

MARCH MADNESS

As the calendar turns from February to March, a couple of transitions come to mind, such as; the Vernal Equinox, hopes of warmer days, the arrival of daylight savings time, and for the sports minded among us, the beginning of March Madness. That name was conjured up by a network which makes a profit from televising college basketball games. But the term March Madness has been appropriated by retailers who want to sell you a car or an appliance, and many other events which take place in this month.

March Madness could even supply a fitting description of a part our faith journey. This year, as is often the case, the season of Lent begins in March as Ash Wednesday falls on March 6th. Lent, of course, is the season of spiritual discipline, self-reflection, penitence, sacrifice, and preparation for the celebration of Easter. It is set to reflect the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness, lasting 40 days (not including Sundays.) It is viewed by many as a dark, difficult time. But Sundays are excluded, on the Lord's Day we are to proclaim the "Good News" to lift and feel wonder and praise. But that can be a tall order in the darkness of Lent.

We live in a dark and difficult time, a time of massive transitions. Our church, which has been a refuge for many seems to be facing an uncertain future. Cultural shifts seem to be pushing and pulling at accepted norms of behavior and thought leading to simultaneous rejoicing and resistance depending on one's point of view. Political differences have escalated to violent confrontations. Even the changing weather has left us with cabin fever that creates doubt over the anticipated arrival of Spring. Having hope in the face of such odds could be viewed by some as Madness. And yet we have hope.

A wall plaque reads; "You don't have to be crazy to work here, but it helps" Having hope against long odds seems like Madness. But we do, because we are Easter people. We have hope that Spring will come because it always has in the past. We have hope that cultural and political differences will be set aside for the common good, hopefully without a traumatic event being the trigger. We have hope that God is with us, because God has kept that promise for thousands of years. It's Madness to think someone can be resurrected following the horrific death of crucifixion, certainly Thomas had such doubts. But God has shown it to be true. Even in the darkest of times, when it feels like Madness to have hope, we do. We can proclaim "good news" on the Sundays of Lent because God is with us. May March Madness assure us of good times to come.

Chaz Ruark, Executive Presbyter