

TIDINGS

The Monthly Newsletter of Forks United Church of Christ
No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey...

you are welcome here!

What We've Been Up To...



Advent



Youth Group
Snack Sales
for
Easton
Municipal
Band

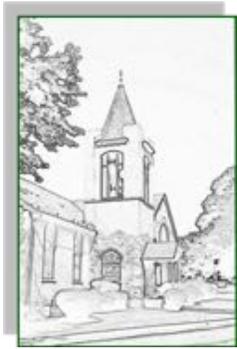


Polar Express production



Christmas Eve





Recently, we began a new small group at the church, studying and discussing the book, “Christianity and World Religions”, written by Methodist pastor, Adam Hamilton. I was prompted to suggest this book because our next Conference Meeting in April is built around the theme of “Growing Together”, and we will be inviting, and worshipping with, and talking with several interfaith partners from the Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Bahai, and Hindu faiths. In the first chapter of Hamilton’s book, the author poses some questions that might be challenging for devout Christians, like, “Why are there so many religions? What is God’s relationship to all of these religions? What is the eternal fate for those practicing religions other than Christianity?”

That last question reminds me of an old “Simpsons” episode that I remember watching- Bart asks his elementary school teacher if his pets will make it to Heaven one day. “No, sorry,” she replies. “How about a caveman or a Woolly Mammoth?” “No!” “How about a robot with a human brain?” “No!!!” Finally, after a few more questions, the teacher grows exasperated with Bart and sends him down to the principal’s office. I know that I grew up in a religious environment (the Roman Catholic church) that seemed very exclusive to me- we didn’t even consider Protestants like those in the U.C.C. to be real Christians! I have encountered many, many Christians, throughout the course of my lifetime, who have expressed similar sentiments to me, “If you don’t believe in God exactly the way that I do, you are not going to be saved.”

I remember watching the Netflix movie, “Come Sunday”, about Bishop Carlton Pearson, who was mentored by Oral Roberts, and ordained in the Pentecostal Church. Pearson garnered large crowds, on television and in person, and became one of the most popular and influential preachers in the country. In the 1990’s, he changed theological course after witnessing the genocide in Rwanda, believing that there was no way a loving God would send little African children who were being killed to eternal Hell, simply because they had never known Jesus. Instead, he began preaching what he called, “A Gospel of Inclusion”. He was declared a heretic by his denomination and abandoned by his colleagues and mentors.

Most Christians preaching “A Gospel of Exclusion” that I have encountered, have pointed to particular Scripture passages, like the one where Jesus says to enter by the narrow gate, and says, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” Yet, as theologian, David Bentley Hart points out, in a recent issue of *Christian Century* magazine, “The whole idea of Hell is remarkably elusive in the New Testament.” The whole idea is entirely absent from Paul’s letters. Even Matthew 25, which some Christians point to as the strongest evidence of eternal punishment, is a passage in which, according to Hart, “the wording leaves room for considerable doubt regarding its true significance.”

“On the other hand”, Hart goes on to say, “there are a remarkable number of passages in the New Testament, several of them from Paul’s writings, that appear instead to promise a final salvation of all persons and all things, and in the most unqualified terms.” Hart quotes many Scripture passages (Romans 5:18-19, 1 Corinthians 15:22, 1 Timothy 2:3-6, Hebrews 2:9, John 4:42, and many others) that support this inclusive view, and says that it is one of the great mysteries of Christian history that most Christians seem to disregard these passages.

In the spirit of welcome and inclusivity that we are promoting here at Forks United Church of Christ, perhaps you will be curious enough to read Adam Hamilton’s book, or to come to the Conference Meeting from April 24-25 (it’s at the Chateau at Camelback in the Poconos!). You can certainly borrow the *Christian Century* article from me, and we are planning future small groups to discuss in greater depth the connection between Judaism and Christianity.

In a spirit of welcome and inclusivity, let us remember that God loves all people.

Blessings,
Pastor Bob

Evangelism and Outreach

Thank you for continuing to remember the urgent needs which our food banks seek to address. Canned goods and other non-perishables are always in demand. Please bring **anything** you think would be appreciated. Consider donating spices. Spices allow cooks to add flavor to food without additional salt. Think about buying cumin, cinnamon, coriander, onion powder, garlic powder, cloves, oregano, basil, parsley, cayenne pepper, rosemary, thyme, bay leaves, or any other spices you commonly cook with.

Please keep your cans coming and place them in the pantry shelf. February's food of the month is breakfast items.

Year In Review

We are still collecting dollar bills that have an A, K, or F on them. This stands for **Keep Forks Alive**. One way to do that is to continue our current missions and expand on others.

Our shoe box ministry was a success again this year. Thank you to everyone who participated.

We prepared and delivered well over 25 Thanksgiving baskets this year. We had enough extra to take to food banks. We are blessed to be able to serve others.

