

Together we celebrate the work of God's Spirit among us through Christian fellowship and service throughout our community, practicing a welcoming spirit, honoring each person, and challenging one another to seek God's purpose in the world – with the promise of joy, renewal, and spiritual growth.

(Mission Statement, adopted 1996)

HYDE PARK UNION CHURCH

Chartered in 1874 in the Free Church Tradition
American Baptist/United Church of Christ
5600 South Woodlawn Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60637
phone 773.363.6063 • fax 773.324.3874
www.hpuc.org • office@hpuc.org



March 2015

March Church Calendar

Weekly Events:

Mondays - Yoga & Centering Prayer, 7:00 p.m.
EXCEPT March 2

Wednesdays - Bible Study, 1:00 p.m. **EXCEPT March 4**

Thursdays - Senior Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 1

Worship with Communion, 10:00 a.m.,
Amanda Guthrie preaching

Board Meeting, 11:30 a.m.

Second Hour Lenten Series on Prayer, 11:30 a.m.

Steering Committee Meeting, 12:00 p.m.

Monday, March 2

NO Yoga & Centering Prayer
Classes will resume next week.

Wednesday, March 4

NO Bible Study
Bible Study will resume next week.

Friday, March 6

Taizé Worship, 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, March 8

Worship with Remembrance of Chicago's
Fallen Children and Youth, 10:00 a.m., Rev. Dr.
Douglas R. Sharp preaching

Chili-making, 11:30 a.m.

Second Hour Lenten Series on Prayer, 11:30 a.m.

Sunday, March 15

Worship, Rev. Dr. Douglas R. Sharp preaching

Congregational Meeting, 11:30 a.m.

Second Hour Lenten Series on Prayer, 11:30 a.m.

Sunday, March 22

Worship, 10:00 a.m., Rev. Douglas Sharp
preaching

Second Hour Lenten Series on Prayer, 11:30 a.m.

Sunday, March 29 Palm Sunday

Worship with Palm Sunday Pageant, 10:00 a.m.

Coffee Hour, 11:30 a.m.

From the Interim Minister
Douglas R. Sharp

Non-Random Thoughts

They're here, and I guess we should just be thankful they come, one right after another, for a season. The frigid days of an Arctic Midwest winter have slipped in, and in some ways that parallel the summer weather in these parts, these days become something of an endurance challenge. If you insert large quantities of snow into these frigid days, we can have some unexpected and dangerous circumstances. Fortunately we have not had as much snow as last year.

People whose age and health conditions require safe, secure, warm and reliable living quarters should not be put at risk by acts of nature, but they sometimes are. Members and friends of the Hyde Park Union Church community could do a well-being check with friends and acquaintances when changes in the environment have the potential to affect quality of life and put people at risk. If you know anyone who is in this category, *anyone at all*, please call them periodically during this cold hard weather and ask about their well-being. No one should ever be disconnected, and we can do something about that.

Shifting gears here, slightly: In my sermon on February 15, I noted that there are two ways to describe our being together as a congregation. If we look at Hyde Park Union Church and describe it as a "community," we are probably thinking about HPUC as a structured network of relationships, functions, and activities; there is a flow chart that describes offices and committees, documents that describe what groups are supposed to do, and schedules of activities that allow people to choose their level of participation. Relationships develop in ways that reflect particular positions and roles; we have ministers, staff, a moderator, committee chairs and members, and volunteers, and even interested and disinterested observers. In one sense, HPUC is a "community" characterized by a structured system of positions, roles and functions, sort of like any other community, religious or not.

But in another, more important sense, HPUC is made up of much more delicate and elusive connections. There is a life-force, a living-power, a vital-energy that courses through the formal structures and brings vitality to this thing we call Hyde Park Union Church. It can be discerned in the open, fluid, and unscripted relations between and among persons who know each other, not as chair or committee member, but as human beings who are more than the roles they play. Its signs are manifest in the many pathways on which HPUCers journey. You can see it in the authentic care and concern shown by one to others, and the joy and comfort that comes with the human touch. It is

continued on page 2

evident when one reaches out to another with a word or an act that evokes gratitude and a desire to reach out in turn.

This is what I am calling *communitas*, the network of connections and interactions that can't really be caught in the word "community" because it refers to a quality that points us to something other than ourselves but which is manifest among us, within us, and in-between us. The word *communitas* draws attention to that which lives and breathes and animates our community, our public life. It is, in short, the mode of the Divine Presence as Holy Spirit.

