**Pastor Veronica Recommends:**

**A Concave Indent by Matt Fitzgerald From *Still Speaking Daily Devotional***

**"A stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground – then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground." - Genesis 2:6-7**

**Let's suppose that all of us are made by God's hands. Not just Adam, not just men, not just women, everyone. That might do violence to the text, but whatever, the text has done plenty of violence itself.**

**Imagine a lump of clay. God picks up it, envisions something wonderful and gets to work. She pulls arms and legs out from the middle and uses her little finger to form eye sockets. She gets lost in the project. And when what-will-be-you is almost done she holds it in her hands, admiring her artistry. The clay is drying. There's not much time. God's hold becomes an embrace. Her thumb presses against your chest, marking you with the imprint of your maker, even as you're left with an absence at your center. Not a presence, not an inner light, but a concave indent. God pulls her hand away.**

**God lets us be, because she loves us. If God stayed as close as she was in the act of creation, we'd have no independent existence. And you can't have relationship without differentiation. To paraphrase Gillian Rose, "God had to leave us, so that his love for us could breathe."**

**So we feel God's love. And we ache for his presence. We long for God. Everybody does. Some of us anesthetize the ache. Others deny it exists. Many people try to satisfy it by placing their faith in something tangible. What does it mean to be a Christian in 2017? Do you have to swallow scripture? Do you have to throw shade at atheists? Do you have to spend your life searching for a cross to hang on?**

**I don't know. All I know is that to become a Christian I had to admit this: the ache is real. It hurts. And I cannot satisfy it on my own.**

**Prayer: Let my longing become prayer dear Lord. Answer it! Don't leave me alone. Amen.**

**About Matt Fitzgerald: Matt is the senior pastor of the St. Pauls UCC in Chicago. He the host of “Preachers on Preaching, a weekly podcast sponsored by the *The Christian Century.***.

**Upcoming Events**

* **‘Spirit’ Sunday February 26, 10 am worship service** This Sunday before Lent starts on Wednesday, we will celebrate with a wearing of hats—your choice, “interesting, crazy, silly” or beautiful! In the bleak midwinter, we will raise our spirits. A Mardi Gras “King Cake” will be a part of our coffee hour. In our New England way, we make way for the time of Lent.
* **Ash Wednesday Service in Brookline UCC at March 1, 7pm.** Reverends Veronica Don, and Katherine Merrill will lead this service. All are invited to this special worship service. Bring a friend, a neighbor…
* **Community Supper March 9 5:30 to 7pm**  Good company, warm Fellowship Hall, and of course good food. Know of a neighbor who has just moved in? Invite them to dinner—the easy way! And, offer your help, extra hands are always needed. Washing dishes, picking up the chairs, or preparation. We always meet the following Thursday at 7pm for planning the next supper.
* **Nashua Soup Kitchen, March 11** We will meet at church at 3:00pm. This isa mission of love and energy, as we help prepare and serve the evening meal. Invite a friend or neighbor to come with you. We need about 10 people to cover the meal. Let Kathy Chapman know you are coming: 878-4993.



**Veronica’s installation and celebration is on March 19th.**  There is a special service of installation at 3pm, and we will have refreshments afterwards. Please attend this formal welcoming event. (This is the rescheduled event from last month’s Feb snow/ice out.)

