



The Woke Express

BIG BETHEL SOCIAL
ACTION COMMISSION

MARCH 2024



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Greetings Woke Family,

March marks the official launch of the 2024 National Election cycle. I don't have to tell you that there is a lot at stake, and sitting this one out should not be an option. There are so many things swirling in the current news cycle that it can be hard to decipher the truth from misrepresentation of the facts. Let's be clear, we owe it to ourselves to do whatever it takes to educate ourselves on the political process as well as the candidates that are courting our vote. If we don't get it right, democracy as we know it will be in peril.

Earlier this year, we promised that we would provide you with useful information to help you in becoming more knowledgeable and informed. In this month's issue, we have included our very first election survey. Our goal is to use this data to determine the types of information we will disseminate between now and November to keep the focus on issues impacting our communities and the platform of each political party. We are asking you to take a few minutes to provide your responses.

We will be available the first Sunday of March, April and May to assist with voter registration, voter status and/or voter update. Meet us in the fellowship hall immediately following the morning service. We are also in the planning stages of a candidate forum as well as a voter education symposium.

Your first call to action is the Presidential Preference Primary on March 12th. If you have participated in early voting or submitted an absentee ballot, thank you! You can still early vote through March 8th.

March Health Awareness

National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month: This campaign focuses on the disabled community and highlights how those with developmental disabilities live normal lives. It is about inclusion, awareness, and education.

National Endometriosis Awareness Month: The [Endometriosis Association](#) began this campaign in 1993, and organizations worldwide now recognize it. The yellow ribbon is a symbol of support.

Brain Injury Awareness Month: The [Brain Injury Association of America](#) conducts an awareness campaign each year. The campaign works to empower those affected by [brain injury](#) and remove the stigma around brain injuries.

National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month: The [Prevent Cancer Foundation](#), the [American Digestive Health Foundation](#), and the [National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable](#) have campaigns on preventing and treating [colorectal cancer](#).

National Kidney Month: The [National Kidney Foundation](#) established this campaign to get people interested in kidney health. The [National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases](#) have been working with the [NHLBI](#) to help raise awareness.

National Nutrition Month: The [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#) established this campaign to focus on the importance of making informed food choices and developing positive eating habits alongside physical activity.

Save Your Vision Month: The [American Optometric Association](#) champion this campaign. It aims to increase awareness about good eye care and regular testing.

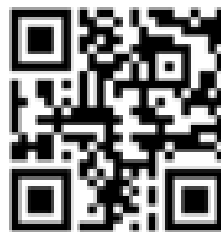
Trisomy Awareness Month: [Down syndrome](#) is a form of trisomy. [Trisomy.org](#) is an extensive resource with a donation facility. This month plays a huge role in increasing awareness and helping those affected.

Woke Express Election 2024 Survey

1. What are the branches of the U.S. Federal Government? (Select All that apply)
Hint: There are three.
 - Administrative
 - Legislative
 - Military
 - Executive
 - Judicial
2. What are your top three priorities for the 2024 Election?
 - Economy (i.e. cost of goods, food, etc.)
 - Gun Violence
 - Voting Rights
 - Student Loan Debt
 - Healthcare
 - Democracy (i.e. individual right to choose, reproductive rights, etc.)
 - Other: _____
 - Other: _____
3. How concerned are you about the escalating extremist attacks on government officials and the constitution?
 - Very Concerned
 - Somewhat Concerned
 - Not Very Concerned
 - Not Concerned At All
4. Are you familiar with the difference between a majority and a super majority when it comes to passing meaningful legislation (i.e. Voting Rights Bill, George Floyd Bill, Gun Safety, etc.) in the Senate?
 - Yes
 - No
5. Have you heard of Project 2025?
 - Yes
 - No

6. What Medium(s) do you use to obtain political news? (Select All that apply)
- Local TV News
 - Newspaper
 - Cable News Networks
 - Social Media
 - Podcasts
 - Other: _____
7. Do you fact check the political information you receive?
- Yes
 - No
8. Do you or have you ever actively participated in your local or national government (i.e. school board, zoning approvals, campaigning, etc.)
- Yes
 - No
9. Do you or have you ever made financial contributions to support a local or national political candidate?
- Yes
 - No
10. What County do you reside in?
- _____

Complete page, scan with cell phone or computer and email to:
bigbethelsac@gmail.com or Complete online:



Please complete by April 5, 2024

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Lent: A Liberationist Perspective

In the synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we find the story of Jesus clearing the Temple of money changers, traders, and others who he declared were defiling his Father's House.

