



PARKWAY
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



www.parkwayucc.org

July 9, 2023

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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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Lana Biondo, *President of the Church Council* [puccpresident@parkwayucc.org]

Kevin Cameron, *Pastor* [kevin@parkwayucc.org]

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Polly Rutherford, *Environmental Justice/Sustainability Seekers* [pollyrutherford@gmail.com]

John Nourse, *Pastor Emeritus*

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.

Bell Rung During Lord's Prayer

Scripture Reader: Jackie Eiffert

Flowers: Sandra and Bruce Swan, online attendees from Massachusetts, in celebration of family and health ~ including the Bumgarner-Camersons.

Subscribe to our email lists: Sign up at www.parkwayucc.org

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Photos/Videos Please be aware that our worship services are video recorded, streamed live on Facebook Live, and made available for later viewing through that service.

Photos/videos should generally not be taken of children in church except as part of organized activities and programs, and any requests of children or their parents or guardians should be respected. Please be respectful of privacy and mindful that this is a safe and sacred space for all who enter.

Media uploads: <https://tinyurl.com/PUCCmedia>

Mental Health Support

988 (new nationwide 3-digit number similar to 911... call or text)

24/7 Crisis Hotline 800-273-8255 (TALK) | 800-SUICIDE: 800-784-2433

24/7 Missouri Department of Mental Health 800-811-4760

Text 741741 and someone will text right back...www.crisistextline.org

Behavioral Health Network of Greater St Louis 314-449-6713

Anniversaries

7/15 MASON, Mike & Lisa (18)

Birthdays

7/9 BOWMAN, Jeremy

7/15 HARMS, Mark

7/11 BORGMANN, Keith

7/15 MATTEUCCI, Nicky

7/14 TOOMBS, Alexandra

7/14 TOOMBS, Graham

6th Sunday *after* Pentecost

Sunday, July 9, 2023 | 10:00am | Sanctuary & Facebook Live

Meditation *Water is a prominent symbol of cleansing and life in the Bible—the water of creation, the great flood, the liberation of Israel through the sea, the water of Mary’s womb, the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River, the woman at the well, and Jesus’ washing of the feet of the disciples. ~UCC Book of Worship*

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 *Peace Be with You*—Daniel E. Gawthrop

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Lighting of the Candles & Ringing of the Bell

Welcome Song *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

Come, thou Fount of every blessing;

tune my heart to sing thy grace;

streams of mercy, never ceasing,

call for songs of loudest praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet,

sung by flaming tongues above;

praise the mount! I’m fixed upon it,

mount of God’s unchanging love!

Jesus sought me when a stranger,

wandering from the fold of God;

he, to rescue me from danger,

interposed his precious love.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,

prone to leave the God I love;

here’s my heart; O take and seal it;

seal it for thy courts above.

Scripture Psalm 23 (CEB - Common English Bible)

The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing. He lets me rest in grassy meadows; he leads me to restful waters; he keeps me alive. He guides me in proper paths for the sake of his good name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no danger because you are with me. Your rod and your staff—they protect me. You set a table for me right in front of my enemies. You bathe my head in oil; my cup is so full it spills over! Yes, goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the Lord’s house as long as I live.

***Call to Worship** Irene Bom inspired by Isaiah 55:1-3

One: Come to the water, all you who thirst.

Many: We come to drink deeply from the river of life.

One: Come to the water, all you who are weary.

Many: We come rest in the quiet pools of God's love.

One: Come to the water, all you who long for justice.

Many: We come be renewed in God's ever-flowing stream.

One: For God is here among us,

Many: washing away the dust and grime of our lives.

One: The Spirit hovers over the waters and hovers over us. Jesus arises from his baptismal waters and God is pleased.

All: Let us worship our God together—Creator, Christ and Spirit.

***Song** *I Was There to Hear Your Born-ing Cry* #2051



1. I was there to hear your born - ing cry, I'll be
 3. When you heard the won - der of the Word, I was
 5. In the mid - dle ag - es of your life, not too
 7. I was there to hear your born - ing cry, I'll be



there when you are old. I re - joiced the day you
 there to cheer you on. You were raised to praise the
 old, no long - er young, I'll be there to guide you
 there when you are old, I re - joiced the day you



were bap - tized to see your life un - fold.
 liv - ing Lord to whom you now be - long.
 through the night, com - plete what I've be - gun.
 were bap - tized to see your life un - fold.



2. I was there when you were but a child with a
 4. If you find some-one to share your time and you
 6. When the eve - ning gent - ly clos - es in and you

faith to suit you well; in a blaze of light you
 join your hearts as one, I'll be there to make your
 shut your weary eyes, I'll be there as I have

D.C.

wan - dered off to find where de - mons dwell.
 vers - es rhyme from dusk till ris - ing sun.
 al - ways been with just one more sur - prise.

