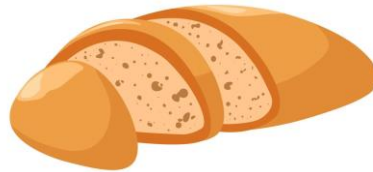
Acts 10:34-43 or
Isaiah 25:6-9
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
1 Corinthians 15:1-11 or
Acts 10:34-43
John 20:1-18 or
Mark 16:1-8

Lenten Soup & Bread Suppers

and Devotion



**We will continue
Wednesday evenings
through Holy Week
at 6:00 pm.**



**A sign-up sheet can be
found in Fellowship Hall
for those who wish to
volunteer to provide
soup or bread.**

**See Sue Ramirez for
further information.**

Liturgy for Holy Week

Monday

Isaiah 42:1-9
Psalm 36:5-11
Hebrews 9:11-15
John 12:1-11

Tuesday

Isaiah 49:1-7
Psalm 71:1-14
1 Corinthians 1:18-31
John 12:20-36

Wednesday

Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 70
Hebrews 12:1-3
John 13:21-32

Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-4 (5-10) 11-14
Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12
Psalm 22
Hebrews 10:16-25 or
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9
John 18:1 – 19:42

Saturday

Job 14:1-14 or
Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24
Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16
1 Peter 4:1-8
Matthew 27:57-66 or
John 19:38-42



Daylight Savings time Begins Sunday, March 10th At 2:00am




March 19th

Shop-Rite gift cards are now available each week during Fellowship Hour in \$25, \$50, and \$100 denominations. Simply bring cash or check and receive your card(s).



Oak Tree-Iselin Presbyterian Church receives 5% back on each card sold.



Memory Verse For March

¹² Now, since our message is that Christ has been raised from death, how can some of you say that the dead cannot be raised to life? ¹³ If that is true, it means that Christ was not raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised from death, then we have nothing to preach and you have nothing to believe.

²⁰. But the truth is that Christ has been raised from death, as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will also be raised ²¹ for just as death came by means of a man, the same way the rising from death comes by means of a man. ²² For just as all people die because of their union with Adam, in the same way all will be raised to life because of their union with Christ.

1 Corinthians 5: 12-14, 20-22

From the Deacons


Ministry of Compassion

A receptacle has been placed in the foyer for donations to the food pantry. Items needed are:

Canned:
 vegetables, beans, fruit, tuna fish, pasta sauce, soup, gravy


Peanut Butter	Pasta	Instant potatoes
Jelly	Stuffing	Mac'n'Cheese
Rice	Soup	Cranberry sauce

The next distribution will be on Monday, March 11th.



Aluminum tabs for Ronald McDonald House

Your tab contribution was gratefully received by the Avenel Presbyterian Church VBS Program, which sponsors the Ronald McDonald effort. Please continue to save tabs for the next collection in July, 2024.



“Thank you” for your generous support for our Souper Bowl Sunday mission focus on February 11th. We collected \$237, which will be used for emergency kits to be distributed to the homeless in our neighborhood.



HUNGER • DISASTER • DEVELOPMENT

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to **loose the bonds of injustice**,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to **let the oppressed go free**,
and to break every yoke?

Is it not to **share your bread with the hungry**,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not hide yourself from your own kin?

You shall raise up the foundations of many
generations;
you shall be called **the repairer of the breach**,
the **restorer of streets to live in**.

Isaiah 58:6,7,12



**Special Offering envelopes,
found in your weekly offering
envelope box, will be received
on Easter Sunday, March 31st.**

**Easter Morning
Breakfast**

Join our church family in
Fellowship Hall for
breakfast at 9:00 am
followed by Easter Service
at 10:30 in the Sanctuary.

Holy Week Worship

Our Lenten Journey together began on Ash Wednesday and continues on Wednesday nights through Holy week for Soup and Bread and study of the last seven words of Christ.



Join us also on **Palm Sunday, March 24th** for regular worship at 10:30 as we begin to walk with Jesus on *HIS* last journey to the cross.

We will gather on
Thursday night at
7:00 pm for the
**Maundy Thursday
Service with
communion**

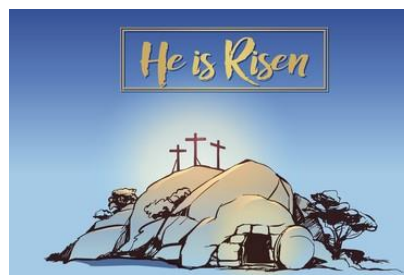


and again, on **Good Friday, March 29th** at 3:00 pm to witness Christ's death on the cross.



Our next journey begins on **Easter Sunday, March 31st** at 10:30 as we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ.

Hallelujah!



He is Risen Indeed!

What to do with all those hard boiled Easter Eggs...



Memaws Country Eggs Goldenrod

2 cups milk
1/8 cup cornstarch
1 1/2 tablespoons butter
1/2 teaspoon salt
pinch ground black pepper
6 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and sliced
6 slices bread, toasted

Stir milk, cornstarch, butter, salt, and black pepper together in a saucepan over medium heat;

Cook and stir until the mixture is thick and smooth, about 20 minutes.

