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Palm Sunday Begins Easter Week

MARCH 31ST 2012 BY UNKNOWN

Palm Sunday Begins Easter Week

*By Annabeth Miller,
ShowMe Times Editor*

Believers throughout the world begin a week-long journey this Sunday toward the high point of the Christian year, Easter, next Sunday, April 8.

This Sunday's observance of Palm Sunday begins the seven days of Holy Week - a week commemorating Jesus' last week on earth. The week begins on a high, marking Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and goes through soul-searching moments of the Last Supper on Holy Thursday, the solemnity of Good Friday and finally the triumph of Easter morning.

Sunday's Palm Sunday services observe the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem that was marked by the crowds who were in the ancient city for the Passover. The people with the waving of palm branches and proclaiming him as the messianic king greeted him. The Gospels tell that Jesus rode into the city on a donkey, enacting the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, and in so doing also emphasized the humility that was to characterize the Kingdom he proclaimed. The irony of it all is that in five days the same crowd would cry for Jesus' execution.

"I think Palm Sunday was more about calculated courage than anything else," said the Rev. Fred Leist incoming Southeast District superintendent of the United Methodist Church. "Jesus had to know what would happen to him in Jerusalem, and yet he went into Jerusalem with the pomp and the crowd waving palm branches. He wasn't unaware of what would happen."

Leist said there is a verse that talks of how Jesus's face "was set like a flint toward Jerusalem", meaning that he was determined in his resolve.

"In one week's time he went from the palm branches to palm prints in his hands," Leist added, referring to the marks made in Jesus' hands at the crucifixion.

The Thursday of Holy Week is marked with Maundy Thursday, or Holy Thursday, observances. The day marks a number of events that were clustered together on this last day before Jesus was arrested. These include the last meal he shared with disciples, the betrayal by Judas, Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane while the disciples fell asleep, and his being arrested by Roman soldiers.

On Thursday after the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples came together to share what was the Passover meal, observing the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt when death "passed over" the Hebrew homes as the tenth plague fell upon

the Egyptians. It was later that night, after the meal, as Jesus and the disciples were praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Jesus was arrested and taken to the house of Caiaphas the High Priest. On Friday he would die.

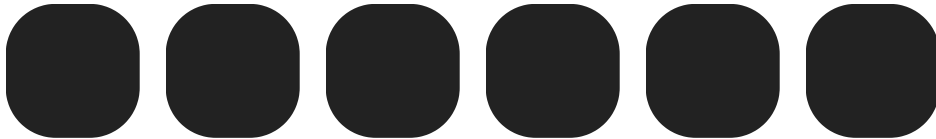
These are days in which Christians are present to the great events of the last hours of Jesus' earthly life and they go through them, as he did, step by step, beginning that Last Supper and night of agonized prayer in the Garden.

Thursday is also known as "Maundy Thursday." The term 'maundy' is from the Latin *Mandatum novum do vocis* - It was on this night that that Jesus gave his followers a "new" mandate to follow: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, you also out to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

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'The Vow': A Real Love Story Of Faith

FEBRUARY 24TH 2012 BY UNKNOWN

['The Vow': A Real Love Story Of Faith](#)

*By Kathy L. Gilbert,
UM News Service*

How seriously do you take the vow, “till death do us part?”

If you look at the statistics — half of all first-time marriages end in divorce — it seems not too many people say “I do” forever.

The Vow, a movie based on [Kim and Krickitt Carpenter’s story](#), debuted Feb. 10 and was the top movie of the weekend, making \$41.7 million. However, the romantic movie is not even close to telling the true story of faith and commitment that has kept the Carpenters devoted to each other for 20 years.

Their saga began 10 weeks after their wedding on Sept. 18, 1993. They were in a serious automobile accident that left Krickitt with no memories of her husband or their new marriage. She suffered a severe brain trauma that wiped out 18 months of her life — the entire time she and Kim met, dated and married.

While he was still madly in love with her, he was a stranger she wanted nothing to do with.

The glue that kept them together was their faith in Christ and the promise they had made before God.

The Carpenters attend [First United Methodist Church in Farmington, N.M.](#)

“Both of us know unconditionally we would not have made it through this ordeal without the Lord being in the center of it all,” Kim Carpenter told United Methodist News Service.

Krickitt spent months in a coma and then months more in physical therapy, but she has never regained those 18 months of memory. Her recovery was slow, her personality changed and at times she told Kim she hated him.

“At a low point in my life, I didn’t think this marriage was going to work. I didn’t have the faith that we were going to make it,” Kim said. “At the same time, I wasn’t going to leave her in the state she was in; I was vowing to stay with her.”

