



JESUS DOES. *How about you?*



Sunday, March 27, 2022

PARKWAY
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



www.parkwayucc.org
Sunday, March 27, 2022

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Limitless Love | Courageous Action | Spirited Inquiry

Purpose Statement

Parkway United Church of Christ strives to be an inclusive community embracing: spiritual nourishment, open-minded inquiry, courageous action, and interfaith partnerships to fulfill God's calling to create a just world for all.

Congregational Statement

Parkway United Church of Christ, with God's grace, seeks to be a congregation that includes all persons, regardless of race, ethnic, or socio-economic background while respecting differences of gender, marital status, age, sexual orientation, and mental and physical ability. We aspire to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. We invite all to share in the life and leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities and blessings of participation in our open and affirming congregation.

PARKWAY UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

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Welcome to Parkway

Thank you for joining us this morning. If you are with us virtually, please let us know you are here by commenting in the chat.

Welcome Children. We invite children to full participation in worship.

Today's flowers given by Sue Moellering in memory of the birthday of her mom, Katherine Biehl.

Bell Rung During Lord's Prayer. A tradition begun when farmers working in surrounding fields would stop their work and join in prayer.

Subscribe to our email lists: Text your email address to 22828 or sign up at www.parkwayucc.org

Communications Requests: Please use the form at www.parkwayucc.org/communications for all announcements for all our media. Bulletin and eNews deadline is noon Monday.

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Anniversaries

3/29 FAUSS, Roger & Donna (54)

Birthdays

3/27 BIEST, Julia

3/31 SELLENRIEK, Pearl

3/27 DETJEN, Douglas

3/31 WILLIAMS, Matthew

3/28 GOLDSTEIN, Nathan

3/31 WOLFF, Katy

3/28 SHELTON, Ryan

4/1 BOWMAN, Klover

3/28 WOLFF, Grant

4/1 LYONS, Liz

3/29 OEHLER, Barbara

4/2 RAUSCHER, Kevin

3/30 MUCHNICK, Todd

4/2 WOODSON, Jennifer

4th Sunday in Lent

Sunday, March 27, 2022 | 10:00am | Sanctuary & Facebook Live

Meditation *We are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories.*

~Jonathan Gottschall

Welcome Let us know you are here!

Passing the Peace of Christ

“May the peace of Christ be with you.”

(We are intentional about bringing more peace into the world.)

Prelude Fantasia – by Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)

Introit Kyrie

Kyrie Eleison **Kyrie Eleison**

Christe Eleison **Christe Eleison**

Kyrie Eleison **Kyrie Eleison**

Lighting of the Candles & Ringing of the Bell

Welcome Song *Lord, Listen to Your Children* #2207

On bend-ed knee with need-y hearts we
come and pray. — Lord, lis-ten to your
chil - dren. — With will-ing hearts and
o-pen arms we come and pray. — Lord,
lis - ten to your chil - dren. — With

The musical score is written on five staves in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff begins with a C-clef and a key signature change to one sharp. The lyrics are written below the notes. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

sim - ple words of heart - felt thanks we come. Be

liev - ing in your prom - is - es, we come. On

⊕ CODA

chil - dren, lis - ten to your chil - dren.

Gathering at the Lenten Candles *Jesus Does. How about you?*

Scripture Luke 10:30-37 (New Revised Standard Version) *Harold Cobb*
 Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

*Call to Worship

One:	Come, let us worship our God together,
Many:	for God is great, and we need to experience God more.
One:	Let’s tell stories of God’s power and awe, God’s mighty acts throughout history,
Many:	for God is great, and we come with gratitude.
One:	Let’s remember the compassion God has shown to us; the mercy and unfailing love we’ve experienced, generation after generation
Many:	for God is great, and we want to learn more.
One:	Let’s pass these stories along to our children and grandchildren, so that they, too, may come to know and love God,
Many:	for God is great, and is eager to spend time with us.
All:	Let us worship our God together—Creator, Christ and Spirit.

