

## Parson to Person by Pastor Dave

The date of this writing is February 23, in time for publishing in early March, when we commence the blustery month named for Mars, the Roman god of war. Mars was second-in-rank to only Jupiter himself, and was mythically the father of Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome. So, you see, I have some timely guidance in what I write today: we humans have been devoted to war from the very beginnings of time, and wars, both real and threatened, are active all over our planet right now. What might be our faithful United Methodist response?

It seems I am crossing over from preaching to meddling, so allow me a brief quote from our Book of Resolutions: *Taking an active stance in society is nothing new for followers of John Wesley. He set the example for us to combine personal and social piety. Ever since predecessor churches to United Methodism flourished in the United States, we have been known as a denomina-*

*tion involved with people's lives, with political and social struggles, struggles that generate local to international mission implications.*

So... we are involved, whatever our national policy turns out to be, whatever our personal sentiments, by virtue of being the people called Methodists, we are involved. I am well aware that we are not a creedal church, that we do not require a specific form of faith adherence. Our *Resolutions* and our *Social Principles* are about as close as we can legitimately get to an 'official word' on a given subject. And since the chosen subject today is war, here is a quote you may have danced with before...

*We deplore war and urge the peaceful settlement of all disputes among nations. From the beginning, the Christian conscience has struggled with the harsh realities of violence and war, for these evils clearly frustrate God's loving purposes for humankind. We yearn for the day when there*

### Our Purpose

**To ENGAGE people in joyful relationships with God and with each other, so we will GROW in Christ-like compassion, and SHARE the blessings of the Holy Spirit.**



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*will be no more war and people will live together in peace and justice. Some of us believe that war, and other acts of violence, are never acceptable to Christians. We also acknowledge that many Christians believe that, when peaceful alternatives have failed, the force of arms may regretfully be preferable to unchecked aggression, tyranny and genocide. We honor the witness of pacifists who will not allow us to become complacent about war and violence, yet we also respect those who support the use of force, but only in extreme situations and only when the need is clear beyond reasonable doubt, and through appropriate international organizations.*

Folks wiser than me have known this forever, and you probably know it too: *nobody ever wins a fight*. Every self-defense class, every martial art, every system of systematically wounding, disabling, and potentially killing your 'enemy' begins with the same supposition, that you make strenuous efforts to avoid the fight. Many of our current world leaders seem not to have gotten that memo, or have chosen to ignore it. But the *principle is the same* whether it is two guys brawling outside a bar or thousands upon thousands engaged in war, *nobody ever wins a fight*. The social damage from our own Civil War is still unspooling after a century and a half. Both World Wars decimated our population and our morale. Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf Wars, Afghanistan... somehow, we haven't come around the curve and seen the truth yet, that this method of conflict resolution is not effec-

tive, and that the price is just too high.

I cannot and will not tell you what to believe. But I can urge a faithful response when other avenues have been exhausted and the bullies just refuse to be reasonable. Mars was a bully, by the way: intensely disliked by the other gods, but adored by the military men (at that time, just men) who credited him with their slaughter and appeased him when they failed. I cannot and will not tell you what to believe, but I can tell you this: our United Methodist hearts and dollars go out to the victims of the current bullying, and also to the Russian citizens who are given no choice when their leader gets a bee in his babushka, or when sovereign nations are invaded to steal their resources, or even when cartel warlords ignore the rules of engagement and start immolating tourists. There are victims all around the world, you see, because *nobody ever wins a fight*. Amen.

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**ENGAGE**

**GROW**

**SHARE**



## **WORSHIP IN MARCH**

### **Sunday, MARCH 1    The Second Sunday in Lent**

Our Lenten journey continues with familiar words from John 3:1-17, beautiful music provided by Chris Wenger and Pastor Dave, the homily “Confusion, Challenge, and Comfort”, and a lovely celebration of Holy Communion.

### **Sunday, MARCH 8    The Third Sunday in Lent**

The text today is one of the more pivotal texts in the entire Gospel, exploring race relations, gender relations, religious affiliations, and more. John 4:5-42 provides the basis for a compelling service and a message entitled “Thirst, Something We Can All Agree On”.

### **Sunday, MARCH 15    The Fourth Sunday in Lent    CELTIC MUSIC DAY**

The perhaps too-familiar Psalm 23 leads us beside the still waters and the green hills of the emerald isle today. Fantastic Celtic music, prayers from St. Francis, and the message “Voluntary Sheep” are planned.

### **Sunday, MARCH 22    The Fifth Sunday in Lent**

Lent is well along by now, and it is time for a pivotal miracle to galvanize the mounting opposition to Jesus’ earthly ministry. Raising Lazarus from the dead, as details in John 11:1-45, is just that kind of miracle. The sermon is called “Unbound and Released”.

### **Sunday, MARCH 29    The Sixth Sunday in Lent    PALM/PASSION SUNDAY**

Selected verses from Matthew 26-27 will undergird our solemn exploration of the Passion of our Lord. Music, liturgical singing, and even the brief message “Seven Steps to Silence” will lead us into the valley of shadows as we prepare for the blessing of a radiant Easter next week.