

# *Faith United Church of Christ*

*“An inclusive spiritual family shaping a better you for creating a better world.  
A place to make a difference.”*

December 31, 2017    **First Night New Year's Eve Service** Sacred Fellowship 7:30 PM

*We are delighted that you are here today! We hope you will find us an affirming, uplifting, and committed family of faith. Here we work to make everyone, without any exceptions, to feel accepted, inspired, and encouraged in their spiritual journey. In dialogue, we seek to understand. In encouragement, we seek to heal. In all things we yearn to live by love, for peace, with joy. This is a place where your intellect will be challenged, your heart will be nurtured, and your spirit refreshed. Varying beliefs are expressed openly and freely, and your doubts will not be suppressed. We trust that we are all, every person and part of creation, continuing to be blessed by God's grace; and that in community we can help each other to see this grace alive in our lives and relationships. We hope to share our gifts with you, even as we pray that you will want to share your gifts with us. Whoever you are and wherever you may be in your life's journey, we invite you to be a part of our lives and our spiritual home. Welcome!*

## **POINTS TO PONDER**

(Pre-Service)

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

— *John 1.5*

“The writer of the Gospel of John thinks in cosmological terms. It is the big picture, the meaning of things, that intrigues his understanding of God's movement and reality within the world. God represents light, and that light is symbolized by love, peace, truth, reason, faith, etc. When one lets this spiritual light within oneself and acts by it, one is one with the benevolent organizing principle of the universe. The chaos, darkness, and values that oppose the light cannot overcome it, but rather the light shines forth in the midst of this darkness. It is an understanding that the forces of good will overcome those of evil. It is faith that the world bends towards justice, harmony, and interdependence rather than injustice, oppression, and solipsism.”

— *Rev. Bret S. Myers, 12/28/2017*

“The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.”

— *I John 2.8b*

“This affirmation of faith in love already coming to fruition is more than wishful thinking or expectant hope. It is recognition that love was played out in the life, teachings, and practices of Christ – not only in Jesus, but in all who follow in that way of love. It is faith that what has already been revealed in part will be manifested more fully on a world-wide scale.”

— *Rev. Bret S. Myers, 12/28/2017*

“Whoever says, ‘I am in the light,’ while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness.”

— *I John 2.9*

“While it is more difficult to assure who is loving, it is quite clear who is not. One who hates does not and cannot love. To hate another reveals that darkness, not light, resides in one's soul. Whenever any does not wish the best for another, or especially when one hates, whatever appearance one may have of love is a façade. Genuine love cannot hate. Not even enemies or those who have harmed or persecuted one. The reason is because the love comes from within, not from without. Those who look at others and judge them as either worthy or unworthy of love have missed the point. Love must arise from within, and will be directed to all. Because genuine love is a reflection of one's character rather than a principle to act on based on externalities, one will exude love towards all.”

— *Rev. Bret S. Myers, 12/28/2017*

“Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light,  
and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling.”

— *I John 2.10*

"One who lives by the light of love does not morally stumble inasmuch as they let that light guide their actions, practices, and behaviors. One may still make other sorts of mistakes, but one will not do anything out of malice, hatred, or ill will. To act by love means to make it the rule for one's life. All other values are secondary, tertiary, or lesser concerns. Love directs one's thoughts, emotions, and deeds. Granted, others may wrongly interpret the light as somehow negative, just as they did with Jesus, but God knows the heart and soul which others do not."

— Rev. Bret S. Myers, 12/28/2017

"Whoever hates another person is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness."

— I John 2.11

"Hatred, interestingly enough, can be self-justifying. When one allows oneself to hate another, one indulges in self-chosen blindness. Hatred is a blindness to the divine image in another. When we are blind to the fact that we are all created in that same image of God, we come to disdain, despise, and eventually hate the other. There may be all sorts of reasons we give ourselves for why a person should be hated or despised, but all of them are the result of not looking through the clear vision of love for the other. At the turn of the new year, it is appropriate that we see with the eyes of love for one another and seek to remove all darkness of hatred from our past. This is not only to be a resolution for a year, but a commitment for a life time."

