

*The St. John's UCC Pulpit showing St. John
Carved in 1925
by Emil Ruoff and Rudolph Blatter Sr.*

Psalm 121

**I lift up my eyes to the hills--
from where will my help come?**

**My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.**

**He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.**

**He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.**

**The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade at your right hand.**

**The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.**

**The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.**

**The LORD will keep your going out
and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.**



**From the
Pastor**

Lent – A Time of Contemplation

The time before the loss of Christ we call Lent, a time for reflection and repentance. Hopefully we can accomplish that as individual Christians.

The original church in the first century developed this season as it was felt that merely recognizing Easter day was not enough to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ. Each Wednesday we will meet at a local church to spend a moment in remembrance of all Jesus Christ did for us. I hope you will consider joining us at one of these worship services followed by a soup and sandwich.

A time of self-assessment is always worth considering as it can be very uplifting. The last three Sundays we covered the passages in the Bible which best define the deity of Christ along with His baptism. First the word from God that he was the Messiah, second the transfiguration before the three disciples and then yesterday the temping in the wilderness during 40 days (like Lent) by the devil.

I hope you have a joyous time as we prepare to recognize the resurrection of our savior, Jesus Christ. **John**



In Our Prayers

We pray today for a dear friend of our congregation, Diane Cannon who lost her father last week, Paul Partenheimer of Salt Lake City. When we think of Diane we think of her heavenly music and know that her father too is at peace in God's heavenly arms. We pray for all who are ill, homebound or recovering from an illness, accident or surgery: Jerome Johnson, Gloria Kunert, Al Leske, Evelyn Magin, Elsie Mattie, Rose Matuska, Fred Staggemeier, Hilda Walters, Brock Wittenberg, Violet Young, and their caregivers.

Please join us on Sunday, March 19th. For the baptism of Madyson Frost during the morning worship. Come and meet her parents and extended family and welcome Madyson into the fellowship of St. John's.

The SJ Skiers ~ For the past two Sundays we have braved the slopes of Mt. La Crosse for the last time until next snow season.

March Birthdays

Mar. 4	Amber Bartlett
	Gray Martin
Mar. 5	Clayton Kay
Mar. 10	Ariel Schneider
Mar. 14	Eunice Whiting
Mar. 16	Nancy Brockman
	Dawn Kay
Mar. 19	Mark Johnson
	Bill Ohm
Mar. 22	Marie Loeffler
	Myrtle Wicklund
Mar. 25	Neil Kleinertz
Mar. 27	Lindsay Steiger
Mar. 30	Erin Hoy
	Ethan Kranz



Attention members: please call or email the church office with your birth date and the date of your anniversary so we can include these in the newsletter. stjohnsoffice@centurytel.net

**DON'T
BE
LATE
FOR
CHURCH
THIS
SUNDAY**

**DAYLIGHT
SAVING
TIME**

**SET YOUR
CLOCKS
AHEAD
ONE
HOUR
THIS
SATURDAY
NIGHT
MARCH, 11th.**

*"Dining Out
Group"*
6:00 pm



Thursday, March 16th

Please join the "Dining Out Group" for their spring night out at Manny's across from Home Depot in Onalaska. Manny's specializes in authentic Mexican food but has a varied menu that will please all palates. Please RSVP by contacting the church office or sign-up in the church lounge. If you need a ride call the "Office Guy" to arrange.



Ann Kleinertz has accepted the position of Church President for 2017. Ann is a very active member here at St. John's and we are fortunate to have her as head of the consistory.

We thank Dawn Kay for serving as our President for the past two years. Dawn will continue as a consistory member.

Coming on as a new member this year is Jennifer Gantzer. We thank her and all members of the consistory for their time and dedication to St. John's.

Consistory Meeting Sunday 3/26



**WHAT IF?
FOUNDATION**

Coins of Love for March 2017 ~ "What If Foundation"

Since 2000, the **What If? Foundation** has partnered with members of the Ti Plas Kazo community in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to bring much-needed food and educational opportunities to impoverished children.

Our vision has always been linked with the vision of the Ti Plas Kazo community to feed and educate their children. Grounded in mutual respect, trust, and the belief that small steps at a grassroots level is essential to lasting change, What If and its Haitian partners (called *Na Rive*) have worked together to provide life-giving services to children

for the last 16 years.

Today, thanks to the support of our donors, we provide resources for:

6,000 meals/week

154 school scholarships/year

An after-school program for 240 youth

A summer camp for 650 children

The What If? Foundation is the only source of funding for these programs.

Our success over the years is a direct result of our collaboration with our Haitian partners, who work tirelessly through turbulent political and economic times. By pairing the commitment and expertise of our Haitian partners, *Na Rive*, with the financial resources provided by our donors, we are grateful to be bringing hope and opportunity to children and their families in Haiti.