*Song *In the Bulb there is a Flower*

Unison



1 In the bulb there is a flow - er; in the seed, an ap - ple tree;
 2 There's a song in ev - ery si - lence, seek - ing word and mel - o - dy;
 3 In our end is our be - gin - ning; in our time, in - fin - i - ty;



in co - coons, a hid - den prom - ise: but - ter - flies will soon be free!
 there's a dawn for ev - ery dark - ness, bring - ing hope to you and me.
 in our doubt there is be - liev - ing; in our life, e - ter - ni - ty.



In the cold and snow of win - ter there's a spring that waits to be,
 From the past will come the fu - ture; what it holds, a mys - ter - y,
 In our death, a res - ur - rec - tion; at the last, a vic - to - ry,

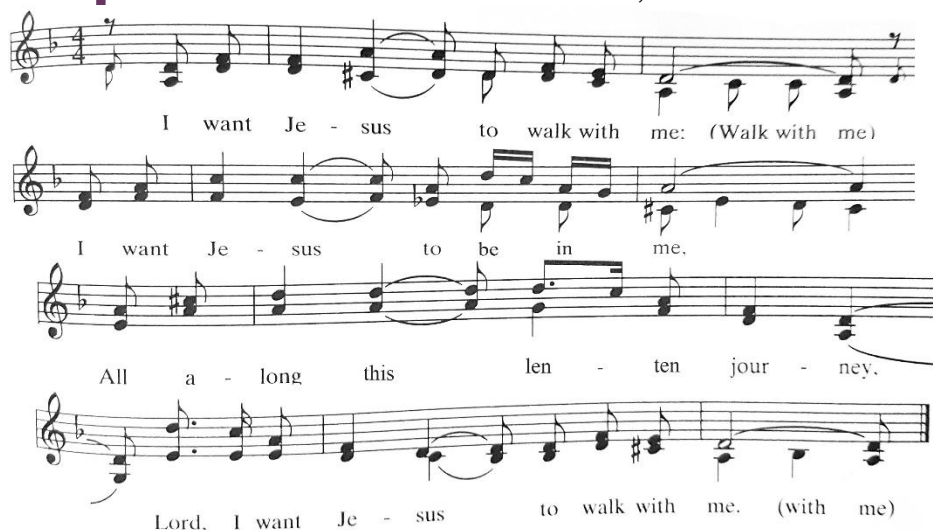


un - re - vealed un - til its sea - son, some - thing God a - lone can see.
 un - re - vealed un - til its sea - son, some - thing God a - lone can see.
 un - re - vealed un - til its sea - son, some - thing God a - lone can see.

*Opening Prayer

Holy One, as we make this Lenten journey, we see what Jesus does—in order that we might do similar things. We can. We sense his power and we can exercise our own agency and make choices. We feel his empathy and we can bring more love into the world. We see him spend time apart from everything else and we can take time to step away and be still. We listen to his stories and can weave our stories together with people near and far. We watch him touch people and we can release our reassurance to others. We hear him speak up and we can be bold for ourselves and others. We sense his struggles and we can find our own courage and stamina. We receive his peace and we can become calm amid storms of every kind. Amen.

***Response** *I Want Jesus to Walk with Me #363, v1*



The image shows a musical score for the song "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me" in 4/4 time. It consists of four staves of music with lyrics written below. The lyrics are: "I want Je - sus to walk with me: (Walk with me)", "I want Je - sus to be in me.", "All a - long this len - ten jour - ney.", and "Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me. (with me)". The music is written in a simple, accessible style with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

I want Je - sus to walk with me: (Walk with me)

I want Je - sus to be in me.

All a - long this len - ten jour - ney.

Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me. (with me)

Children's Time Children are invited to Room 12 (Lower Level) and Youth to Room 15 (Lower Level) following this Children's Time. We will also be on Zoom for those at home. We continue to require masks for all.

Blessing the Children *Jesus Loves the Little Children*
Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world.
Every child in every land, Jesus holds them by the hand.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Scripture and Reflections *Harold Cobb, reader*

Luke 13:20-21

And again Jesus said, "To what should I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

Luke 13:18-19

Jesus said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

Matthew 7:24-27

Jesus said, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!"

