



The Trumpet

FEBRUARY 2026

A publication of the East Woodstock Congregational Church, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



LENTEN SERIES WILL FEATURE EPISODES FROM
ROD SERLING'S *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*

"There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call the 'Twilight Zone.'"

Thus begins one of the most beloved and fascinating television programs of all time, narrated by its creator, Rod Serling. For our Lenten Series this year, we will be showing episodes from *The Twilight Zone*. For five spellbinding seasons (1959-1964), it kept audiences on the edge of their seats with its unique brand of chills and suspense.

Though outwardly a fantasy/science fiction series, *The Twilight Zone* really focused on everyday fears, superstitions, and prejudices that entangle all of us. Many of the ways in which these human foibles were depicted lent themselves to spiritual interpretation. Rod Serling, while writing the series, was an active member along with his wife, Carol, of the Unitarian Community Church of Santa Monica, California.

Serling was already an Emmy-winning television writer when he came up with the idea for *The Twilight Zone*. He was very sensitive to censorship, and thought that by creating his own series, he would have more control over the content. Television programs in the 1950s were very wary about addressing any subject deemed to be controversial.

In an interview with Mike Wallace, Serling told the story about how his two daughters loved to watch *Lassie*. One episode of

Lassie involved her giving birth to puppies. There was such a backlash by the television-viewing audience over this story that the director of *Lassie* had to promise never again to broach the subject of birth. Serling thought the hostile reaction to this story ridiculous. After all, giving birth is a natural and very beautiful part of nature.

Aware of this "wild lunatic fringe" of television watchers, as Serling called them, he would be very careful in the way that he addressed important societal issues. But he would not be intimidated either, not by the sponsors, the television executives, or by a viewing audience that was still largely conservative in its likes, especially Southern audiences.



Serling found the genres of fantasy and science fiction to be the ideal media to get his message across. He knew that if aliens were to talk about contentious subjects, there would not be such a violent reaction. This demonstrated Serling's creative mind for educating people on topics that needed to be addressed, but in a cautious, non-provocative way. Still the message is heard in these *Twilight Zone* episodes, such as the evils of racism, nuclear weapons, and mob hysteria.

When *The Twilight Zone* debuted in 1959, television was largely dominated by predictable Westerns, crime shows, and



Some Congregationalists wonder if they should commemorate Ash Wednesday and Lent. Somehow, these observances seem too “Catholic” for them. Ash Wednesday is the name given to the first day of the season of Lent. On this day (or night) the pastor applies ashes to the forehead or back of the hand. This ritual signifies the inner repentance of the person. But what is the history and meaning of this Christian holy day?

Ash Wednesday, or originally the “Day of Ashes,” is mentioned from at least the 8th century CE (Common Era). One of the earliest descriptions of Ash Wednesday is found in the writings of the Anglo-Saxon abbot, Aelfric (955-1020). In his *Lives of the Saints*, he writes, “We read in the books both in the Old Law and in the New that the men who repented of their sins bestrewed themselves with ashes and clothed their bodies with sackcloth. Now let us do this little at the beginning of our Lent that we strew ashes upon our heads to signify that we ought to repent of our sins during the Lenten fast.” Aelfric's writings confirm what we know from other sources that throughout the medieval period in Europe, ashes were sprinkled on the head rather than anointed on the forehead as many churches do today.

As Aelfric mentions, this pouring of ashes on the body symbolizing inward repentance or mourning is an ancient practice that goes back to biblical times. One of the earliest occurrences is found toward

the end of the Book of Job. Having encountered the wonderful mystery that is God, Job confesses, “Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6 NRSV). In the New Testament, Jesus alludes to the pouring of ashes on the self in Matthew 11:21: “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (NRSV).

In the typical Ash Wednesday service, Christians are invited to come forward to receive the imposition of ashes on their forehead or the back of the hand, prior to receiving Holy Communion. The priest or minister applies the ashes in the shape of a cross while speaking the words, “You are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19 NRSV). God said these words to Adam and Eve after they ate from the forbidden fruit and brought evil upon themselves. It was only after they had sinned against God that God told them of the reality of death. Before that, the first humans were innocent about death. The imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday reminds us of our own sinfulness and mortality, and thus the need to repent and become right with God. This is the first step on the Lenten journey that leads to Good Friday, which reminds us that through Christ's crucifixion, there is forgiveness of sins, and to Easter Sunday, which reminds us that through his resurrection, there is eternal life.