Our Adopted Children

St. John's has long participated in the project to help children overseas. This is coordinated by the UCC but locally was a labor of love for Jane Hay. Jane is gone but her work is not. This year we have raised from our sponsors (at \$60 each) a total of \$436 towards the needed \$660. With time we have lost two sponsors, I hope you will consider stepping in.

Thank You John



~ It's Time to Order Easter Flowers ~



For those of you wishing to order Easter plants in memory of or in honor of your loved one, the final day to order through the florist is

FRIDAY, MARCH 31ST.

The church office will again be ordering plants through Cottage Garden

Floral. A 6" Easter Lily will be \$13.00 each and 6" mum plant \$17.00. **Please return this form to the office no later than Friday March 31st.**

Thank You!

Please order _____ Easter Lilies at \$13.00 each

In memory / honor of: (circle one)

Please order _____ Mum plant at \$17.00 each

In memory / honor of: (circle one)

Given By:

Please include payment with your order.
If you choose to bring in your own flowers please inform the church office so your loved one's mentioned in the Easter Sunday Bulletin. Flowers may be delivered Wednesday, April 12th. or Friday April 14th. from 9:00 am to noon.

Thank You!

*Lenten Worship Schedule***Wednesday Mid-Week
Ecumenical Lenten Services**

March 15th. First Congregational UCC
2503 Main Street, Canon Dr. Patrick Augustine

March 22nd. Christ Episcopal
831 Main Street, Pastor John Parkyn

March 29th. St. John's UCC
630 West Avenue S., Pastor Anna-Lisa Hunter

April 5th. First Presbyterian
233 West Avenue S., Dr. Timothy Ashley

April 12th. Common Ground Campus
Ministry 1334 Pine Street, Rev. J. Taylor Haley

Worship Service at 12:00 noon

Offering will benefit

Common Ground Campus Ministry

Lunch at 12:30 pm

\$5.00 suggested lunch donation

**Maundy Thursday
Service**

7:00 PM

April 13th

**Confirmation
Sunday**

palm sunday
Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord

10:00 PM Worship

HAPPY EASTER

Sunday, April 16th.

10:00 am

Easter Worship

A TIME FOR SOMETHING NEW

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

In the 1960's a band put the words of Ecclesiastes to music, and the world came to know them not so much as Scripture, but as song. Whenever I preach on this passage I see a faint look of recognition in the eyes of the congregation. And after church someone always says to me, "I didn't know that was in the Bible . . . I transcending time and space and, at its best, lifting us up into God's presence. There's a reason why music plays such an important part in our corporate worship. thought it was just a song!"

I'm not sure anything is "just a song," even a song. Music has the magical power of It's not a performance; it's praising God in an extraordinary language and helping others to do the same.

And yet, I can't carry a tune in a bucket. I confess to making sure my microphone is turned off before each hymn on Sundays, and to mumbling along. I love listening to music; I'm just not that good at making it. I can pray out loud and preach all day long, but don't ask me to sing.

Recently, though, I've begun to sing with less fear. I still don't hit all the notes, but I at least join my voice with the congregation's. Why? Because while music may not be my native tongue, I'm still invited into the song.

The same is true when people tell me they can't pray because they're "no good at it." Whoever gave us the idea that prayer was something we had to be "good at"? Prayer is just about talking to God. And if I can sing, you can pray.

This Lent, we are invited into new relationships with God. In Lent we are invited to push past our fears and live our faith in new ways. We sing, we pray, we tell our truths in new ways. And we find that God is there, cheering us on.

Written by Pastor Emily C. Heath, Congregational Church Exeter, NH March 4, 2017

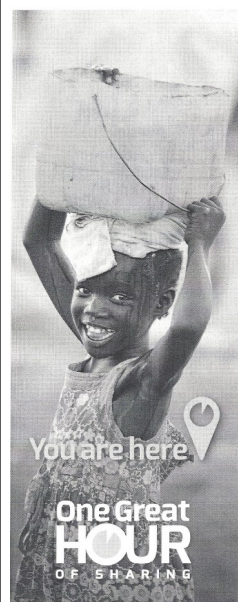
One Great HOUR OF SHARING

One Great Hour of Sharing is an offering that makes the love of Christ real for individuals and communities around the world who suffer the effects of disaster, conflict, or severe economic hardship, and for those who serve them through gifts of money and time. Today, projects are underway in more than 100 countries, including the United States and Canada. In the 1990s, receipts have exceeded \$20 million annually. While specific allocations differ in each denomination, all use their One Great Hour of Sharing funds to make possible disaster relief, refugee assistance, development aid and more.