Story gets out

The media first learned of their story when a reporter came to interview Kim about his work as a baseball coach. In the course of the conversation, the story came out.

When the Carpenters renewed their vows and had a second wedding in 1996, it was a media circus. People were amazed and encouraged by their story, so Krickitt asked God to use their story to show others His amazing love and power.

They wrote a book about their story in 2000 and updated the book to coincide with the opening of the movie on Feb. 10.

“We enjoyed the movie but we were a little frustrated by the artistic license they took,” Kim said. “The dramatization in the movie was much greater, but it is hard to put 20 years of challenges into 103 minutes.”

Enduring faith

Krickitt’s faith never faltered, and she never considered divorce.

“A Scripture I really hold onto is Philippians 4:13: *‘I can do all things through him who strengthens me.’* I believed I was called according to God’s purpose, and I followed with my whole heart,” she said.

Kim said he has taken offense to some of the media reporting him as “heroic, courageous, manly.”

They insist they are an ordinary couple with two children, Danny and LeeAnn.

“It is amazing we live in a world that there is such a big deal made about a man and woman who simply did what we said we were going to do,” Kim said.

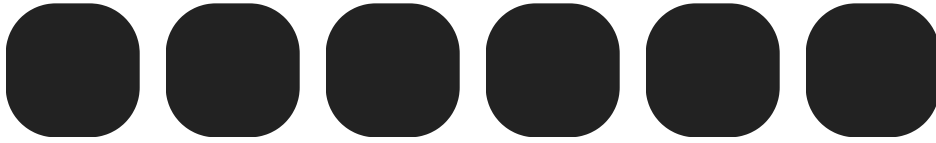
The book and the movie are providing a platform for them to talk about their faith.

“People all over the world are seeking something higher, some message,” Kim said. “We have been very grateful for the prayers and well wishes we have received. We know the Lord is not going to give us more than we can handle.”

Gilbert is a multimedia reporter for the young adult content team at United Methodist Communications, Nashville, Tenn.

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Warren Finds New Purpose: Weight Loss

FEBRUARY 09TH 2012 BY UNKNOWN

Warren Finds New Purpose: Weight Loss

LAKE FOREST, Calif.(RNS) - Megachurch pastor Rick Warren has become an outsized evangelical superstar: best-selling author of "The Purpose Driven Life" series, pastoral mentor and even political referee.

Now Warren is finding a new purpose: tackling his outsized waistline.

Warren, 58, says the revelation came about a year ago, during a marathon baptism session of about 800 people at Saddleback Church.

As he struggled to submerge members of his flock in the baptismal pool one by one, he realized his parishioners were heavy and that he, too, was fat, setting a terrible example.

Warren says his gradual weight gain -- about two to three pounds a year -- has added up over his 30 years as a pastor. To lose the extra pounds and inspire others to do the same, the former football player enlisted the help of three doctors.

Warren recruited a family physician, Dr. Mark Hyman; Dr. Mehmet Oz, New York Times best-selling author and host of NBC's "The Dr. Oz Show"; and Dr. Daniel Amen, a professor of psychiatry at the University of California, Irvine School of Medicine, and the lone Christian in the mix.

Together they launched "The Daniel Plan: God's Prescription for Your Health," named after a passage in the biblical Book of Daniel where the prophet and fellow Israelites refuse to accept "royal" food and wine from the Babylonian king, opting for water and simple vegetables instead.

The Daniel Plan encourages parishioners to link into Saddleback's vast network of small Bible study groups as support systems to get fit. Congregants exercise together at weekly classes such as "Walk & Worship" and "Pump & Praise." The three doctors offer tips on healthy eating and participants can create a health profile online.

Since the launch of the plan a year ago, more than 15,000 people have signed up and participants have shed a combined total of at least 250,000 pounds, according to the church. The 6-foot-3 Warren, who started the program at 295 pounds, shed 60 pounds in the first year.

Amen, a Saddleback member, said "churches are by and large a place of illness."

"I'm tired of fat football coaches and fat pastors," Amen said.

The advantage of losing weight in a church, he said, is the support of the built-in community. "When you're surrounded by other people who have the same values, and they have the same health habits, you're going to do so much better," he said.

Tammie Allen, 41, a mother of two and a Saddleback parishioner, joined the Daniel Plan with other members of her Monday night Bible study group.

"You can't do it alone, and you can't do it without God's power," said Allen, who started exercising with other Saddleback parishioners and chose more fruits and vegetables. So far, she's dropped 97 pounds.

"My daughter tells me all the time she loves being able to put her arms around me."