And it should not go without saying that, in this period of betwixt-and-between, there are individuals in our community who are pondering whether and how to be a part of Hyde Park Union Church. For some, the experiences of injury and pain that have occurred in the community have constricted the life-force that flows in the *communitas*. Because that life-force intends to bring health and healing, unity in diversity, and, ultimately, transformation, each of us who live and love as participants in the HPUC Community must reach out with compassion and affection for a well-being check-in with those we know—and don't yet know. No one should ever be disconnected, and we can do something about that.

Shifting gears again here: When I was on the faculty at Northern Seminary, I created a course that focused on developing a cross-cultural understanding of race and racism and a theological warrant for undertaking initiatives to dismantle racism in both church and society. Out of the many years of teaching that course came my book on racism, *No Partiality: The Idolatry of Race and the New Humanity* (InterVarsity Press, 2002). I am happy to make copies available to members and friends of HPUC at no cost. If you would like to have one, please stop by the church office sometime and ask for one.

Peace, to all,
Douglas

From the Moderator: Church Board Update

Sophie Behlen

As you might imagine the Church Board has been very active these last 4 months. They have met 4 times and have made many decisions, and taken on many more tasks in a short time. At each meeting we have had very full attendance. I am very grateful to them for their full attention and readiness at such an important time for us.

One month ago, at our Annual Financial meeting, Property and Finance presented a budget for the year 2015 to the congregation. The Budget included estimated rental income from possible renters, one of them being Chicago Citizens for Change, whose executive director is our Pastor Emerita, Susan Johnson. The Congregation voted to accept the Budget, and expressed gratitude to Pam Mearsheimer and the

Property & Finance committee for their work in preparing and presenting the Budget .

On February 4th, we learned that our few possible renters had been narrowed to one - CCC. So the Church Board met on Feb 15th to discuss Property & Finance's proposal that we lease the north suite of offices on the 4th floor to CCC. Twelve of our fourteen board members were present. Various members brought up important issues to consider: the potential impact on our Interim and Call process, staff relations, finances and mission. As the discussion continued many Board members expressed their desire to accept the proposal, and use the language of the lease to provide clear boundaries in the workplace so as to minimize any confusion that may arise due to Susan Johnson's change of roles. The Board voted unanimously to execute such a lease, and over this past week Property and Finance, the Moderator and Pastor Douglas have worked with CCC to create that document.

The lease was signed on Wednesday, February 25. Repairs are being done, and CCC will begin to move in on Saturday, Feb 28th. The signing of this lease now brings us a step further in our project to build an elevator.

In a bit of unfortunate timing, the Hyde Park Herald printed an article that included some factual errors. We have put in a call to the Herald, but not yet made contact.

So...a lot has happened this last month. Pastor Douglas will be helping us explore ways to foster constructive conversations about all that has been going on for us.

The Board will meet briefly this Sunday, March 1st, to decide on the list of potential nominees for the Call Committee, which will shortly be brought to the congregation for a vote. The Steering Committee (a small subset of the Board) will remain and meet longer.

New Questions for a New Day

Jeffrey D. Jones

This is an article published on January 30, 2015 by Alban at Duke Divinity on their website.

It's time to start asking new questions. Better answers to the same old questions about the church will not get us through the tumultuous times in which we live. This is a time for out-of-the box thinking. Old questions keep us in the box. New questions invite us to move outside.

Phyllis Tickle, in *The Great Emergence*, talks about the need for today's church to have a rummage sale so we can rid ourselves of all those practices, beliefs and ways of being that are no longer effective and get in the way of being the church we are called to be.

Many of the questions we have asked for centuries in the church need to be put in that rummage sale. They need to be replaced with new questions that lead us into new ways of being and doing – ways that are attuned to the time in which we live.

It's not that the old questions weren't valid at one time or even that they have no place in the church today. Rather, the new questions, if they are the questions that form our approach to ministry, will lead us to new insights and new learning.