For 48-year-old Iraq war veteran Robert Z., buying a house was an important step toward recovery from post-traumatic stress disorder. Then the floods came. After completing military service, Robert established his own trucking company. But then depression and stress incapacitated him. He closed his business and moved in with friends. It took Robert years of hard work to get on top of PTSD, but he did it. “The house was the next step in trying to take care of myself again” Robert said. He found a “fixer-upper” in West Columbia, S.C., and began repairing it. Then the storms of October 2015 came. Days of incessant rain and wind caused a large tree to fall onto Robert’s roof. The damage opened the house to the continuing rainfall soaking walls, floors, ceilings and furniture. Robert did what he could, but it wasn’t enough. Then he heard about the Disaster Recovery Support Initiative (DRSI), a joint endeavor of the United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries, Brethren Disaster Ministries, and the Disaster Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) DRSI volunteers were happy to assist as part of their work in modeling long-term recovery processes in the wider community. They connected with the emerging local long-term recovery organization. They gutted Robert’s house and repaired the roof. They installed brand-new windows, walls, floor, electricals and plumbing. “These are not just people talking,” Robert said. “They are really doing something. I am amazed that someone would do it for me.” “Generous giving to One Great Hour of Sharing is enabling us to reach the most vulnerable families,” said UCC Disaster Ministries Executive Zach Wolgemuth. “It shows, you are here.”

“Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40) God is most tangibly present in this world where people hunger, thirst, lack adequate clothing and shelter, and are sick or imprisoned. Christ claims people who suffer as family members. Christ is so present in them that when you feed the hungry, care for the sick, welcome the stranger – you feed, and care for, and welcome Christ. When you give through **OGHS** to those who suffer from natural disasters, war, or systemic poverty, you let them know:

You are here.



The **One Great Hour of Sharing offering** is so much a part of the mission tradition here at St. John’s. As Sunday School kids way, I mean way way back, we would look forward to getting our special offering boxes for **OGHS**, take them home and very diligently fill them up with coins and on **OGHS** Sunday Vernetta Johns would have a special kids service during Sunday School to collect our boxed offerings. Vernetta’s lesson was always simple. There are others in the world who need our help. There are others in the world that do not have what we have. Even with the smallest of donations you can make a positive difference in peoples lives around the world. Please return your **One Great Hour of Sharing** envelop in the mail or on **Sunday, March 26th. Make a Difference!**

‘Into the Mystic’ Rev. Dorhauer is The United Church of Christ General Minister and President. He is creating these weekly messages so that "the art and practice of spiritual reflection is modeled as a priority and not just a part time avocation."

JERUSALEM

By the time you hear this, I will have landed in Amman, Jordan – and will have begun a spiritual journey through what the world recognizes as the Holy Land. Christian, Muslim, and Jew all recognize the sacred places to which we will travel as foundational to myth, story, and history that conspire to give shape and identity to three distinct spiritual traditions.

This will be the second such trip I have taken in the last year. My first trip here left me with a deep appreciation for the way that these cultures and traditions negotiate a sometimes tenuous, shared existence. The history of how power over and détente between them all coalesce is a complex one that I don’t pretend to fully understand. The political tensions are evident almost everywhere you walk. For those who walk with eyes wide open, there is enough in almost every setting to see signs of hope and of despair; of the commitments of peace between peoples and of inflictions of war between nations; of the desire for understanding of the pressures to divide.

There is deep history, grounded in architecture that reflects a commitment to preserve ancient and sacred times. There is an impinging present that you cannot avoid seeing in tanks, soldiers, parapets, and checkpoints. There are broad skies and narrow streets. The smile you see on a stranger’s face often belies the trouble with which they live every day, their effort to embody faith and make the most of what can be a conflicted life in a troubled world.

There is an ever-present impulse to rehearse sacred stories that one has heard from early childhood as you cross over ground once occupied by Abraham and Sarah; Moses and Miriam; Joseph and Mary. Almost every neighborhood and village longs to tell a sacred story: in Bethlehem there is the birth narrative; on the hill overlooking Old Jerusalem you can hear echoes of the passion and crucifixion; on the Temple Mount Solomon begs to be heard; at the river Jordan you come face to face with the ritual cleansing performed by John and asked for by Jesus.

But it isn’t only the ancient stories that beg to be told. When you walk through the occupied territories you listen to mothers whose sons have been gunned down, you visit with people who have been living in exile for three generations and who long to return home, and you see graffiti that gives voice to the anger and ventilation to the fears of the occupied peoples. You see women and children on the street stripped of their dignity by what look like children wearing uniforms and carrying guns. You see workers at the end of the day exhausted and forced to go home through checkpoints, waiting in long lines and needing to prove their right to be there.