Lent is a season on the church calendar that lasts 40 days, from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday (in case you are counting on a calendar, Sundays are not included). The number “40” has symbolic meaning in the Bible, such as the 40-year wandering in the wilderness of the ancient Hebrews and the 40-day fast of Jesus in the desert while being tempted. “Forty” almost always means a time of testing in scripture. And so, the leaders of the Church wanted to retain that idea of trial or probation for the period of Lent. The word comes from the Middle English *lente*, which means “springtime,” named for the time of the year when it usually occurs.

Like Ash Wednesday, Lent has a long tradition in church history. It began as a period of preparation for Easter. The liturgical color for Lent is purple, the color of repentance and sorrow for sin.

The meaning of Lent since at least the fourth century was, first, to spend time in repentance and denial of self. All Christians were to examine their lives according to the Ten Commandments and other Christian precepts, and repent where necessary. They were to remember the ultimate sacrifice made on their behalf by their Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Second, Lent was a time of instruction and preparation for catechumens who wanted to become members of the Christian Church, similar to confirmands in our Congregational tradition. During Lent these students of the Christian faith would learn doctrine by studying the creeds and would be led step by step through prayer and other spiritual exercises. Finally, they would be baptized into the Christian Church and receive Holy Communion

PASTOR'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

for the first time in a joyous service either on Easter Eve or Easter Sunday.

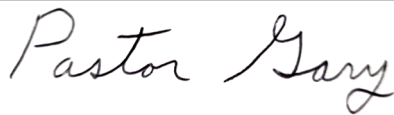
At the time of the Reformation in the 16th century, some Protestants wanted to eliminate observing Lent since it was not commanded by the Bible and was associated with Roman Catholicism. Interestingly Martin Luther, who began the Protestant Reformation, urged that Lent be commemorated as a valuable opportunity for the strengthening of faith.

Today Christians may no longer fast, but many still “give something up” during Lent, such as eating snack foods or refraining from the internet, as a way of showing self-denial. Of course, the time that would have been spent on these activities should instead be spent on spiritual self-examination and reflection.

Lent is not just for Roman Catholics. All Christians can benefit from this 40-day spiritual pilgrimage. Commit yourself this Lenten season to take the time to pray, read the Bible, perform acts of charity, and attend worship services.

East Woodstock Congregational Church will host an Ash Wednesday service on February 18 at 7:00pm with our sister churches, First Congregational Church, Woodstock, and Church of the Good Shepherd. In addition to ashes being dispensed, Communion will be served, a brief homily will be given, and choirs from all three churches will provide music. This is a wonderful opportunity to begin the Lenten season with a contrite heart and openness to spiritual renewal.

Blessings in Christ,



EWCC HOSTS ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE FEBRUARY 18 AT 7:00PM

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent. During this service, you will have the opportunity to receive ashes on your forehead (or back of the hand),

hear a brief homily, receive Holy Communion, and hear the combined choirs of our congregation, First Congregational Church, Woodstock, and Church of the Good Shepherd. Everyone is welcome, including youth and children.

FILM SERIES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

situation comedies. Few shows grappled with important social issues. The ideal suburban family was portrayed over and over again in programs such as *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *Leave It to Beaver*, and *Father Knows Best*. Even when these shows addressed moral issues, the ending was tidy and complete, the problems solved to everyone's satisfaction in half an hour.

Not so with the issues dealt with in *The Twilight Zone*. Many of the episodes leave you wondering at the end. The show pulls you into its world and keeps you there as you ponder the possibilities of the situation. It is certainly not mindless entertainment, which is the stuff of most television programs, especially today. The many predicaments encountered by the characters in *The Twilight Zone* stay with you and force you to think about them long after you view them. Though embedded in the realm of fantasy and science fiction, the “make-believe” of these stories impacts circumstances in our present world and everyday life.

