



United Church of Christ-Congregational THE LIGHTED WINDOW



Celebrating 159 years of faithful
service for Christ and the Church

March 2019

Sunday Worship Time

10:00am

Pastor

Rev. Dr. Bill Comfort

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Hours: M-Th 9am-12:30pm

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Pastor's Ponderings - Blessings

One of the finest things that a Pastor gets to do is to bless people. I recommend it. Whether it is the formal blessing of a Baptism or a marriage or the simple claiming of someone as the beloved child of God a person who extends a blessing is blessed. We believe that God is love and that everyone who loves is a child of God.

Last week we read in the opening chapter of Genesis of God's extension to the chaos that was the universe. "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters." (Genesis 1:1-2, NRSV) God blessed the universe into being. Later in that same chapter we read that "God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he

created them." (Genesis 1:27, NRSV) Apparently, brothers and sisters, we are being blessed into being in order to bless the rest of creation.

One of my favorite books is Gilead by Marylyne Robinson. I took a long time to read because I enjoyed it so much I didn't want to hurry. The book is about three generations of men who are pastors at the Congregational church in Gilead, Iowa - the grandfather, the father and the narrator who is writing a long letter to his own son. These three are very different from each other, particularly in their beliefs about war. All three are sincere men of God. The contrast between them is striking. The father and grandfather disagree so strongly that they are only finally reconciled after the grandfather has died. That is so typical of human relations. We hold so firmly to our beliefs that we cannot move lovingly in the direction of someone who disagrees with us. This is particularly sad when the people thus separated are family members.

The latter part of the book is taken up in a conflict between the narrator and the son of his best friend. In the view of the narrator this son has shamed the family and is not at all a righteous person. There is no way the two characters can reconcile, the judgement of the older man is so strong. In a wonderful scene late in the book the old Pastor offers to bless the younger man. To me it did not seem that the older man changes any of his views in offering this blessing. He simply claimed the younger man as God's beloved. When he did that the rift between himself and god held in place by his judgement was mended and he found a measure of peace.

When we bless another in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit we are claiming them and ourselves as God's beloved. Making this claim creates a soul deep reconciliation for both of you. I recommend it. You need not recognize a rift to put this into practice. Just find another person and bless them in whatever language is meaningful to you. Find someone to bless and make that claim. You will both be better for it.

Blessing, Bill

SERVERS FOR MARCH

Date	Greeter	Reader	Coffee Host	Child Care
3/3		Susan Stewart	Brenda and Dottie	
3/10		Tedd Lovell	Jackie Clark	
3/17				
3/24		Sheri		
4/7		Rymmel		



Birthdays in March

- Annika Baumgarten 5**
- John Baumgarten 6**
- Benjamin Deckard 9**
- Sue Peachey 11**
- John Peachey 13**
- Klea Espy 30**

March Anniversaries

- Karl & Jean Vercouteren 20**
- Chris & Tama Bolton 21**
- Bill & Vicki Matthew 25**



The March pantry item is TUNA!!!

Begin the madness March 3rd. Last year we collected over 150 cans. Please help fill the shopping cart in the Roberts room.

Calendar of Events

Mar 6— 10:30 Lenten Study
 11:30 Book Group
 3pm Diaconate
 5:30 Ash Wednesday service
 Mar 10—Budget mtg follows worship
 Mar 11—1pm Women's Fellowship
 Mar 12—2:15pm Church Council
 Mar 13, 20, 27—10:30 Lenten Study
 Mar 31—One Great Hour of Sharing
 Collected during service

AA MEETS: Mon-Fri 7-8am

Mon & Fri 6-7pm

Sat & Sun 5-6pm

Tues 5:30-6:30pm

Book Study Wednesday, March 6th 11:30 am Isabella Gray room.

Hello to all,

I hope everyone is enjoying the blanket of white everywhere around us.

At our book group today, we decided to meet at 11:30 next month, March 6. There is a writing class at the Senior Center that some folks want to attend, so we are meeting a half hour early to accommodate that.

Our book next month will be a non-fiction work called A RIVER LOST: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER. It is an older title and readily available. The author is Blaine Harden.

April 1 is our meeting after that and the book will be THE LINE BECOMES A RIVER: DISPATCHES FROM THE BORDER by Francisco Cantu. It will be released in paperback this month, February.

Our May meeting is May 1 and the book is THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. It, like the other selections, is available in paperback.

Cody Yeager

Lent

The Christian calendar has two periods that are set aside for introspection and preparation—Advent and Lent. Advent is the time before Christmas and is challenging because the world around us has started to celebrate Christmas already and we are called to spend the few weeks of late November and December readying ourselves for Christ to be born again in our flesh. Advent is a giddy time with the vision of Christmas at the end.

Lent is different. When I was a child Lent was pretty much the province of Catholics and the ones in my neighborhood were always thinking of something to give up. Since then observing Lent has become more common among main line protestants. Progressive Christians now see Lent as a time for deep reflection, prayer, repentance, and overall spiritual growth. One of the ways of coming to an understanding of Lent is through the parable of the Prodigal Son. 'There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. (Luke 15:11-13, NRSV)

The story that Jesus tells is a story about Creation, imagination, and eternal love. The Greek word *ousia* translated "property" by the NRSV usually means "substance." The father and both of his sons in this story share the same substance. I like to think of creation as a bursting forth of all that is from a single source—the singularity at the beginning of time. Some call this the Big Bang, I like to call it the time before time when God said, "Let there be light."

This relationship between the father and his sons is the same kind of relationship that Christians have come to say that Jesus has with the Father, they share a common substance or ousia. If we think of the ongoing process of Creation as equally active in the time of the parable, and in our time, and at the beginning of time then creation itself can be seen as God sharing God's substance with all of that which God is creating like the father in the parable dividing his property. Since this substance is all God, realizing this oneness with God and the rest of Creation is Communion. Each piece of Creation then is differentiated into a unique manifestation of God. The process that happens out of the balance of differentiation and communion is autopoiesis—deep co-creating our piece of the universe along with God. This is the process we are living into as we live through Lent. We want to consciously choose to realize our oneness with God and with all of Creation. The process we will use to make this move starts with recognizing that we have not been living into the cosmic oneness of God. The beginning of Lent is Ash Wednesday. This is the time when we confess that we want to move in the direction of God. If you missed Ash Wednesday don't worry because you can make this confession any time you want to. Then for the rest of the time until Easter individually and together we will reflect, pray and open ourselves to spiritual growth.

Pastor Bill

Women's Fellowship News

February's SNOW has kept us apart no denying that!! Hopefully by March 11th Spring Will Have Sprung!! Our next meeting is March 11th at 1:00 pm in the Isabella Gray Room. Our Hostess will be provided by Louanne Starr with Tama Bolton assisting her! Thank you Tama! The Devotional will be given by Caroline Homer. Our program will be for each of you (or those that want to) to share a favorite scripture or song and the reasons why!! All women of the church are invited to attend. We hope to see you there!!

Thank You

Dear Friends-

Please accept this heartfelt thank you on behalf of the entire Camp Adams community for your congregation's generous donation to Camp Adams. Before we dive headfirst into our work together in 2019, we wanted to take a moment to extend thanks to all who contributed to outdoor ministries in 2018.

Sincerely, Natalie and Bob Becker