In Matthew's (21:12-13, NLT) account, the gospel writer states: "Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out all the people buying and selling animals for sacrifice. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves. ¹³ He said to them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of prayer,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves! This violent reaction puts the humble Jesus in a totally different light than the one we may typically embrace. We are more comfortable with looking at the kind, compassionate, and even long-suffering side of the Christ. Yet, Jesus demonstrated a litany of human traits as he walked the earth and provided us with a blueprint for living.

To better understand this premise, we should look at the timing of this event. It occurs days before the crucifixion of our Savior, the time frame that we refer to today as Holy Week. In this instance, Jesus is demonstrating that our faith may call for a more serious reaction, and in doing so, made the Holy Week not only an act of royal manifestation, teaching, and compassion, but one of liberation and power.

One might ask why this is important. I would offer the suggestion that in the mind of Jesus, who had ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey and hailed as king, was aware of the gruesome fate that awaited him. These final days would be a harrowing experience, full of vicious abuse, pain, and suffering. Also, they represented his last opportunity to fight against the defilement of the Temple of God. He needed to liberate the people from earthly obsession and idolatry. For three years, Jesus had preached salvation, saved the lost, healed the sick and even raised the dead. Now, it was time to make a last stand!

The Culture

In Jewish culture, it is true that the Temple was the central meeting place and hub of the community. Still, its most important purpose was to serve as the spiritual and religious center of the Jewish faith. In it, holy representatives sought the presence of God, came together to minister, and offer sacrifices, and carry out the holy business of the church. Outside its structure were specific areas or courts to be used for certain purposes. The outer courts, for example, were specifically designated for Gentiles, women (see Luke 2, story of Anna) and others (livingwithfaith.org) to congregate and worship. In addition, people came to pay taxes, purchase offerings (such as doves) for sacrifice and carry out other business in these designated spaces. Therefore, it was clear that no trade, selling, etc., should be carried out in the inner sanctums of the Temple. Old Testament law had already dictated the various rules to follow regarding Temple use and access (see Deuteronomy 23, Ezekiel 44). Anyone not obeying the law and established practices was not only being irreverent, but also directly sinning against God.

The Context

With this in mind, Jesus had every right to be concerned about what he saw. Some theologians indicate that his reference to the money changers and others making the temple *a den of thieves* was because they were stealing from the people. Others disagree, but in the end, one truth stands: Jesus saw what they were doing and where they were doing it as a sin against God. Instead of gentle words, he chose to use a more physical and aggressive approach to get his point across.

For us, as we enter into the Lenten season, we can imagine a Jesus who, when it was necessary, was not afraid to push and resist those individuals who took advantage of helpless people and send against God through the misuse of God's house. We certainly do not suggest that anyone fights or destroys property, but we do acknowledge that being passive is not always the role that Jesus played. On his way to Calvary and to suffer on the cross, Jesus took the time to turn over tables, physically block the way of those attempting to enter with merchandise and drive out those individuals who dared to defile the Temple. In doing so, he demonstrated his willingness to not only act as an advocate, but also as a powerful activist, pointing the way to a faith of liberation.

The Reverend Monica C. Jones, PhD



Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church building up Atlanta's Black community



Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church is known for being the first Black church in Atlanta.

By [Tori Cooper](#)

Published: Feb. 21, 2024 at 6:08 PM EST Updated: Feb. 21, 2024 at 11:34 PM EST

ATLANTA, Ga. (Atlanta News First) - Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church is known for being the first Black church in Atlanta. But it doesn't always get credit for its role in shaping the civil rights movement, Black education, social change, and even political influence. For over a century, Big Bethel has been lifting Black voices when others tried to silence them.