Jim and Melanie Black, who just celebrated their 11-year anniversary, joined the program together and have dropped their taste for fast food. They say the motivation behind the change is noteworthy -- it's not for vanity's sake.

"We're doing it so we can serve God at a higher level," said Jim Black.

Chiquita Seals, 45, a single mother of two, is so far the church's biggest loser.

"In the beginning I thought, "This is just another diet program," she said. Seals said she assumed she was "going to be eating rabbit food."

After all, Seals said, she had tried other diet programs like Jenny Craig and Weight Watchers, but this is the only one that stuck. When she began the Daniel Plan she weighed 267 pounds. She now weighs 135.

"All my life I thought that I could never be used by God," Seals confessed in a video posted on the church's website. But after losing the pounds, "I know I can be used by God."

To be sure, the program has attracted scrutiny. The church posted an online response to those who questioned the use of non-Christian doctors to help lead the program, saying that members "will never compromise our belief that Jesus is the only way to heaven or that the Bible is the 100 percent completely infallible and perfect Word of God."

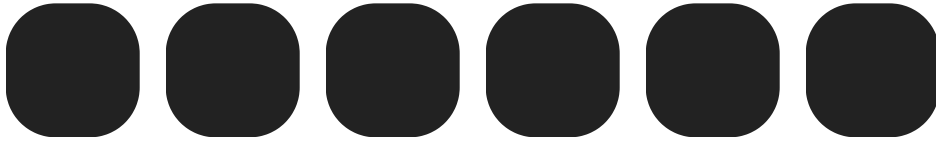
"These doctors are helping us as friends," the statement concludes. "But are in no way advising our church on spiritual matters."

For his part, Warren still hopes to drop another 30 pounds. And, in typical Warren fashion, he's spreading his message to other churches. The bottom line, Amen said, is those looking to lose weight are in luck.

"If for whatever reason your family won't do it with you," he said, "well, you now have the family of Saddleback."

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God Lives Under The Bed

JANUARY 21ST 2012 BY STAFF WRITER

[God Lives Under The Bed](#)

This is a shared email from George and Carol Ann Truelove of Faith Medical Clinic in Nan Sentrain, Haiti, W.I.. Missionaries and friends of area Dexter residents, they have committed their life's work to serving God in the Country of Haiti. George and Carol Ann are are pure people of faith and love for others.

Find more information on the Faith Medical Clinic via the websites of <http://www.haitihospital.org/> and <http://truthem.org/>.

You can also offer encouragement and support to their ministry by contacting George at his email of mfhaiti@aol.com.

GOD LIVES UNDER THE BED

I envy Kevin. My brother, Kevin, thinks God lives under his bed. At least that's what I heard him say one night. He was praying out loud in his dark bedroom, and I stopped to listen, 'Are you there, God?' He said. 'Where are you? Oh, I see. Under the bed...'

I giggled softly and tiptoed off to my own room. Kevin's unique perspectives are often a source of amusement. But that night something else lingered long after the humor. I realized for the first time the very different world Kevin lives in.

He was born 30 years ago, mentally disabled as a result of difficulties during labor. Apart from his size (he's 6-foot-2), there are few ways in which he is an adult.

He reasons and communicates with the capabilities of a 7-year-old, and he always will. He will probably always believe that God lives under his bed, that Santa Claus is the one who fills the space under our tree every Christmas and that airplanes stay up in the sky because angels carry them.

I remember wondering if Kevin realizes he is different. Is he ever dissatisfied with his monotonous life?

Up before dawn each day, off to work at a workshop for the disabled, home to walk our cocker spaniel, return to eat his favorite macaroni-and-cheese for dinner, and later to bed.

The only variation in the entire scheme is laundry, when he hovers excitedly over the washing machine like a mother with her newborn child.

He does not seem dissatisfied.

He lopes out to the bus every morning at 7:05, eager for a day of simple work.

He wrings his hands excitedly while the water boils on the stove before dinner, and he stays up late twice a week to gather our dirty laundry for his next day's laundry chores.

And Saturdays - oh, the bliss of Saturdays!

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That's the day my Dad takes Kevin to the airport to have a soft drink, watch the planes land, and speculate loudly on the destination of each passenger inside. 'That one's goin' to Chi-car-go!' Kevin shouts as he claps his hands.

His anticipation is so great he can hardly sleep on Friday nights.

And so goes his world of daily rituals and weekend field trips.

He doesn't know what it means to be discontented.

His life is simple.

He will never know the entanglements of wealth or power, and he does not care what brand of clothing he wears or what kind of food he eats.

