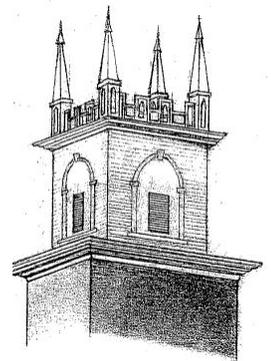


**+ N.E.W.S. CONNECTION**

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**Message from the Pastor**

In collecting my thoughts for each monthly message, I usually try to amplify one theme. March promises to be such a full month for our church that I need amplify all of these points:

- First, with a deep sense of sadness and the *deja-vu* of history repeating itself, I stay updated on the invasion of Ukraine. Now I truly have a sense of what many experienced in 1938, with the annexation of Austria and Germany's occupation of the Sudetenland portion of Czechoslovakia. We know what happened as a consequence in September 1939. Pray that another world war does not engulf us. Right now, all of us can pray for all those people who become victims of war. My childhood home, Fall River, Massachusetts, had a small community who emigrated from the Ukraine. They had their own church and a "Ukrainian Home," with a tavern upstairs and a restaurant in the basement. Long before fast-food takeout, my father and I would drive across the city to pick up their delicious, hot steak sandwiches. My grandparents' neighbors, the Chomacks, were a true American success story. Steve Chomack came to the United States as a teenager and within a few years established a window-washing business. In the early thirties, with the news that his family suffered from famine as a result of Stalin's process of collectivizing farms [depriving farmers of private ownership], he sponsored some refugees to migrate to Fall River. It became very personal when an 18-year-old-girl, Anna, came from "the old country" to become his wife. They had three sons in five years, then Mr. Chomack died. Anna, knowing no English at that time, managed to run the business and keep the family together. The Chomack boys were lifelong friends of my dad and uncle. All three earned college degrees. I especially loved going to Mrs. Chomack's house around the time of Orthodox Easter. She made the most delicious angel cake I ever tasted, and she always sent me home with her beautifully decorated Easter eggs. I learned something as a child when I once asked Mrs. Chomack, "Aren't you the same people as Russians?" Oh, my!—she answered in her native tongue, but I got the gist of it right away. It always changes our perspective and brings it closer to home when we can put a human face on suffering and the toll of war.
- Secondly, on the second, Lent begins with our Ash Wednesday service at noon. Why do this? We all hear and experience how change is the constant in our lives. Particularly in the sphere of technology, upgrades are perennial otherwise things just won't work. My parents bought me a sturdy Smith Corona typewriter for Christmas of 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Dad said, "You'll have it for the rest of your life." It did get me through college, but as I started teaching, still typing on purple stencils, I knew that when I could afford it, I would buy an electric typewriter, and then, eventually, a personal computer. On other fronts, the torrent of change can sweep us away. What should we hold unto? Lent is an opportunity for us to engage in deeper contemplation as a Christian church community. We can do more, and that begins with an extra measure of time that we devote to a spiritual practice. It is an appropriate time to launch our Bible study following service throughout the March Sundays of Lent. Making this small sacrifice of time and allowing room for prayer unites us with centuries of past Christians who honored the season of Lent, anticipating the joy of Easter.

- Thirdly, for reasons articulated elsewhere, we have compiled our bylaw revisions. Sometimes change is necessary and healthy. Please support the efforts of those who have worked on prayerfully making these changes and join in the meeting following service on Sunday, March 20, appropriately the first day of Spring. In the meantime, a complete copy of our existing bylaws has been available on our website: <https://pittsfordcongregationalchurch.org/church-bylaws/> Several paper copies are also available in the church vestibule.
- And lastly, some thoughts on Bob Welch's Memorial Service on Saturday, March 19, at 1. How families and friends choose to honor a deceased loved one is another of the changes we all have experienced. Some families choose no commemoration or church service. In the case of Bob, however, we have the opportunity to come together as a church community and demonstrate our support for Jane, their children, and grandchildren.  
Let us, then, as a tribute to all that Bob and Jane did for the church to **show up**. Of course, not everyone feels comfortable to attend a reception in the Fellowship Hall, but there is plenty of room for us to practice social distance in the sanctuary.

Yours in faith and the good work we share together,

Michael F. Dwyer, Pastor