

The Peace Visitor



About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. Acts 16: 25-26

One of my favorite stories of the New Testament has always been the Holy Spirit setting Paul and Silas free. It was accomplished by means of an earthquake that shook loose chains and opened doors. I like the story because it is about the power of God being able to reach beyond the things and circumstances that bind us. It is also about that same power being able to open doors and bring liberation. For me, the story has always symbolized the work of the reconciling church as it strives to be Open and Affirming. We still seek to open doors to those who have felt barred from inclusion and welcome those in the Christian church.

On the weekend of September 16, 17 and 18 Saint Cloud will celebrate St. Cloud Pride. For our second year, Peace UCC will have an informational table at the Saturday event in the Eastman Park by Lake George. It is important to know why we do this. Pride events originally took place to increase visibility of LGBT+ persons and to advocate for decriminalization of gathering in community. Punitive laws have been repealed across the country and marriage equality is now in all 50 states. But the work of Pride and Open and Affirming churches is far from over.

It is estimated that over 40% of all homeless teens are somewhere in the LGBT+ continuum. Many of these young adults become homeless as a response of parents or care givers to their coming out. Often coming out means out on the street. Much of the bullying that takes place in schools is linked either to sexual or gender identity. Because of these factors, LGBT youth are almost 4 times more likely to attempt suicide and over 30% of all Transgender students have attempted or contemplated suicide. There is much work to be done. There are new attempts to criminalize community and make the LGBT+ community feel unwelcomed in the world. Church is meant to be a place of sanctuary and help. But too many churches and religious organizations hold the doors closed to people at this exact point of need.

As much as pride celebrations are about self-acceptance and community, they are also about showcasing places that are welcoming. Peace UCC will be in the park to show that the Holy Spirit opened our hearts and doors long ago. We will be there to stand witness to liberation of faith communities from policies of exclusion. The same Holy Spirit that liberated Paul and Silas is still at work, still bringing hope of liberation and setting free those that are chained. Our witness at Pride demonstrates who we are as a church. On the Sunday morning following, we will worship as we always do, extending warmth, love and grace. We will continue to live our welcome and hold open the doors. We will **Be the Church** that knows **God is Still Speaking!**

September 2016



Pastor John

Pastor John's Theology Word of the Month:

bles·ing ['blesiNG] NOUN

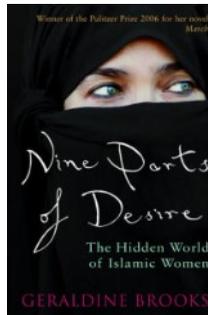
- 1) approval that allows or helps you to do something
- 2) help and approval from God
- 3) something that helps you or brings happiness

In the Hebrew scriptures the word we translate as blessing is Barak. It is used in multiple places. Its first occurrence is in Genesis 1:22 when God blesses the animals telling them to be fruitful and multiply. Today blessings are prayed for on things which we ask God to touch and hold precious. Often we ask God to bless those things which connect us to the divine.

YOU ARE INVITED. . .

“A rare look at a significant segment of the world's population that literally has been cloaked in mystery for generations.”

— *Seattle Times*



“Powerful and enlightening... Brooks presents stunning vignettes of Muslim women... and carefully distinguishes misogyny and oppressive cultural traditions from what she considers the true teachings of the Koran.”

— *Publishers Weekly*

The Peace UCC Community Book Group is reading NINE PARTS OF DESIRE, by Geraldine Brooks. We will meet on September 10th 9:00 a.m. at Ace Bar and Grill. Join us for breakfast, conversation and good company.

Nine Parts of Desire is the story of the author's journey toward an understanding of the women behind the veils, and of the often contradictory political, religious, and cultural forces that shape their lives. Defying our stereotypes about the Muslim world, Brooks' acute analysis of the world's fastest growing religion deftly illustrates how Islam's holiest texts have been misused to justify repression of women, and how male pride and power have warped the original message of a once liberating faith.

“Frank, enraging and captivating.”

— *The New Yorker*

There are some members interested in exploring what it takes to become a Just Peace church. If you have an interest in discussing this movement and the designation, please let Moderator Jon Tufte know!