His needs have always been met, and he never worries that one-day they may not be. His hands are diligent. Kevin is never more happy than when he is working. When he unloads the dishwasher or vacuums the carpet, his heart is completely in it.

He does not shrink from a job when it is begun, and he does not leave a job until it is finished. When his tasks are done, Kevin knows how to relax.

He is not obsessed with his work or the work of others. His heart is pure.

He still believes everyone tells the truth, promises must be kept, and when you are wrong, you apologize instead of argue.

Free from pride and unconcerned with appearances, Kevin is not afraid to cry when he is hurt, angry or sorry. He is always transparent, always sincere.

And he trusts God.

Not confined by intellectual reasoning, when he comes to Christ, he comes as a child. Kevin seems to know God - to really be friends with Him in a way that is difficult for an 'educated' person to grasp. God is his closest companion.

In my moments of doubt and frustrations with Christianity, I envy the security Kevin has in his simple faith. It is then that I am most willing to admit that he has some divine knowledge that rises above my mortal questions.

It is then I realize that perhaps he is not the one with the handicap. I am. My obligations, my fear, my pride, my circumstances - they all become disabilities when I do not trust them to God's care.

Who knows if Kevin comprehends things I can never learn? After all, he has spent his whole life in that kind of innocence, praying after dark and soaking up the goodness and love of God.

And one day, when the mysteries of heaven are opened, and we are all amazed at how close God really is to our hearts, I'll realize that God heard the simple prayers of a boy who believed that God lived under his bed.

Kevin won't be surprised at all!

FRIENDS ARE ANGELS WHO LIFT US TO OUR FEET WHEN OUR OUR WINGS HAVE TROUBLE REMEMBERING HOW TO FLY.

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Celebrate Epiphany With Joy, Renewal

JANUARY 06TH 2012 BY UNKNOWN

Celebrate Epiphany With Joy, Renewal

*By Deborah White
UM General Board Of Discipleship*

Wearing crowns and singing "We Three Kings," children walk the halls of Central United Methodist Church in Albuquerque, N.M., searching for Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. When they find the baby, they sing, "Oh come let us adore him."

The Epiphany celebration annually attracts 60 to 80 children, all eager to act out the story of the three wise men from Matthew's gospel.

"The trek through the church is the thing they love -- finding the baby Jesus like the three kings (did)," said Christy Albright, director of Christian education. "They understand the story better because they have lived it."

This is one of many ways churches celebrate Epiphany with joy, excitement and spiritual renewal. Epiphany, on Jan. 6, marks the coming of the wise men to the manger.

Epiphany and the season that follows celebrates God making himself known to us through Jesus. It is the season of revelation.

In the movement of the Church Year, Epiphany brings the Christmas cycle to its climax. In Advent, we long for God's appearing and remember his promises. In Christmastide we celebrate the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. In Epiphany, we mark various ways that Jesus manifested God's glory to all people.

Though Eastern and Western churches mark the time and days somewhat differently, in both cases we are celebrating the dawning and brilliance of the Light of the World.

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Scriptures and emphases in the time after Epiphany include:

- The baptism of Christ
- The calling of the disciples
- The teaching and training of the disciples
- The ministry and miracles of Jesus
- The transfiguration of Christ

"Epiphany is a major feast in the life of the Christian year and a major feast of the manifestation," said the Rev. Taylor Burton-Edwards, director of worship resources for the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship.

The symbol of Epiphany is light. It is a time to absorb the message of Christmas and to spread the light of God's love through Jesus.

Epiphany celebrations -- festive or contemplative -- are a good way for churches to launch the New Year. Some plan outreach activities from Epiphany until Ash Wednesday.

Some pastor have called for prayer and fasting during this time of Epiphany. Church leaders said practicing spiritual disciplines transformed their congregations.

"Prayer changes everything," said the Rev. Tina Carter, pastor of The Rock United Methodist Church in Cedar Park, Texas.

"Sometimes we put so much energy into the period before Jesus, into the wrapping, that we forget to do the unwrapping of both Jesus and ourselves," said the Rev. Bernard Ritchea, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Edna, Texas.

Epiphany rituals are important, said the Rev. Mary Alice Gran, director of children's ministries for the General Board of Discipleship.

"Frequently there is such an emphasis on planning Christmas we have that let-down feeling."

Illustration Above: Kathrin Burleson's painting portrays three revelatory events traditionally associated with the Feast of Epiphany. The water pot in the foreground recalls the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, where Jesus turned water into wine. The star in the distance was followed by Magi from the east, who ascertained by it that Israel's Messiah had been born. And the glorious light outshining the star speaks of the Babe to whom that star pointed.

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