One question that has been asked consistently through the years, and even more so in these days of declining church membership is, "How do we bring them in?" It would be better for us to ask, **"How do we send them out?"**

In these days of changing roles and responsibilities many wonder, "What should the pastor do?" But a more important question for congregations today is **"What is our shared ministry?"**

When congregations focus on strategic planning they ask, "What's our vision and how do we implement it?" What would happen if they instead asked, **"What's God up to and how do we get on board?"**

When congregations have financial struggles, they ask, "How do we survive?" Instead they might ask, **"How do we serve?"**

When congregations think about their mission, they often ask, "How do we save people?" or perhaps, "How do we help people?" A better question might be **"How do we make the reign of God more present in this time and place?"**

There are no "right" answers to these new questions that can be applied to all congregations. Every congregation needs to live with the questions, because it is only in living with them that new ways being and doing church emerge. The familiar line from Rainer Maria Rilke in *Letters to a Young Poet* can guide us: "Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, one distant day live right into the answer."

If you ask these questions there is no assurance that you'll find the way to renew, revitalize or redevelop your church. It may happen. But you may just as likely discover that asking these questions takes you down a road to some other alternative that you hadn't even thought of before. What I feel pretty confident about, however, is that asking these new questions will bring us closer to discovering what God is seeking from us in this time. I also believe asking these new questions will help ensure that whatever the future holds for us and our congregations we will be more faithful in the work we are about right now. And that is a pretty wondrous thing!

Jeffrey D. Jones is a pastor in the American Baptist Church and the author of several books, including [Heart, Mind, and Strength: Theory and Practice for Congregational Leadership](#). His latest book, [Facing Reality, Finding Hope: New Possibilities for Faithful Churches](#), will be published by Alban Books in February 2015.

The Heralding of Spring

Rev. Erma Y. Croom, Director of Gilead Ministry

The month of March heralds the dawning of spring, a much welcome occasion for us here in Chicago who have had to endure a brutally cold winter. With spring comes the newness of life and the awakening of creation from its cold, gray dimness. The heralding of spring at Jackson Park Hospital also brings echoes of something new. Plans are now underway for the opening of a new Geriatric Care Unit. The unit will provide comprehensive care for older adults and will accommodate patients age 65 and older who meet the required health criteria for admission. The unit will be specifically designed to address the needs of hospitalized older adults, and to improve clinical outcomes for older patients by preventing functional decline and other complications. This new unit will be located on the south wing of the hospital that currently houses the Mother/Baby unit. The Mother/Baby unit will soon be returning to its former location. The administration and staff are excited about the possibilities of providing quality patient-centered care to those who will occupy the new unit. The Geriatric Care unit will have single occupancy rooms with 14 patient beds and will provide patients with around-the-clock care.

Spring also brings change to the Gilead ministry. This month we will be saying goodbye to our interns from the University of Chicago Divinity School. The interns began their pastoral ministry at Jackson Park Hospital in September as a part of a pilot project launched by Rev. Wesley Sun and the Field Studies Department at the Divinity School. The project provides first year Divinity School students an opportunity to experience pastoral ministry within a hospital context. Some of the students plan to pursue chaplaincy as a vocation, others are leaning more toward the academy, and others are still in the process of discerning the specifics of their call.

This diverse group of men and women brought the richness of their life experiences, knowledge, and skills to serve the patients, family members and staff of Jackson Park Hospital. The staff and I have found the students a delight to work with and are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to their ministry formation. I pray God's blessing upon each student's life and wish all of them well as they continue their Divinity School journey.

The Palm Sunday Pageant

Amanda Guthrie

A student recently asked me why we do the Palm Sunday Pageant every year. "That's a great question!" I responded. We tell the story a bit differently every year, but not so differently that the pageant is unpredictable or surprising. Every year, we see Jesus ride through the center aisle on a donkey – all of the other students waiving their palms as the congregation sings "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" We see Judas colluding with the chief priests to betray Jesus. The last supper. Jesus praying desperately in Gethsemane, while his disciples struggle to stay awake. The arrest, during which the high priest's slave's ear gets cut off by one of the bystanders – always a crowd favorite. And, finally, Peter's three denials before the crowing of the rooster. So there you have it! The story we tell every year boiled down to its major "scenes."

The obvious question is raised: If we already know what's going to happen, why do we do it again?

There are, of course, several reasons why we do the Palm Sunday Pageant every year. It's tradition! And there's something quite important about tradition. Tradition provides a rhythm for church life and connects our present community with the past and present. It also connects us with churches around the world today that have Palm Sunday Pageants and processions. The UCC book of worship outlines a service with dramatic readings and a blessing of the palms, as does the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. Many Christians recognize the importance in engaging in ritual *together*, whether or not we are in the same place. This kind of acting together unites us despite our differences.

