



# Hopeful Connections

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## Wintertime Wonder

I have always been drawn to the language of Luke's gospel. In the second chapter, as Mary witnesses the mystery and wonder of Jesus's birth and the reactions to the baby in the manger, the author writes, "*Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.*" Beautiful. To be able to treasure our experiences – the happy and

the challenging experiences - and ponder and process these events, is a gift. Holding on to memories and thinking about them beyond the moment of their occurrence allows us to grow emotionally and spiritually and even offers us the chance to make decisions on future occasions with a clearer vision and objectives.

Writing a monthly newsletter cover article offers me an opportunity to reflect upon and ponder all that the new month will bring. I am able to reflect on all that has happened since last month and all that is in store for us in the weeks ahead. I have found this to be a challenging, but very fulfilling, monthly task. I always have a list of what I'm going to include in each newsletter cover and the different articles, but when I start writing, all the faces, feelings, emotions, and love contained within each item gives me pause. In some ways, writing this report becomes a type of prayer for me. As your pastor, I have been entrusted with so much. I am so blessed and so grateful for this. My third anniversary was January 9 and as we begin our 4th year together, I am so happy with all this congregation has accomplished together and I am excited to see what God will have us do in the year and years to come. 'Church' was never meant to be a static institution. This is a lesson repeated often in 2020 and will continue to be understood in 2021. God has created within us the ability to adapt and grow and we have seen what we can do and, I hope, this strengthens and encourages us for all that we will plan and achieve in the future.

We will begin our Lenten journey on Ash Wednesday, February 17. Although we are once again adapting our worship and programs to maintain our safety measures during Covid, we are able to explore, grow, and learn from this meaningful journey leading us to Easter Sunday. Our theme is *Pilgrimage to the Promise* and I pray that you will join me as we lean into this new spiritual season and explore God's promises and our role in those promises. The schedule of events and services is listed in this newsletter. You will also receive a Lent-At-Home Kit before Ash Wednesday. Your kit will contain items that will lead you through this holy season and connect you with all we are doing at church.

Your partner in the journey,  
Pastor Santana

**February Scripture**

Feb. 7	1 Corinthians 9:16-23 Mark 1:29-39
Feb. 14	2 Kings 2:1-12 Mark 9:2-9
Feb. 21	Genesis 9:8-17 Mark 1:9-15
Feb. 28	Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 Mark 8:31-38
Mar. 7	Exodus 20:1-17 John 2:13-22

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU.....**

03 Karen Ohrberg  
07 Abigail Beug  
16 Sally Herbst  
19 Carole Lysell  
20 Judy Collins  
20 Daniel Hawotte  
25 Laura Black



*Thank You*

*Thank you to Pastor Santina, Visitation Ministry, the Hawottes, and everyone who has sent prayers, cards and gifts during the holiday season. It helps to be remembered.*

Love, Marge Gottwalt



**Lent Calendar of Events**

**February 17: Ash Wednesday**

**\*1:00-2:00 P.M. OR 5:30-6:30 P.M:** Drive-Thru Holy Communion and Ash Square Distribution

**7:00 P.M:** Ash Wednesday Worship Service (Livestream)

\*Due to Covid restrictions, we will distribute ashes a little differently this year. Anyone who wishes to receive them will receive a prayer square with a cross painted on it in lieu of ashes on the forehead or hand. These will be distributed during the drive-thru events.

**February 24, March 3, 10, 17, 24 at 7:00 P.M: Sacred Journeys Film and Discussion**

Each week we will learn about a different spiritual pilgrimage from a variety of sacred traditions. We will (hopefully) join together to do this via Zoom. Link will be available beginning February 21.

**Weekly:** Beginning the week of February 21<sup>st</sup>, there will be a different prayer station and/or spiritual practice available for you to use. They will be set up outside the building so that you can participate in a way that you are most comfortable.

### **Covid Task Force Update**

We are relieved that Rock Island County is beginning to show some improvement in our Covid Positivity Rate and Hospitalization Rate. The return to in-person learning in our schools, relaxing the safety mitigations, and vaccinations being administered in our area are all encouraging signs that better days are coming. Out of an abundance of caution and with our call to faithfully care for our community, Hope UCC's Church Council has decided to continue with our policy of only virtual gatherings for worship, meetings, and programs through the end of March. This decision was made based on the very small percentage of vaccinations administered in Rock Island County at this time as well as the risk from new and more easily transmitted variations of this virus. We are hopeful to be able to safely regather in person after March, but please remember that all services, meetings, programs, and other events are available using technology which is the safest way for our congregation to gather. We will continue our policy welcoming in person anyone without the ability to join electronically as they feel safe doing so. Anyone in our building and sanctuary must be correctly masked and maintain social distance guidelines. We thank you for your patience and for always complying with our Covid safety guidelines. We will remain faithful in doing so as this is an act of caring and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. If you have any questions or concerns about Hope UCC's Covid plans, please contact the church office, any member of the Covid Task Force, or our Council President, Grady Birdsell. Thank you again for your cooperation and support during this challenging year.

