

Online engagement ideas for Lent

Lent is a time of reflection. It is also a time many individuals seek ways to deepen their spiritual relationships. Here are some creative ways churches can engage members and potential visitors during Lent.

Photo-a-Day Meditation: This spiritual practice asks people to focus on a particular word or theme each day during Lent, inviting participants to reflect on the theme and share a photo of something related on social media. Create your own Photo-a-Day challenge by choosing words and themes from the lectionary texts or from a sermon series you are planning. Create a graphic with the words for each day that is easily sharable on social media. Think about collecting images that your members submit and using them in sermon illustrations, slideshows or even a photo book of devotionals.

Online Fast: Invite congregants to unplug from cell phones, email and social media for a day a week or other designated time, giving them more time to read or pray during their “fast.” Challenge members to engage by different means, perhaps a handwritten note, thank you card, or letter for their children or spouse.

Stories of Faith: What is your favorite Scripture and why? Ask members if they would be willing to answer this question on video. Create simple one- or two-minute videos using a digital camera or smartphone. You can expand the scope of the videos to allow people to tell a significant story in the life of their faith. Post the videos each day online on a social media platform or your church website. Consider scheduling and pre-posting videos to save time.

Online Missions Experience: This might be a 40-day period of fundraising for a particular mission of the church (Imagine No Malaria, Global AIDS Fund, an Advance project, etc). It could also be a daily or weekly effort to raise awareness within your congregation.

40 Days Meditation: For each day of Lent, share a visual meditation via email or social media. Consider using stock photographs that go along with a daily meditation. Using an email service or third party social media platform, you can pre-post all these daily images and meditations to send to your community.

This is just a small batch of ideas for engaging others during this upcoming season. Hopefully this article will help you think of additional ways to deepen your congregation’s faith and extend the mission of your church.

Read more of this article at www.umcom.org.

— Gavin Richardson, United Methodist Communications

Ministers’ Convocation to be held May 8-10, 2017

Register now for Ministers’ Convocation, “Making Space for Yourself and Others,” which will be held May 8-10 at Virginia Crossings Wyndham Hotel & Conference Center. Workshop information is now available. Visit <http://www.vaumc.org/MinistersConvocation> for more information.

March issue of Advocate shares about UM history, polity

The United Methodist Church is in the midst of adjustment as followers reevaluate their beliefs against those of the church’s especially in regards to the issue of human sexuality. In this issue, revisit what the church believes are and the history. The March *Advocate* issue is great for new members and confirmands as well as a refresher course for members. The *Advocate* is the official monthly magazine of the Virginia Conference. To subscribe to the *Advocate*—print, digital or both—call (804) 521-1110 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 110; email Advocate@vaumc.org; or go to www.vaumc.org/advocate.

Newest 3-minute stir video shares about call

The Rev. Lindsey Baynham shares about being called in the newest 3-minute stir video. Baynham is Associate Director for Call, Candidacy & Discernment in the conference center. 3 Minute Stir, a concept created by Paulo Lopes, conference director of Ministries with Young People, and Nick Ruxton, conference videographer, is a new VAUMC resource developing from Bishop Lewis’ charge to Virginia to “stir up the gifts” at her Welcoming Service in September. Each of these 3-minute videos are a reengagement with Scripture-based and relatable messages to be shared with small groups or youth groups. Find videos on YouTube by entering in the search bar “3 minute stir.”

Bishop’s Convocation on Prayer to be held Apr. 1, 2017

Registration is now open for The Bishop’s Convocation on Prayer on Apr. 1, 2017. The event will take place at Trinity UMC in Richmond with the Rev. Juanita Rasmus acting as plenary speaker. Fee is \$10 and participants will get to choose two workshops to attend. A workshop in Spanish is also being offered. To learn more about the event, visit www.vaumc.org and click on “conference calendar,” then navigate to the corresponding event date.

Quote of the Week

“Reader, if thou art constrain’d to bless the instrument, give God the glory.”

— *Just a section of text from John Wesley’s epitaph. The founder of Methodism died in 1791 at age 88. He is buried at Wesley’s Chapel in London. Wesley’s tombstone reflects the humility of one such as Moses who understood his role as an instrument in God’s hands.*

Published weekly, the electronic *Sunday Advocate* summarizes news events affecting Virginia United Methodists and serves as a link to the in-depth reporting of the *Virginia United Methodist Advocate*, the official magazine of the Virginia Conference. To subscribe to the monthly *Virginia Advocate* magazine, call (804) 521-1110 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 110; or e-mail Advocate@vaumc.org. Unless indicated, all news compiled courtesy of the *Virginia Advocate*, the weekly *e-Advocate* or United Methodist News Service.