What is a “Just Peace” Church?

The Just Peace Church vision is a hallmark of United Church of Christ theological identity. For 30 years, the Just Peace Church pronouncement has inspired a grassroots movement of UCC congregations committed to corporately naming and boldly proclaiming a public identity as a justice-doing, peace-seeking church. The Just Peace pronouncement articulated the UCC position on war and peace distinct from other approaches such as crusade, pacifism, or “just war.” Grounded in UCC polity and covenantal theology, the position focuses attention on alleviating systemic injustice of all types using non-violence and calls us to offer the message, grounded in the hope of reconciliation in Jesus, that “Peace is possible.”

Justice and Witness Ministries is committed to a revitalized Just Peace Church movement and to empowering and resourcing congregations to create a stronger justice and peace witness. Now is the time to rekindle our commitment to Just Peace and make visible our longstanding witness to this approach. To do so, we will be working to update the list of Just Peace Churches in the UCC and will keep this site up to date with educational resources.

Does your church consider itself to be a Just Peace congregation? What is your church doing to live out its calling to be a Just Peace church? What does it mean to be a Just Peace Church in times like these?

For more information contact uccjustpeace@gmail.com and join us in conversation via Facebook and Twitter@JustPeaceUCC.

Laundry Love, our interdenominational program of laundry and community at Kipp’s Laundromat, will be held this month on September 6 and 20 from 11 AM to 2 PM. Feel free to stop by or donate quarters or laundry products for this ongoing program.

On Saturday, September 17, there is a fundraiser for Laundry Love at St. John’s Episcopal Church. If you are interested in making bars for sale at that event, talk to Pastor John. You can even drop them off at Peace and John will transport them!

Also, our community and faith partner St. John’s Episcopal Church is working to keep their tiny house. They have gone to court to keep a "tiny house" they use to house a homeless person.

“City officials say the trailer...violates residential code requirements and must be removed. The church filed a complaint against the city of St. Cloud in federal court on Thursday [August 25].” AP, August 27

Please stay in prayer for the homeless in our area, as their needs are more numerous than we know.

FAITH FORMATION FOR SUMMER

The Journeys of Flat Jesus

Here's what Flat Jesus did in August.



The rose hedge (pink flowers) was given by Anna Streitz, who had moved back to Germany. Isn't it gorgeous?



United Church of Christ

PEACE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
REV JOHN FISCUS PASTOR

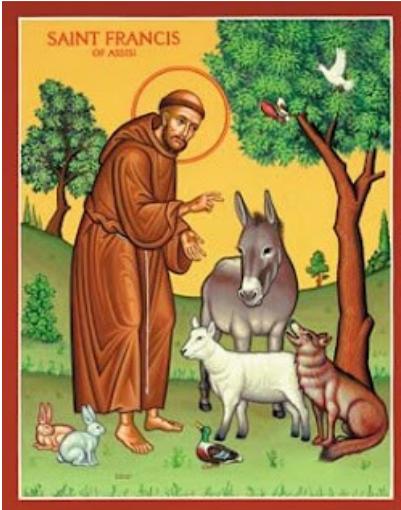
WORSHIP SERVICE 10 AM SU
WWW.PEACEUCCSCLOUD.ORG

Jesus in the Garden

Many thanks to those who have kept the garden looking amazing this summer! If you have time to help, come on by, or let us know so we can find a job for you.



BLESSING OF ANIMALS AND PEOPLE'S FAIR



It had been my intention to have a Blessing of the Animals a year ago. With scheduling and other issues at the time I was unable to complete that plan. This year I have October 8th blocked as the day to bless our animal companions. Our cats, dogs and other critters bless us already but asking God to bless them celebrates their presence in our lives.

As I thought about this tradition, I began to think we might expand that initial vision. St. Francis was originally thought of as the patron of all animals and October is where St Francis Day falls. But what St Francis was also known for was being visible and present in community. That made me rethink my vision.

I want **October 8th** to be a day of fun and connection.

