

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  
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## February 2016

### February Church Calendar

#### Regular Weekly Events:

**Mondays** - Yoga & Centering Prayer, 7:00 p.m.

**Wednesdays** - Bible Study, 1:00 p.m. except February 3 and February 10

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

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**Friday, February 5**

Taizé Worship, 7:00 p.m.

**Sunday, February 7**

Worship with Communion, Rev. Wesley Sun preaching, 10:00 a.m.

Coffee Hour & Fellowship, 11:30 a.m.

Second Hour: *Voices from the Past: Reflections in Song through the 20th Century*

**Wednesday, February 10**

**Ash Wednesday, Lent Begins**

No Bible Study. Bible Study resumes February 17.

Ash Wednesday Service, 5:00 p.m.

**Sunday, February 14**

Worship, 10:00 a.m.

Coffee Hour & Fellowship, 11:30 a.m.

Chili-making, 11:30 a.m.

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

**Sunday, February 21**

Worship, 10:00 a.m.

Coffee Hour and Fellowship, 11:30 a.m.

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

**Sunday, February 28**

Worship, 10:00 a.m.

Coffee Hour & Fellowship, 11:30 a.m.

Annual Financial Meeting, 11:30 a.m.

From the Interim Minister  
**Douglas R. Sharp**

### Non-Random Thoughts

Not too many days hence, we will observe Ash Wednesday and begin the season of Lent, a time in the church year for Christians to take up the disciplines of self-examination and reflection and carry out the sacred practices of repentance and fasting in preparation for the coming of Easter. In this season, we focus our attention on our relationship to God, the source and goal of our life, and engage in practices of self-denial, choosing to give up something of pleasurable value or give of ourselves in an *extra*-ordinary measure of service. Lent is a time to become aware of the ways we have discounted or ignored our responsibilities to others and, especially, our response-ability to the Holy One whose all-embracing love providentially animates and sustains our very existence. Lent is a time to assess how our demeanor has injured others, how our way of living has harmed others, both seen and unseen.

In the spirit of the season of Lent, and with an eye toward examining our relationship to God and the good creation with which we have been gifted, I want to commit the Second Hour Lenten series to a reading and discussion of *Laudato Si'*, the papal encyclical on climate change promulgated last May by Pope Francis. This is a most amazing document in so many ways, and while there are members and friends of Hyde Park Union Church who have been deeply involved in the environmental movement, we have much to learn by giving attention to the encyclical on this subject.

One feature in particular that makes this document unusual is the incorporation of a distinctively religious perspective on what has heretofore been a phenomenon addressed in terms of science, economics and politics. This is not to say that the predominant perspectives in the discussions and strategies for dealing with climate change are absent from the encyclical. Quite the contrary. Rather, now alongside the scientific, economic and political perspectives is a spiritual perspective, in dialogue.

Another notable feature that distinguishes this document is the way it sets the biblical and theological perspectives on creation in the context of the ecological crisis we are facing. With notable insight and skill, the pope crafts a theology of creation that situates its foremost themes—the gift of creation and the human contribution to its continuation—in relation to the divine love in creation, the human care for creation, and the vulnerability of the natural environment. This biblical and theological emphasis goes a long way in accentuating the crisis that emerges from indifference, denial, and self-interest regarding the human role in altering our environment.

Related to this is yet another prominent feature in the discussion of ecology, namely the disparate impact of climate change on the poor and on countries in the developing world. At this point, the document addresses not only the rich nations whose disproportionate development and use of resources have been deleterious to our climate, but also the poor countries who have not

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contributed to climate change but whose resources are so meager as to render them incapable of adapting to climate change and the effects such change has had in their own living spaces, politics and economy.

Most evidently, the encyclical is a call for dialogue, conversion, and action. Whatever one's expectations might be for a document that represents the official teaching of a major stream of the Christian tradition, one can read this treatise and only come away with enormous respect for the extent to which one's thinking about faith convictions and manner of living are challenged. The pope has offered an indictment of a way of life that diminishes the prospects for the flourishing of others, and in that vein has addressed the social, economic, political, yes, and moral and spiritual beliefs, attitudes, values, and practices that constitute a privileged habitation on this earth.

