



The Central Connection

MESSAGES & OPPORTUNITIES FROM CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH TO YOU!

April 2010

SCARS

No one expected to see Jesus again after his crucifixion. He was completely dead. Even though he had talked with his disciples about resurrection, nothing they had experienced in their lives prepared them for seeing Jesus alive again. Risen, he was changed, but still Jesus. He was alive and still carrying the scars of crucifixion, but not confined by death or nails or hatred.

So we, too, who live by faith in the risen Lord, now participate in his victory over sin and death. We, too, are raised to new life, both in this life and the resurrection life to come. And some of us bear the scars of past wounds. Living the resurrection life does not leave us without the marks of having lived through hardships, abuse, trials, and challenges. We can carry our emotional, spiritual and physical scars as reminders that in the power of the risen Christ, God also overcomes our places of “death” and raises us to new life.

Amy Carmichael was an Irish missionary to the orphans of India. In the 1920’s she rescued hundreds of orphaned children—especially little girls who would have been dedicated to Hindu gods for use in sexual temple rituals.



One day in 1931, she fell, suffering fractures that would cripple her for the rest of her life. Not one to be discouraged or bitter when faced with pain or persecution, Amy now had the opportunity to demonstrate God’s faithfulness to even more people: Because her physical limitations kept her confined to bed, she

now had the time to write books, poems and letters that were translated and shared around the world.

One of her poems is entitled “No Scar?” The last stanza reads:

No wound? No scar?
Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,
And pierced are the feet that follow Me.
But thine are whole; can he have followed far
Who has no wound or scar?

Our scars can be places of identification with others who are wounded and with our Lord. No matter what life has held for us, or what difficulties we may face in the future, we continue to live in the power of the resurrection—the power of God to raise us from whatever deaths we have experienced into new life, scars and all.

In the strength of His resurrection,
Pastor Stephanie

Single Mingle 2010

single mingle \

'sin-gəl-, min-gəl \ *noun* :

an informal group of single adults who enjoy lots of laughs, each other's good company, and delicious food (as evidenced by the following eating—er, I mean—"activity" schedule)!



All single adults are invited to one or all events.

No dues, no business sessions, reservations not required, just friends enjoying a pleasant meal ("Dutch-treat"). So, join us when you can—as often as you can, and please bring a friend or two along!

April 18	Lunch after church (Shoney's)	August	Attend Annual Church Picnic
May 16	Lunch after church (Japanese Steakhouse)	Aug. 26 Thursday	5:15 p.m. Meet at Terry Court to car pool to Pano's for dinner at 6:00 p.m.
June 13	Lunch after church (Baja Bean)	Sept. 12	Lunch after church (Maria's Italian Restaurant)
June 28 Monday	6:00 p.m. Covered-dish dinner near Gazebo in Gypsy Hill Park; Then attend Stonewall Band Concert.	Oct. 10	Lunch after church (Texas Steak House)
July 11	Lunch after church (Boston Beanery)	Nov. 14	Lunch after church (Depot Grille)
July 29 Thursday	Dinner at T-Bone Tooter Meet at Christ UMC at 5:30 p.m. to car pool.	Dec. 12	Lunch after church (Mill Street Grill)

Please mark your calendar – also check your bulletin and/or newsletters for possible changes. If you have questions concerning any of the activities please call a committee member.

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The Central Connection is the monthly newsletter of Central United Methodist Church, Lewis and Beverley Streets, Staunton, VA.

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IN MINISTRY

The Mission of Central UMC is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Resident Bishop Charlene Payne Kammerer
District Superintendent Kathleen Overby Webster
Pastor Stephanie M. Sault
Pastoral Assistant Daniel K. Purdom
Retired Missionary Professor Hunter P. Mabry
Professor MBC Kenneth A. Beals
Minister of Music/Organist Sherry von Oeyen
Church Secretary Agnes Campbell
Custodian Janet Nuckles

Lenten & Easter Schedule



MAUNDY THURSDAY – April 1

7:30 p.m. (Please note time change)

On Maundy Thursday for the last two years we have been inspired and moved by a dramatic representation of the Last Supper. This year we will be focusing on the “new commandment” to love one another as Jesus has loved us. When Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, he was showing the kind of servant love we are to demonstrate. Therefore, during this year’s worship service we will have the opportunity to practice foot washing and/or hand washing as signs of servanthood, and also participate in Holy Communion. Even if you are not quite ready to participate in foot washing, please come to worship together and observe this powerful sign of our call to discipleship. Maundy Thursday Worship will be held at 7:30 p.m. on April 1.

