

Lux Center News



February 9, 2021

February 2021: A Time for Lent, Purim and Black History

Living in Wisconsin, February always seems to be one of the less attractive months of the year. It is a month of cold and snow following several months of cold and snow. The number of days in this month causes confusion each year, having fewer days than any other month. Then, every four years we tack on an extra day at the end of February depriving those born on that particular day from having a regular birthday.

To make up for its deficits, the February calendar contains a variety of special days. Groundhog Day, Presidents' Day, Valentine's Day, and Super Bowl Sunday are just a few. February is also notable for observing African American History month and Women's History month.

Two notable religious observances begin or occur during February in 2021 (many times they begin in March). Christians will begin celebrating Lent on Wednesday, February 17th—Ash Wednesday. Later in the month, Jews will celebrate the Jewish Festival of Purim beginning at sundown on Thursday, February 25th through sundown on Friday, February 26th.

Lent is a season of forty days which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends at sundown on Holy Thursday. For Catholics, it is a time of prayer, repentance, sacrifice, renewal of faith and good works. It is a time of preparation for the sorrow of Holy Week leading to the crucifixion of Jesus on Good Friday and the joy of Easter and Jesus' resurrection. It is a time for by self-examination and deep reflection.

Christian biblical passages that are read and studied during Lent provide rich imagery and encourage theological contemplation. It cannot be overlooked, however, that throughout much of the history of Christian-Jewish relations, mainstream interpretations of these same passages have played a role in fueling antisemitism that often spilled over into violence during the Lenten season.

Sensitive to the need for clergy to provide historical, theological and exegetical explanations of these texts that are annually presented to people in the church pews, John M. Sweeney took the initiative to gather Christian and Jewish scholars to address these

issues in his book, *Jesus Wasn't Killed by the Jews: Reflections for Christians in Lent*. Catholic-Jewish relations have made great strides toward healing during the past fifty plus years since Vatican II. Sweeney's book continues that trajectory with a collection of thoughtful and insightful essays.

At the very end of February, Jewish people around the world will celebrate the joyous festival of Purim. The story of Purim is told in the biblical book of Esther. It commemorates the time when the Jewish people living in the Persian Empire were saved from extermination by the courage of a young Jewish woman called Esther. It is a time to celebrate overcoming persecution and the victory of freedom. Holiday traditions include the public reading of the book of Esther, giving charity to the needy and food gifts to friends.

You may be unaware that **February** was named for the Roman word "februum", which means purification or cleansing. It may be a good idea to rethink how we can cleanse ourselves of old prejudices and bigotry and strive to make the rest of the year one of peace, harmony and brotherly love among all people.

Lux Center Programs You Will Not Want to Miss

2021 WINTER Jewish Studies Seminar for Christians
The Jewish People and the Church
WEBINAR SERIES

Last Session

Christianity and the Holocaust:
Action and Reaction in Challenging Times

WED., FEB. 10 | 7:00-8:15 p.m. CST

Rebecca Carter-Chand, Ph.D.

To register go to <https://www.shsst.edu/luxcenter-eventsandnews/>

In Preparation for Lent

A Webinar via Zoom

A Conversation about the Book:

Jesus Wasn't Killed by the Jews

Tuesday, February 16

6:30 p.m. CST

With Book Contributors:

Mary C. Boys, SNJM

Robert Ellsberg

Greg Garrett

And Jon M. Sweeney, Editor of the Book and Moderator

To register go to <https://www.shsst.edu/luxcenter-eventsandnews/>

Please Join Us!
For the 2021 Lux Center Spring Lecture
**Blood Brothers:
Jews and Christians as Sibling Rivals**

Sunday, March 21 at 3:00 p.m.
via Zoom
with
Rabbi Burton Visotzky

To register go to <https://www.shsst.edu/luxcenter-eventsandnews/>

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