Thank you to those who helped at the last soup kitchen. Sharon Merluzzi will have more information about our 2020 schedule for volunteers.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for your continued support of our very needy food banks. Their shelves are almost always empty, even in this new year. Please put non-perishable items in the corner cupboard in the narthex.

We are still collecting used eye glasses.

Our newest outreach project of collecting any size plastic bottle caps to benefit *The Boys and Girls Club of Easton*, was such a success that we are putting it on hold for the time being.

There are "Thinking of you" cards in the Social Hall for anyone to take and send to people who would like to be remembered.

Check out the book racks of informative and helpful booklets.

As always, we want to hear from you with any suggestions for more outreach.

Christian Education

Christmas Pageant

Thank you to everyone involved in this year's production of The Polar Express. Special thanks to Pastor Bob, Anthony Newett, and the cast. It was wonderful!

Parish Life

Our annual dance this year will be at Jacobs' Farm on Saturday, February 8th from 7-10PM. It is a Valentine's Day dance and we ask that you bring an appetizer or dessert to share. The event is BYOB.

Stewardship and Finance

You can always give your special offerings (envelopes) online at:

<https://forksucc.breezechms.com/give/online>

The special offerings this month are as follows:

2/2 - maintenance and repair fund

2/9 - heat special offering

Please note those words in the "comment" box while completing your online gift to allow your gift to be moved into the correct account.

Barrels, again!

Beginning in September we started paying for our Fuel Oil for the heating season. We have entered into a contract with Fogels Fuel again at a price of \$2.459. Our monthly payments are \$860 a month. Again this year we are hoping you help us by buying "Barrels of Oil" for \$50 a barrel. We need 173 barrels to complete our goal. You will find "Barrels of Oil" Envelopes in the pews and vestibules beginning in September. Together we can ensure we can worship in a warm sanctuary all throughout the cold winter.

Offering Envelopes

Do you use your offering envelopes? If not, please contact Cheryl in the church office (610-759-5676) to cancel your order. These envelopes are purchased and if you are giving electronically, we'd rather not waste the paper and money. Thank you!

Creative Worship

We have some exciting Worship services coming up. Please mark your calendar and join us:

February 2nd - Super Soul Sunday

February 9th - Widen our Welcome/Bring a Friend Sunday

February 16th - Lovefeast Service

February 23rd - Transfiguration Sunday

Lovefeast

In February we will prepare for our Moravian Lovefeast held on Sunday, February 16th during 10AM worship. A Lovefeast service is a service dedicated to Christian love and is most famously practiced by the Moravians. It is also practiced by groups descending from the Schwarzenau Brethren. The term was used by the Primitive Methodists. A Lovefeast seeks to strengthen the bonds and the spirit of harmony, goodwill, and congeniality, as well as to forgive past disputes and instead love one another.

Good Reads

Welcome to our section sharing what we're reading now. Please send your recommendations to wmhornbake@yahoo.com to be featured next month.

I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness by Austin Channing Brown

"Austin Channing Brown's first encounter with a racialized America came at age 7, when she discovered her parents named her Austin to deceive future employers into thinking she was a white man. Growing up in majority-white schools, organizations, and churches, Austin writes, "I had to learn what it means to love blackness," a journey that led to a lifetime spent navigating America's racial divide as a writer, speaker and expert who helps organizations practice genuine inclusion. In a time when nearly all institutions (schools, churches, universities, businesses) claim to value "diversity" in their mission statements, I'm Still Here is a powerful account of how and why our actions so often fall short of our words. Austin writes in breathtaking detail about her journey to self-worth and the pitfalls that kill our attempts at racial justice, in stories that bear witness to the complexity of America's social fabric--from Black Cleveland neighborhoods to private schools in the middle-class suburbs, from prison walls to the boardrooms at majority-white organizations.

For readers who have engaged with America's legacy on race through the writing of Ta-Nehisi Coates and Michael Eric Dyson, I'm Still Here is an illuminating look at how white, middle-class, Evangelicalism has participated in an era of rising racial hostility, inviting the reader to confront apathy, recognize God's ongoing work in the world, and discover how blackness--if we let it--can save us all."

Synopsis courtesy of Amazon.com

Recommended by Alice Hornbake

Emergency Prayer Chain

An outreach for prayer when you or someone you know and love has an emergency, unexpected surgery, accident, etc. The place to call is:

- Church Office - (610) 759-5676
- Lois Steward - (610) 759-3519
- Rita Blossy - (484) 373-0614

One of us will start the chain. Anyone who would like to join our Emergency Prayer Chain, please call Lois Steward or Rita Blossy at the numbers listed above.

Call the Church Office When...

- A member of your family is admitted to the hospital so the proper people are notified.
- Your home phone, email address, or mailing address has changed.
- An addition to your family has occurred.
- You want your birthday and/or anniversary added to our newsletter list.
- You feel the church can help you in any way.

Is Church Canceled Today?

