

Faith United Church of Christ

“An inclusive spiritual family shaping a better you for creating a better world.

A place to make a difference.”

July 9, 2017

Sacred Fellowship 10:45 a.m.

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

“Jesus uses Isaiah's visions of God's liberating empire (Isaiah 26.19; 29.18-19; 35.5-6; 42.7; 61.1) to sum up his merciful mission among the marginalized.”

— Warren Carter, *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*, p. 1765

“Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.’” — Matthew 11.7-9

“Jesus testifies to John's role: He does not belong to the elite. The *reed* was a Herodian symbol. John, a prophet who challenges current structures and announces God's future, attacked Herod (14.1-12).” — Warren Carter, *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*, p. 1765-66

“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. Let anyone with ears listen!” — Matthew 11.12-15

“The non-violent eschatological kingdom represented by the advent of Jesus the meek king has met violent opposition from representatives of the opposing kingdom. The advent of God's kingdom as represented by John and Jesus provokes violent opposition.... John is the eschatological Elijah, who stands at the turning of the ages.”

— M. Eugene Boring, *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in 12 Volumes*, VIII, p. 268

“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not

mourn.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

— Matthew 11.16-19

“The imagery of children playing games (playing the flute refers to celebrating weddings, and wailing refers to what is done at funerals) in the marketplace reveals that they go through the motions but treat the significance of life and death as trite (evidenced by the games they play); or worse still as commodities (which is why the marketplace is mentioned). Their music and weeping are charades and shallow; lacking in real understanding and the emotion which a mature person would experience in encountering an actual wedding or funeral. The implication is that they take both life and death as trivial matters, and therefore lack the spiritual discernment necessary to see the substance of what they are mimicking. When a spiritually mature person like John or Jesus comes along and does not dance when they dance or wail when they wail, having recognized that they are only playing pretend rather than being serious, the immature criticize the mature. John and Jesus have presented their generation with transformative messages, but most have rejected their message, pointing out their other behaviors as disqualifying rather than listening to the truth of their words and following in their character traits. Some have even turned violent, as kids will sometimes do when someone doesn't play the way they want them to. This alludes to threats and actions that have already transpired, as well as foreshadowing the even greater violence of both John and Jesus' deaths. John and Jesus, by their deeds, personify wisdom; the ‘children’ of this generation personify foolishness. The contrast cannot be overstated: ‘This generation’ represents an unrestrained and evil empire; John and Jesus represent a disciplined (note the ‘yoke’ that is later mentioned) and virtuous empire – one is Caesar's empire, the other God's. Jesus, the one of peace and justice, is making a political critique and condemnation that further incites the anger and violence of his adversaries.”

— Rev. Bret S. Myers, 7/5/2017

“This generation's' description of Jesus as a glutton and a drunkard is reminiscent of Deut. 21.20, suggesting more than merely an insult: Jesus is a rebellious Israelite worthy of stoning, one who should be executed in order to purge evil from the midst of the covenant community.”

— M. Eugene Boring, *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in 12 Volumes*, VIII, p. 269

“And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades. For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.”

— Matthew 11.23

“The problem is not that the inhabitants were skeptical of miracles as such. Indeed, they believed that the miracles happened, but Jesus' call for repentance (4.17) –reorientation of life to accord with his announcement of the kingdom of God– had gone unheeded even by those who believed that Jesus and his disciples actually worked miracles.”

— M. Eugene Boring, *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in 12 Volumes*, VIII, p. 273

“Capernaum was Jesus' home town, and where he did much of his ministry. It was not noted for being the epitome of evil in the ways Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom were so considered. It was your typical ‘family-oriented’ bedroom community of that day. Why then the condemnation? Perhaps be-

cause Jesus spent so much time there preaching and doing good works, and people still did not change their ways. Sodom, a place notorious for corruption and violence, is claimed as being a place that would have changed its ways if they had witnessed all that Jesus' hometown had witnessed. Capernaum saw Jesus and may have even appreciated his good deeds, but they were unwilling to let the good they saw in him transform their own lives. Whether apathetic or hostile, they witnessed divine virtue and yet refused to make it a part of their own lives. The thinking may go that Sodom had no example of goodness by which to change its ways, whereas Capernaum did. Sodom would be less blameworthy since the light of love, peace, and justice was not presented to them; they were wayward as a result of having no spiritual mentor. Capernaum, however, refused to follow in the ways of God when it came from one of their own. Having seen and yet preferring to remain blind was especially blameworthy to the ancient mind."