*Opening Prayer Irene Bom

God of the waters—you are the water of birth, moving us from safety into the world. God of the waters – you are the water of connection, engaging the playful Spirit, the passionate Christ, the challenging God. God of the waters—you are the water of life, sustaining, quenching, cleansing. God of the waters—you are the water of trouble, journeying us from here to there, from the known to the unknown. God of the waters, birth us, connect us, live in us, trouble us. Amen.

*Response *Spirit of the Living God*

**Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me;
 Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me.
 Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me!
 Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me.**

Children's Time Children are invited to Room 12 (Lower Level) and Youth to Room 15 (Lower Level) following this Children's Time. Please meet your child/youth in the Gathering Space just outside the Sanctuary after worship - as the teachers will bring them there after class.

Blessing the Children *Go My Children, with My Blessing*

**Go, my children, with my blessing, never alone;
 Waking, sleeping, I am with you. You are my own;
 In my love's baptismal river I have made you mine forever
 Go, my children, with my blessing. You are my own.**

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Scripture Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67 (CEB - Common English Bible)

The man said, "I am Abraham's servant. The Lord has richly blessed my master, has made him a great man, and has given him flocks, cattle, silver, gold, men servants, women servants, camels, and donkeys. My master's wife Sarah gave birth to a son for my master in her old age, and he's given him everything he owns. My master made me give him my word: 'Don't choose a wife for my son from the Canaanite women, in whose land I'm living. No,

instead, go to my father's household and to my relatives and choose a wife for my son.'

"Today I arrived at the spring, and I said, 'Lord, God of my master Abraham, if you wish to make the trip I'm taking successful, when I'm standing by the spring and the young woman who comes out to draw water and to whom I say,

"Please give me a little drink of water from your jar," and she responds to me,

"Drink, and I will draw water for your camels too," may she be the woman the Lord has selected for my master's son.' Before I finished saying this to myself, Rebekah came out with her water jar on her shoulder and went down to the spring to draw water. And I said to her, 'Please give me something to drink.'

"She immediately lowered her water jar and said, 'Drink, and I will give your camels something to drink too.' So I drank and she also gave water to the camels.

"Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?'

"And she said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son whom Milcah bore him.' I put a ring in her nose and bracelets on her arms. I bowed and worshipped the Lord and blessed the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who led me in the right direction to choose the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son. Now if you're loyal and faithful to my master, tell me. If not, tell me so I will know where I stand either way."

They called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?"

She said, "I will go."

So they sent off their sister Rebekah, her nurse, Abraham's servant, and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, saying to her,

"May you, our sister, become thousands of ten thousand; may your children possess their enemies' cities."

Rebekah and her young women got up, mounted the camels, and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

Now Isaac had come from the region of Beer-lahai-roi and had settled in the arid southern plain. One evening, Isaac went out to inspect the pasture, and while staring he saw camels approaching. Rebekah stared at Isaac. She got down from the camel and said to the servant, "Who is this man walking through the pasture to meet us?"

The servant said, "He's my master." So she took her headscarf and covered herself. The servant told Isaac everything that had happened. Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent. He received Rebekah as his wife and loved her. So Isaac found comfort after his mother's death.

Moment of Silent Reflection

Sermon

Invitation to Prayer *As the Deer* #2025

As the deer pants for the wa-ter, so my soul longs af - ter
you. You a - lone are my heart's de - sire, and I
long to wor - ship you. You a - lone are my
strength, my shield; to you a - lone may my spir - it
yield. You a - lone are my heart's de -
sire, and I long to wor - ship 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.]

Offering Our Gifts to God

If you have an offering today, please place it in the plate on the communion table before the end of the closing hymn. There are also offering plates in the Gathering Space just outside the sanctuary. Thank you for your generosity.

