

Church's traditions of Lent begin this week

By Rev. Sharonda Medina

What is Ash Wednesday?

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. In the tradition of the United Methodist church, it marks the beginning of a period of reflection and repentance. In the Bible, sprinkling oneself with ashes was traditionally a sign of one's sorrow for having committed sins. In the Christian tradition, Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of preparation for the understanding of the death and resurrection of Christ. Ashes from the palms used

in the previous year's Palm Sunday celebration are used to mark a cross on the forehead of each worshiper.

What is Lent?

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday (the day before Easter). Lent comes from the Anglo Saxon word lencten, which means "spring."

The forty days represent the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing

to begin his ministry. Lent is a time of repentance, fasting and preparation for the coming of Easter. It is a time of self-examination and reflection.

In the early church, Lent was a time to prepare new converts for baptism. Today, Christians often choose to give up something or to take up something during this time period to help them focus on their relationship with God.

Sundays in Lent are not counted in the forty days, because each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter," and the rever-

ent spirit of Lent is tempered with joyful anticipation of the Resurrection.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Sharonda Medina serves as Associate Pastor for First United Methodist Church of Clinton. FUMC will have a casual Come-and-Go imposition of ashes from 6:30 a.m. until 8 a.m. on Ash Wednesday, March 6, as well as their Traditions Worship Service at 6 p.m.

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