— Rev. Bret S. Myers, 12/28/2017

## **CALLED TOGETHER AS SPIRITUAL FAMILY**

(Beginning of Service)

### **Welcome and Announcements**

*Please sign the registration pads at the ends of the pews on the center aisle.  
We ask that you please shut off cell phones and practice quietness during the service.*

\* = You are invited to stand as you are able

### **Prelude**

"Rhosymedre" (Lovely)

R. Vaughan Williams

### **Welcoming the Light of Love in Our Midst** (acolytes light altar candles)

*We prepare ourselves for communing with the sacred as love's light is brought into our awareness. The light of love burns within and among each of us, and we carry that light into our sanctuary; visually reminding us of the image of the divine that lives in our hearts, minds, and souls – and that we nourish through our faith-filled fellowship.*

### **Affirming God's Presence in Us All**

"You Matter!"

### **\*Centering Our Souls**

"Out of the Flames"

by Sara Eileen LaWall

Out of the flames of fear: We rise with courage of our deepest convictions to stand for justice, inclusion and peace.

**Out of the flames of scrutiny: We rise to proclaim our faith with hope to heal a fractured and hurting world.**

Out of the flames of doubt: We rise to embrace the mystery, wonder and awe of all there is and all that is yet to be.

**Out of the flames of hate: We rise with the force of love -- love that celebrates our shared humanity.**  
Out of the flames we rise.

### **\*Hymn of Changing Seasons**

"All Beautiful the March of Days"

**#434**

### **Our Stories of Random Acts of Kindness & Intentional Deeds of Compassion**

## WE LISTEN FOR THE SACRED IN THE MIDST OF OUR LIVES

### Prayers

*Sharing Our Joys and Concerns in the Transition of Years*

*Silent Meditation: The Prayers of the People*

*Pastoral Prayer*

*Unison Prayer*

“Let Go”

by Lois Van Leer

Let go -- Of all that binds you...Of all that burdens you...Of what you carry  
Of all that shames you...Of fear...Of trespasses and transgressions...Of woundedness  
Let go of guilt...Let go of anger...Let go of small mindedness and pettiness  
Of ways of being that no longer work for you...Of compulsions that consume your living  
Let go of what you cannot change...Let go of regret...Of that which haunts you  
Let go of pain...Let go of ways in which you missed the mark  
Let go

**\*Hymn of Renewal**

“Each Winter as the Year Grows Older”

**#435**

**Scripture Lesson**

I John 2.7-11

**Message**

“It’s All about Love”

**\*Hymn for a New Year**

“Standing at the Future’s Threshold”

**#538; vss. 1-4**

## WE DEDICATE OURSELVES TO GOD’S SERVICE THROUGH FAITHFULNESS

### Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

*“Generosity arises from gratitude like heat arises from fire. Like fire, gratitude is lovely to see;  
but when it warms others with generosity, that is when it becomes a true blessing.”*

**Offertory** “Organ Improvisation”

**\*Song of Dedication**

When we give thanks, then go to sow;

Our blessings are assured to grow.

We are not known by what we keep;

We’re known by deeds that others reap.

**\*Unison Prayer of Dedication**

Great Spirit, all Earth is a gift; and we are a part of that gift. Bless us to be a blessing by how we give of what we have received. Let our generosity and joy grow in our giving, and may we offer back more than we have taken. Let not the sun rise on our selfishness, nor set on our compassion. Let us be rooted like the sycamore tree in our integrity, and be given the wings of eagles that we may soar with loving-kindness towards all creation. Grant us the endurance of the wind, and constancy of the waves, in our stewardship of all the lands, waters, and skies and all the life they nourish. May the wisdom of all creatures, and our respect and love for them all, inspire us to be the caretakers you have designed us to be: Now and forever.

**\*Encouragement for the Journey**

“In this New Year”

by Aaron Stockwell

In this new year, let us be amazed.

Let us search for new life and hope in our midst.

Let us nurture creativity in every form.

Let us be reminded that new insights of the universe are always being made.

In this new year, let us be amazed.