Matthew 18:23-31

Jesus said, “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, he ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ Out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon a fellow slave who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place.”

Luke 15:11-32

Jesus said, “There was a man with two sons. The younger 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 traveled to a distant country where he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout the land and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

“Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

A Time of Prayer *Cares Chorus #2215*

I cast all my cares up-on you, I
lay all of my bur-dens down at your feet, and
an-y-time that I don't know what to do, I will
cast all my cares up-on you.

Pastoral Prayer & Prayers of the People

Lord's Prayer

Our [Creator/Mother/Father/Holy One] **who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

[A variety of names for God are welcome here – including in the Lord's Prayer.]

Mission Moment *2nd Mile Lent/Easter—Darlene Sowell*

Heifer Project | Lydia's House | **Unleashing Potential** | Eden Seminary

Offering Our Gifts to God *Antiphonal Psalm—Hal Hopson*

Based on Psalm 150

Praise our God! Praise God in the sanctuary.

Praise God! Praise God for the glory of the sky.

Praise God according to God's greatness.

Praise God with trumpet sound. Praise God with the lute and harp.

Praise God! Praise God with drums and dance.

Praise God with strings and flute.

Praise God with loud clashing cymbals. Join everything that breathes.

Praise our God! Praise God!

Praise our God! Praise God! Praise God! Praise God!

***Response** *Make Me a Servant #2176*

Make me a servant, humble and meek.
Lord, let me lift up those who are weak.
And may the prayer of my heart always be:
Make me a servant, Make me a servant
Make me a servant today...

***Prayer of Dedication**

Holy One, you invite us to be generous with our hearts, hands, graces and gifts. You help us to listen to one another's story so we can see where we overlap – sensing where we can give and where we can receive. We want to be a blessing to one another. Lead us into places where we can do that well. Amen.

***Song of Parting** *Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing #538*

1. Lord, dis - miss us with Thy bless - ing; Fill our hearts with
2. Thanks we give and ad - o - ra - tion For Thy gos - pel's
3. So that when Thy love shall call us, Sav - ior, from the
joy and peace; Let us each, Thy love pos - sess - ing,
joy - ful sound; May the fruits of Thy sal - va - tion
world a - way, Let no fear of death ap - pall us,
Tri - umph in re - deem - ing grace. O re - fresh us,
In our hearts and lives a - bound. Ev - er faith - ful,
Glad Thy sum - mons to o - bey. May we ev - er,
O re - fresh us, Trav - eling through this wil - der - ness.
Ev - er faith - ful To the truth may we be found;
May we ev - er Reign with Thee in end - less day.

***Benediction**

***God's Light Goes Forth**

***Music for Going Forth** *Father, We Praise Thee—Lani Smith* Based on the tune *Christe Sanctorum* from the *Paris Antiphoner*, 1681

Announcements

Our Own Lenten Daily Devotion via Email

Our Lenten Theme this year is: JESUS DOES. How about you?

We are sending a brief email each day to help you along this journey.

These devotions rotate through seven categories –

Things Jesus did. Things Jesus said.

Stories Jesus told. Someone Jesus met.

Song lyrics about Jesus. Names for Jesus.

Quotes about Jesus.

We hope that one of these invited you to ponder, pray and share with others.

Please consider writing a brief devotion with a focus on one of the categories above. Submissions and questions to kevin@parkwayucc.org

Amazing Response To Video System Appeal

On March 9, an email to the congregation explained the status of our video project. This project has equipped the sanctuary with professional video equipment, thereby permitting our services to be transmitted into homes and allowing videos to be used in the sanctuary. Our notice explained that the project was more than half paid, but that approximately \$10,000 remained unpaid on this unbudgeted expense. We invited those who wished to contribute to the project.

You responded—and how!

Several contributions were sent in immediately.

- A member offered an anonymous contribution of \$2,500 if the congregation could raise the additional \$7,500. We announced that “match” offer at the conclusion of worship on Sunday, March 20.
- And when that Sunday’s offering was counted, it was found to contain multiple contributions to the video project—submitted even before the “match” offer was announced.