So we will spend time immersing ourselves during Lent in this treatise, beginning on February 14. In preparation for that inaugural session in the series, participants should pick up a study guide on the back table in the sanctuary or the side table next to the entrance to the Social Hall, read the introduction and first chapter of the encyclical (the study guide gives a website where the document can be accessed on-line or downloaded), and come to Second Hour on February 14 to engage in reflection and dialogue. I'm looking forward to this series with great expectation.

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### ***The Meaning of the Ashes***

*Rev. Erma Y. Croom, Director of Gilead Ministry*

*"From dust you were made and to dust you will return."*

On February 10<sup>th</sup> Gilead Ministry at Jackson Park Hospital will observe Ash Wednesday. The observance of Ash Wednesday, marking the beginning of the Lenten season, is a season of introspection, reflection and penance. But what is the significance of the ashes? The ashes are actually a reminder of our mortality, reminding us that we are from dust and to dust we all will return. The fact of our mortality becomes more real to me as I serve as a Chaplain at Jackson Park Hospital. Recently our Department began to make an intentional effort to provide direct support to the hospital's oncology patients. In my visits with these patients I find them at various stages in their struggle with cancer. Some have just learned that they have the dreaded disease and are overwhelmed as a result of receiving the news. Others have lived with the reality of being a cancer patient for a few months and are making efforts to adjust to their treatments. And there are others still, who have lived with cancer for a year or more and are learning to manage their symptoms and take the pain and the treatments in stride. And then, there are those who are in the end stages and are grappling with the reality that they most likely won't recover.

As I think about those patients who are approaching the end of life. I am struck by the sacredness of this work. This sacredness is realized in the relationships formed while accompanying them in their journey through the various levels of pain and sickness. It is realized in the sitting and

talking with them. It is realized in listening to them and in laughing, crying and praying with them in the hope of relieving their suffering while at the same time, providing spiritual and emotional support.

I am writing this article after learning that one of the patients I have journeyed with through her experience as a cancer patient will be going into hospice. What this means for the patient is that there will be some relief. She will be made more comfortable, her suffering will be minimized and eventually she will be at rest. Just as reflection on my experience with the oncology patients at Jackson Park Hospital brings me to the realization of the sacredness of my work as a Chaplain, I am also realizing the sacredness of the ashes, for not only are they a reminder of our mortality but they are also a reminder of what we all share as members of the human family, the precious gift of life and the opportunity to love and care for one another extravagantly while we have life. Ash Wednesday is a reminder of what is meaningful about life and living. It is an invitation to remember our frailty and the importance of the people that we love in our lives and the short time we have. Ash Wednesday has become a tradition at Jackson Park Hospital and its observance on February 10<sup>th</sup> will include a brief service in the chapel and the imposition of ashes throughout the hospital. Ash Wednesday is a day that challenges us to appreciate the many gifts and blessings of life even when we are contemplating the inevitable reality of death.

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### ***All Things Music***

*Jade Maze, Music Director*

This month I thought I'd just give you glimpses of all things musical going on in the next month here in the HPUC music ministry.

- FEBRUARY 7<sup>th</sup>, 11:45am, HPUC Sanctuary:  
Voices from the Past: Reflections in Song through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

This will be a lovely way to spend an early Sunday afternoon and a refined contrast to the Super bowl Sunday evening some of us may be looking forward to in great anticipation.

The concert will feature Ensamble Adhoc, which is made up of soprano Franci Acosta and luteist and early baroque guitarist José Luis Posada and our section leaders (except for Qiana who is out of town). Alyssa Conde will be at the piano. The music will span from medieval to 20<sup>th</sup> classical and musical theater eras. A few teenage voice students will lend their talents as well. It should be a refreshing and charming hour of loveliness and beauty—a jolt of energy right before we delve into our season of Lent.

We hope you can join us!!!