And just as we preach on the same texts every three years, as we do when using the lectionary, we may see the same Palm Sunday Pageant every three years but derive a different meaning from it. The actors may interpret their lines and movements differently. As the audience, some line or movement may strike us differently than they did three years ago, given our new set of experiences and circumstances. We read and reread our Scriptures because they still have so much to tell us. We are never done learning from them or seeing them anew.

While all of this may be reason enough to do a Palm Sunday Pageant every year, there seems to me to be something particularly important about the scripture we bring to life on this day. This scripture tells us of Jesus' final days. It tells us of his paradoxical entry into Jerusalem – a king riding on a donkey. It tells us stories of Jesus being questioned. He responds with words that awe his listeners, and yet they are inspired to conspire against him. It also tells us of his last meal with his disciples – a meal that we replicate today, acknowledging the sacrifice Jesus made for us in his death.

And it seems to me that Jesus' last days, his death, and resurrection are crucial for our understanding of him. That is at least the take the author of the Gospel of Mark seems to have. In the Gospel of Mark, "no full and appropriate understanding of Jesus is possible except in the light of his passion, death, and resurrection," Lamar Williamson, Jr. writes in his commentary on the gospel. These last "scenes" in Jesus' life are crucial to our knowing him. They are crucial to our comprehending his meaning for us – our lives and our community. They are crucial for our understanding of what it means to be Jesus' disciples, his witnesses in the world. We can easily miss the difficulty and strangeness and unbelievable parts of Jesus' story. And yet his passion, death, and resurrection highlight exactly the story those things. God came to earth and got treated like a traitor, with no respect. God came to earth and no one could see who he was. No one could see his love for him. God came to earth and died. That is our Savior. That is our God. A God who makes the last first and the first last. A God who called blessed the poor in spirit, those who mourn, and those who are persecuted. A God who heals sinners, the sick, and the hurt. And a God who promises to *be with us always, to the end of the age*.

As difficult and strange and hard to comprehend as Jesus' story is, we must continuously try. Perhaps by seeing the Palm Sunday Pageant again, we will understand a bit better. We will be struck by the power and meaning of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. And we will place ourselves in a long line of his disciples, sharing the good news of his kingdom again today as we eagerly await his return.

Sing into Spring!

Jade Maze

Many people thoroughly enjoy being in a choir. You get a chance to sing different kinds of music, and you get to be around others who share your interest in music. Making music with a group of people may give you just the balance you need in your busy workweek. If you've never tried it, here's a little more incentive. **It's good for you!** And it turns out you don't even have to be a particularly good singer to reap the rewards. According to several studies, group singing "can produce satisfying and therapeutic sensations even when the sound produced by the vocal instrument is of mediocre quality." So if you are looking for a way to enrich your church life, benefit your health and serve God, come join the choir for the last half of the season, which ends in June. Our number always thin as the cold weather hits. Let's all warble into Spring together!

The Benefits of Singing

Group singing is cheaper than therapy, healthier than drinking, and certainly more fun than working out. It is the one thing in life where feeling better is pretty much guaranteed. There are many benefits from singing: physically, emotionally and socially.



Socially

1. Brings people together and encourages a sense of community
2. It is a forum for sharing and giving and receiving support.
3. Offers opportunity for giving and receiving positive feedback
4. Choir practice is a forum for fun and laughter and provides a safe environment to try new skills
5. Brings people together. Give it a try!

And here is a nice concise echo of the wonderfulness that is singing...

Life-Affirming Benefits of Singing – Vocalizing Promotes Well Being

By Patty Mills

“Singing fortifies health, widens culture, refines the intelligence, enriches the imagination, makes for happiness and endows life with an added zest.” * If you sing in the shower or sing along with the radio, consider taking this raw vocal skill to new heights. Music – the “universal language” not only stirs our deepest emotions, but active participation can increase energy and vigor to see us through even the most stress-filled life commitments. Good vocal technique goes beyond the basics to include both physical and vocal warm-ups, proper nutrition, adequate rest and emotional commitment. An experienced vocal teacher will explore all aspects of posture, abdominal and chest development, tone production and breath control. What health club can promise these benefits?