Though often set in a surreal world, the characters of *The Twilight Zone* were often everyday folks, just like us. They were housewives, bank clerks, teachers, salesmen, business executives, and petty criminals. We can easily identify with these fragile and susceptible souls and their vulnerabilities.

One book about *The Twilight Zone*, written by Mark Dawidziak, is titled *Everything I Need to Know I Learned in The Twilight Zone*. That just about sums it all up about the significance of this classic television series.

A different episode will be shown each week with a follow-up discussion during the six Sundays of Lent (February 22, March 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29). They will be presented in Fellowship Hall after the worship service. Join us. Next stop, the *Twilight Zone*!

Continuing to pray for...

- Dave Norman, continuing to heal
- Joel Morse, continuing to heal
- Ann LaMountain, recovering from wrist surgery
- Sue Foster's parents
- Lisa Gould, continued recovery
- MacDara, as he struggles for clarity in recovery
- Our church community as we continue to move forward in this transition to a settled pastorate.

God hears our prayers and surrounds those we pray for with comfort, strength, and compassion in difficult times.

Come, My Light

Come, my Light,
and illumine my darkness.
Come, my Life,
and revive me from death.
Come, my Physician,
and heal my wounds.
Come, Flame of divine love,
and burn up the thorns of my sins,
kindling my heart
with the flame of thy love.

Dimitrii of Rostov



worship & prayer

The following are the scriptures for this month. You are invited to read them as part of your daily devotions and as preparation for worship. For daily devotions, please go to: sneucc.org/lectionary

Sunday, February 1

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany
Micah 6:1-8, Psalm 15, ,
1 Corinthians 1:18-31, Matthew 5:1-12

Sunday, February 8

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany
Isaiah 58:1-9a [9b-12], Psalm 112:1-9 [10],
1 Corinthians 2:1-12 [13-16],
Matthew 5:13-20

Sunday, February 15

Transfiguration of the Lord
Exodus 24:12-18 Psalm 2 or Psalm 99,
2 Peter 1:16-21, Matthew 17:1-9

Sunday, February 22

First Sunday in Lent
Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7, Psalm 32,
Romans 5:12-19, Matthew 4:1-11

Invite Us Deeper

Almighty and ever living God,
you invite us deeper into your world,
your people, your Lent.
May this time be one of outward focus;
seeking you in those we often ignore.
Help us live a Lent focused on freedom,
generosity, and encounter.
Give us hearts hungry to serve you
and those who need what we have to give.

Author Unknown

The Fast Life

Fast from judging others;
Feast on Christ dwelling in them.
Fast from fear of illness;
Feast on the healing power of God.
Fast from words that pollute;
Feast on speech that purifies.
Fast from discontent;
Feast on gratitude.
Fast from anger;
Feast on patience.
Fast from pessimism;
Feast on hope.
Fast from negatives;
Feast on encouragement.
Fast from bitterness;
Feast on forgiveness.
Fast from self-concern;
Feast on compassion.
Fast from suspicion;
Feast on truth.
Fast from gossip;
Feast on purposeful silence.
Fast from problems that overwhelm;
Feast on prayer that sustains.
Fast from anxiety;
Feast on faith.

Author Unknown

PASTORAL SEARCH & TRANSITION

The Search & Call Team has continued our dedicated work to find our next settled pastor. A third candidate has been identified to be interviewed and our position has also been posted on the recruiting site 'Indeed'. This posting has resulted in many applications; however, these interested parties have not been vetted by the UCC conference yet and so far there have been no viable candidates identified. However, we believe this additional exposure through 'Indeed' as well as postings with 5 different seminaries has significantly increased our chances of identifying the right person that God is calling to our church.

Marilyn Rath

As we continue our transition from one Settled Pastor to the next, Council wants to make sure everyone is feeling heard and continues to feel connected to our wonderful church. Please do not hesitate to use one of the simple methods below to share your comments:

1. Use the comment card in the pew rack
2. Talk to me at church. Email me at my church address:

Dorries@eastwoodstockchurch.org

Also, in the near future we will launch our new website that will include another avenue to send me your issue or concern. Stay tuned!

With Peace and Gratitude,
Dorrie Scranton
Council Chair



BUNKO IS BACK!