### **Pastor Emeritus Parker Lewis**

Please join us in virtually celebrating and thanking Parker for his loving pastoral ministry at Hope UCC during our livestream worship on February 14!

Parker Lewis served as pastor of Hope UCC for almost 19 years. Additionally he has held his ordination in the United Church of Christ for 26 years. He accomplished much in his tenure at Hope UCC, steering it through many transitions and mission focuses. He brought Hope UCC into partnership with Quad Cities Interfaith and Churches United QC. Parker was (and still is) active in the Illinois Conference UCC and the Western Association of the Illinois Conference. Now, as a member of the congregation, he and Kathy share their gifts in many ways, continuing to enrich our faith community and our Quad Cities Community with their involvement and support here at church in the bell choir, helping with Sunday school, volunteering with One Human Family and the food pantry at Church of Peace UCC.

The designation of Pastor Emeritus is honorary and does not carry any work or ministry obligations or expectations. It is a way for us to say thank you to Parker for all he has done for this congregation and the many lives he has touched throughout his tenure here. Hope UCC's Church Council voted to affirm this designation for Parker at our December meeting.



### **From Suzanne Cutler**

The day after Ray's funeral, Suzanne went out to visit his graveside. She was there as the sun rose and captured this beautiful image. It captures the light so beautifully which is a wonderful reminder of Ray's smile and joy lighting up a room.



### **Youth Group News for Winter Spring: February - April**

Youth Group meets from 3:00-4:30 Sunday afternoons, unless otherwise noted for special events. In order to faithfully and safely gather, all activities require properly worn masks and social distancing guidelines are enforced. Please stay home if you do not feel well or think you have/have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for Corona Virus. Thank you for complying with the safety guidelines – it is an act of caring and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves.



February 14: Valentine's Day – How Does Love Transform Us?  
Mark 9:2-9

February 17: Ash Wednesday

Please come through for drive through Holy Communion and to receive your ash square – either 1:00-2:00 or 5:30-6:30. Join the livestream service at 7:00.

February 21: 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent - God's Promises and Our Journeys

Genesis 9:8-17

Spiritual Practice: Labyrinth

February 28: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent - God's Promises and Our Journeys

Genesis 17:1-16: What's in a Name? Activity using our names and celebrating our identity as children of God

Spiritual Practice: Journaling

March 7: No Youth Group

March 14: 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent - God's Promises and Our Journeys

Ephesians 2:1-10: Our covenant to serve and share is explored. We will make bird feeders for McCandless Park and discuss a summer service project.

Spiritual Practice: Nature Walk (weather permitting) & prayer journal reflection

March 21: 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent- God's Promises and Our Journeys

John 12:20-33: No matter where we wander, God remains with us.

Spiritual Practice: Pretzel making & prayer journal reflection

March 28: Palm Sunday

Field Trip to McCandless Park to put up bird feeders (weather permitting) and park clean up.

Prayer journal reflection at the park

April 1: Maundy Thursday

Please plan to attend the service (virtual service via livestream)

April 2: Good Friday

Reserve a time to come in and walk the labyrinth in Fellowship Hall.

April 4: Easter Sunday No Youth Group

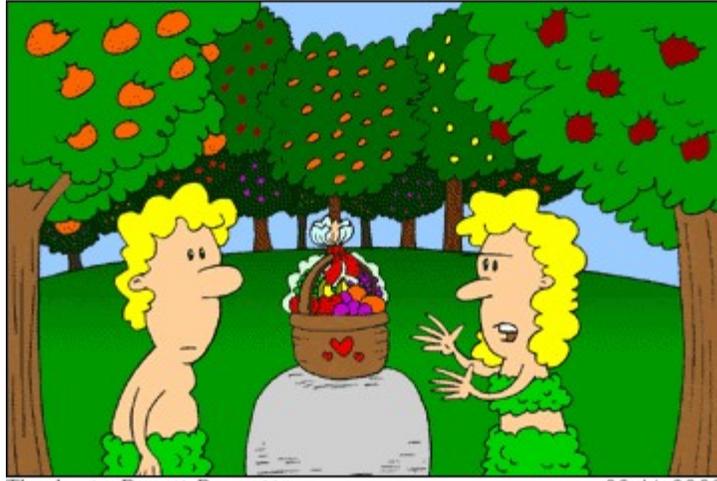
April 11: When We Doubt

John 20:19-31

Praying in color

April 18: No Youth Group

April 25: Youth Group will meet following worship at 11:30 a.m. for an off campus adventure (Depending on Covid restrictions, closures, etc – but we will pray and hope for the BEST!!)



Thanks to Benoit Paquette

02-14-2002

REALLY ADAM ... A VALENTINE'S DAY  
FRUIT BASKET ... IN THE GARDEN OF  
EDEN?!?