

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
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February 2017

February Church Calendar

Regular Weekly Events:

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

Friday, February 3

Taizé Worship, 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 5

Worship with Communion, Rev. Ashley Whitaker preaching, 10:00 a.m.

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

Second Hour: Rev. Wesley Sun on His Multi-vocational Journey, especially on The Intersection of Ministry, Teaching, and Writing/Publishing Comics

Sunday, February 12

Worship, Rev. Ashley Whitaker preaching, 10:00 a.m.

Chili-making, 11:30 a.m.

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

Second Hour: Letter-writing & Advocacy, 11:30 a.m.

Sunday, February 19

Worship, Rev. Ashley Whitaker preaching, 10:00 a.m.

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

Board Meeting, 12:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 26

Worship, Rev. Ashley Whitaker preaching, 10:00 a.m.

ABCMC Interim Executive Ministers
Rev. Carol McVetty and Rev. Doug Harris will be joining us for worship.

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

Pastor's Column Rev. Ashley Whitaker

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:43-45

It's impossible to ignore the fact that our nation is in the midst of a highly contentious, divisive, and painful political climate. As I write this column, it has not yet been two weeks since the inauguration. Regardless of your political beliefs, I believe we must stay engaged and not choose to "opt out" of a system that directly impacts our everyday lives. And yet, as one colleague described it during a fellowship dinner on Sunday evening, turning to social media or the mainstream news media for our information can often feel like trying to drink from a fire hose. Trying to stay well informed without being totally overwhelmed and overloaded can be challenging.

However, I believe that one antidote to the constant roller coaster effect of the news coming from our national, state, and local governments is prayer. I don't say that lightly; too often, people refer to prayer as a way to sidestep true commitment and engagement, when in reality, prayer quite often accomplishes the exact opposite. If we follow Jesus' exhortations regarding prayer, especially prayer for those we dislike or may even view as our enemies, we may indeed discover unexpected, life-giving, and life-changing spiritual fruit. Rev. Vicki Kemper, in a 2016 UCC Stillspeaking Daily Devotional, puts it this way:

"I've never found "because I said so" a very compelling reason to do something. But whenever I resisted my parents' instructions or talked back or asked why, "Because I said so" was the answer I got. "I'm the boss of you," in other words. Yes, I know: Sometimes it's the last card remaining in an exasperated parent's hand. And it's almost always for our own good.

But Jesus wasn't interested in being anyone's boss. (As far as we know, he never said, "Argh! Because I'm the Lord, that's why!") He came that we might have life, and his radical love showed us what that is. Still, he realized some of his teachings would strike us as impractical, impossible, or just plain ridiculous. He knew we would balk and ask why: "I'm supposed to love a mass murderer, Jesus? Really? I'm supposed to pray for a racist bully? You've got to be kidding. And that person in church who annoys me to no end? Come on."

But Jesus doesn't play the boss card—or even the savior card. Instead, he offers explanations, incentives, and his own life. "So that," he says. Love your enemies so that resentment and bitterness won't eat you alive. Love your enemies so that you might be delivered from the prison of us-them thinking. Love your enemies so that all the faults you project onto others might be healed within yourself. Love your enemies so that God might find a dwelling place in you.

Pray for those who persecute you so that you might come to realize how much they're like you: wounded, frightened, precious, hungry for love, and usually doing the best they can. Pray for them so that you can live more fully as a beloved child of God. Pray for them that we might be one, siblings all."

Lord, may it be so. Amen.

Blessings,

Pastor Ashley

It's All About Love

Rev. Erma Croom, Director of the Gilead Ministry

When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.
(Matthew 14:14 NRSV)

In the passage above Jesus responds to the suffering of others with compassion. Compassion always seemed to be the motivating force for his actions. I believe the compassion demonstrated by Jesus was derived from a heart filled with love. Jesus loved people and therefore dedicated his life to alleviating their suffering. As followers of Jesus we are called to love as he loved.

I sat with a patient this week who I'd visit with a month prior after he was referred to me because he had received a poor prognosis. At the time of our initial encounter, the patient was at a very low point. Naturally, he was saddened by the news he had received and struggling to make sense of it. What did this news mean for him? What did it mean for his family he loved so dearly? I was moved by his expression of total bewilderment. My hope was to bring some comfort in this critical moment and to provide a safe space where he could process his pain.