We are now very close to meeting the conditions for the match, and within a few thousand dollars of covering all current installation costs for the video system. Council offers its sincere thanks to the congregation for this amazing and speedy outpouring of generosity.

We continue to accept contributions to close out this project. Since some church reserves were used in the initial payment for the project, any contributions in excess of the currently expected \$10,000 to \$11,000 final payments will be applied to these prior payments, thus allowing the church reserves to be refreshed.

Thank you for this wonderful outpouring of support. It allows Parkway to pay for this important but non-budgeted project without cutting into current programs. And it shows the congregation’s enthusiasm for this major improvement to the church’s facilities, born of the pandemic, but likely to help the church, its members, and its mission in many ways in the future.

UCC Issues Appeal for Ukraine Members of the United Church of Christ are joining the global community to respond to the events unfolding in Ukraine. We are praying for Ukraine, for peace and for the many displaced people on the move. We give thanks for the host countries providing refuge and humanitarian aid. We are adding our resources to ensure that all can have access to safety and shelter.

The UCC, through Global H.O.P.E. and Global Ministries, is collaborating with **Act Alliance** (actalliance.org) and the **Reformed Church of Hungary** to bring aid to Ukraine. RCH is responding to the situation in the war-torn country through its agency, Hungarian Reformed Church (<https://reformatus.hu/english/news/emergency-response-for-ukraine/>) This group has been offering humanitarian assistance since Russian troops first attacked Ukraine on February 24. It's working with elderly and other vulnerable communities inside the country who have not been able to leave, including immigrants and migrant populations who are experiencing difficulties crossing into other European countries. HRCA is also working with refugees who are leaving the country.

We are particularly grateful the Reformed Church of Hungary is prioritizing care of vulnerable populations who are unable to leave Ukraine for multiple reasons. The elderly and other internally displaced persons have emerging needs requiring attention.”

Gifts to the **UCC Ukraine Emergency Appeal** provide shelter, food and other care to war refugees and internally displaced people. It also will help refugees and asylum seekers from African, Middle Eastern and other countries who had sought refuge in Ukraine and now are twice displaced, as well as other citizens of more than 125 countries living in Ukraine.

<https://support.ucc.org/global-h-o-p-e/ukraine-emergency-appeal>

2nd Mile Lent & Easter 2022

Go the 2nd Mile with us!

We are pleased to announce that Parkway will again support four worthy organizations with its Second Mile Giving for Lent and Easter. We believe this blend of support will help Parkway create a local, national and international impact with its gifts. Please remember that Second Mile Giving is over and beyond the Operational Budget and donations will be divided evenly among the organizations listed below. Please be generous as these organizations need on our gifts in order to be more faithful and effective.

Please be sure to clearly mark your 2nd Mile gifts throughout the season of Lent.

Lydia's House | lydiashouse.org

UP—Unleashing Potential | neighborhoodhouses.org

Heifer International | heifer.org

Eden Seminary | eden.edu

Lydia's House | lydiashouse.org

Lydia's House works in faith to end domestic violence in St Louis by being a place of healing and a voice of hope for abused women and their children. The agency provides safe, confidentially-located furnished apartments for up to two years, assists women in creating and implementing goal plans that will help them live independently, and increases community awareness of domestic violence. For more information, please visit

UP—Unleashing Potential | neighborhoodhouses.org

For more than 100 years, UP (formerly **Neighborhood Houses**) has loved children in St Louis. Currently, there are three main facets to their mission:

Early Childhood Education—Caroline Mission is a licensed and accredited Early Childhood facility operated by Neighborhood Houses. Our Mission is to provide quality affordable childcare for children from 6 weeks to 5 years of age. Caroline Mission is a “home away from home.”

Girls' Night Out: Neighborhood Houses and Parents as Teachers collaborated together in the design and execution of a program dedicated to supporting and assisting young mothers, ages 13-22. *Girls Night Out* is designed to promote healthy individuals and families.

After School Programs: Neighborhood Houses is the #1 provider of after school programming with the St Louis Public Schools ... fun & creative activities, homework assistance, character education, cultural awareness, health & fitness focus, arts & crafts, supervised recreation, and much more!

