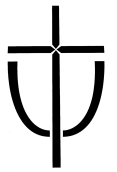




Still Speaking



Indeed, the word of God is living and active...
 -Hebrews 4:12

December 2019

The Inside Scoop

Newsletter Deadline

*Our next newsletter will be published the week of **February 12, 2020**.
 The deadline for that newsletter is Friday, **February 7, 2020**.*

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Consumer Rites? Or, the Best Christmas Gift, Ever?

What’s the best Christmas gift you ever received?

My answer to that is easy: when I was 11, my parents brought into our home our first family dog. “Willy,” a cute German Schnauzer puppy, was a complete surprise to my brother, Andy, and me. “It’s a dog!” I exclaimed as I walked into our living room after church to see the bundle under the Christmas tree. “A real one!” my younger brother replied.

So, what’s the best Christmas gift you ever received?

As it turned out, Willy wasn’t much of a genius. It took months to potty train him. His bark was loud, shrill, and frequent. And he flunked, actually flunked, obedience school.

But we loved him anyway, and he loved us. For fourteen years, he was there for every birthday party—hoping for a dropped hot dog. Every evening, he waited by the door for his post-dinner walk in our Appleton neighborhood. And at night, he would curl up next to one of us on the couch where we’d pet him and he’d respond with what my mom called his “lovie licks.”

Of course, our love for our dog was work, too. There were those months of potty training (and the messes that resulted from his failure to get it). There were those nightly walks after dinner. There were those obedience school classes where we tried in vain to teach him to “heal,” to “sit,” and to “stay” (it was the “long down” that was his particular nemesis—perhaps he had a bit of doggie ADD).

Anyway, in this season of consumer rites—the buying and selling that can threaten to take over our celebrations—it’s a good practice to try and “keep it simple:” to give gifts that give life. After all, that is the reason for the season—the celebration of the life of Jesus, who gave his life so that we might live happily and fully, even eternally.

It’s sad how easily happiness can be twisted into an association with a commodity, isn’t it? The good life, we get sold, lives in goods. But we know, when we pause to reflect, that lasting happiness can’t be bought. We didn’t

(continued on page 2)

Lectionary Readings**Dec. 22—4th Sunday of Advent**

Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25

Dec. 24—Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

Dec. 25—Christmas Day

Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98
Hebrews 1:1-4, (5-12); John 1:1-14

Dec. 29—1st Sunday after Christmas

Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148
Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23

Dec. 31—New Year's Eve

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Psalm 8
Revelation 21:1-6a; Matthew 25:31-46

Jan. 1—New Year's Day

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Psalm 8
Revelation 21:1-6a; Matthew 25:31-46

Jan. 5—Epiphany

Jeremiah 31:7-14 or Sirach 24:1-12
Psalm 147:12-20 or Wis. of Sol. 10:15-21
Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:(1-9), 10-18

Jan. 12—The Baptism of Christ

Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29
Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 3:13-17

Jan. 19—2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11
1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

Jan. 26—3rd Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 9:1-4; Psalm 27:1, 4-9
1 Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 4:12-23

Feb. 2—4th Sunday after Epiphany

Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 15
1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12

Feb. 9—5th Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 58:1-9a (9b-12); Psalm 112:1-9 (10)
1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16)
Matthew 5:13-20

Feb. 16—6th Sunday after Epiphany

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 or Sirach 15:15-20
Psalm 119:1-8; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9
Matthew 5:21-37

(continued from page 1)

experience happiness as children when our parents bought Willy. We experienced happiness when we were surprised by this silver and gray bundle of LIFE that became a member of our family.

In the same way, the story of Jesus that we hear each Christmas invites us into life-giving relationship. God dwells among us, Emmanuel, so that we might experience the wonder of living in relationship to the ever-loving God.

What more could we ask for? What more could we need?

God who is the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of the universe has promised to BE WITH US, to celebrate with us our joys, and to console us in our failures.

And we experience that presence of the living God in our relationships with each other, through the church, through our families, and through our friends (including the furry ones).

So, we hope that you'll join us for our Christmas Eve worship this year— at 3:00 p.m. for a service for all ages with a special message to our children, and/or at 9:00 p.m. for our Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship.