Snap out of winter's cabin fever with Bunko on Fridays, February 20 and March 20. Led by Dorrie Scranton, all comers and newbies welcome! The games begin at 6:30PM in Fellowship Hall; join us for this fun way to warm up in winter!

FREE ELECTRIC HOSPITAL BED LOOKING FOR A HOME

If you know of someone who would be interested, please let Amy Hiller-White or Windsor White know. The bed is on wheels, has a push button control for raising both head and foot of the bed. The entire bed lowers and raises with a manual crank and has a super comfy mattress.

Amy: 508.380.8448 amyhillerwhite@gmail.com

Windsor: 508.789.3644 windsor.white@msn.com

Apologies...to G. Leslie Sweetnam, one of Woodstock's resident troubadours: for the "spell correct" error in the Annual Report. Leslie has kindly offered to join our Music Committee. He is definitely a "Friend" of our Community, and not a "fiend" as mistakenly printed.

news&

MEMBERSHIP CLASS OFFERED

Though every Christian is a member of Christ's universal Church, local church membership is important. Have you ever thought about becoming a member of East Woodstock Congregational Church? Membership allows you to join the Board of Deacons, Society, or the Nominating Committee. It allows you to vote at congregational meetings. It allows you to serve on the Search and Call Committee to nominate a ministerial candidate to become the Settled Pastor of the church, and then to vote on that candidate. Membership allows you to hold any of the offices of the church: Clerk, Treasurer, Chair of Church Council, and Moderator. Being a member of East Woodstock Congregational Church allows you fully to participate in the life of the church so that you can experience all its benefits. It will enable you to use the gifts, talents, and abilities with which the Holy Spirit has endowed you for the building up of God's people.

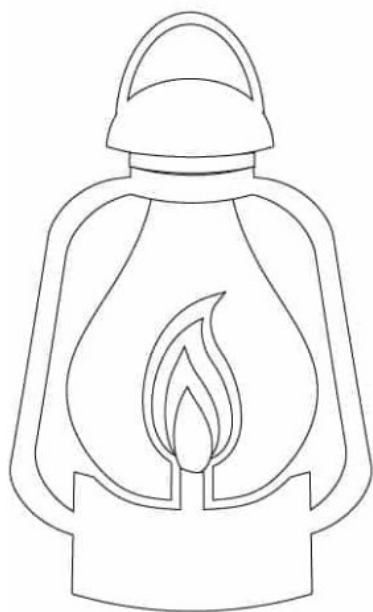
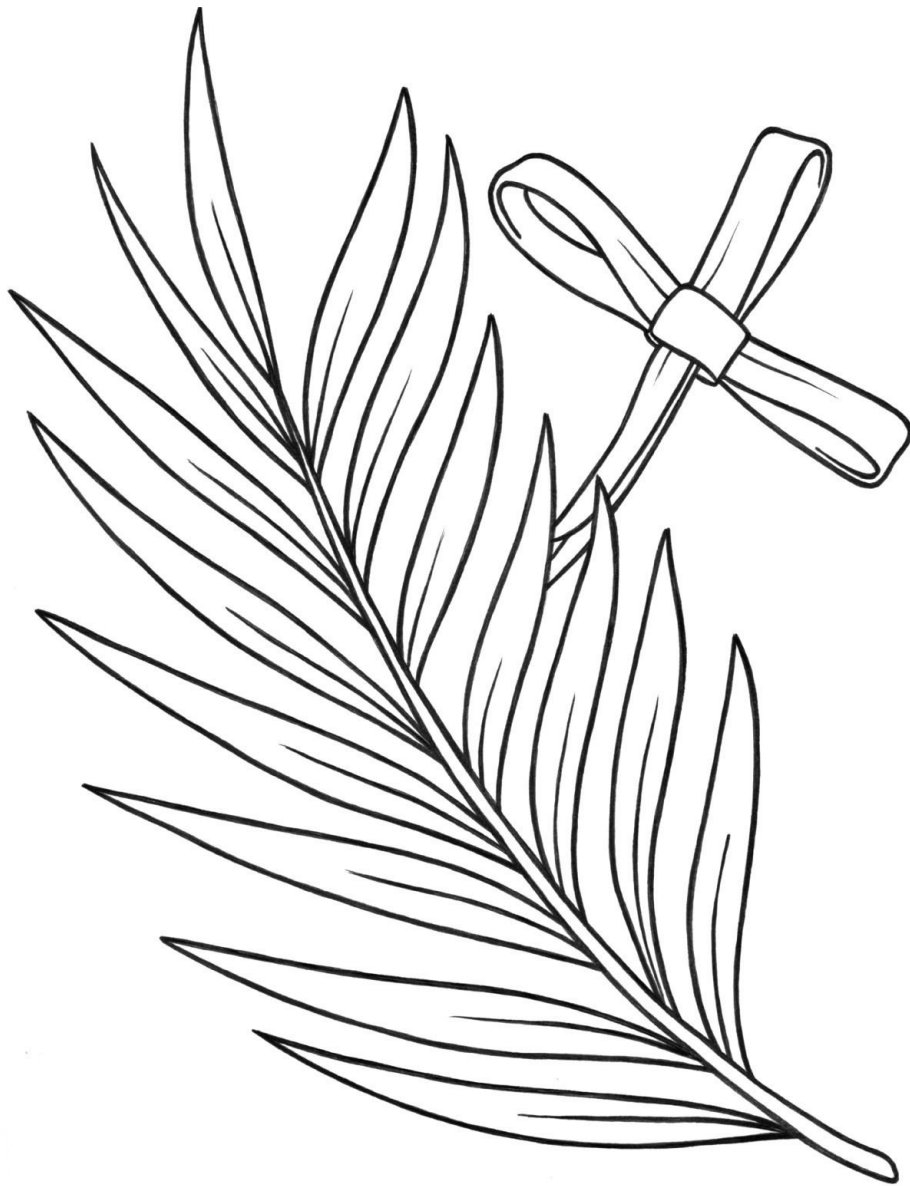
If interested in taking this class, contact Pastor Gary. A suitable day and time will be decided on to conduct the class. Normally three sessions will suffice, but more might be required.