**Postlude**

Presto from Organ Concerto in F Major, Op. 4, no. 5

G. F. Handel

## **\*The Light of Love Goes into the World**

*Love's light is not extinguished from our worship, but is transferred from the flame of the candles to the passion in our hearts that we may go forth to let the light of love shine through us as we go to serve in the world!*

### **WE GO FORTH AS PEACEMAKERS** **TO CREATE JUSTICE FOR ALL**

*Our worship is fulfilled, and our purpose is confirmed,  
through our service as God's stewards to the world and all creation.  
Use the blessings God has given you as you share  
the joy in your heart, the wisdom in your mind,  
the love in your spirit, and the peace in your soul.*

*Thank you for sharing sacred fellowship with us.*

### ***Nourishment for the Journey***

#### **LET SOMETHING ESSENTIAL HAPPEN TO ME**

From GUERRILLAS OF GRACE, Ted Loder

O God, let something essential happen to me,  
something more than interesting  
or entertaining,  
or thoughtful.

O God, let something essential happen to me,  
something awesome,  
something real.

Speak to my condition, Lord,  
and change me somewhere inside where it matters,  
a change that will burn and tremble and heal  
and explode me into tears  
or laughter or love that throbs or screams  
or keeps its terrible, cleansing silence  
and dares the dangerous deeds.

Let something happen in me which is my real self, God.

O God, let something essential and passionate happen in me now.  
Strip me of my illusions of self-sufficiency,  
of my proud sophistications,  
of my inflated assumptions of knowledge  
and leave me shivering as Adam or Eve  
before the miracle of the natural--  
before the miracle of this earth  
that nurtures me as a mother  
and delights me as a lover;  
the miracle of my body  
that breathes and moves,  
hungers and digests,  
sees and hears,  
that works the most amazing messages

of what and when and how,  
coded and curled in every cell  
and that dares to speak the confronting word.

O God, let something essential and joyful happen in me now;

something like the blooming of hope and faith,  
like a grateful heart,  
like a surge of awareness,  
of how precious each moment is,  
that now, not next time,  
now is the occasion  
to take off my shoes,  
to see every bush afire,  
to leap and whirl with neighbor,  
to gulp the air as sweet wine  
until I've drunk enough  
to dare to speak the tender word:  
"Thank you";  
"I love you";  
"You're beautiful";  
"Let's live forever beginning now";  
and "I'm a fool for Christ's sake."

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

-- Marianne Williamson, *A Return to Love*

Faith UCC is an open and affirming church, embracing diversity in our congregation and community, and affirming the dignity and worth of every person. We are an inclusive community of faith that celebrates God's presence through worship and the sharing of God's word. We welcome all persons into the full life and ministry of the church, regardless of race, ethnic background, gender identity, sexual orientation, capability, or circumstance of life.

*The liturgies for this morning's worship, along with the Song of Dedication, were written by Rev. Bret S. Myers except where otherwise noted.*



**Welcome to all first-time (and returning) guests to Faith UCC!** We would like to get to know you and for you to get to know us. Join us after worship for coffee and **conversation**.

There is free parking on Sundays at the meters and at the McAllister & Pugh Street parking garages – so, we hope you'll worship with us again next Sunday!

**Electronic Giving Options:** During the offering time in the service, you may place your offerings on the plates the ushers will bring around. If you prefer to give electronically simply **scan the QR code** with your smartphone to be directed to our online donation page.



- January 7 the Baptism of Christ
- January 10 ESGMT @ 1 PM
- Trustees @ 7 PM
- January 14 2nd Sunday After Epiphany
- January 15 MLK, Jr Day

- January 6 Epiphany

**Get In Touch with Us!**

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Tel: (814) 237-3904 Websites: [www.faihucc.info](http://www.faihucc.info), facebook.com/SCFaithUCC  
Church Office Email: [faithucc@comcast.net](mailto:faithucc@comcast.net) Pastor's Email: [revbmyers@yahoo.com](mailto:revbmyers@yahoo.com)  
Church Office Hours: 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Fridays

Please make an appointment with Rev. Myers if you would like to meet with the pastor.  
You may call the church office, or his cell at 608-370-9472.