In one recent survey, 96% of people who do not attend church and do not profess to be Christian are at least somewhat likely to attend church if they are invited.

Stated another way:

More than nine out of 10 of the unchurched said they would be likely to come to church if they were invited.

PLEASE invite someone!

Good Friday – April 2

Tenebrae Service 7:30 p.m.

(Please note time change)

The Office of Tenebrae (the name means “darkness” or “shadows”) is a Holy Week devotion, which dates back to the seventh or eighth century A.D. and is characterized by the successive extinguishing of candles as the service progresses.

The stations of the Cross mark the last journey of Jesus through Jerusalem to Golgotha.

EASTER — April 11

Morning Worship Service

11:00 a.m.

Invite your family, friends, and neighbors to the greatest celebration of the Christian year!



EASTER OFFERING

How shall I celebrate the wonderful

LAYWITNESS STORY AT WESLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

As Friday evening traffic moved along the highway in front of Wesley United Methodist Church, cars with license plates from four states turned into the driveway. As visiting lay persons entered the building, they began mingling with church members. Soon the fellowship hall was buzzing with enthusiastic conversation. It was like the beginning of a family reunion, although we had never met the Lay team members before. "They talked to us as if we were already friends and made us feel comfortable," said one church member. Members arrived with food for the potluck dinner that would officially begin our Mission Weekend. We said grace and the mission began. People filled the fellowship hall and several classrooms.

The idea to host a Mission Weekend originated a year earlier when my wife and I were at a workshop with the person who would later become the coordinator of our mission. We shared the frustrations we and the church had experienced in trying different renewal strategies. He suggested a Lay Mission, a strategy whereby laity shares stories of lasting life changes through the power of the living Christ. He said that it also includes a follow-up for renewal. Although new to us, we decided to try it.

We were encouraged by a retired pastor in our church who had served churches that had hosted missions and by a member who had been in a church that held one.

"Feeling a real need for a spiritual uplifting, I was glad when we decided to have a Lay Mission Weekend," said the chairperson. "Excitement began to build as we made our preparations. By the time the team members arrived we were anxious to begin."



Team members shared their life stories, especially the impact Jesus Christ had made in their relationships with God, neighbors, church members, spouses, and children.

We were able to arrange a date in September. The planning committee, using the Lay Mission Handbook, worked to ensure the success of the mission and promoted their dreams for the spiritual renewal of our church. At the outset, someone volunteered to arrange housing for the visiting team members. Despite the enthusiasm of our planning committee, one nagging question kept surfacing: What if nobody comes?

But they did. Our mission was undergirded with prayer by the committee and by individuals. These prayers were answered during the mission and the weeks following.

So, what did happen after the potluck dinner on Friday? Singing, for one. We sang many of the traditional favorites such as *Amazing Grace*, as well as modern choruses. As we sang *It's Love That Makes the World Go 'Round*, we passed the peace and love of our Lord with one another. Team members shared their life stories, especially the impact Jesus Christ had made in their relationships with God, neighbors, church members, spouses, and children. Many of our members could relate to the team members' struggles and faith journeys, since they'd had similar experiences. They were also encouraged by the team members' reliance upon Christ to enable them to live life with its daily trials and to remain faithful disciples. Following the gathering, our youth met with youth from the visiting team for special activities and discussions.

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Adults met in classrooms to discuss faith issues in small groups. Children gathered for their own programs.

"I discovered that I'm not the only one with doubts, fears, and questions concerning faith. I've found strength in Christ through Christian relationships within the group as we gathered in Christ's name. It's exciting as we hear prayers that have been answered!"

On Saturday night, in one of these groups a young woman experienced assurance. During the discussion she realized she was still struggling with her own faith questions. "The assurance that I was accepted and loved by God who would enable me to have eternal life just came to me," she said. During Sunday worship she was "filled with joy." She now knows and relates the difference between hearing about assurance and experiencing it; she is also becoming more open to faith-sharing.

Many of our members enjoyed going home on Friday and Saturday nights so they could spend time with the team members who were staying with them in their homes. "They were the nicest people I've ever met," said an elderly widow who hosted a couple. "They even adopted me as their mother!" Another couple enjoyed hosting their guests because "they have such a positive outlook on life."