So, stay away (as much as you can!) from the consumer rites that dictate that you must buy happiness. And enjoy, instead, the love that comes from the greatest gifts of all—our relationships with each other, through which we can experience the presence of the living, loving God.

Jon Pahl

Minister of Faith Formation and Community Engagement

Our Church Family

Upcoming Adult Education at Union Church

For January, we'll continue with our theme of "The Green Gospel," at 9 a.m. in the Bagby Chapel. Join us!

January 5 — Eric Harkoff
"Climate Change in Senegal"

January 12—Kelsey Mauthe
"The Brain Center is Underway!"
Come hear an update from The Brain Center's new communications director on this start-up that will be housed in Union's re-purposed "Incubator Space" (including a walk-through of the new space).

January 19—Jon Pahl
"Earth Ministry's 'Greening Congregations' Program"

January 26—Bill McKibben and 350.org

Some of the "regulars" who have been a part of this "Green Gospel" conversation for a few months now have been leading discussions AND doing some pre-reading that is circulated beforehand. If you have ideas for discussions, and/or would like to do a talk on a green-and-faith-related topic, contact Cathy Putman at cputman@new.rr.com. We hope to see you Sunday morning for some stimulating/informative education about the most crucial faith-issue of our time (according to no less than Pope Francis!)

Coming in Lent

"The Green Gospel"

Lunch & Learn Series (starts March 1)

Advent and Christmas at a Glance



Saturday, Dec. 21 Christmas Pageant Rehearsal (9 a.m.)

Sunday, Dec. 22 Fourth Sunday in Advent—Christmas Pageant
We tell the story of Jesus' birth in the drama of the Christmas Pageant.
NO FAITH FORMATION this Sunday.

Tuesday, Dec. 24 Christmas Eve

Our early service is more informal with special thought given to children's attention spans. The late service of scripture, carols, and candlelight is preceded by wonderful Christmas music. Join us!

- 3:00 p.m. Worship with a special welcome to our children
- 8:40 p.m. The Music of Christmas
- 9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight worship

Wednesday, Dec. 25 Christmas Day

A Blessed and Merry Christmas to one and all! The church office is closed.

Sunday, Dec. 29 First Sunday after Christmas

10:00 a.m. Worship in the Sanctuary. **NO FAITH FORMATION** this Sunday.

Tuesday, Dec. 31 and Wednesday, Jan. 1 The church office is closed

Sunday, Jan. 5, 2020 Epiphany

10:00 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion in the Sanctuary.

Greater Green Bay Area Annual Martin Luther King Interfaith Prayer Gathering

Monday, January 20—7 p.m.
at Resurrection Catholic Church
333 Hilltop Drive

Hosted by G.I.F.T.
(Gathered In Efaith Together)



All are welcome to attend this interfaith celebration of the life and legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. The prayer service will be lead by religious leaders representing the co-sponsoring congregations.

Coffee Hour Hosts Needed

We are in need of someone to host coffee hour for the following dates:

**January 19; February 16;
March 15; April 19; May 17**

We could also use volunteers for treats for coffee hour.

If interested in either of these, please contact Nicole Kinjerski at nkinjerski@gmail.com.

Union Church's New Banner



(photo by Winnie Hutjens)

Our "Love Over All" banner was hung on December 9 by Jones Sign.

Is There Biblical Support for Care of Planet Earth?

**Seminary Secrets series:
January 15, 22, 29**



Among progressive Christians, there is a growing conviction that care of the planet is a Christian obligation, hence the term "Green Gospel." But on what basis is this a *Christian* imperative?

Certainly one doesn't need to be a Christian to be an environmentalist! Since the Bible is Christianity's *foundational identity document*—the writings that we turn to again and again to define who we are and what we're about—it would seem logical to mine the Bible to support the notion that Christians, as Christians, have something to say about the green movement.

But there may be a few problems with the success of this approach. For one thing, the ancient, pre-industrial people who composed the books of the Bible lived between 2,000 to 3,000 years ago, long before there was much risk of pollution, overpopulation, climate change, and other environmental degradations; therefore, there's a risk of attributing modern attitudes to them that they'd find quite peculiar. Second, as biblical scholars well know, the Bible is comprised of many different "voices" which, not infrequently, disagree with each other. Finally, those who'd like to prove that something is "Christian" often cite "proof-texts" willy nilly, with inadequate regard for either the literary or historical context in which such a verse was penned.