* **Conversations with Women Friday, March 17th 2pm to 4pm**  This is a casual group of local Mason, and nearby community women who will have coffee/tea and more as they converse. No particular agenda has been developed but enjoy the conversation. Come, share, and float your own ideas!
* **Living Room Coffee House** **March 18th**. Doors open at 6:30, Music begins at 7. There are warm drinks, food, and music lovers: just mix and enjoy. March feature is our own Mason resident, Jerry Wile. Jerry is a singer/songwriter and a master picker of the guitar and banjo—coaxing amazing sounds from his instruments as his fingering wows you… Don’t miss our live music and lively crowd.
* **April 2, 2017 Budgeting Seminar for Help with Everyday Finances and Long Term Planning. Soup/salad/bread at 5 pm, seminar from 6-8 pm. No charge.** For more information call Mason Church at 878-1684, leave a message if necessary, someone will call you back.
* **Lending Library Books and Music** Notice the fine bookshelf in Fellowship Hall that has books for lending—all nicely organized, and alphabetized by a church angel. Steve Tamulonis has contributed some CDs for lending/listening. Please sign them out, and return in a reasonable time. Enjoy this mission/blessing.
* **Prayer shawls have been flying from the church!**  Spend some dark hours of winter by joining the knitters of Mason Church in prayerful knitting. Let us know if you need yarn or pattern.

If you know someone who needs the warmth and prayers of a shawl please contact: Susan Suokko at Usercat2@comcast.net or 941-920-0270 or Michelle Scott 878-1680



* **Curt Dunn** and Karin Eisenhaure. Keep them in your thoughts and prayers. Some of these days with ice and snow are such a challenge, yet they appear each Sunday for worship and song!
* **Joe and Jennie Walsh** and Joshua, Jonathan and Joseph are always in our hearts and thoughts. Call, write, or email them with your news! Their address is: 50 Clinton Ave, Chelmsford, MA 01824 978-256-6700 Jwalsh13197@gmail.com (NOTE: new email for Jennie)
* **Cindy Tibbetts**  Cindy and Jim are in Milford, but also in our thoughts! She may need rides to church when Jim or her parents can’t do this. Give Cindy a call at 809-2036. New Address: Cahill Place, 486 Nashua St. Milford 03055 Cindy spent part of February up at Dartmouth Hospital, she’s home now.
* **Laila Washburn**  We had such fun going caroling at Laila’s house, maybe we can have Deborah bring her accordion, and we can sing spring songs. She was very happy to see everyone. Laila Washburn, c/o Brett Kivela, 25 Will Road, New Ipswich 03071. Although visitors are welcome from 10am to 7pm, it is good to call first. 878-3065
* **Gretchen Brown** has limited mobility these days, and loves visitors. You can call ahead 878-1481 or stop by. Gretchen is on a special diet in an effort to alleviate her chronic pain. It is gluten free, and sugar free. Please call Wally and Gretchen at 878-1481 or Michelle if you need help with cooking ideas or details 878-1680 or miscott39@gmail.com
* **Linda A. Robinson,** a long time Mason resident, and wife of Earle Robinson, died on November 22, 2016. She was 68 years old. There were no services, but many of us hold her in memory. She was a lively personality—one of Mason’s own.
* **Pets are windows into our souls.** This past month Nancy Richards’ beloved Samantha-dog died of old age. The Damery’s hearing service dog, Jennie died at the age of 14. Someone shared this saying with me:

*It came to me that every time I lost a dog they took a piece of my heart with them, and every new dog who comes into my life, gifts me with a piece of their heart. If I live long enough all the components of my heart will be dog, and I will become as generous and loving as they are.*

* **Do you know someone who needs spiritual support or other support, of the pastor and deacons?** Please call, your church family may be able to help. Leave a confidential message for Pastor Veronica Don at 603-878-1684 or on her personal phone at 603-213-6368.

**What is Ash Wednesday?** This is a worship service beginning the 40 days before the Crucifixion of Jesus. In the United Church of Christ it is a period of repentance and remembrance. During the service the minister will mark your forehead or hand with ashes, in the sign of the cross. The ashes are collected from a ceremonial burning of the palm leaves used in the 2016 Palm Sunday service. On Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem with crowds lining the streets waving palm branches and cheering. A week later he would die at the hands of the Romans, a fate condoned by of some of the same people who cheered. The ashes are a reminder of our mortality, and the sacrifice Jesus made for us.

*From Paul’s Letters in 2 Corinthians 6:2 For he says, “At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.” See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation.*