Sunday morning worship was inspiring. The team coordinator shared his faith story and invited persons to profess their faith and commit themselves to be faithful disciples. One young woman who had visited our church the previous Sunday renewed her commitment and experienced God's Spirit as she prayed at the chancel rail.

After the team's departure evening we sometime later gathered for the Lay Mission evaluation and celebration service. We sang hymns; two youth were baptized. The chairperson of our administrative council (who had planned to attend the mission whether or not anyone else did) stood and said, "For some time, I had felt the need to recommit myself to Christ but tried to deny it. I rationalized, "I'm a leader in the church so why do I need it?" I was relieved to finally face the need to renew my faith. Not that I had strayed from God,

but I had drifted into a comfortable routine of attending church and presiding at meetings without having any spiritual vitality."

During the meeting we discussed forming ongoing small groups; two groups began that very night. "Since the Lay Mission Weekend, my husband and I meet with two other retired couples one afternoon a week for Bible study, prayer, and sharing," said our church's planning committee chairperson. "This is uplifting. Had it not been for the "weekend", we wouldn't have had this special time to study and pray together."

A small group for young adults formed. "This is the best thing that ever happened to me," said one member. "I discovered that I'm not the only one with doubts, fears, and questions concerning faith. I've found strength in Christ through Christian relationships within the group as we gathered in Christ's name. It's exciting as we hear prayers that have been answered!"

Again and again, visitors say they like the friendly atmosphere in our worship services. And they are drawn by the hunger for spiritual growth that our members exhibit. Members are inviting friends and neighbors to our church. We're growing numerically as well as spiritually.

The Lay Mission Weekend has had a positive, long-lasting impact on our church. Renewed spiritual vitality is evident in many aspects of church life. There's a new spirit of enthusiasm in worship services. Persons are looking for spiritual growth through Bible study, prayer, and fellowship. Small groups offer discussions about personal spiritual journeys, as well as support for everyday struggles. We have a renewed interest in ministry in the community. Members are finding ways to share their faith stories at home and in the workplace. God is working in and through our church. We're praying that your church will also be renewed as you participate in your "New Beginnings Weekend".

—Story shared by Pastor Steve Johnson, Wesley UMC

WHAT WOULD IT MEAN IF THIS BECOMES CENTRAL'S STORY?

BISHOP'S CONVOCATION ON CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION



“Authentic Christian faith leads us to care for *all* of God’s creation” was the main theme echoing throughout the recent Bishop’s Convocation on “Caring For God’s Creation” that we attended on February 27th in the excellent facilities of the River Road UMC, Richmond.

Bishop Charlene Kammerer gave a helpful introduction to a significant new document from the UM Council of Bishops, “God’s Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action.” This document builds on the Bishops’ 1986 document *In Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Threat and a Just Peace*, and identifies three interrelated global threats that people of faith and goodwill must confront: pandemic poverty and disease, environmental degradation and climate change, and a world awash with weapons and violence.

We found the session on Biblical Foundations for Creation Care to be very stimulating. This was led by Rev. Pat Watkins, UM missionary and Executive Director of Caretakers of God’s Creation. Noting the threats we face today, he compared our relationships to a three-legged stool: a relationship with God, a relationship with our planet Earth that God has created, and a relationship with each other – and challenged us to live out these biblical relationships with integrity.

A wide variety of workshops provided opportunities for gaining practical skills – such as “What Other Churches Are Doing”, “Food and God’s Creation”, “Creation Care in the Wesleyan Tradition”, “Earn the Energy Star Label for your Church” and “The Pastor’s Role in Growing a Green Church Culture.”

The final session can be best described as a passionate discussion of the need for a faith-based shift of vision that takes this world seriously – and sharing that vision in the public square – led by Rev. Richard Cizik, founder and president of the New Evangelicals, a movement defined by openness to new ideas, a broader agenda of biblical concerns, civility in the public square, and a strategy for change devoted to the common good.

It was a privilege for us to attend this event. We have become increasingly convinced that the new document from the Council of Bishops, “God’s Renewed Creation,” is enormously important – especially as it identifies and attempts to respond to the triple threat of pandemic poverty and disease, environmental degradation and climate change, and a world awash with weapons and violence. A six-session guide has been prepared to help groups in local churches study the document and its implications. We will be glad to lead such a study sometime after Easter. If you are interested, please let us know at egama34@gmail.com or hmabry@gmail.com, or 540-943-5682 or inform the church office at 886-3441. We will then contact all interested persons and find what dates and times will work best.