Well, in Seminary Secrets we resist the urge to proof-text, and instead *seek to discover what a biblical author was trying to say to his original audience*. Then we consider if and how we can apply that meaning to today's context, taking into account other resources as well, such as science, experience, and reason.

So, in this series, we'll study various biblical passages and consider questions like these: How did the ancient authors view creation? What did they see as God's role? What did they see as the human role? Can the Bible inform a Christian ethic about Planet Earth? How?

DATES? Wednesdays, January 15, 22, 29

TIME? 6:15 to 7:30 p.m. (coincides with youth groups)

WHERE? Chapel Classroom (behind Bagby Chapel)

HOW TO SIGN UP & GET THE READING ASSIGNMENTS: Contact Julie at jblackharder@gmail.com or 920-465-0752.

OPTIONAL SUPPER: Coming from work? Take advantage of a meal and fellowship in Pilgrim Hall at 5:45 p.m.—free will offering appreciated but not necessary.

QUESTIONS? Contact Julie!

Church Library Has Stories for the Season

“Refuge” is a picture book for adults and children. It is a retelling of Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem, the birth and the flight afterward into Egypt. In this journey, Jesus’s parents depend on the kindness of strangers for their survival. Similarly, the pictorial immigrant narrative “La Frontera: My Journey with Papa” shows that these journeys are hard, the adaptation curve is steep and small first gestures have an outsized impact.

A big story in American Protestantism is the white church’s separation from and disregard for black Christians. Writing in “The Cross and the Lynching Tree,” black theologian James Cone was both amazed and stricken by fellow academic Reinhold Niebuhr’s blindness to laws and norms – including lynching – that had throttled the promise of freedom for black Americans. The man who had such early sensitivity to an oppressive Nazi regime could not see the oppressive treatment of black citizens by government programs, newspapers, banks and law enforcement.

Being a member of the clergy did not give Niebuhr special insight nor was he different from much of the rest of the nation. Nor are we much different. Reaction to diversity reenacts the oppressive culture of our past. Whether we acknowledge it or not, discomfort and distrust of the “other” protects our expectations, and serves our self-interest.

It is a time to put our trust in stories in which love drives out fear, in which kindness – ours and others – uncovers a new way.

In “Reconstructing the Gospel: Finding Freedom from Slaveholder Religion,” white author Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove witnesses American religion’s fracture at his Thanksgiving table. His father is white, racist and a churchgoer. His son is black and cannot fathom the white supremacist values his grandfather holds. Wilson-Hartgrove is caught between them, observing “Our racial blindness is generational and multilayered, folded in and among all that is true and good about our faith.”

Wilson-Hartgrove is a part-time preacher. His stories of coming to see racism in white culture are generously flecked with Biblical anecdote and historical episodes. He tells of walking through his integrated neighborhood in North Carolina. Several times he was invited to sit on Ms. Carolyn’s porch with her neighbors. Only after many such greetings does he understand that he has been welcomed; he is the stranger. Through porch sitting, listening and learning from another porch visitor, Grandma Ann, Wilson-Hartgrove finds a place to heal his self-preserving social and racial blindness.

Christmas is often a time of feel good stories, sometimes featuring ourselves or our like as welcomers of the hour. Christmas is also a time to venture out into the world vulnerable and weak but blinking with the possibility of sight.

The books mentioned here are in the basket under the window in the church library. See a more extensive bibliography of the church holdings on these topics there also.

—Cathy Putman

Call to the 184th Annual Meeting

The 184th Annual Meeting of Union Congregational United Church of Christ will convene on Sunday, January 26 immediately following worship. We will conduct our business meeting and share a potluck luncheon. Reports concerning the ministry of Union Church in 2019 will be presented, outgoing ministry chairs and vice-chairs will be recognized, elections will be held for new leaders in and a budget for the ministry of Union Church in 2020 will be adopted.

Please bring a salad, vegetable, casserole or dessert for the common table. Common Ministry will provide meat, drinks and table service.