Stir egg slices into the sauce and cook until just warmed, about 5 minutes. Ladle egg and sauce over toast slices.

Serves 6

Variation:

2 Tablespoons butter
2 Tablespoons flour
1 Cup milk
Salt and pepper to taste
4 slices toast

In a saucepot, melt butter. Stir in flour, then add milk slowly, stirring constantly.

Season to taste.

Chop whites of 4 hard-cooked eggs and add to sauce, heat a few minutes.

Ladle over toast and grate the yolks over each serving.

Makes 4 servings.

Leprechauns



Saint Patrick's Day is one of the most celebrated cultural and religious holidays in Europe and America. The holiday, also known as a feast day, is observed on or around March 17. The Irish holiday is marked by parades, foods, music, dance, and other activities. Another thing you are likely to see is a tiny bearded man wearing green suits and hats and partaking in mischief. These mythical creatures are popularly known as leprechauns. Saint Patrick's Day is never complete without the leprechauns since they are known to be great musicians who can also play a variety of instruments including the Irish harp, fiddle, and tin whistle.

Originally, leprechauns had different appearances since they were found in different parts of Ireland. It was believed that they wore red and not green as they do today. Solitary leprechauns wore red jackets while the trooping ones wore green. The jackets had seven buttons, each in a row. They also wore hats which they would use to ball on a wall, usually when they were up to something mischievous. The modern leprechauns are more or less the same in appearance in all parts of Ireland. They are small or tiny enough to sit on one's shoulders. However, some people claim that leprechauns are almost the size of small children. They are depicted as having a green suit, green hat, red beards, buckled shoes, and sitting on a toadstool.

The name leprechaun was derived from the Irish word "lepreachan" meaning "pigmy." The creatures first appeared in an ancient tale known as "Adventure of Fergus son of Léti" as Fergus mac Leti, King of Ulster. According to the text, the King fell asleep on the beach and woke up only to find three small-bodied men (luchorpain) dragging him to the sea. The King of Ulster managed to capture his abductors who granted him three wishes for their release. David Russell McAnally indicates that leprechaun is a "degenerated fairy" who is a son of an "evil spirit" and is partly good and partly evil. Like most Irish fairy tales, leprechauns may have its origin from the Tuatha De Danann, a supernatural race of the deities in Irish mythology but rarely appeared in Irish mythology.

Leprechaun is a solitary creature whose main occupation is to make and mend shoes. Although they are practical jokers and mischievous, these mythical creatures are harmless and very intelligent. Irish legend holds that leprechauns are wealthy and derives their wealth from treasure-crocks buried during the time of war. They store their wealth and coins earned from shoemaking in a hidden pot at the end of the rainbow. The legend of the pot of treasure is popular among many people who will often chase rainbow in search of leprechauns and their pot of treasure. It is widely believed that if a leprechaun is caught, it will grant the capturer three wishes in exchange for its freedom. According to some sources like YourIrish.com, leprechauns are only found in Ireland, specifically rural areas, away from people.



Woodbridge Township
St. Patrick's Day Parade
is on Sunday March 10th
at 1:30 pm

(Pastor's message continued from page 1)

As he was dying, he was clearly concerned about his mother, and made sure the “disciple whom he loved” would take care of her once he was gone.

4. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

These powerful words are the opening verse of Psalm 22. A psalm of lament, Psalm 22 shows us, and Jesus demonstrates perfectly, that even our darkest moments, we can still cry out to God. Importantly, we must also remember that Jesus is not just saying these words, but invoking the entire Psalm, that ends with these powerful words:

“To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him. Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it. “

5. “I thirst.”

This may be his most human moment on the cross, albeit said in a very “John-like” way! Frequently, people who are nearing their death become very thirsty. Those of you who have been at the bedside of someone who is conscious as they approach that moment will know a nurse or aid brought a cup of ice chips into the room for them, maybe a cup of water with a straw. This statement is a powerful reminder that yes, Jesus was fully divine, he was the Son of God; but he was also the Son of Humanity—he was fully human.

6. “It is finished.”

Jesus constantly told his disciples this was going to happen. They may not have believed him, or understood him, but he did tell them. And at this moment, the purpose of his trip to Jerusalem was finished. This moment also goes into the doctrine of atonement—the idea that Jesus died for us. The moment on the cross is not a discussion of theological doctrine, but it does serve as a reminder that despite our sin, we are forgiven because of Jesus’ crucifixion on the cross.

7. “Into your hands I commit my spirit.”

His final words on the cross, Jesus offers one last prayer to God. It is a prayer of absolute trust in the Lord. These words come from another psalm—Psalm 31:5. This is how that psalm begins (Psalm 31:1-5):

“In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me. Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me. You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name’s sake lead me and guide me, take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hands I commit my spirit.”

In his final moments, he is demonstrating his absolute faith in God.

Friends, throughout this Lenten season, I hope you will take some time and spend it with Christ on the cross. We can learn many lessons about faith, love, forgiveness, and grace. Read each gospels account of the crucifixion, and see what you Christ is saying to, and for, you.

In Christ,

Rev. Chris

“You are never too old to set a new goal or dream a new dream.”

C. S. Lewis