- Singing increases poise, self-esteem and presentation skills.
- Singing strengthens concentration and memory.
- Singing develops the lungs and promotes superior posture.
- Singing broadens expressive communication.
- Singing adds a rich, more pleasant quality to speech.
- Singing animates the body, mind and spirit.
- Singing enables the performer to delve into characterization/acting.
- Singing stimulates insight into prose and poetry and piques interests in the inner meaning of words.
- Singing enriches one’s ability to appreciate the art of great singers.
- Singing is an ageless enjoyment – you are never too young or too old.
- Singing is therapeutic both emotionally and physically.

If you are interested in singing in the choir, please contact me! Jade Maze: jade@hpuc.org, 773-610-2996 (Rehearsals are Thursdays at 7:30pm, Sunday morning service).

Physically

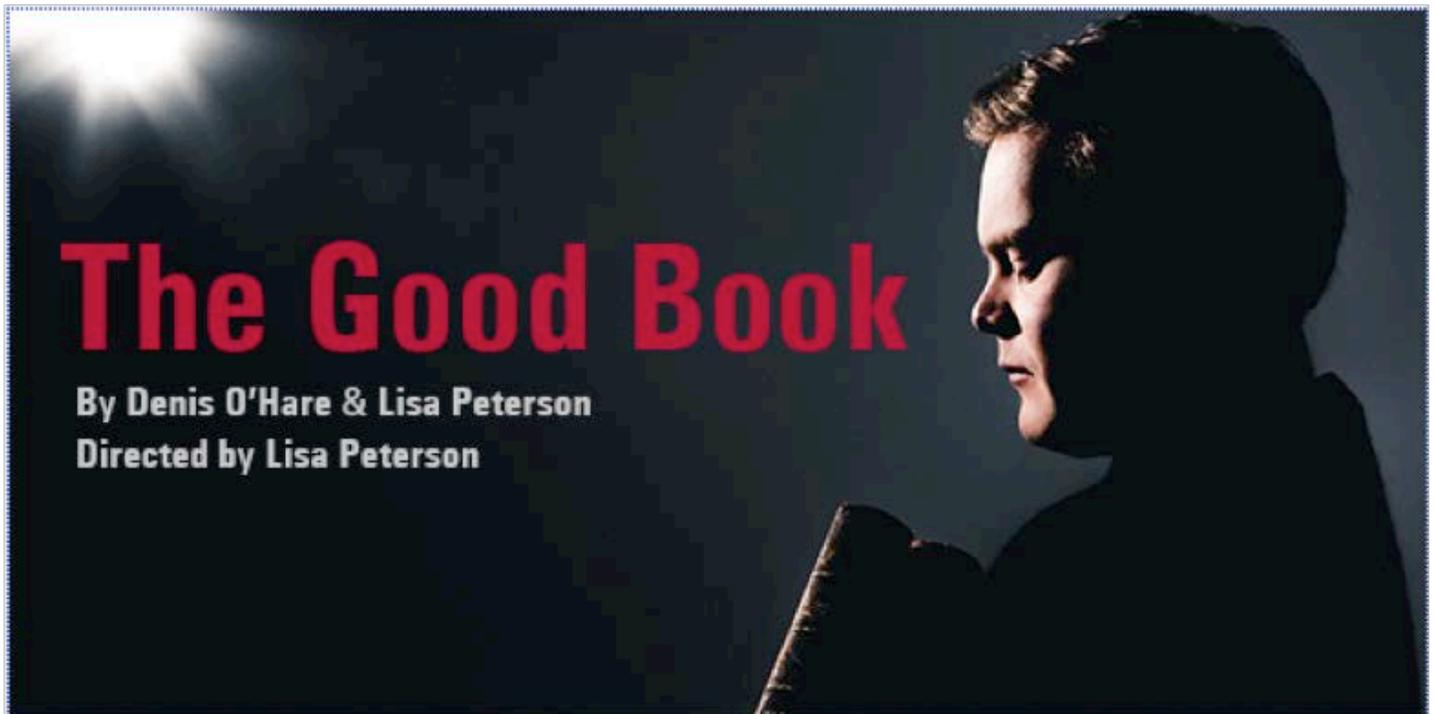
1. Singing exercises our lungs. It tones up our intercostal muscles and our diaphragm.
2. It can improve our sleep.
3. When you sing you also release oxytocin, which is a natural stress reliever and is found to alleviate feelings of depression and loneliness.
3. We benefit our hearts and circulation by improving our aerobic capacity and we decrease muscle tension.
5. And, when singing with someone else, your heart rates can even sync together.
4. Our facial muscles get toned.
5. Our posture improves.
6. We can become more mentally alert.
7. Sinuses and respiratory tubes are opened up.
8. With careful training recent evidence suggests that it can help decrease the problem of snoring.
9. There is a release of pain relieving endorphins.
10. Our immune system is given a boost enabling us to fight disease.
11. It can help reduce anger, depression and anxiety.
12. It’s really good for your brain enhancing concentration and memory and has been used as an all-natural way to help treat dementia, lung cancer, depression, and chronic pain.