Men’s Breakfast Group Now Meets at Julie’s Café

For years, the Men’s Fellowship Group has met for breakfast at 7 a.m. on the first Wednesday of the month. Beginning New Year’s Day and going forward, the group will meet at a new location (Julie’s Café, 1685 Main Street). Breakfast is open to all at Union Church who identify as male. The meeting is free flowing, which allows those attending to depart whenever needed.

Attendance

November	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
1st Sunday	160	144
2nd Sunday	138	134
3rd Sunday	170	150
4th Sunday	144	113
Totals	612	541
Average	153.0	135.3

Proposed Bylaw Change

For roughly the last 18 months, New Member and Inreach Ministries have been meeting together and functioning as a unit. Both ministries were conscious that much of their work overlapped, and that coordinated efforts would help both to be stronger and function more efficiently. After this successful year-and-a-half long experiment, Common Ministry proposes the changes below to our church bylaws to reflect our current functionality, to be voted on at our Annual Meeting on January 26, 2020 following worship.

Current Bylaws:

Section 19. Inreach Ministry

The purpose of the Inreach Ministry is to provide support, coordination, and vision-keeping in the planning and administration of our care for one another and our fellowship together. It shall ensure that related activities are appropriately staffed by developing ongoing committees, task forces, or other mechanisms to further its work.

It shall ensure that the fellowship activities of the youth of the church are appropriately supported. It shall assist the Pastor when requested and assume direction when he/she is absent in making visitations on members. It shall submit an annual budget to the Common Ministry.

Section 20. New Member Ministry

The purpose of the New Member Ministry is to provide support, coordination, and vision-keeping in the planning and administration of membership growth and new member assimilation. In cooperation with the Pastor and the Common Ministry, it shall lead church-wide efforts in evangelism and fulfilling our Christian commitment to share the good news of Jesus Christ. It shall ensure that related activities are appropriately staffed by developing ongoing committees, task forces, or other mechanisms to further its work. It shall submit an annual budget to the Common Ministry.

Proposed Bylaws:

Section 19. Membership and Inreach Ministry

The purpose of the Membership and Inreach Ministry is to provide support, coordination, and vision-keeping in the planning and administration of membership growth and retention, new member assimilation, membership roll review, and our care for one another and our fellowship together. It shall ensure that related activities are appropriately staffed by developing ongoing committees, task forces, or other mechanisms to further its work.

In cooperation with the Pastor and the Common Ministry, it shall lead church-wide efforts in evangelism and fulfilling our Christian commitment to share the good news of Jesus Christ. It shall ensure that the fellowship activities of the youth of the church are appropriately supported. It shall assist the Pastor when requested and assume direction when he/she is absent in making visitations on members. It shall submit an annual budget to the Common Ministry.

Altar Flowers

Please consider providing flowers for the altar in memory of a loved one or in celebration of a special event.



These dates are available for you to provide flowers:

January 2020

Please call the church office at 437-9266 or sign up on the board next to the office if you'd like to provide altar flowers. Thank you.

Women's Advent Reflection was December 2



Over 80 women gathered for reflection and community in Pilgrim Hall at this year's Woman's Advent Event. Pictured above (from left to right) are Kathy Baldwin, Gloria Kaminecki, Helen Krueger, Laura Bartelt, and Marie Guzman.

Union Church Calendar

December 22, 2019—February 5, 2020

December 22 4th Sunday of Advent
CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

8:30 a.m. Pageant Rehearsal
 10:00 a.m. Christmas Pageant
 in the sanctuary

December 24 Tuesday
CHRISTMAS EVE

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSURES at NOON
 3:00 p.m. Family Worship
 8:40 p.m. The Music of Christmas
 9:00 p.m. Candlelight Worship

December 25 Wednesday
CHRISTMAS DAY
 CHURCH OFFICE IS CLOSED

December 29 Sunday
 NO FAITH FORMATION
 NO ADULT EDUCATION
 10:00 a.m. Worship in the sanctuary

December 31 Tuesday
NEW YEAR'S EVE
 CHURCH OFFICE IS CLOSED

January 1 Wednesday
NEW YEAR'S DAY
 CHURCH OFFICE IS CLOSED
 7:00 a.m. Men's Breakfast Group
 (at Julie's Café
 1685 Main Street)