— Rev. Bret S. Myers, 7/6/2017

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

— Matthew 11.28-30

"Later on in life, you expect a bit of rest, don't you? You think you deserve it. I did, anyway. But then you begin to understand that the reward of merit is not life's business."

— Julian Barnes

"Love turns work into rest."

— Teresa of Ávila, 16th century

"Jesus calls the weary and the burdened, people oppressed by the taxing demands of Rome. *Rest* often refers to being free of imperial rule (2 Chr. 32.21-22; Is. 14.1-7). *Yoke* often denotes imperial or harsh rule (2 Chr. 10.9-11; Is. 14.5, 25; 47.6). But God's empire is life-giving and Jesus is a *meek* or compassionate king whose reign benefits others (20.25-28). Verse 30 is better translated, 'My yoke is kind/good and its burden is small.'"

— Warren Carter, *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*, p. 1765-66

CALLED TOGETHER AS SPIRITUAL FAMILY

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.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments after the worship in Romig Hall (lower level of elevator or stairs).

* = You are invited to stand as you are able

Prelude

"How Fair and Pleasant art Thou"

M. Dupré

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.

*Centering Our Souls

You, O God, call us to calm the troubled waters of injustice, to silence the violence of war and oppression, and to cast aside our fears and hatreds:

If we follow your ways, they will be the ways of love, peace, and justice for all.

How hard we imagine the struggle to be, and how hard it may indeed be.

But you ask us not to consider the difficulty, but rather the goodness; not whether we will be successful, but whether we can be impactful.

Like John the Baptist who preached in the wilderness, you ask us to go to places we may feel uncomfortable and give messages that may anger the powerful and privileged.

Even the contented who are just getting by may reject your message that calls them from complacency to action, from apathy to involvement.

Help us to prioritize our values to accord with your values, to listen to your truths rather than our own, and to be a witness to invigorated life.

Teach us how to commit ourselves wholly to your ways that we may know the blessing of an easy spiritual yoke and a light ethical burden.

Inspire us to be passionate about kindness, committed to compassion, and inspired to do goodness. Envelop us in a spirit of gentleness and humbleness of heart.

May it be so; now and always throughout our lives.

*Hymn of Blessed Rest

"I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say"

#489; vss. 1-3, 6

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

WE LISTEN FOR THE SACRED IN THE MIDST OF OUR LIVES

A Time for All God's Children

Prayers

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

Silent Meditation: The Prayers of the People

Pastoral Prayer

Unison Prayer: "Poetic Prayer in the Spirit of Christ"

Loving Spirit, who is here and there,
we're grateful for your tender care.

Your virtues rise, your values prized;
near and far, and everywhere.

Feed our bodies, and feed our souls.

And by forgiveness make us whole,
And may we all evils deplore,
as we search and sail for mercy's shore.
May peace and love within us rule,
and justice be your Spirit's tool;
Now and always, for us and others,
and for all creation.
May we make it so, all as one,
by your inspiration.

***Hymn of God's Presence** "God Is Still Speaking" *see insert*

Scripture Lesson Matthew 11

Message "An Easy Yoke and a Light Burden?"

***Hymn for Peace of Spirit** "O Come to Me, You Weary" #484

WE AFFIRM & CELEBRATE OUR UNITY
AS GOD'S CREATION

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

(As God calls all people to the table of forgiveness, peace, and loving fellowship, Faith UCC affirms an inclusive and open Communion Table. All persons (all ages, ethnicities, sexual orientations/identities, dis/abilities, religious affiliations, and other distinguishing features) are welcome to partake of this sacrament which affirms that we are all part of God's family and are to commune together in sacred relationship. Love and peace are the uniting virtues of this spiritual meeting place. Therefore, all who wish to join in this ritual of unity are invited to do so providing that you do so in the spirit of peace and mutual love for one another.)

The Purpose of Holy Communion

God seeks to be in communion with us, and wills that we be in communion with one another. Through the Christ in Jesus, God drew closer to us by living among us with all the desires and temptations of being human, and showed us that we each have the power to overcome wrongdoing by the inspiration of our spiritual lives and the discipline of our physical lives; thereby effecting the Christ in us. Jesus represented the individual model of how we each can do this; and in calling to his side the disciples and followers in his way of love and peace, many of whom were ostracized by the wider society, he revealed how to model this in our community here on Earth.