Emotionally

1. It can increase self-esteem and confidence.
2. It increases feelings of wellbeing.
3. It enhances mood and increases positive feelings.
4. It’s useful as a stress reducer.
5. It is spiritually uplifting.
6. Singing encourages creativity
7. It can be energizing.
8. It evokes emotions and promotes bonding.
9. Diverse repertoire increases understanding and empathy between cultures.
10. It is healing.

Come see "The Good Book" at the Court Theatre with HPUC!

Speak with Pastor Amanda, if you are interested.
There are several dates possible; she will send you a survey to complete.



Join us for a church-wide potluck at Ted & Lee Cook's home (5421 S. Greenwood) on Sunday,
March 1 at 5:00 p.m.!

Please RSVP by February 27 to Caroline Anderson at cjanderso@comcast.net. Please indicate the number in your party (adults & children) and whether you are bringing a main dish, a side dish or salad, or a desert.





We're Updating Our Directory!

Please fill out the contact information form by clicking [here](#).

The link is also available on the right sidebar on the front page of the church website and in the "This Week/This Weekend @ HPUC" emails.

One form per household will suffice. Even if your information has not changed, please **do** fill out the form as confirmation to the church office. **If you would rather not be included in the new edition of the church directory, please send an email to the church office saying so.**

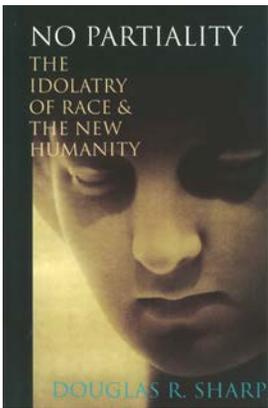


Members and friends of HPUC are invited to donate flowers for the Communion Table in the chancel for worship on non-Communion Sundays.

Flowers may be given to memorialize a friend or loved one or to commemorate a special occasion. The cost of flowers is a minimum of \$35 for a small bouquet. Requests for flowers for the chancel may be made to the Church Office or to the Worship & Music Committee (worshipmusic@hpuc.org). Sign-up sheets will also be available in the Social Hall during coffee hour.

Thank you for enhancing our Sunday worship with the gift of flowers!

Congregational Announcements



Douglas is donating copies of his book, *No Partiality: The Idolatry of Race and the New Humanity* (IVP 2002) to members and friends of Hyde Park Union Church.

Please stop by the church office to pick up a copy if you would like one.

Amanda will begin a CPE Residency at Providence Portland Medical Center in mid-September and will be moving to Portland, OR sometime this summer.

Easter Lily Orders

On Easter Sunday we invite Church members and friends to donate lilies for the chancel at a cost of \$15 each. The lilies may be taken home after worship on Easter Sunday or may be donated for one of the members of the church who is unable attend.

You can order lilies online by clicking [here](#). The link will also be made available in "This Week/This Weekend @ HPUC" emails and on the right sidebar of the front page of the church website.



Paper order forms will be made available at the back sanctuary table and may be placed in the offering plate.

Orders are due by Sunday, March 15.

Join us for Taizé Worship
on Friday, March 6 at 7 p.m.



Holy Week

Palm Sunday, March 29

Children's Palm Sunday Pageant, 10:00 a.m.

Maundy Thursday, April 2

Agape Meal, 6:30 p.m.

Good Friday, March 3

Service, 7:00 p.m.

Easter Sunday, April 5

Early Easter Service, 7:30 a.m.

Easter Breakfast, 8:30 a.m.

Easter Service, 10:00 a.m.

Hyde Park Union Church
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