I encountered the patient a second time when I made my rounds on the Med/Surg unit of Jackson Park Hospital. When I saw him I noticed a peacefulness about him. He greeted me warmly as I entered the room. We talked about our first encounter and he expressed his gratitude for the emotional support and prayer I provided during that low point in his life. Although nothing had changed regarding his prognoses, it was evident that he had changed.

Somewhere between the time of our first encounter and this visit he had come to terms with his prognosis and made peace with the potential outcome. He spoke of his gratitude for a good life and for being surrounded by people he loved and who loved him. He spoke of having no regrets and of his determination to take each day as it comes. My heart filled with joy as he spoke and my eyes brimmed with tears. At the end of our conversation I expressed to him my gratitude for the opportunity to support him in his journey. As I think about this patient a song I learned years ago comes to mind. The words are:

*It only takes a spark to get a fire going,
And soon all those around will warm to its glowing,
That's how it is with God's love
Once you experience it.
You want to sing.
It's fresh like spring.
You want to pass it on.*

During the month of February there is a significant emphasis on love and loving. My prayer is that God's love will overflow in our hearts and continuously inspire us all to act compassionately in our homes, our communities, and our world.

Update from the Missions Committee

We are delighted to be able to share the news that Bethany Pickens has agreed to join the Missions Committee. We are also always pleased to have anyone interested in helping advance the church's work in the community join us or share ideas.

Our current work:

- We dedicated the Christmas Eve offering to the effort to resettle Syrian refugee families, in testament to the fact that the Holy Family themselves were refugees. We are trying to work more closely with the RefugeeOne project to house and support Syrian refugee families in Hyde Park, along with the Unitarian Church and Augustana Lutheran Church. Augustana has also suggested we might collaborate with them on other projects. RefugeeOne is now trying to raise enough funding and support to bring a second Syrian refugee family to Hyde Park, although the current immigration ban has left that effort in limbo for the moment. Our next letter writing will be to urge reconsidering that action. We can help by collecting clothing and furniture, volunteering for chores like driving the family members to appointments, volunteering to tutor kids, be an English tutor to the whole family, etc. Please contact Margaret O'Dell or another member of the committee if you want to learn more.

- The Missions Committee has taken over responsibility for managing chili making every second Sunday; Tim Smith has been very generous with his time, but we aim to establish rotating responsibility for taking the lead so that going forward we will have institutional memory and won't be so reliant on one or two individuals. Also, in January we were joined by a group of adults and youth from the Quaker House across the street; they loved doing it and plan to keep coming!! That's good news for us, as our ranks have been thin. We're also talking to Worship and Music about making sure Second Hour on that Sunday doesn't compete with chili making. And we want to go back to real ground beef, rather than pre-cooked meat.

- Wesley Sun is helping us develop some mission work at Cook County Jail. As a starting activity, he is willing to take children's books into Cook County Jail for mothers there to record reading for their young children; we would then deliver the book and the recording to the child in a format in which they can listen to it--probably a file that works on a cellphone. Our first step is to create a bibliography of suitable children's books and provide ten or so as a library for mothers at CCJ to choose from. And if anyone has any experience with recordings of this kind, we would welcome technical advice!

- Letter writing: We are working to return to a regular schedule of monthly letter writing. Two immediate issues involve the new federal policy shifts regarding the availability of health care for all and the desperate situation of refugee families, particularly from the Middle East. We are always grateful for suggestions.

Please share thoughts with us about needs or issues you would like to see the church exploring together.

Margaret O'Dell
Chair

HPUC Happenings



On Saturday, January 28, Tim Smith and Sabine and Wallace Charles organized a day trip out to Starved Rock State Park in Oglesby, IL for children and families.





Experience the Sacred
through Song and Silence in the Spirit of

Taizé

Friday, February 3rd, 7pm

Faith is key...



**Hyde Park
Union Church**

5600 S Woodlawn | hpuc.org 
Join us every first Friday of the month for Taizé



Monday: 12:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday: 7:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday: 12:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Thursday: by appointment only

Friday: 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Closed Weekends

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