Reminding us symbolically of this union of body and spirit, Jesus took a loaf of bread, broke it like we are often broken in our relationships with one another, and showed us the way to reconciliation by asking us to share our bread with one another in remembrance of his own example. Through the broken bread, we participate in and become the body of Christ in the world.

In like manner, Jesus took the cup filled with the fruit of the vine, the vine that sustains us and links us to one another, and the fruit that nourishes the spirit of virtue that abides within and between each of us, and asked us to drink of that same spirit of loving-kindness and uniting harmony that was in him. Through the cup of blessing, we participate in and become the new life of Christ in the world.

The bread and fruit we partake nourishes us that we may nourish others. Through this sacrament of Holy Communion, we affirm that we are committed to Christ's way of love and peace by our motives, thoughts, actions, and practices in this world. We acknowledge that we are one community made by God, and that we must consciously choose, day by day, to be in right relationship with God, each other, and our sacred values. We therefore dedicate ourselves, individually and collectively, to make the Body and Spirit of Christ real in this world, here and now, and throughout our life as a community of the faithful. What we symbolize here in this holy space, we make real by our service when we go forth from this place.

Invitation

Partaking of the Bread and Juice

(Please come forward by rows down the center aisle, taking a piece of bread, dipping it in the cup, eating, and returning to your seats by the side aisles. You may take additional elements with you to bring to those in your row unable to come forward, or we will have a server to bring the elements to any who cannot come forward. Grape juice is used, and gluten free bread is available upon request.)

Commissioning

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**

Tune: Old Hundredth; p. 7

The light of love does shine most bright when all are siblings in our sight;

We are one fam'ly on this earth; we are God's children from our birth.

***Unison Prayer of Dedication**

By the Spirit's inspiration, we give of what we have that your blessings may abound and that goodness may flourish. Instill in us a spirit of generosity that we may do our part to help all who are in need. Pour out your Spirit upon us that we may envision one world, the world of all of Your children. Let our lives be a testimony of the unifying nature of your love to all that we meet along our life's way. Amen

Encouragement for the Journey

Postlude

Fugue in D Major

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.

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.

Our Ministry

Ministers — All the Congregation
Ushers — Tina Aumiller, Mary Jane Wild
Liturgist —
Acolyte —
Fellowship — Jean Cole
Communion Servers: Tina Aumiller, Jo Ann Edwards, Ernie Hawk, Jim Welsh

Church Staff

Custodian — Scott Luzier
Choir Director — Colin Ruffer
Organist—Mark Ferraguto
Pastor — Rev. Bret Myers
Trustee — Neil Christy
Children's Message —
Nursery —
Church School Coordinator — Barbara Chellman
Pianist — Jacki Hunt
Administrative Assistant — Jeff Stormer

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

Prayers for healing and wholeness:



The Family of Linda Merchant, Jean Weller, Lisa B. (JoAnn's daughter), Brandon G., Lisa Neidigh, Bunnie Hartswick, Katelynn Wilson, Darlene Ripka, April S., Randy Brown (Aimee's Dad), the Parrish Family, the Piggot family, Robert Zupp (Eileen Pfaff's nephew), the family of Ruth Tressler, the family of Susan Meyer, and Bob Dunham

Nourishment for the Journey

*"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. My yoke is kindness/goodness and its burden is small."
— Matthew 11.28-30*

This beloved passage, like many other beloved passages, is often taken out of context. It is human nature to seek to find comfort and rest in a world in which we feel burdened and unfree. Who among us doesn't seek for some respite from the world's worries?

But Jesus has been teaching an antithetical message to that of human empire and those who are more enamored by power, success, and wealth than they are by virtue, significance, and honor. The ways of the world are those of war/violence, injustice, vengeance, and corruption; the ways of God/Jesus are peace/gentleness, justice, love, and moral integrity. Pride and self-esteem are what the world teaches us; but respect for others and humility of self (i.e., neither making ourselves greater or lesser in our own eyes than others) are what Jesus teaches us.