– Esther and Hunter Mabry

REAL CHANGE FOR REAL PEOPLE: MOVING BEYOND BROKE



The Board of Church and Society, in partnership with Interfaith Center for Public Policy, will sponsor a

workshop to train regional facilitators for future regional workshops to address the injustice of poverty. The training will take place April 17, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., at the Virginia United Methodist Conference Center in Glen Allen. A light lunch will be provided.

The first regional workshop is scheduled for May 1, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon at Calvary UMC, 1637 Williamsburg Rd, Richmond. This workshop will address the issues of unemployment insurance, living wage, and predatory lending. The Social Principles, Scripture and living testimonies will be integrated in the content of this workshop. These workshops will give participants an opportunity to analyze and discuss major holes in Virginia's unemployment insurance program and predatory lending laws; to become effective advocates initiating systemic change; and also to enter the lives of the "least of these."

For more info e-mail Marilyn Heckstall at mheckstall@comcast.net. For lunch reservations, e-mail Carla Sterns: revcarla3@yahoo.com by Apr.9.

THE UNITED METHODIST WOMEN —ANSWERING THE CALL

—By Luz M. de Tablan

This Lenten Season we have the opportunity to recall how our Lord Jesus Christ suffered, nailed on the cross and died at Calvary. We remember how God's purpose to save and redeem the world from the bondage of sins had been accomplished and fulfilled through the blood of Jesus Christ. This is the result of our Lord Jesus Christ answering the call of God the Father for the salvation of humankind.



Sometimes we wonder and we questioned why God allowed His only Son to die for the sins of others, and why He let Him experience trials and difficulties. But God is God and He knows what He wants; and He has His divine plan in mind. When He calls, He always makes His will clear. Jesus Christ was called and He heeded His Father's call. Though it caused His death on the cross, it ended up in the redemption of our sins.

Likewise, the United Methodist Women are called for a great PURPOSE ---to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church. We, United Methodist Women, have no doubt that God has called us, because we accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and know He has a purpose for our lives. We are His living testimony, and our faith could stir others to trust and obey His will. God never calls us to do things in our own strength; we know that His mighty hand is our sufficiency. When God calls, we may not know all the details, but we will know that He has called us. There is no need for us to worry about how we will accomplish the work God has given us, because God always equips those He calls. God will prepare us for the responsibility He's placed with us. Yes, there were times that we felt overwhelmed and want to give up, but we cried out to God, and He faithfully refreshed and encouraged us. Nothing this life holds can compare to God's love and grace. Godly responsibility requires confidence in God, courage to go forward even though the way may not be clear; and commitment to Jesus Christ.

United Methodist Women find encouragement in the fact that we are never left alone to handle a situation without God. He is with us leading, guiding, reassuring, and reminding us of His intimate love and care at every turn. Only by God's strength can we do what He has called us to do. God uses all who make themselves available to Him regardless of age. Are you prepared to answer His call?



LECTIONARY READINGS

April 4, Easter Day

Acts 10:34-43

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 (UMH 839)

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

John 20:1-18 or

Luke 24:1-12

April 11

Acts 5:27-32

Psalm 150 (UMH 862)

Revelation 1:4-8

John 20:19-31

April 18

Acts 9:1-6 (7-20)

Psalm 30 (UMH 762)

Revelation 5:11-14

John 21:1-19

April 25

Acts 9:36-43

Psalm 23 (UMH 754)

Revelation 7:9-17

John 10:22-3

Native American Ministries Sunday!

On April 25 we will join with other United Methodist Churches throughout the United States in celebrating Native American Ministries Sunday. There will be two parts to our celebration:



The Prayer Shawl Ministry was started in 1997 or 1998 by two women and has now spread all over the United States in different organizations and churches including the United Methodist Church.

Shawls are knitted or crocheted, blessed in church, and given to persons for the purpose of expressing love and compassion to members of the church who are sick, are recovering from illness or surgery, have experienced death in the family, or for any occasion at all to remind them at all times that God cares and loves them. They are knitted in a prayerful manner endowing what is being done with thoughts of love and compassion, sympathy, or condolence depending on the person's needs. If this is a ministry through the church, the finished shawls are displayed at the altar and the pastor prays and blesses them before they are given out. The shawls may be packed with poems or prayers that will convey feelings of love, compassion, sympathy, wishes of quick recovery from illness, or for newborn babies and their mothers. They may be given out to members of the church, to your friends or relatives in need, or to others in the community who need the comfort of knowing that there are people who care and embody the limitless love of our God.