To find out this winter, or anytime, if Forks UCC services are canceled due to inclement weather, the Consistory has implemented procedures to notify the congregation.

The Forks UCC Congregation can find out if church is canceled the following ways:

- The cancellation notice will be sent out to members on the mass e-mail list
- The cancellation notice will be posted on WFMZ.com & in extreme weather conditions on WFMZ TV

Please take advantage of these services to find out if church services are ever canceled.

Thank You

I want to thank Pastor Bob for his numerous visits to be with us in the hospital and after Dale's death. Those visits meant a lot. I also want to express my gratitude for all of the prayers, cards, and caring from so many friends and family. And last, but certainly not least, to everyone involved in any way with the preparation and serving of the meal after the funeral. No words can explain how meaningful that was. Our community of love knows no bounds.

Kim Starner and family

Altar Flowers

If you would like to sponsor altar flowers, select your Sunday and affix your name and intention (“In honor of” or “In memory of” or “To the Glory of God”). The arrangements are \$30. Another way of showing your love is to opt out of having flowers, rather choosing to have a single candle on the altar and your flower money will be donated to a charity of your choice. This is a powerful way to honor the day but make a difference in our world. Please make checks payable to “Forks UCC” with the notation “Altar Flowers”. Simply drop your payment in the offering plate. Thank you.

Altar Flower Sponsors for February

February 2 - Will, Alice, and Eleanore Hornbake

February 9 - AVAILABLE

February 16 - AVAILABLE

February 23 - Mike and Cathy Tirrell

Those Serving

Ushers/Coin Collectors

February 2 - Steve Dewalt

February 9 - Ron Mumaw

February 16 - Sam Kemmerer

February 23 - Bob Zabe

Greeters/Offering Collectors

February 2 - Lori Rowlands & Mike Bruengsen/Jean Cooper & Kerrie Schneebeli

February 9 - Rita Blossey & Sharon Merluzzi/Carla Solt & Maggie Obulaney

February 16 - Debbie Hartzell & Cindy Aicher/Brenda DeLong & Bobbi Ricci

February 23 - Rocky Starner & Kim Starner/Alice Bartholomew & Amy Knitter

Celebrate with our Church Family

Happy February Birthdays

01 Cathy Tirrell	16 Kim Edelheiser
03 Vilma Milham	16 David Warner
05 Cayden Shook	19 Pauline Frace*
05 Samantha Shook	21 Gloria Burkos
05 Gabrielle Francis	21 Shelby McCollian
08 Bob Zabe	22 Will Hornbake
08 Diane Dewalt	23 Andrew Margelot
09 Nick Hendricks	23 Kim Starner
10 Shannon McCollian	23 Chris Mumaw
11 Tyler Mitch	25 Patti Starner
13 Jennifer Wood	26 Ron Mumaw
15 Roger Keat	26 Violet Ortiz
15 Lily Ringhoff	26 Abigail Audenried
15 Jakob Herres	26 Devon Clifton
15 Allison Silfies	27 Derek Hammerstone
15 Kelsey Beers	28 Judy Kinsey
16 Dale Wilson	



*Best wishes to Pauline Frace who celebrates her 90th birthday!

If your name does not appear in the birthday or anniversary section and you would like it listed, please contact the church office.

February Anniversaries

Will & Kerrie Schneebeli 2/23/2002

Confirmands

Tyler Grogg, Jacob Hackman

Visitation List

Please see the Church Directory or contact the Church office or a member of the visitation team for addresses. Fred Bolling, Corinne Eberts, Bob Egolf, Dorthy Kortz, Florence Saylor, Betty Stocker, Irene Tenges, Bonnie Warren

Missing Church this Week?

No fear! You can watch from your computer. If you are on Facebook, go to our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/forkschurch/>) around 10AM and tune in LIVE. If you are not on Facebook, you can still go to our Facebook page AFTER the service and watch. Never miss a week!



February 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 4th Sunday after Epiphany Communion <i>Pick up of Relay for Life hoagies after Worship</i> Super Soul Sunday	3	4	5 1-3PM Small Group 6PM Handbell Choir 7PM Sacred Choir	6	7	8 6:30-9:30PM Parish Life Valentine's Day Dance
9 5th Sunday after Epiphany Widen our Welcome Sunday	10 7PM Stewardship and Finance	11 6PM Spiritual Council 7PM Consistory	12 1-3PM Small Group 6PM Handbell Choir 7PM Sacred Choir	13	14	15
16 6th Sunday after Epiphany Lovefeast during 10AM Worship	17	18 7PM Evangelism & Outreach	19 1-3PM Small Group 6PM Handbell Choir 7PM Sacred Choir	20	21	22
23 7th Sunday after Epiphany Transfiguration Sunday Congregational Meeting after Worship	24 7PM Christian Ed.	25	26 Ash Wednesday 1-3PM Small Group 7PM Sacred Choir	27	28	29

Sundays
 8AM - Meditative Worship
 10AM - Worship



February 2020

