

## **FROM PASTOR MARC'S DESK**

### ***World Changing During Lent And Beyond***

The season of Lent, at its heart, is ideally a season of transformation. For Christians, it is a forty day journey from the solemnity of Ash Wednesday to the roads of Holy Week, the shadow of the cross, and to the awe and wonder of the empty tomb. From the very beginning of this journey, we are reminded that we are but dust. From dust we were made, and to dust we shall return. The story is not ultimately about us. The story is ultimately about God. We could also say, "From God we were made, and to God we shall return."

The journey of Lent ultimately represents our journey towards growing closer to God both spiritually and through the seasons of our lives. It's also about taking a long, hard look in the mirror about how our lives, our communities, our country, and our world can be transformed more fully into the kind of world we were created to be.

Over the last month, the youth group at Oxford Presbyterian Church (along with the leadership of Carrie Ann Sherrit and myself) has spent six weeks studying the book, Worldchanging 101, by David LaMotte. The book wrestles with the complex issues and questions about why affecting that kind of positive change in our neighborhoods and our towns can be so hard. What keeps us so paralyzed? Do our actions really matter even in a small town like Oxford? How can we really make a difference? Is transformation really possible?

Over these six weeks, our youth have read and studied. They have asked serious and engaging questions. They've talked about how they have seen these issues and questions play out in school, at home, in their families, in civic engagement, and here in Oxford. The culmination of this six-week study is a community service project that directly addresses one of our core mission identities at Oxford Presbyterian Church: Caring For Creation.

As I have had the privilege of walking with our young people along this journey through Worldchanging 101, I feel like I have learned as much from them as I have from this book. I have learned that for the youth of Oxford Presbyterian Church, impact, change, and transformation in our communities matter.

Even during a time of pandemic (perhaps even especially during a pandemic), our young people have a deep hunger to make a real difference in our community. To not be paralyzed by the many complexities that make Worldchanging so challenging but rather to lean into them as opportunities for learning and growth.

It is an honor to walk alongside them and with all of you on this Lenten journey together. This Spring, with the partnership of Progressive Christian Students (a student organization at Miami University) plans are underway for a similar book study journey with our campus aged students. Whatever the Lenten journey looks like for you, I hope that you will find ways to make a positive difference in someone's life or in your neighborhood. I hope that you will discover ways to learn, to grow, to be stretched a little bit, and to grow closer to the God who is the source of all our lives. That is the journey that continues on long after these forty days are over and that we walk along together again and again.