Rebekah Circle is a small circle, and we'd like to invite persons in the congregation who knit or crochet to join us in this project. The main purpose will be to create shawls, lap blankets, baby blankets, or whatever one might be interested in doing.

Please let me know of your interest or let the pastor or Agnes know so that we might be able to determine what day and time the group would meet. My phone no is 540-943-5682 or 540-448-3656.

—Esther Mabry

- 1. Recognizing and honoring the contribution of Native Americans to the church and society.** We anticipate having an interesting display of books and periodicals about Native American life and culture, along with artifacts and cultural items, and possibly one or more persons of American Indian heritage who live in our area. Do you have any books, magazines, artifacts or other cultural items you could loan for this display? Do you know of any persons of American Indian heritage who live in our area? If so, please inform Hunter Mabry, our Native American Ministries representative, or the church office, before April 20th. Hunter can be contacted at 943-5682 or hmabry@gmail.com; the church office number is 886-3441.
- 2. Supporting Native American Ministries will be the other part of our April 25th celebration.** For more than twenty years a special offering, one of six special church-wide offerings for designated causes, has been received to help support Native American ministries. Fifty percent of the offering received at Central will go toward support of Native American Ministries in the Virginia Conference. The other fifty percent will be used to provide scholarships for American Indians studying in our United Methodist seminaries and to support the Native American Urban Initiative of our General Board of Global Ministries.

Please share, as you are able, to enrich our display on April 25, and to support Native American ministries!

MUSIC NOTES

Because I live, you also will live. (John 14:19)



For the past 3 decades or so, the music of Gloria and Bill Gaither has been an important part of evangelical hymnody. The song that is especially familiar and one that reflects their own belief that the principle of the resurrection of Jesus is part of everything that we do from day to day is "Because He Lives."

Bill Gaither recalls the circumstances that prompted the writing of this favorite:

We wrote "Because He Lives" after a period of time when we had had a kind of dry spell and hadn't written any songs for a while...At the end of the 1960's, our country was going through some great turmoil with the height of the drug culture, and the whole "God is Dead" theory was running wild in our country. Also it was the peak of the Vietnam war. During that time our little son was born—at least Gloria was expecting him. I can remember at the time we thought, "Brother, this is really a poor time to bring a child into the world." At times we were even quite discouraged by the whole thing. And then Benjy did come. We had two little girls whom we love very much, but this was our first son, and so that lyric came to us, "How sweet to hold our new-born baby and feel the pride and joy he gives, but better still the calm assurance that this child can face uncertain days because Christ lives." And it gave us the courage to say, "Because Christ lives we can face tomorrow" and keep our heads high.

—from *Amazing Grace—Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions* by Kenneth W. Osbeck

Live in the joyous confidence that the living, victorious Christ is guiding your life. Keep this hymn in your hearts as you go from day to day.

—Sherry von Oeyen, Minister of Music

Because He Lives

God sent His Son--they called Him Jesus;
He came to love, heal and forgive;
He lived and died to buy my pardon;
an empty grave is there to prove
my Savior lives.

How sweet to hold a new-born baby
and feel the pride and joy he gives;
But greater still the calm assurance:
This child can face uncertain days
because Christ lives.

And then one day I'll cross the river;
I'll fight life's final war with pain;
And then, as death gives way to victory,
I'll see the lights of glory--and I'll
know He lives.

Chorus:
Because He lives I can face tomorrow,
because He lives all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future
and life is worth the living—
just because He lives.

©Gloria and William J. Gaither, 1971

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF GOD'S KIDS



On Palm Sunday, a five-year old boy had to stay home with a sore throat, and missed church. When the family returned home, they were carrying several palm branches.

When the boy asked what the branches were for, his mother told him, "People held them over Jesus' head as He walked by."

"Wouldn't you know it!" the boy fumed. "The one Sunday I don't go, *He* shows up!"

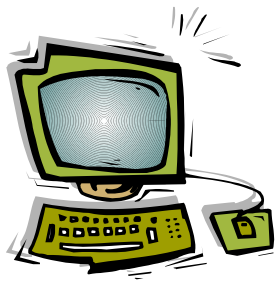
—Columnist Smiley Anders, Baton Rouge (LA) *Advocate*
April 2010 ©Joyful Noiseletter.com

LIBRARY NEWS

Have you checked out the Church Library lately?