We will **Bless the Animals** from 10 to 11AM and then have a **People's Fair**. I am inviting groups we have supported over the years to come set up booths and tables. From 11 to 3 PM Groups like Tri-County Homeless Resources, Annamarie's House and Abigail's Closet will be invited to bring information and raise awareness. IN house, all crafters are welcome to set up a table to sell and showcase goods. Some of the members of the church talked about a pie booth... because everything is better with pie. One dreamer is even thinking about a pumpkin patch materializing. Start dreaming and planning. Talk to Pastor John or the ROSE committee about ways you might wish to participate.

Meet **KILLEBREW**, our Official Blessing of the Animals Mascot. He will be very sad if you don't come to visit him on October 8.



“The Church on the Corner”

I have heard our church described by people as being the church with the tall white steeple with the gold cross, on the corner, over by Lake George. And, then people usually seem to know us. Unfortunately, by our building and not by our ministry/mission in the community.

We have talked about being a church of “extravagant welcome.” Just what does that call us to do? We look at making sure people feel welcome when they come to our church. We are getting pretty good at looking around to see who might be visiting, saying hello to them, and maybe even inviting/taking them down to coffee. A challenge for all of us is to make sure we sit with the visitor if they come down for coffee and “invite them to our table for conversation and food.” But, an extravagant welcome won’t be enough – because people need to come to us for that to happen.

That brings us to the next level of “extravagance!” Should we be looking at being a church of “extravagant invitation,” asking people to come worship with us on Sunday?! So, instead of waiting for people to come to church, we invite people into our fellowship. Not by going out and knocking on doors, but by going out into our community, purposefully.

I am thinking that we would call this next level of extravagance one of “Extravagant Presence.” I envision us not “doing church” within our walls, but “being the church” out in the community. It used to be that people sought out a church and joined. Over that past years our “community” around us has changed, but we have stayed the same. We are now needing to go out into the community, meeting people “at the breach,” as Pastor John talks about.

Younger adults are looking for a church that is relevant and out in the community meeting people at their point of need. They are looking for a church that is welcoming of all, inviting them into covenant with them, and making a difference in the world (and maybe more-so, in the community – right in our back yard!)

As we continue to listen to God in the next months and years, we should listen for the mission God is asking our church to take, not what we think our mission is. How are we being “present” (Being the Church) with those in the margins, or at the breach? Peace UCC has a very exciting future serving the community/neighborhood around us. Let’s band together, again, as our predecessors did, and continue the strong tradition that has been given to us.

So, when someone asks you where’s your church, you respond, “out in the community, spreading God’s Love for his children.” It’s not our building, it’s all about our “Extravagant Presence” in our neighborhood!



Jon Tufte, Moderator

“Lions and Tigers and Bears—Oh, My!”

All-Church Picnic & Holy Humor Sunday Riverside Park 2016



Another successful church picnic is in the history books and a great time was had by all! The weather was perfect (since we didn't sing "Shall We Gather At the River?") and the food was delicious! Thanks to all who planned food and activities, for all who came to worship and fellowship, and to John who took himself lightly this year and infused the day with a spirit of fun!



☞ Hot dogs and hamburgers—perfectly grilled by our expert staff.

Daniel in the Lion's Den



☞ With Becky on piano (and church bell), a whistle around his neck, and Flat Jesus for inspiration, Pastor John couldn't go wrong!

WOMEN'S RETREAT

September 23-25, 2016 at Pilgrim Point

Join with women of the Minnesota Conference UCC for a God-filled weekend while you enjoy the beauty of Pilgrim Point Camp on the shores of Lake Ida in Alexandria, MN. Download the brochure for a paper registration form and more information.

[Shirley Hoff plans to attend.]

Registration is Open!

Cost: \$90/person

This retreat is an opportunity to learn more about yourself and experience God in a profound way. Discover the parallels between basket weaving and our life's journey - the many unique ways in which we are woven together. By the end of the retreat you will have a basket, woven by yourself, to remind you of this step on your faith journey. No weaving experience needed! Check out other camp & retreat opportunities at Pilgrim Point on our website.