"There wasn't a bigger, Black-held facility in the city of Atlanta than this place. Us and Wheat Street were "it" for Black congregations meeting over a thousand people," said Pastor John Foster. For the past 11 years, Pastor Foster has been a testament to the true power of what ministry can do.

“We support a halfway house for men dealing with substance abuse two blocks away. Right behind us is this 180-unit affordable housing complex called Bethel Towers that gives subsidized housing to the community,” Pastor Foster said. “We have young people that work really diligently with the homeless.”

The work didn’t start there. Turn the page back to the late 1700s and head north to Pennsylvania where former slave Richard Allen was forbidden from praying at St. George’s Church.

Determined to worship, Allen formed the original Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. His voice eventually spread all the way to the south, leading to Atlanta’s first Methodist Episcopal Church — Bethel Tabernacle.

“During the 1960s, Big Bethel was one of the four pillars civil rights churches. It was on this strip here — Wheat Street, then Big Bethel, and then Ebenezer and Butler Street,” Pastor Foster said. The church became the Black city hall for prominent civil rights leaders and politicians to meet.

In 1881, the church decided to establish a space for higher learning. “Eventually we started having some classes held here at Big Bethel,” said Historian Ernest Tate. “There were other sites as well.”

Born out of the basement of Big Bethel, it would be called Morris Brown College. “I couldn’t ask for anything better,” said Morris Brown College graduate Charles Moore.

At 100 years old, Moore still remembers his time on campus after fighting in World War II. He majored in business and graduated with honors. He returned later to run business operations for the HBCU. “I ended up staying there 15 years at Morris Brown. Could you imagine that?” Moore said.

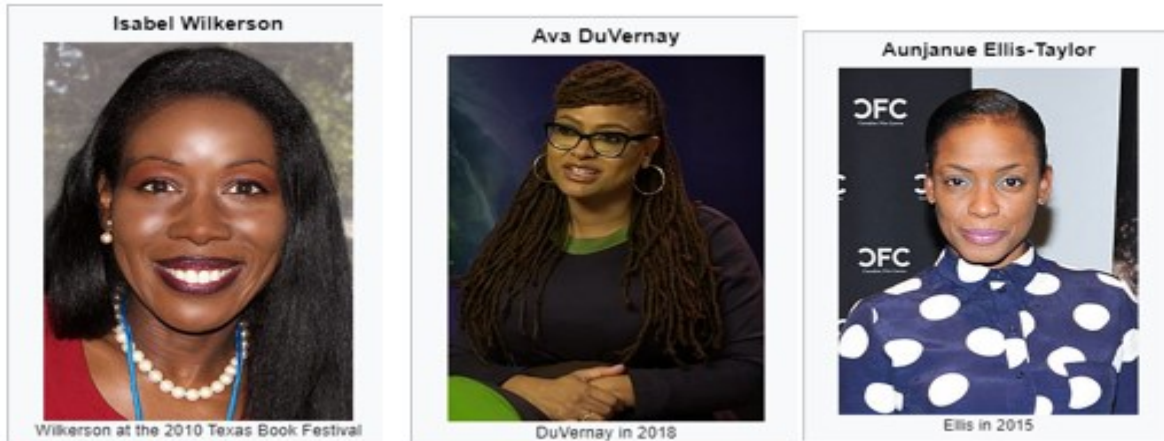
The walls of Big Bethel have borne witness to success stories like Brother Moore, offering a platform for Black folks to stand on.

“You have everything from the first NAACP conference in the south that was held at Big Bethel in 1920,” Tate said. “This area just holds a great amount of pride and history about what God has done through the African American community,” Pastor Foster said.

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Origin

There is a fantastic movie currently playing at the theaters called *Origin*, written, and produced by Ava DuVernay. This movie has directed my way of thinking about racism and the struggles that we must endure for justice and equality.



Origin is based on the novel “*Caste*” and the life story of the author, Isabel Wilkerson that explores the concept of caste systems, particularly in the United States. Here is a summary of the book:

The book examines how caste systems have shaped societies throughout history, drawing parallels between the caste system in India, the caste-like system of Nazi Germany, and the racial hierarchy in the United States.