The Library Committee has been hard at work organizing, cataloging, and assessing needs.

Please read the new “Church Library Statement of Policy” below—and be sure to check out all the great resources!



CHURCH LIBRARY STATEMENT OF POLICY

The purpose of the church library is to fill a niche that the local library does not provide. Resources for children, youth and adults of our congregation will focus on our United Methodist heritage so that we may grow in our Christian understanding.

This will be a self-serve library, with the user checking out his/her own selections. Parents and teachers are asked to oversee and assist younger children with checking out items and to help monitor the return of those items in a timely manner.

The library computer offers internet access.

A television has also been set up for videos. We have a great collection.

Materials may be checked out by using the check-out sheet on the library table.

The sheet should be filled in with your name, date, phone number, and a list of materials checked out.

Items are due back in 2 weeks. Again fill in the sheet with the return date.

Place items in the crate labeled “Returns” so that they can be re-shelved by the library committee.

Items being donated to the Church Library will be reviewed by the committee to determine suitability. If you want to donate items, please call the church office or one of the library committee members.

Current members of the committee are Dan Purdom, Mary Ann Mason, Esther Mabry, Jean Smith, and Vicki Printy. If you have any interest in helping out, please join us. Is there where your talent lies?

STOP HUNGER NOW



Pastor Stephanie and Lila help assemble meals.

On Saturday, March 20, about 80 people from at least 6 different area churches gathered at Christ UMC to package meals for Stop Hunger Now. These meals consist of high protein soy meal, dehydrated vegetables, chicken protein and rice, which when reconstituted and cooked provides a low cost nutritious meal for six people. This organization sends emergency food to school lunch programs around the world and to people in areas hit by natural disasters.

On Saturday, we thought we were going to package meals for the people of Haiti, but Stop Hunger Now has already provided several million meals for Haiti. So we packaged 10,400 meals for a school lunch program in the Ivory Coast (enough for 62,400 people). It has been determined that when school meals are provided for the children, the girls ages 11-14 are more apt to stay in school, instead of getting married and having children at that early age. We had a great deal of fun, enjoyed Christian fellowship, and helped Stop Hunger Now! Thanks to everyone who participated.

Quote:

I've learned that if you're going to pray
about something, why worry?
If you're going to worry, why pray?

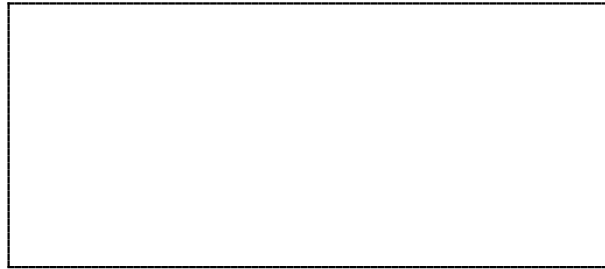
—Author Unknown

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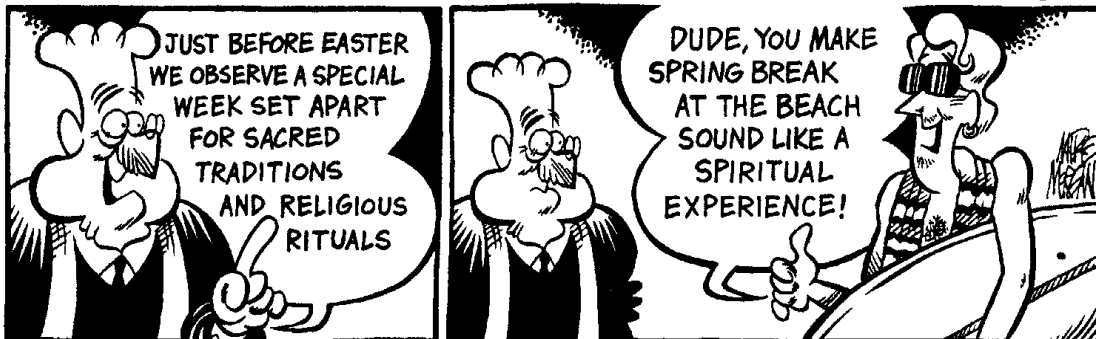
NEW BEGINNINGS WEEKEND

APRIL 16-18

SEE INFO INSIDE!

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE

By Mike Morgan



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