Heifer International | heifer.org

Heifer International does so much more than put food in the mouths of hungry people. Heifer helps people to feed themselves. The goal of every Heifer project is sustainability—project partners achieving self-reliance. And year after year, as partner families “pass on the gift” of knowledge and one or more of their animals' offspring to others in need, they become links in a network of hope, dignity and self-reliance that helps hundreds of others care for themselves. For more information, please visit

Eden Seminary | eden.edu

Eden Theological Seminary is a graduate school preparing women and men for ordained Christian ministry. It is committed to the study of theology in the context of the ecumenical Christian community and the contemporary interfaith world. One of the six seminaries of the United Church of Christ, Eden is a community that seeks God's justice and peace in the world. Eden is welcoming, inclusive and ecumenically diverse.

Eden was established in 1850 at Marthasville, Missouri. Its first graduating class included six Evangelicals as well as a Methodist and a Mennonite. Eden admitted its first African American student in 1933. In 1965, the late Joseph Cardinal Ritter of the Saint Louis Archdiocese became the first Roman Catholic Cardinal to address a graduating class in a Protestant seminary. Today, students from many different denominations are engaged in theological education here. Eden remains committed to educating faithful and effective leaders for church and society. The seminary counts among its distinguished graduates Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr and Walter Brueggemann.

Prayer List

as of Wednesday, March 23, 2022

Celebrations

All the acts of kindness, justice and equity near and far.

Women's History Month.

Lenten Journey.

Lucia McKenzie and John Bieg - engaged to be married.

Concerns

Millicent Guerri - hospitalized at St Luke's.

Kathleen Tarr - foot surgery 3/25; crutches 10 days; boot 6 weeks.

Joan Biest - strength and peace as she absorbs cancer diagnosis.

Richard Gaillardetz - recent cancer diagnosis (Barnes).

Janet Schoedinger - starting chemo - 3rd cancer battle (Litzinger).

All impacted by Covid-19 - individuals, families, healthcare workers; If anyone needs help getting vax/booster or if anyone vaccinated would like to be on the Care Team, please reach out to kevin@parkwayucc.org

The war in Ukraine.

Continuing

Ellie Svenson - healing in STL after a mild stroke and ankle surgery.

Sally Boughman - continued issues with back pain.

Steve and Andrea Barnes - preparing for his surgery on elbows and wrists due to nerve damage from sarcoidosis.

Val Weber - 101st Birthday recently; strength and patience as she recuperates from a couple of mild strokes (Jim Winkelmann's mother).

Dan & Kim, Ben/Henry/Davis Weas - Dan's cancer treatments.

Christopher, Gail & Bill Haack - chronic health challenges... Bill has begun the lengthy prep process for extensive back surgery.

Cherie & Mike Stolze - her health; her father's kidney disease.

Lori Connors - for strength, stamina through health challenges.

Ruth Peace & Pinky Wilcoxon - PUCC sisters with health challenges.

Bill Darland - ongoing health issues.

Lizzie - awaiting liver transplant (niece of Barb Kuhlmann).

Anthony - multiple challenges as he lives his post-incarceration life.

Gary - risky behaviors; seeking balance and stability.

Kevin Ceballos - sudden death of husband, Darryl Luffman (Schmelig).

Intertwine Interfaith Welcome Circle - Afghan family in St Louis.

Home/Care Facility/Rehab Center

Conrad Damsgaard - *Mason Pointe Care Ctr*; 13190 S. Outer 40 Rd; #1207; Town & Country, MO 63017; 636-236-9639 [birthdate: April 27]

Millicent Guerri - living with cancer... 14300 Conway Meadows Ct E, Chesterfield, MO 63017 [birthdate: December 5]

Marv Herpel - *Brookdale West County*; 785 Henry Ave, #217; Ballwin, MO 63021; 636-227-5838 [birthdate: March 3]

Sue Houser - *Bethany Ctr for Rehab & Healing*; 421 Ocala Dr - #209B; Nashville, TN 37211; 615-577-2049. [birthdate: July 8]