Wilkerson argues that the United States operates under an invisible caste system, with White Americans at the top, followed by various minority groups like African Americans, Latinos, and others.

She explores how this caste system manifests in everyday life, affecting everything from social interactions to access to resources and opportunities.

Through historical anecdotes, personal stories, and sociological analysis, Wilkerson sheds light on the pervasive and often unrecognized impact of caste in American society.

The book encourages readers to confront the realities of caste and work towards dismantling the systems of oppression that perpetuate it.

Ava DuVernay’s view of the movie in her own words, "This film is about humanity. It's about dignity." I could not agree more. My belief that this project is God’s way of manifesting and revealing the struggles of our ancestors through three phenomenal Black women.

Isabel Wilkerson is the first African American woman to win a Pulitzer Prize in journalism. She has also been a recipient of the George Polk Award and a MacArthur Fellowship (also known as the "Genius Grant"). Her writing makes you feel like you are a part of the book, not just as a reader but as an active participant of the story.

Ava DuVernay gained widespread recognition for her film "Selma" (2014), which chronicles the historic 1965 voting rights marches from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The film received critical acclaim for its powerful storytelling, direction, and performances, earning DuVernay a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Picture, making her the first Black woman to receive this honor.

Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor, the actor who played Isabel Wilkerson in the film, was brilliant. As an actor she gained notoriety in the critically acclaimed movie "The Help." Throughout the film, "The Help" Yule Mae (her character) serves as a representation of the systemic racism and injustice that African American housekeepers faced during the civil rights era in the United States. In the movie "Origin" she fundamentally made all of what Isabel Wilkerson and Ava DuVernay conceived about this movie "Origin" happen in true form.

This movie will change your life for the better. It is a must-see for everyone who has the opportunity to read this article. I believe that anyone who watches the movie will come to recognize the importance of standing up for humanity against all institutionalized systemic racism and supremacist foes that we as humans face daily. Especially white supremacists.

Understand that I am not against White Nationalism in its purest form. I believe Whites should be proud of their culture and history. What I fight against is when White Nationalism turns into White Supremacy and denies me and other none whites our humanity.... as White Nationalism too often does.

Please take time to see the movie "Origin". Remember if we do not fight for what is right to make positive changes in our beloved community, evil will have an opportunity to overcome our next generations. God has given us all that we need to overcome. Let us press ahead and obey his commandments and let his will be done here on Earth. Amen.

Mother Bethel AME is vandalized, shattering both windows and peace

Early Monday morning, the historic Mother Bethel AME Church in Society Hill was vandalized. The damage to its historic stained-glass windows will require skilled craftsmen to repair.



by [Lynette Hazelton](#) (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*)

Published Feb. 20, 2024, 6:51 p.m. ET

Mother Bethel AME Church has a storied history of activism that started with its founding in 1787. The church, at 419 S. Sixth Street in Society Hill, is on one of the oldest parcels of land continuously owned by African Americans. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1974. Early Monday morning before dawn, it became a victim of vandalism when someone smashed several of its windows, including three of the church's historic stained-glass windows.

Although police say they are investigating and cannot yet say whether the vandalism is believed to be intentional, that there was no message delivered with the rocks thrown through the windows and no graffiti spread on the building leads the senior pastor, the Rev. Mark Kelly Tyler, to think it was a random act.

“It is an evolving story, but what we know today is it appears to be random. There’s no evidence to suggest it was a hate crime. There was no message, and nothing was thrown into the church,” Tyler said. “If a person wants to make a political point, there will be some kind of message. Maybe the person had anger issues, but the indicators at this point [are] it was a random act.”

Random or intentional?

But in a statement released Tuesday, Ahmet Selim Tekelioglu, executive director of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), hinted at the believed that there is a connection between the vandalism and Mother Bethel’s activism, including being host for the launch of the multi-faith Pilgrimage for Peace walk last week, calling for a cease-fire in Gaza and the release of all Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

“Mother Bethel AME Church in Philadelphia has been on the forefront of communal struggles addressing issues such as criminal justice, voting rights, and other communal concerns, including the Ceasefire Now movement,” Tekelioglu wrote.