The world's worries are not his worries (NOTE: This is NOT the same as being unconcerned about the world's worries); and if it is the world's worries that are disturbing our peace, then he'd remind us to forget them by focusing on the yoke of kindness/goodness. This may not reduce our worldly travails, but it will give us a different perspective on them. Indeed, it will, ironically, make us even more diligent in working to solve the world's problems – the very thing that has, up till now, caused us existential worry. The difference, however, is that his call to come to him (i.e., his ways – which are God's ways) requires our whole being; whereas most of us try to only give a portion to God and keep a portion for ourselves in trying to live comfortably in the world. Our commitment to justice, love, and peace will increase when we put aside the worries of self-interest and worldly benefit, and put God's heavenly values first and foremost in our lives. Jesus calls us to live as he lived, to act as he acted, to think as he thought, to put our whole being into serving God and God's people and creation.

As some commentators point out, "come to me" (reminiscent of passages where wisdom is anthropomorphized in calling us to her) is Jesus' call to those who have been burdened by the oppressive and unjust practices of human empires that treat its people as commodities and deny them

their rights if they are different from the ones who make the rules. The systemic injustice of empire is what we still hear today from minority persons who rightly see the laws and cultural mores pitted against them. The mass incarceration of brown skinned people is of epidemic proportions. The lower wages and too often condescending attitudes towards women remains pervasive. The ban of Muslims and a wall to keep out Mexicans are growing threats, along with the deportations of people based on their ethnicity or religion. Even the poor themselves are targeted with losing their health insurance so that the wealthiest can gain still more wealth – exacerbating an already deplorable wage gap.

The weariness Jesus is referring to is therefore not the general weariness of life, but rather the constant struggle of having to deal with systemic economic and social injustice, state-sanctioned violence, detention, expulsion, and murder, and the spiritual malaise of feeling you have no control over your own destiny. These are indeed heavy burdens – too infrequently recognized today by those “suffering” by the obliviousness of white, male, and Christian privilege. All but the wealthiest and most powerful in Jesus’ day would have understood yoke of oppression heaped upon the masses. Strangely, the masses in our time don’t seem to understand the policies designed to further subvert them and give them little rest.

It may seem odd to our ears to hear that Jesus wants to place a “yoke” upon us, but a yoke was seen as much as an instrument to help one with one’s work as it was to restrict one’s freedom. Without a yoke, one’s burden might be unbearable. With a yoke, one can negotiate greater weights and endure for much longer periods of time. Everyone has a burden to carry, but carrying it without a yoke is much harder than carrying it with one.

There was an understanding that the yoke of obedience to God was more liberating than imprisoning. Jesus follows in this prophetic tradition in suggesting that following God’s ways, as much as it will put one in conflict with the ways of the rest of society, will ultimately be more restful and freeing than the false promises of those rulers who suggest you can work your way to the top. In God’s kingdom, all are not only created equal, but are to be treated as equals. No one is to have power over another. In the way of Jesus with his disciples, even income and assets are to be equitably distributed to each as each has needs. The king would act as a servant, not a tyrant; for the people’s good, not his own. Peace would reign, and nonviolence would be the norm. Justice would be for all; not only those who could afford it. Love would be for all others, as for one’s own self. How radical this still sounds yet today!

Jesus’ teaching conveyed a total overturning of the current empire – which is why he was considered dangerous, and needed to be exterminated. Given the opposition and violence he faced by those of different values, one might wonder why he considered his yoke as “easy” and his burden “light.” Warren Carter proposes a different translation of this verse which would help rectify this problem, calling the yoke “kind/god” and the burden “small.” If the yoke is goodness or kindness, then while it still could imply a lot of work that needed to be done, it would be work that was fulfilling and meaningful. It would be work that would give one’s spirit a rest from living without purpose. The burden, done out of the joy of love, would seem small – much like all that parents do for their children because they get satisfaction out of benefitting those they love.

Sticking with the terminology of “easy” and “light” can also be spiritualized to mean the same thing, but it doesn’t ring quite as true to our ears. Seeking justice for others (or oneself) is NOT an “easy” task, neither in Jesus’ world or ours. Living by nonviolence while others employ violence toward you is also not an “easy” thing to do. Loving others who hate you, likewise, is hardly a “light”

burden. Again, unless we spiritualize these words to connote that we are blessed when we do such things because doing them results in our sense of integrity, honor, and goodness as a person. When the circumstances of life are harsh, we can still maintain a commitment to love others no matter if they reciprocate...to let our soul know the peace of living virtuously despite our economic, physical, emotional, or relational turmoil...and to feel the dignity of striving for justice regardless of whether our efforts come to fruition. Doing the right thing for the right reasons indeed brings lightness to our being. There is an ease or contentment that comes in having done all we could to live according to our highest ethical and spiritual standards. Everything else in our life may be going horribly, but our character and spirit is up to us. No one can take those away from us. No oppression can reduce us to being less than who we alone decide to be.