Offering Interlude

What a Friend We Have in Jesus—arr. Albert Beck

Based on the tune *Friend* by Charles C. Converse, 1868

***Response** *Make Me A Servant #2176*

Make me a ser-vant, hum-ble and meek, Lord, let me
lift up those who are weak. And may the prayer of my
heart al-ways be: Make me a ser-vant, make me a
ser-vant, make me a ser-vant to - day. _____

***Prayer of Dedication** Irene Bom

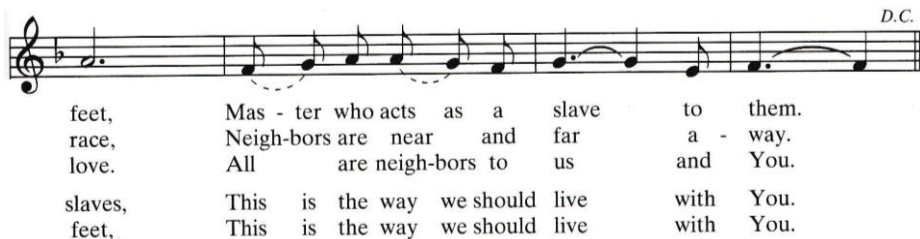
Eternal defender of the poor and sad, hear our prayers for all who suffer. For those who are refugees, exiles from home, because of the cruelty of enemies or the forces of nature. For those who are starving and whose tears are their only food. For those who are desperate for a drink, and who thirst for life-giving water. For those who are sad and troubled, whose hearts break for want of hope. For those whose faith is weak, who feel that You have abandoned them. Protector of the weak, be with all who need You today. May they know that they are not forgotten. Amen.

***Song of Parting** *Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love #367*

Je - su, Je - su, fill us with Your love, Show *Fine*
us how to serve the neigh-bors we have from You.

1. Kneels at the feet of His friends,
2. Neigh-bors are rich and poor,
3. These are the ones we should serve,
4. Lov - ing puts us on our knees,
5. Kneel at the feet of our friends,

Si - lent - ly wash - es their
Var - ied in col - or and
These are the ones we should
Serv - ing as though we are
Si - lent - ly wash - ing their



*Unison Benediction Irene Bom

Jesus calls us to step out on to the water with him, to leave the safety of our boats, and to walk toward him in faith, joining him in the work he is already doing in our world.

And when the wind and waves get high and threaten to overwhelm us, we remember his words: “Don’t be afraid. Take courage. I am here.”

So let’s go with faith, to follow where Jesus leads, confident that his love and presence go with us. Amen.

*God’s Light Goes Forth

*Postlude Voluntary in F—Robert Lau © 2018 Lorenz Publishing Co.

Announcements

Please submit your announcement at www.parkwayucc.org/communications.
 Bulletin and eNews deadline: noon Monday.

TODAY! Parkway Speakers Series: A Road Trip in Palestine/Israel; Things Travel Brochures Don't Tell You by Lea Koesterer

July 9, 2023 | 11:15am - 12:15pm Heritage Room & Zoom

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84691476997?pwd=aEM2ZURYWURLNmkwad0EzV0VHV1lyQT09#success>

Meeting ID: 8469147 6997 | **Passcode:** 181565 | **Dial:** (312) 626-6799

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Lea Koesterer has been committed to advocating for the poor and oppressed for years. “The vast majority of Americans have no idea of the true nature of the Palestine occupation nor the genesis of the conditions,” she observes.

Because of this, she founded St. Louis Friends of Bethlehem. Their goal is to enlighten people about the beauty and value of the culture of Palestine, and the reality of the deprivation inflicted by military occupation. Lea also produces documentary films to depict the plight of the people who live in the Holy Land under a military occupation; a new and provocative perspective, which in some respects is consistent with the 2021 UCC General Synod Resolution decrying the oppression of the Palestinian people as a matter of faith.

Let's get Acquainted—A New Parkway UCC Church Directory Coming Soon

A Directory Team is preparing to update our church directory—this year, without family photos but with lots of updated information. See the update questionnaires on the round table in the Gathering Space. If your current information is correct, WRITE YOUR NAME, and please check the circle at the top of the form and place it in the basket on the round table. If there are changes in your information, please PRINT CLEARLY your information, ESPECIALLY THE EMAIL ADDRESSES. We thank you for responding.

More info: Carol Cobb | ccjacob@aol.com | (314) 640-8166

7/11—Tuesday Evening Dialogue

2nd & 4th Tuesdays | 6:00pm potluck | 7:00pm Discussion | Heritage Room

Please join us for our second and final discussion of the book *Proof of Heaven* by Dr Eben Alexander. This book is about his near death experience during his time in a coma. Unlike other accounts of NDEs, the author, a neurosurgeon, is able to explain why his damaged brain was unable to fabricate his journey into the afterlife. Are you a believer or skeptic? Come share your thoughts on this interesting book with us!