My soul is enriched by experiences with the people and places of this beautiful land. To absorb past glory and encounter present need; to see ancient culture and touch today’s pain; to merge both the origin and evolution of one’s faith is a spiritual exuberance the likes of which I have not duplicated anywhere else.

As I land this time, I am aware that I now have previous experiences to draw on; places to which I want to return and people I want to meet again. There is the falafel vendor in Old Jerusalem who fed me the best meal I’ve had in years for the price of a McDonald’s happy meal; the ceramics shop owner across from our hotel whose craft renders me an admirer and whose charm softens me up for the easy sell; the art as resistance on the wall in Bethlehem that reminds me of the same in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico; and the children whose smiles remind me what hope looks like.

I will return in two weeks spiritually fed, physically exhausted, and wondering when I get to go back. God will be known, felt, heard, and loved. Her face will be seen everywhere I go, writ large across the landscape of the pain and the poignancy. My travel will afford me another opportunity to encounter sacred presence in truly sacred space while among sacred peoples. I will return two weeks hence caught up in the wonder of it all and grateful for this sojourn Into the Mystic.



Lectionary Readings for Sunday, March 12th. - Second Sunday in LentGenesis 12:1-4a • Psalm 121 • Romans 4:1-5, 13-17 • John 3:1-17 or Matthew 17:1-9**Focus Scripture: John 3:1-17 Excerpted commentary by David Lose**

John is a master of dramatic settings, symbolism and imagery and so it is valuable to note that Nicodemus, a Pharisee and Jewish leader, arrives at night, a time of unbelief, ignorance, and temptation in the Fourth Gospel. He comes ostensibly to learn more about this young rabbi, but perhaps does not want his colleagues to know of his interest. He has, if not faith, at least faithful curiosity.

In typical Johannine fashion, Jesus engages Nicodemus in what seems like a non sequitur: Nicodemus praises Jesus as one who comes from God and Jesus, in return, asserts that no one can see the kingdom without being born from *anāothēn*, which can be translated as again, anew, or from above. Nicodemus clearly takes Jesus to mean the first of these three possibilities, and his confusion invites a discourse from Jesus about the difference between Spirit and flesh.

Nicodemus, still confused, asks how this can be, to which Jesus again responds, this time orienting him -- and presumably us, as Nicodemus fades from the gaze of the narrator and the language of "you" shifts from the singular to the plural -- to his death on the cross. This death does not signify defeat but rather is the moment of God's glorious triumph and it will save all those who look to Jesus and believe that he is the one sent from God.

Believers, represented by light, recognize in Jesus God's decisive action for the world and move toward him. Unbelievers, symbolized by darkness, flee God's revelation as they would prefer to remain in darkness. Jesus, then, has no need to condemn, as the involuntary reaction of those encountered by Jesus reveal their disposition to God's redemption. Either way, God's judgment is revealed: God loves this world, even the God-hating world that crucified the Lord of glory.

Lectionary Readings for Sunday, March 19th. - Third Sunday in LentExodus 17:1-7 • Psalm 95 • Romans 5:1-11 • John 4:5-42**Focus Scripture: Matthew 4:5-42 Excerpted Commentary by Meda Stamper**

The much-loved story of the Samaritan woman at the well is the second of four encounters with Jesus in John this Lent. This encounter begins with social boundary-crossing, typical of Jesus in all of the gospels, when he asks the Samaritan woman for a drink.

The encounter between the two can be read in three movements. The first movement is all about water: Jesus' thirst, then the ensuing conversation with the woman, a bit wary of him and his boundary-crossing, and then the living water gushing up to eternal life that he will offer her and for which she will ask. The second movement is the conversation about the woman's private life, which is the moment on which the encounter seems to turn. The third movement is the conversation about worship in Spirit and truth, which leads to her wondering about the Messiah and his revealing to her that it is he.

But unlike Nicodemus, who doesn't seem to move beyond his confusion, the woman does move. She asks for this water, realizing that it is not ordinary water but not yet understanding in what way, and she will go still further with and for Jesus as the narrative develops.

The Spirit is introduced here explicitly. To worship God as God wants is to worship in Spirit, presumably with the Spirit that Jesus offers gushing up from the heart, and in truth, which we will later understand to be embodied in Jesus himself. Worship, this seems to suggest, is about relationship, dwelling in the vine Jesus. The Samaritan woman, who has entered into relationship with him here, perhaps understands this. She suggests in her roundabout way that he is the coming Messiah, and for the first and only time in John, Jesus says that he is.

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God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



***COME WORSHIP WITH US ~ ALL ARE WELCOME
SUNDAY SCHOOL 9 AM ~ SUNDAY WORSHIP 10 AM***

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