January 5 Sunday
 9:00 a.m. Faith Formation
 9:00 a.m. Adult Ed: Eric Harkoff
 "Climate Change in Senegal"
 10:00 a.m. Worship in the sanctuary
 with Holy Communion

January 7 Tuesday
 12:00 p.m. Bible Study
 4:30 p.m. Outreach Ministry
 5:30 p.m. Bell Choir
 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir
 6:30 p.m. Education Ministry

January 8 Wednesday
 8:30 a.m. Brown County Homeless
 and Housing Coalition
 5:30 p.m. Worship Ministry
 5:45 p.m. Dinner
 6:15 p.m. PF & YCA

January 9 Thursday
 12:00 p.m. JOSHUA Religious Leaders
 5:00 p.m. New Member/Inreach
 6:00 p.m. Common Ministry

January 12 Sunday
 9:00 a.m. Faith Formation
 9:00 a.m. Second Sunday Series:
 Kelsey Mauthe
 "The Brain Center of GB"
 10:00 a.m. Worship in the sanctuary

January 14 Tuesday
 12:00 p.m. Bible Study
 2:00 p.m. Visitation Ministry
 5:00 p.m. Stewardship Ministry
 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir
 6:30 p.m. Adult Gay-Straight Alliance

January 15 Wednesday
 5:45 p.m. Dinner
 6:15 p.m. PF & YCA
 6:15 p.m. Seminary Secrets

January 19 Sunday
 9:00 a.m. Faith Formation
 9:00 a.m. Adult Ed: Jon Pahl
 "Greening Congregations"
 10:00 a.m. Worship in the sanctuary

January 20 Monday
 7:00 p.m. G.I.F.T. MLK Service
 at Resurrection Church
 (333 Hilltop Drive)

January 21 Tuesday
 12:00 p.m. Bible Study
 5:30 p.m. Bell Choir
 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir

January 22 Wednesday
 3:30 p.m. Immigration Advocacy
 5:45 p.m. Dinner
 6:15 p.m. PF & YCA
 6:15 p.m. Seminary Secrets

January 26 Sunday
 184th ANNUAL MEETING
 9:00 a.m. Adult Ed: Bill McKibben
 9:00 a.m. Faith Formation
 10:00 a.m. Worship in the sanctuary
 followed by our Annual
 Meeting and potluck

January 28 Tuesday
 12:00 p.m. Bible Study
 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir

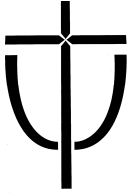
January 29 Wednesday
 5:45 p.m. Dinner
 6:15 p.m. PF & YCA
 6:15 p.m. Seminary Secrets

February 1 Saturday
 2:00 p.m. Call and Response Jazz:
 Honoring Green Bay's
 First Responders

February 2 Sunday
 9:00 a.m. Faith Formation
 10:00 a.m. Worship in the sanctuary
 with Holy Communion

February 4 Tuesday
 12:00 p.m. Bible Study
 4:30 p.m. Outreach Ministry
 5:30 p.m. Worship Ministry
 5:30 p.m. Bell Choir
 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir
 6:30 p.m. Education Ministry

February 5 Wednesday
 7:00 a.m. Men's Breakfast Group
 (at Julie's Café
 1685 Main Street)
 5:45 p.m. Dinner
 6:15 p.m. PF & YCA



Union Congregational
United Church of Christ
716 S. Madison Street
Green Bay, WI 54301

Return Service Requested

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PERMIT NO. 53
GREEN BAY, WI

3:00 p.m.
Christmas Eve Worship
for all ages with a special
message to our children

8:40 p.m.
The Music of Christmas

9:00 p.m.
Christmas Eve
Candlelight Worship

Christmas Eve

at
Union Church

Join us...and invite your
friends...as we celebrate the joy
of the birth of our Savior,
Jesus Christ!

**Union Congregational
United Church of Christ**
716 S. Madison Street
Green Bay, WI 54301
e-mail: office@unionucc.com
(920) 437-9266

Rev. Bridget M. Flad Daniels
Senior Minister

Dr. Jon Pahl
Minister of Faith Formation
and Community Engagement

Sandy Polarek
Moderator

Church Office Hours
Mon.-Fri. 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
For more information about us,
visit our web page
at <http://www.unionucc.com>