

# ADULT SERIES THIS LENT: "GROWING SPIRITUALLY"

First Congregational Church, UCC presents

## "GROWING SPIRITUALLY"

A 10-Week Lenten Book Study

February 22<sup>nd</sup> - April 26<sup>th</sup>

Wednesday Evenings from 7:00-8:30

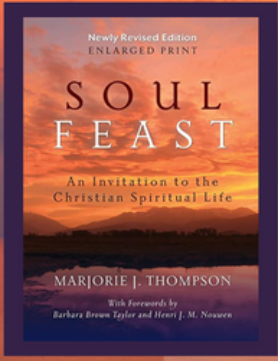
Co-led by the Revs. Scott McLeod and Don Niederfrank

based on the book

### SOUL FEAST

An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life

BY MARJORIE J. THOMPSON



A Lenten Book Study will be starting up this month co-led by Scott McLeod and Don Niederfrank. It will be a 10-session study of the exceptional book, "Soul Feast" by Marjorie J. Thompson. The central image behind the book's title is of a great banquet table upon which is spread all the glorious spiritual foods our souls crave. The spiritual food and drink were developed from generations of seekers and their experience in finding the divine over 2,000 years. These items of spiritual nourishment are right there for us to take, yet, sadly, we seem blind to the feast before us, and instead make do with a few crumbs falling from the table, which we hope to catch to sustain ourselves. Thompson hopes to open the eyes of modern Christians like us that we might see the feast that is set before us. A feast of rich spiritual food that will nourish us and strengthen us. Thompson writes,

"This book aims to help us find and partake of food and drink for the spirit. The resources we will explore are drawn from our full Christian heritage. None of the practices are new, but some have been lost to our knowledge and other require adaptations. Our current spiritual hunger is partly due to being out of touch with classic practices that could feed us. When we are severed from our roots, we are like plants without nourishment. To fruitfully appropriate classic disciplines, we need to be willing to engage "traditions" creatively."

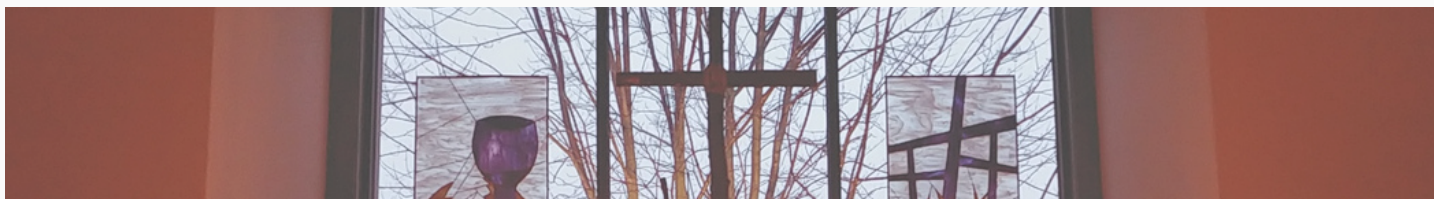
Participants will read a chapter before attending each week. The group will explore and discuss a "classic" Christian spiritual practice to taste and see if we find it nourishing! The weekly sessions will be less interested in giving you information about the spiritual life than in giving you the tools to engage the spiritual life. If this sounds interesting to you, please check out the book, "Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life" (Newly Revised Edition) by Marjorie J. Thompson. Books are available in the church office for \$14, or you can order on your own. The group will begin meeting on February 22, and each Wednesday evening thereafter, from 7:00 to 8:30 following the Vesper Service. The study sessions continue throughout the season of Lent and finish up on the last Wednesday of April.

## LENT BEGINS FEBRUARY 26 - HERE IS A PREVIEW OF THE SEASON AHEAD!

The Season of Lent in 2023 begins on the last Sunday of February. Lent is a liturgical season spent in the wilderness, a place that feels both familiar and dreaded after the recent pandemic. While we might emphasize the loneliness and desolation of the wilderness, wilderness times are not just empty and barren. Just as a wilderness can be teeming with life, our wilderness times can also surprise us with the life they hold. Our lives can also feel clarifying and renewed as we find within ourselves new awareness.

We begin in the familiar landscape of the wilderness with the tempter's questions to Jesus. As the weeks of Lent come and go, our growing awareness shifts from Jesus to Nicodemus' assurance of God's deep care and self-giving love in the winds of change and new birth. We continue to find a new awareness of ourselves in the questions asked of and by the Samaritan woman and by the one born blind in the gospel of John. If we didn't notice it before, we begin to notice that there are companions in the wilderness who encourage our survival.

Just before we enter Jerusalem on a road paved with branches and cloaks, we find ourselves in the wilderness of grief, asking harrowing questions of God and ourselves. At that tomb, we hear a call to unbind each other. No one asks these questions alone, but we share in the dream of what new life will be after all that has happened. It is vision and hope that we join the chorus of voices that cry for justice on Palm/Passion Sunday. Here, we realize how much we have changed and continue the transformation beyond the cross to the empty tomb. Easter arrives dressed in white and gold and a flurry of Alleluias. It is a feast for our senses when Mary becomes the first witness to the resurrection of Jesus. Thomas uses his hands to proclaim his faith, and two see the risen Christ when bread is broken and shared. We come into our senses as we consider life that continues beyond the tomb, beyond doubt, beyond trials.



## ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP SERVICE, FEBRUARY 22 AT 6:30 P.M.

The Season of Lent begins on the last Wednesday of the month, February 22. You are invited to begin the season with our Ash Wednesday Worship Service at 6:30 p.m. Together we can set out on our forty-day journey toward Easter in the sanctuary with a moving and meaningful evening service. Ash Wednesday worship is a simple, yet profound service of scripture, song, prayers, and the imposition of ashes as a sign of our frail humanity. It is a worship service in which we acknowledge our faults and failings, in order that we might truly experience God's acceptance and overflowing love.