The yoke of virtue is easy, especially as understood by the ancients who considered virtue as the epitome of morality in the same way that being a maestro is the epitome of playing music. Once you have cultivated and habituated virtue in your life the way a maestro has practiced playing music, it seems effortless. Doing the right thing, or at least acting on beneficent motives and intentions, becomes second nature. Just as the maestro doesn’t need to look at the sheets of music, so the truly virtuous doesn’t need to ask what is the right thing to do. It is clear, as the prophets said: Love, do justly, and be a peacemaker. In essence, live by the Golden Rule and the Great Commandment. Let it occupy all your thoughts and emotions, and be implemented by your words, actions, and practices.

This way of life that Jesus proposes will give our spirits rest. We will know in our heart and soul that we are living as God intended. We will feel that unity and closeness with God that can only come from doing as Jesus himself would do – living with compassion, kindness, gentleness, peace, and justice with all people and all creation.

Jesus assured us that we are capable of this kind of life even as he was himself. This is his good news to us. It is possible. And it only seems unrealistic when we have refused to commit ourselves wholeheartedly to this way of life -- when we still have fears of how others may take advantage of us, of how we may be financially or physically harmed, of how we may end up being the recipients of injustice ourselves in defending others from it, and of how we will never be able to achieve our dreams of success, wealth, influence, and happiness if we are always intent on making the world a better place rather than looking out for our own interests. Jesus tells us that the spiritual and soulful “rest” we can gain in following God’s ways is better than all of these other things; but that we can only gain this rest when we give up all of these other ambitions and focus solely on being a good person.

Jesus has paved the way and showed us it could be done. He told us to take his “yoke” of gentleness and humbleness of heart; to “learn” from him. He gave up all the worldly ambitions to serve a higher calling. He lived a life of mere subsistence, was harassed, persecuted, and finally executed. But they could not take his soul and spirit. That he held on to, loving even his enemies and persecutors till his dying breath. Folks, that may sound hard, but Jesus made it look easy. And the reason why was that he was totally committed to God’s values rather than any other values that humanity could conjure up. Are you willing to make a total commitment? Are you willing to be a disciple of Christ? That is the question we must each ask ourselves – again and again, until we finally say “YES!” It will be at that time that our yoke will be easy, and our burden light.

--- Rev. Bret S. Myers, 7/6/2017

God Is Still Speaking

Tune: Buessan 55.54D ("Morning Has Broken")

Music: Trad. Gaelic melody; harm. by Carlton R. Young, 1988; Words: Rev. Bret Stuart Myers, 3/12/2007

God is still speaking wisdom to power
Prophets are preaching courage to strength
"Let there be justice! Let there be healing!"
God is revealing, "Love knows no length!"

God is still speaking to every nation
"Stifle your armies, raise up your saints!
Put down your weapons. Be not controlling.
Peace will start rolling when fears will faint."

God is still speaking to friends and families
"Hold not to grievance; mercy supply.
Learn of forgiveness; teach only kindness
I can cure blindness; on me rely!"

God is still speaking to all creation
To all our neighbors 'round this whole world
"Judge not by color! Judge not by specie!
Look still more closely: My form unfurled!"

God is still speaking and we're still listening
Op'ning church doors to all who would pray
Joining our journeys, sharing our yearnings
Hearts are still burning! God speaks today!



A Just World for All

November 11, 2016

Written by **John Dorhauer**

At the end of a full year of open dialogue that engaged covenant partners across the full life of the denomination, the United Church of Christ Board affirmed a Purpose, Vision, and Mission statement for the denomination. If you haven't seen them yet, here they are:

Purpose: To love our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength; and our neighbor as ourselves.

Vision: United in Christ's love, a just world for all.

Mission: United in Spirit, inspired by God's grace we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.

How beautiful is this? Love and justice are clearly seen by us as our missional imperatives. These commitments of offering a redeeming, transformative love to all, and in that love working to establish a just peace for all: this fully expresses why it is we were called into being.

The United Church of Christ Board would like to invite every setting of the denomination to begin prayerfully discerning this: in your setting for ministry, how do you and your worship family live out their call to build a just world for all?

I have the privilege of witnessing week in and week out how our local churches fulfill this mission. Even before we had the language that captured our mission impulse, we were bearing witness to the power of love to change the world. In recent weeks, I have seen this love in action...