Contact Helen Race: raceh@att.net | (314) 401-4382

7/23—Parkway Speaker Series: *The Journey of a Thousand Miles Begins with a Single Step* by Savannah Gagnon

Sunday, July 23 | 11:15am - 12:15pm | Heritage Rm & Zoom

Zoom link: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84691476997?pwd=a](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84691476997?pwd=aEM2ZURYWURLNmkwD0EzV0VHV1lyQT09#success)

EM2ZURYWURLNmkwD0EzV0VHV1lyQT09#success

Meeting ID: 8469147 6997 | **Passcode:** 181565 | **Dial:** (312) 626-6799

Pythagoras, the Greek philosopher, advised us to “Leave the roads; take the trails.” Our speaker, Savannah Gagonon, took that counsel. She has hiked the Appalachian Trail, (2,200 miles) and the Pacific Crest Trail (3,028 miles). Those two trails, along with the Continental Divide Trail (3,028 miles), informally constitute the Triple Crown of Hiking in this country. Currently, she is preparing to tackle the third leg.

These trails traverse America’s remote wilds through deserts, deep forests, and over mountains, exposing the hikers to a variety of weather. It doesn’t take much imagination to envision that Savannah has many stories to recount her adventures.

7/27 Parkway Adventurers Outing: Missouri Botanical Garden

Thursday, July 27 | 9:00am carpool or 9:30 at MoBot entrance | Lunch after Missouri Botanical Garden, 4344 Shaw Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63110

Join the Parkway Adventurers (PALS) as we enjoy *Chihuly in the Garden* at the Missouri Botanical Garden. Stroll through the Garden, or sit and enjoy the scenery. At the Garden, we can grab lunch at the Sassafras Cafe or enjoy a more leisurely meal at the Sassafras Restaurant. Please RSVP to Jackie Eiffert, jeiffert2@gmail.com or 661-378-6781.

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/>



JHLTB—Jesus Has Left the Building July 30

Sign up to help in the Gathering Space or by using the QR code on the left or go to

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080c4daeeaa28a46-jesus#/>

We will be doing various activities to serve the community.

Caring for the Welfare of Children: *Support for Isaiah 58 School Supplies Ministries*

The following items are requested:

1. Underwear, including socks, undershirts, all sizes, adults too, but especially for children, considering that older high school students need larger sizes;
2. 200 composition books, college-ruled (narrow lines), one-subject, spiral-bound. Watch for sales when shopping and take advantage of late July and August Back-to-School sales.
3. Hosts to sponsor activity tables on the Isaiah 58 Back-to-School Fair on Saturday, 22 July, 8:00 to 1:00 PM. Let me know if anyone is interested in this portion of the school fair day.

Underwear, all sizes, and composition books can be collected through Aug 31.

Evelyn Buretta: burettaevelyn@gmail.com | (636) 220-1280

UCC Habitat for Humanity Auction ~ Fall Fundraiser

Our UCC Build is gearing up for an online auction this fall. We are looking for a volunteer from PUCC to seek items and publicize the auction in our congregation and beyond. We hope that we'll discover great items for others to buy: Cardinals tickets, Dinner at a favorite place, Service from a company, A pie a month. The items are only limited by our imagination. Already, someone has donated a truck load of firewood, an HVAC check, a gift certificate to a restaurant. More info? Contact Tom McKenzie: mckenzie1947@att.net or Keith Karau keith.karau@gmail.com

Habitat helps build strength and stability ~ at Habitat for Humanity, we build. We build because we believe that everyone, everywhere should have a healthy, affordable place to call home. When a family helps build or improve a place they can call home, they are also building a better community as they build a better life for themselves.

Jesus Doesn't Tidy

Mary Luti

But after his brothers had gone to the festival, [Jesus] also went ... but in secret. And there was considerable complaining about him among the crowds. While some were saying, "He is a good man," others were saying, "No, he is deceiving the crowd." - John 7:10 and 12 (NRSVUE)

They're leaf-blowing the park outside my window. I can't concentrate on anything else, so I'm pondering leaf blowers. Not their noise and toxicity or the way they dislodge the leaf litter essential to insects. No, I'm thinking about how tidy they leave the park: debris-free, sharp neat edges, mulch in perfect circles around the trunks of trees.

It's pleasing, this tidiness, this clarity, this taming. Nothing unruly, no sprawl to spoil the satisfying view. Like slogans that delimit ideas, labels that delimit lives, rules that delimit behavior, theologies that square away the ineffable God. Leaf blowers, controlling the wild the way God intended.

Not.

I mean, consider Jesus: he's a thicket. Try to edge him, he spreads. Try to mow him, he mows you. He re-litters every path swept clean. A straight line or perfect circle he is not. No one gets him exactly. He doesn't let himself be got. Watch him long enough, you still can't put your finger on him. Listen to him long enough, you know less, not more.

And thank God for that. Because you really don't want a leaf-blowing savior, inclined to precise demarcations. Better this one, inclined to ambiguity. Better this one, who never manicured a mystery, tidied a sprawling thought into a six-word meme, or reduced a brave and beautiful life to a gender sign on a restroom door. Better this one, wild.

