

WEEKDAY WORDS

Thursday, February 16, 2023

LAST SUNDAY WRAP-UP

At 9:30 our Deacons met while the 4-7 grade class decorated Valentines cookies. Time in the kitchen benefited all of us who received their sweet gestures of love during the Children's Time and after worship.

During worship, Jeanine and Joe offered an arrangement of *Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us* that was simply sublime. Pastor Vicki summarized Moses' journey in faith including his late-in-life wisdom to "...choose life!" Throughout our lives, we get to choose: love over hate, generosity over greed, kindness rather than meanness. Later in the service, Pastor Vicki shared that Tara Hopkins, who lives hours away from the epicenter of the earthquake is safe but heartbroken at the devastation. We began a special offering for those impacted by the earthquake in Turkey/Syria.

THIS SUNDAY

This week there will be no Faith Formation at 9:30.

So often during worship, we hear just a portion of scripture. This Sunday at 10:30, several readers will share the words of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The lyrics of the hymns for Sunday were all penned by the Rev. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. We look forward to hearing the voices of many generations as we recall some of Jesus' most well-known words. Carol Costell Corbin is the Deacon and after worship, coffee hour will be hosted by Claire, A.C., and Theo. Nursery care is available. Find our live-stream service on Facebook, YouTube or at www.homercc.com.

A GIFT FOR LENT

The Board of Deacons voted to gift each family in the congregation with a copy of John Pavlovitz's *RISE: An Authentic Lenten Devotional*. From the introduction:

...Pain is a present opportunity to choose: a sacred space where we get to decide who we will be and what we will believe and how we will respond. As people of faith, we get up when we fall because we are a people of hope, we accept the descent as the invitation to rise again.

And so, we will travel the days of Lent together as we share in 40 days of fasting and feasting and watching for hope that surrounds us. Copies of the book will be available on Sunday and at the Ash Wednesday service.

SPECIAL OFFERING

The impact of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria is incomprehensible. Our Mission Committee assures us that we can help! Make checks payable to Homer Congregational Church, putting "Earthquake Relief" in the memo. Soon, we will send one check through the UCC for earthquake relief.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION AS OF JANUARY 31:

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|------------------------|----|----------------|
| Revenue - \$18,232.95 | or | 8.4% of budget |
| Expenses - \$13,642.69 | or | 5.9% of budget |

THIS WEEK'S SCHEDULE

- Monday The office is closed in observance of President's Day
- Tuesday Trustees meet at 7:00 pm.
- Wednesday Ash Wednesday service begins at 7 PM.
- Thursday Information session on the Quilt Project in the boardroom at 6:00 pm
- Friday Stop by our Green on Friday between 5:30 – 8 and purchase hot cocoa and HOMEMADE cookies from the Scouts who meet in our building.
- Saturday Quilt Sewing class at 10:00 – 1:00 pm

The Burtsons will be in California Feb. 23 – March 3 visiting family.

A sign up is available on the Resource Table in the RFR for hosting coffee hour. After this Sunday, no one signed up to host.

NEXT SUNDAY IS THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Our Outreach Team is coordinating another Easter Basket Give-Away for Saturday, April 1. Each week, they invite us to bring donations. On Sunday, February 26, please bring donations of boxed scalloped potatoes.

9:30 Faith Formation classes resume.

10:30 Rev. Laurel Harte-Westover will lead worship. Julie Freeman is the Deacon for the Day and will offer the Children's Time.

3:00 *New Beginnings* - Cortland Interfaith Council's Choir Festival held at UPC. Our choir will join at least three other choirs in offering musical gifts.

When you pray, please include prayers of/for...

 ...thanksgiving at the schools' winter break – may it bring renewal to students, faculty and staff.

 ...sustenance for the students who rely on school breakfast/lunch programs.

 ...thanksgiving for parents willing to foster and/or adopt children who need family.

 ...a deep well of patience when a child's past trauma creates emotional and psychological difficulties in the present.

 ...thanksgiving for the places we call home.

 ...understanding for people who do not have home, and who find it increasingly difficult to have a place just to "be".

 ...thanksgiving for the "ah-HA!" moments when God's love and hope are seen within our world.

 ...faith to carry us when our eyes do not perceive, and our ears cannot hear, and despair threatens to take control.

Many of us have signed up for the daily devotional provided by the Still-speaking UCC Writers group. Quinn Caldwell is a regular contributor. Here is the offering from Tuesday (Valentine's Day) which captures some important considerations for all of us imperfect humans.

If you are interested in receiving these daily thought-provoking pieces, go to www.UCC.org, click on the Resources tab, scroll down to "related devotional material" and click on the "+" sign. You can provide an email address to these helpful devotions.

UCC DAILY DEVOTIONAL
Happy No Harm Day by Mary Luti

Be devoted to one another in love. Do not repay anyone evil for evil.
- Romans 12:10, 17 (NIV)

Today is Love Day, sentimental and sappy, romantic and raunchy, corny and commercial. And if Valentine's is your thing, I wish you luscious chocolates, velvety roses, and kissy-face love that lasts forever and a day.

Not everyone loves Love Day, though, often for reasons too painful to describe. And if that's you, I hope today's mush isn't too hard on you, or on anyone else for whom love isn't a many-splendored thing.

Which isn't to say that celebrating starry-eyed love is bad, just that it glosses over the hard bits. Maybe we need another day to honor love's less giddy aspects: Love Through Gritted Teeth Day, maybe?

Or better yet, No Harm Day. Because, honestly, that's where a lot of us land on the love scale in these divisive days, clinging to the bottom rung of love, barely managing to fulfill its minimum requirement to inflict as little harm on others as possible.

Refraining from harm-doing, harm-thinking, harm-saying—it may not be what most people think of as love. But isn't it at least a nod in love's direction whenever someone says, "There goes a human being who's burdened enough without my piling on"?

No, it's not everything, but trying not to pile on might be just enough to get us over the line on the Last Day when, as St. John of the Cross writes, we'll be examined on love, and love alone.

Prayer

Enthusiastically loving my neighbor would be best, of course; but oh Jesus Christ, some days not harming them is all I can manage. Bless it, please. It's a start.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Luti is a long-time seminary educator and pastor, author of *Teresa of Avila's Way* and numerous articles, and founding member of The Daughters of Abraham, a national network of interfaith women's book groups.