In a communion service held at the wall separating the US from Mexico where over 85 UCC members gathered from all across the country;

On the Dakota lands where tribal leaders and pastors led young activists to the front lines at the Standing Rock reservation on horseback and gave them a sense of pride, purpose, and identity;

In a 400 year old church in Barnstable MA where the worship space also serves as the town hall gathering place and a long time relationship with a sister church in Sri Lanka calls them to service a half a globe away;

At Holy Covenant UCC in Charlotte NC where I met one of the couples that successfully challenged the state's laws criminalizing clergy for performing same gender weddings;

At the Samoan Church of Hawaii on the west shore of Oahu where every Sunday the faithful gather to sing their praises to the Creator;

With a group of clergy in Vermont who spent three days in the early fall processing the manifestation and impact of white privilege and making deeper commitments to becoming allies for racial equity.

What an honor to serve in this way and to bear witness to our ongoing commitment to build a just world for all. We are truly united in spirit and inspired by grace, and therefore welcome all, love all and seek justice for all.

We are the United Church of Christ.



The Rev. John C. Dorhauer is the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ.

Announcements and Upcoming Events

Interested in being a new member of Faith UCC?



start here

As Faith UCC welcomes a new interim pastor, we also welcome new members to join in our community of faith. If you are interested in becoming a member of our family, please let Rev. Myers know of your interest. If you are unsure whether you would like to take this step now or later, Rev. Myers will be glad to speak with you regarding your questions and concerns.

COFFEE HOUR AT WEBSTERS – IICC Coffee Hours return on Monday, **July 17** & Monday, *August 21* – (& move to 3rd Tuesdays September – February!)



Jordan's Penguin Pack video showed at General Synod this morning - the very first item on the live stream. It was very well done, and will inspire other churches to do similar projects. Sadly, the Synod site didn't archive those videos, but you can see it in the News section of the Church website: <http://www.faithucc.info/news.html>

Way to go, Jordan!

Disaster Relief Needs

Dear Friends,
We are in need of volunteers in Ottawa, IL to assist with rebuilding for families who were impacted by an early 2017 tornado.
This is the site where we (UCC, Disciples, Brethren) deployed our pilot project Disaster Recovery Support Initiative (DRSI) with the goal of shortening the time between response and recovery. We have been successful in doing so but now need volunteers.

The current need is for a small team of skilled roofers (5-6 individuals). Housing is provided and there is currently a skilled DRSI construction advisor on site. If you have a team or teams that can assist **please contact Tim Sheaffer at 717-713-3834**

Thank you for your attention to this need.

Peace,

Zach Wolgemuth

Executive, UCC Disaster Ministries

If you haven't already picked one up, the new red church parking permits are available in the church office!



Heart & Soul Gatherings: As the first major necessary step of the interim process, we will be gathering in small groups of 8-10 to get to know each other better "heart and soul." Each member and attender of the church is to select a time to sign up for one of these meetings led by Rev. Myers. This is both an opportunity to get to know each other better, and to recognize the diversity we have within our church as we each tell the story of our own spiritual journey from birth to the present in a confidential group. This sharing time will help us to identify what is most valuable to us and to others in our spiritual journeys, which will be important to creating a context of self and other-understanding for which we can later address the historical and current successes and challenges within the life of our congregation as a whole. Sign up sheets will be on the table at the Locust Lane entrance. You may call the office to have your name put on the list. Please choose to be in a group of persons in which you do NOT know each other well. Therefore, long term friends should not be in the same group. Couples may attend the same group. You may choose from the following schedule:

Tuesday, July 11 th	1-3:30 p.m. or 6-8:30 p.m.
Wednesday, July 12 th	1-3:30 p.m. or 6-8:30 p.m.

If you cannot make these times, please contact Rev. Myers to let him know times you would be available. It is important that EVERY person in our congregation attend one of these Heart & Soul Gatherings.

[Our Prayers for the Family of Linda Merchant:](#)

On Thursday evening, July 6th, 2017, Linda this earthly existence into the heavenly realm of husband Cliff, daughter Julie, son Robert, and hearts throughout their time of mourning. are pending.



Merchant passed from eternity. We keep her their families in our Funeral arrangements

"May the Spirit of Love within us be a blessing to all who are in grief, suffering, and need the presence of caring souls in their lives."

Pastor Bret