Back to School

Thank you to all who brought items for our back to school drive. We collected 20 backpacks, 30 boxes of crayons, 30 spiral notebooks, 15 packages of paper, 20 multi-packs of pens and pencils plus some other miscellaneous things! We, along with the Tri-County Homeless Alliance, will be donating supplies to Lincoln Elementary. Lincoln has the highest percentage of homeless students in the area. In addition, almost 82% of Lincoln students qualify for free/reduced lunches. In Minnesota, studies show “the number of homeless children decreased 7% between 2012 and 2015. However, children still represent 35% of the overall homeless population, and young people age 24 or younger are the most likely to be homeless.” (Wilder Research, 2015)



...To a Corner Near Us

Watch for our new Little Free Pantry! Like the Little Free Libraries that have begun popping up all over, there is a movement to place and stock Little Free Pantries — accessible boxes where people in

need can find some of the basics, like toilet paper, socks, peanut butter, crackers, etc.



Remember to keep us up-to-date on your address and other contact info.

Did we miss your birthday on the calendar? Let us know!

Thought of the Month

If you could avoid one household chore for the rest of your life, what chore would it be?

From The Conversation Piece: Creative Questions to Tickle the Mind

Remember to let us know if you are ill or hospitalized. The hospital can't let us know you are there, due to HIPAA and other privacy concerns. The only way we know to put you on the prayer list and come visit is if you call the office and leave us the information.

Also, let us know if you **wish** to be put on the prayer chain or the prayer list in the bulletin. We want to know how much information you are comfortable sharing.

Thanks so much!



Are you able to visit or send a note to members who are homebound or living in long-term care?

They would love to hear from you.

Marlys Burke

218 22nd Ave N
St. Cloud, MN 56303

Leif Larsen

1790 W Mill Street
Paynesville, MN 56362

Dolores Honl

2000 15th Ave SE # 217
St. Cloud, MN 56304

Dorothy Matakis

2511 15th St N
St. Cloud, MN 56303

Bev Killeen

1115 4th Ave N NS 227
Sauk Rapids, MN 56379

Gary Naegeli

Edgewood Sr. Living
12450 Cloud Dr NE, #128
Blaine, MN 55449
763-754-1723

Big News! Mom is moving to assisted care after living on her own for over 50 years. Here is her new address:

**St. Benedict's Court
c/o Eleanor M Conrad
1980 15th St. SE
Apt. 105
St. Cloud MN 56304**

Surprise her by sending here a "welcome to your new home card!" or note. Her phone is the same: 320 251 5738 Move in day is Thursday Sept 1. She does not have fb or internet. Wish me luck with this moving business, it's tough. It's the toughest thing on our 43 years of marriage so far.

Shirley Hoff



The Sunshine Report—Joys and Concerns

The family of Lucy Siercks—sympathy
The family of Bob Levine—sympathy

PEACE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

402 – 8th Avenue South

St. Cloud, MN 56301

Staff

Minister: Rev. John Fiscus

Secretary: Michelle Dettmann

Choir Director: Roger Towler

Organist: Mark Ochu

Custodian: WACOSA

Conference Minister: Rev. Shari Prestemon

Associate Conference Minister: Rick Wagner

Church Council

Moderator: Jon Tuffe moderatorpucc@gmail.com

Vice Moderator: Rick Fine

Treasurer: Lisa Hanson

Financial Secretary: Michelle Dettmann

Council Secretary: Val Broste

Members at Large: Brad Hanson, Curt Hutchens

Trustees: Brad Hanson, Bruce Michaels, Jim Thares, Linda Vierkant, **OPEN, OPEN**

Deacons: Rick Fine, Fred Grunke, Mark Hoff, Shirley Hoff, Jerryl Michaels, Roger Towler

Pastor Parish: Michelle Dettmann, Ann Grunke, Bruce Michaels, Liz Thares, Linda Vierkant

Time, Talent & Treas.: Mark Hoff, Curt Hutchens, Norma Tamm, **OPEN, OPEN, OPEN**, treasurer *ex officio*, financial

secretary *ex officio*

ROSE (Reach Out/Special Events): Val Broste, Rick Fine, Ann Grunke, Bev Tallent, **OPEN**

Faith Formation: Michelle Dettmann, Sue Towler, **OPEN, OPEN, OPEN**

Mission: Eleanor Conrad, Brad Hanson, Shirley Hoff, Becky Nieland, Mary Stamps