Tyler not only leads an activist church, he also is the civic engagement strategist of POWER Inter-faith, a network of 200 area congregations that advocates for economic and racial justice, and now a cease-fire in Gaza.

A police spokesperson said Tuesday that he could neither confirm nor deny whether the attack was intentional or random.

Other victims of the vandalism

Other incidents of window-smashing nearby happened in the pre-dawn hours on Monday. The staff of the InterAct Theater on 300 block of South Hicks Street arrived at work and were greeted with the smashed double pane glass on the front door. “It was a pretty hefty rock thrown through [the] front door to shatter both panes,” theater manager Ann Garner said.

There was no message connected to the rock, and nothing else was thrown into the theater. Garner said the theater is a nonprofit and doesn’t take political positions as an organization but does tackle controversial social issues in its plays.

On Sunday, it had closed Step Mom, Step Mom, Step Mom — a play that tackles interracial issues. Coming in March is The Last Yiddish Speaker, a play about faith, heritage and identity.

“We moved here in 2016 and have never had none of this kind of trouble. Hopefully it’s the last,” said Garner, who estimated the damage at \$1,500.

There was also a report of a broken window at the Beasley building, home of the Beasley law firm, at 1125 Walnut St., but a police spokesperson couldn’t confirm whether the acts of vandalism were related.

Historic preservation

Police estimated the damage to Mother Bethel at \$15,000, but Tyler said the shattered stained-glass windows date to the 1890s. He estimated the damage at \$30,000 because of the specialized craftsmanship needed to repair historic stained glass.

Tyler said he was wary of submitting an insurance claim for the damage due to a recent influx of insurance companies dropping houses of worship, particularly in coastal areas. He said he doesn't want to risk another blow to Mother Bethel.

Last month, the church was awarded a \$90,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to preserve the historic building and the windows that are now in pieces. If he has to, Tyler said, he could return to the funder and ask for modifications to the grant to help pay for the unexpected damage. He has already seen an outpouring of support, from his neighbors in Society Hill to local foundations and political leaders, all offering help.

“That’s the legacy of Bishop Richard Allen,” said Tyler, referring to the founder of Mother Bethel.



A bronze statue of Bishop Richard Allen outside Mother Bethel AME Church on Tuesday. Gralish / Staff Photographer

PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY
TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2024

DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES	REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES
Joseph R. Biden	Ryan L. Binkley
Dean Phillips	Doug Burgum
Marianne Williamson	Chris Christie
	Ron DeSantis
	Nikki Haley
	Asa Hutchinson
	Perry Johnson
	Vivek Ramaswamy
	Tim Scott
	David Stuckenberg
	Donald J. Trump

**** MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD ****



**“IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW STRONG YOUR
OPINIONS ARE. IF YOU DON'T USE YOUR
POWER FOR POSITIVE CHANGE YOU ARE
INDEED PART OF THE PROBLEM!”**

CORETTA SCOTT KING

2024 Presidential Preference Primary Election Dates to Remember

Presidential Preference Primary (PPP) AND Special Election - County/Municipal Contests

~~Registration deadline – February 12th @ 5:00 p.m. EST~~

Early Voting – February 19th – March 8th

Mandatory Saturday Voting - February 24th and March 2nd

Absentee Ballot Request – Now through Friday, March 1st

Absentee Ballot Return deadline – Tuesday, March 12th @ 7:00 p.m. EST

Primary In-person Voting – Tuesday, March 12th

Runoffs

Early Voting for Special Election Runoff for Local Offices **(if needed)** - begins As soon as possible, but no later than April 1 – April 5

Special Election Runoff Absentee Ballot Request Deadline – Friday, March 29th

In-person Special Election Runoff for Local Offices **(if needed)** – Tuesday, April 9th

Secretary of State Website (My Voter Page):

<https://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/MVP/mvp.do>



OUR VOTES MATTER!!!!