Prayer: *For all with an urge to clarify and tidy life, we pray. Relax us instead into your thicket, where life is wild, complicated, interesting, lovely, confounding, and real. Amen.*

Mary Luti (she/her/hers) is a long-time seminary educator and pastor, and founding member of *The Daughters of Abraham*, a national network of interfaith women's book groups.

Prayer List

as of Wednesday, July 5, 2023

Celebrations

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

Seasonal beauty.

Ongoing Search for Christian Education and Youth Directors – we are interviewing promising candidates.

Independence Day ... see Galatians 5:13 as mentioned last Sunday.

Concerns

Family & friends of Dick Witte as they grieve & give thanks for him.

Visitation at Bopp Funeral Home from 9-11am followed by Memorial Service then interment at Oak Grove Cemetery on Thursday, July 13.

Kevin and Rosanna Hogarty - as he recuperates from a heart attack.

Val & Doug Detjen - as she continues to strengthen *at home*.

Peter LaSalle & Sally Dodge - as they spend quality time with family.

Donna - recent cancer diagnosis (sister of Dottie Dwyer).

The gun violence across the US over the holiday weekend.

The ongoing power struggles and violence in Sudan, elsewhere

The continuing war in Ukraine.

Continuing

Cassie Rosenberger's sister Christa - healing after recent surgery.

Avery (20 months old) and parents Kyle & Laura - as she has been diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy (Kari/Keith Borgmann's granddaughter).

Cassie Rosenberger's mother Martha - ongoing cancer treatments.

Joseph Miller - long road to healing (son of Deb Carter).

Tito, Sarah & Family - his outpt rehab after stroke (Mason nephew).

Barb - complications with cancer tx and at odds with insurance co (Tarr)

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

Bill Darland - ongoing health issues.

Gail, Bill and Christopher Haack - chronic health challenges.

Coree Mix - settling into new home by DePaul Hospital... 11777 Minot Drive, Bridgeton 63044; 314-412-0150. They'd love a call and/or visit!

Jan - experiencing dementia (great-grandma of Coree Mix).

Angie - living with Hodgkin's Lymphoma (Rosenberger).

Matt Albers - finished chemo and radiation; surgery next (Connors).

Theresa - surgery/treatment/recovery - aggressive cancer (Schwarz).

Jackie - special needs adult battling Parkinson's, cancer, dementia.

Sharon - variety of health challenges (Rogers).

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.

Home-Centered/Care Facility/Rehab Center

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, #166; 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]

Naomi Runtz - 272 N Lindbergh Blvd; StL MO 63141; 34-993-0469 naomiruntz@sbcglobal.net [birthdate: August 30]

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

David Smith - *Anthology of Town & Country*; 1020 Woods Mill Rd; #310; St Louis, MO 63017; 636-200-5076 [birthdate: July 24]
(Father of Deb Carter).

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

JoJo & Derek and Natty Kersting as they await a baby this summer.

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 & those dealing with meds.

Caregivers of all shapes and sizes.

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.

Peace and Justice near and far.

US Military around the globe.

6th Sunday *after* Pentecost

Sunday, July 9, 2023

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Chosen Journeys

[Jesus said:] "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Dear Jesus, our brother and friend,

Today we pray for all those who are weary, that they may feel the easiness of your yoke and the lightness of your load.

We pray for others who are ill, weary from battling the enemy within their own bodies. And we pray for the healing of our own illnesses of body, mind and spirit. Send your healing power like a balm over all who suffer in this way, and help us all to know that you are always near to comfort and to soothe.

We pray for others who are weary from the demands of overwork or from the worthlessness of worklessness. And we pray for ourselves, that we may remember that productivity is not a Kin-dom value. Send your grace, Holy Friend, upon all of us who suffer from the delusion that we are only as valuable as their work. Remind us that your ease is for all people, and draw them into the shelter of your mercy.

We pray for others who are trapped in cycles of addiction or violence. And we pray for ourselves, that the bonds of our violent and addictive tendencies be loosened bit by bit in the wake of your healing and hope. Shower us with the full confidence and faith to take the next step forward, and the next, then the next after that. Draw into our circles those who can counsel and guide us in new ways and patterns of being.

We pray for those who are pressed down into the cracks of the broken places in our society and culture. And we pray for ourselves when we find ourselves squeezed into the cracks, so heavily burdened by sexism, racism, or homophobia that it feels that we cannot stand. Raise us up, shattering that which keeps us fast and opening the eyes of all to the ease and joy of your justice.

We pray all these things in your name. Amen.