Pat Klein - *Anthology Senior Living of Wildwood*; 251 Plaza Dr, #325; Wildwood, MO 63040 [birthdate: September 21]

Bill Klein - *Anthology Senior Living of Wildwood*; 251 Plaza Dr, #104; Wildwood, MO 63040 [birthdate: March 8]

John Nourse *The Village at Cape Albeon*; 3300 Lake Bend Dr, #103; Valley Park, MO 63088 [birthdate: October 26]

Ruth Peace - 10379-D Forest Brooke Ln; StL MO 63146; 314-983-0253; meadletter222@gmail.com [birthdate: August 8]

Pearl Sellenriek - *Friendship Village Memory Care Division* #1001; 15250 Olive Blvd, Chesterfield, MO 63017 [birthdate: March 31]

Gladys Sims - *Friendship Village - 15200 Village View Dr, #2418*; Chesterfield, MO 63017; 636-898-8873 [birthdate: July 4]

Pinky Wilcoxen - 10379-D Forest Brooke Ln; StL MO 63146; 314-983-0253; meadletter222@gmail.com [birthdate: April 7]

Dick Witte - Meramec Bluffs Assisted Living; 40 Meramec Trails Dr; Apt #104; Ballwin, MO 63021; 636-368-7324 [birthdate: March 25]

Other

Pres Biden, VP Harris, Congress, all local, national, world leaders.

The “me too” Movement - shining a light on sexual abuse.

All people who live with mental illness.

Caregivers of all shapes and sizes.

Individuals in all levels of leadership as they make decisions today.

PUCC Family struggling with employment; healthcare costs and limits.

Our Missouri Mid-South Conference and St Louis Assn UCC

Gun violence and other violence across the US and other lands.

Conversations about the Death Penalty in the United States.

Victims of Natural and Created Disasters around the world.

Healing of relationships between the public and the police.

US Military around the globe.

Peace and Justice near and far.

St Louis Association UCC Covenant Partner

Week ending March 27 - First Congregational UCC, Bonne Terre

Week ending April 3 - First Congregational UCC, St. Louis;

firstcongregational.org

4th Sunday in Lent

March 27, 2022

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Embracing Love

Even if you don't know much else from the Bible, it's likely that you have heard the story of the prodigal son. A young man leaves his comfortable family home with his ill-gotten inheritance, only to squander what he has been given on fast living. When he returns to beg forgiveness, he is received with jealous skepticism by his brother and with abundant love by his father.

We usually are invited to hear this story from the point of view of either the careless and morally bankrupt youngest son or the hardworking and resentful eldest. In either reading, we are in need of forgiveness and transformation. Yet, it can sometimes be helpful to place ourselves in this story from another perspective - that of the forgiving father. In so doing, we can see ourselves not merely as those in need of redemption like the two sons, but also as those who are able to offer what is needed for another.

If we are able to shift our point of view in this way, recognizing that sometimes we are the prodigal, sometimes the eldest and sometimes the parent, we begin to see giving and receiving not merely as a one-way street, but as a circle of care, respect and love, in which sometimes we all have need, and sometimes we all can give.

This circle is nowhere more strongly demonstrated than in our yearly One Great Hour of Sharing offering. When you give, One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is able to help families around the world become stronger, healthier and better equipped to address hardships and catastrophes that would otherwise leave them destitute and hopeless. And, you do not know when you will be in need of help yourself. Please consider your gift to OGHS this morning as part of the circle of giving and receiving and giving again and then receiving again - the circle into which we have all been invited as people of faith.

Whether you want to give others a "new normal" in their lives after disaster strikes or provide care to new mothers and children with high mortality rates, or give refugees a place to call home, the OGHS offering can help you to help. From the Philippines to Fiji, from western Africa to Haiti, from Japan to more than thirty states that have been struck with hurricanes, fires, flood and illness, OGHS has stepped in as part of the circle of care.

You can give today through your church or online:

<https://www.ucc.org/giving/ways-to-give/our-churchs-wider-mission/one-great-hour-of-sharing/>