- LEEAP Grant: It is not official yet, but I have been reassured by the powers that be that the application we submitted to extend our LEEAPP grant through year two has been approved! More organizations have applied for the same grant, so our piece of the pie may be slightly smaller, but we will definitely be able to keep our efforts in the Sacred Jazz Institute up and running. I'll put out the official word as soon as I get it.
- The UCC Off the Pews into the Streets organization has agreed to provide me with two youth assistants to help with events and services and musical administrative assignment (distributing flyers, photographing events, etc.) at their cost. I am so grateful for this. I'm in the process of making a workable schedule with two young women, and you should start seeing them at our jazz services, jam sessions, etc. working diligently. God is good!
- We in the music department will be doing our best to support the Lenten season theme with our selections.
- Starting Friday February 5<sup>th</sup> at the Taizé service, we will have a new vocal intern. Her name is Nia Fitch, and she is a lovely young lady with a beautiful voice. Hopefully, we will hear her in morning worship as well as at the evening services.
- Elikem Fiase is now officially our organist at HPUC. I am thrilled.

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***Missions Committee Update: Syrian Refugees and Ways to Engage as a Community of Faith***  
*Missions Committee*

The Missions Committee met on January 12 and is exploring two opportunities for congregational learning and possible deeper engagement.

We have all been concerned about rising anti-Muslim sentiment in our country and about the plight of refugees from the Middle East, but it's hard to know what we can do beyond our communion offering dedicated to refugee relief. Rev. Douglas Sharp has learned from clergy meetings in the Northern Illinois region that the First Unitarian Church in Hyde Park partnered with an organization called Refugee One to co-sponsor a Syrian refugee family in Hyde Park. We will be inviting a representative of First Unitarian to describe the work they are doing during the January 31 Second Hour. First Unitarian would welcome volunteers to help with ongoing tutoring and mentoring activities with the family; if individuals from our congregation are interested in joining members of Augustana Lutheran Church in supporting this work, their help would be appreciated.

The committee and Douglas will also be exploring a possible educational program or forum for the church and neighbors,

perhaps on a Sunday afternoon later in the winter. The goal would be to learn about how we might collaborate with Muslim religious groups for greater cross-religious understanding, possibly in partnership with the Council for the Parliament of World Religions. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Several members of the congregation have expressed an interest in learning and possibly doing more about climate change. This is an issue that affects not only the health of God's creation but the well-being particularly of "the least of those," connected to extreme weather in our own communities and around the world, food supply and the cost of food, the very existence of poorer island nations, and the desertification of large swathes of the entire African continent. In the wake of the papal encyclical *Laudato si*, and the recent, cautious progress at the international negotiations in Paris, climate change from a faith perspective will be the topic of our Lenten series. The Missions and Social Concerns Committee will then explore whether that conversation suggests further engagement for us as a congregation.

Of course, we continue to follow the issue of gun violence, a long-time issue of concern for the church and the topic of our most recent letter writing campaign. We will let you know if and when we receive a response from Sen. Raoul and Rep. Currie. And we are also exploring options to support local youth services organizations in responding to the needs connected to the aftermath of the Laquan McDonald shooting.

Mission Committee meetings occur on the second Tuesday of every month, and we would welcome more "ad hoc" participation. Please feel free to contact the committee with questions or ideas you would like us to explore: [missions@hpuc.org](mailto:missions@hpuc.org).

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**Church Office Hours**  
*effective through March 14, 2016*

Monday by appointment only

Tuesday 7 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Wednesday 4 p.m. - 7 p.m.

Thursday 7 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Friday 7 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.

*the church office can always be reached  
via email at [office@hpuc.org](mailto:office@hpuc.org)*

**"All are from the dust,  
and to dust all return."**

Ecclesiastes 3:20, ESV



## Ash Wednesday Service

February 10, 2016

5:00 p.m.

with Imposition of Ashes



Experience the Sacred  
through Song and Silence in the Spirit of

# Taizé

Friday, February 5th, 7pm

## Accepting Change



Hyde Park  
Union Church

5600 S Woodlawn | [hpuc.org](http://hpuc.org) 

Join us every first Friday of the month for Taizé

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Hyde Park Union Church  
5600 S. Woodlawn Ave.  
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