THANK YOU...

...to our Winter warriors who make sure there are safe places for walking and parking: Mark Billings, Calvin Neely, Eddie Hryzan, and Seth Spalding....
...to our hospitality mavens, Laurie Edwards & crew, who welcome us with goodies and tea & lately, kind sympathy, as we acknowledge the passing of friends and neighbors....

...to all of the officers & chairs of committees who endeavored to compile our Annual Report....

...and to all those who continue to welcome friends and strangers alike, making EWCC the spiritual home it has become and continues to be.



But anyone who lives
by the truth comes
into the light.
They live by the truth
with God's help.
John 3:21

CHILDREN'S CHAPEL

Jesus was born, baptized, and is now teaching parables on a mountainside or over a casual meal near you!

At least, that's what we're talking about in Sunday school.

Ask the children, any children in your life, of any age, what one of their favorite stories is. They may tell you a book or a movie or the story of how they crashed into a stonewall while sledding. They will have shared a little bit of themselves with you.

Because that is the power of stories. We learn how to determine good and bad, different ways of approaching obstacles in life, and what makes us excited or confused.

Jesus taught using stories so people could relate to what they identified with, the shepherd, the farmer, the widow, etc.

Jesus related God's dream to human experience; keeping a farm or a garden, making bread, finding treasure, fighting with parents.

Each month we will be exploring a different parable in our student spaces and then presenting them during worship. We hope everyone enjoys the process and learns a little bit more about getting closer to God.

Children are the Church.

*Jessica Weaver Boose
CE Director*

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East Woodstock Congregational Church

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East Woodstock, Connecticut 06244



Just a reminder....

Planning to send something for the Weekly Reminder or

The **Trumpet**? If sending electronically, please send in word or google doc format. It makes it a bit easier when putting together....and the **deadline is the 20th of the month!** Thank you!



We love hearing good news! Have a special event you'd like to share— a birth, graduation, new job, special honor? Let us know...

Have you changed your phone, email or mailing? Please let the office know of any changes so you don't miss out on *The Trumpet* or other important messages. You can send any changes or correspondence to churchoffice@eastwoodstockchurch.org.