Secretary of State Website (My Voter Page):

<https://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/MVP/mvp.do>



The screenshot shows the MVP My Voter Page interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for SOS Office, Business, Charities, Elections (highlighted), Securities, Licensing, and Search. Below the navigation bar is a banner with the text "Welcome to My Voter Page" and a background image of people at a voting station. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column contains a registration form with fields for First Initial, Last Name, County, and Date of Birth, along with a "SUBMIT" button and a "Not Registered to Vote? Register" link. The right column contains a section titled "Use the MVP Log In to check your" followed by a list of services: 1. Voter registration status, 2. Mail-In application and ballot status, 3. Poll location, 4. Early voting locations, 5. Elected Officials, 6. Registration information on file with the county office, 7. Sample ballot for the upcoming election, and 8. Provisional Ballot status.

From this site, Voters can access/update critical voter information:

- **Voter Registration**
- **Confirm Voter status (maintained by local county office)**
- **Change/Update Voter Information**
- **Polling location Information (directions, hours, precinct cards, etc.)**
- **Absentee Ballot Information**
- **Early Voting Information**
- **Sample Ballots**
- **Elected Officials Information**
- **Much More!**

Voter Tips/Reminders

1. Be sure your state issued ID matches your voter registration name.

Acceptable forms of identification if you do not have a Georgia Driver's License or State Identification Card Number

Identification with your photograph:

- United States Passport
- Georgia voter identification card
- Other valid identification card issued by a branch, department, agency, or entity of the State of Georgia, any other state, or the United States authorized by law to issue personal identification.
- United States military identification card
- Employee identification card issued by any branch, department, agency, or entity of the United States government, Georgia state government, or Georgia county, municipality, board, authority, or any other entity of the state of Georgia
- Tribal identification card

Documents that show your name and address:

Current utility bill ~ Bank statement ~ Paycheck
Government check ~ Other government document

2. Review the sample ballot (if applicable) on the Secretary of State website.
3. Take advantage of Early Voting and Absentee Ballots
4. If your right to vote is challenged, you have a right to request a "Provisional" ballot.

*****PLEDGE TO GET THREE (3) NEW VOTERS REGISTERED*****

OUR VOTES MATTER!!!!



How Many Words Can You Find?

G	R	A	C	E	U	Y	R	A	V	L	A	C	P	L	B
X	R	S	I	F	H	B	T	E	C	G	O	H	C	L	I
A	V	Y	R	A	M	I	Q	A	H	S	M	J	O	E	P
N	G	H	N	D	O	W	K	S	G	A	X	O	B	N	D
Y	P	A	C	H	R	I	S	T	Y	C	D	C	K	T	C
H	J	O	W	K	A	U	Z	E	Q	R	C	C	M	H	U
E	F	R	N	S	A	R	F	R	V	I	J	M	A	S	K
G	T	E	D	T	V	R	O	B	E	F	N	A	Y	U	M
G	C	J	X	N	I	E	N	R	L	I	B	U	F	N	S
S	Q	R	B	L	J	U	C	G	S	C	G	N	A	R	P
M	S	B	O	X	D	E	S	Z	I	E	A	D	O	I	E
K	X	G	Y	S	O	N	V	P	O	S	T	Y	P	S	E
T	E	N	F	R	S	E	S	T	I	Z	E	S	J	E	P
V	L	A	M	B	K	R	B	W	X	L	K	H	U	L	Q
Q	J	L	D	F	C	A	N	D	Y	P	A	X	S	I	W
B	A	I	G	K	E	W	J	P	L	C	E	T	H	A	L
P	U	F	E	P	Y	M	C	B	Q	Z	N	Q	E	J	K
D	Z	Q	R	E	S	U	R	R	E	C	T	I	O	N	T
F	H	U	I	W	O	T	R	K	Z	D	M	V	M	H	L

Ashes	Christ	Grace	Maundy	Resurrection
Blood	Cross	Lamb	Palm	Robe
Calvary	Easter	Lent	Peeps	Sacrifice
Candy	Eggs	Mary	Pontius Pilate	Sunrise