

FEBRUARY 2021

THE VOICE

Official Newsletter of Friedens
United Church of Christ

Extravagant Welcome!

Talk about Hospitality!!!

When we opened back up for worship I was so proud of our members. At least 12 years ago we had an active talk about hospitality and before we opened our doors again I asked our long-time members to sit in the fellowship hall and gathering area for worship and let our newest members and guests experience worship in the sanctuary.

We can host 25 in the sanctuary and 25 in the fellowship hall with video and 10 in the gathering area around the fireplace and TV. We hope you will all worship with us again as we continue to be the church in unprecedented times! Allowing our newest worship attenders to worship in the sanctuary allows them the experience most of us have experienced for years! This reminds us all that we are indeed:

PEOPLE OF
extravagant
WELCOME

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Extravagant Welcome:
We did it!

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Worship Series Continues thru Feb 14th

We began a new worship series on January 17th that we pray will bring a “breather” and a sense of assurance to us all as we continue to venture into the new year together.

Life is a series of exclamations from “O No!” to “Help!” to “Oh Yeah!” We can swing between disappointment, helplessness, and gratitude on a daily basis. The Book of Psalms knows all about this. Written over a span of time from exile and isolation to the rebuilding of the community, the poetry of the Psalms will accompany us in this series, reminding us that through it all, we can trust that God is, indeed, holding our lives.

This worship allows us to simplify and slow down for a time. We will lean on prayer, reflection and sharing with one another.

We do not live in a land ruled by Kings, as the first hearers of the Psalms did. Nevertheless, the petitions of the psalmist for justice, deliverance, defense of the poor and oppressed, and peace for all peoples is an undergirding theme of our faith. We are reminded that a just society is one that proclaims “these lives are precious” and worthy of protection. God, indeed, is holding our lives. Let this continue to be our “epiphany” in this new year.

“God is Holding Your Life”

SERIES ENDS
FEBRUARY 14TH



God is Holding Your Life

A Journey of Assurance for the New Year

Friedens
P • E • A • C • E

*Join us online for worship on
Sunday mornings at 10am*

[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/IRVINGTONUCC](https://www.facebook.com/IRVINGTONUCC)

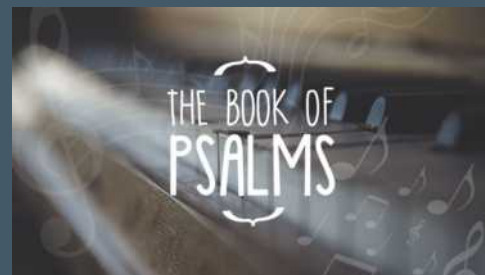
Series Snapshot

Sunday, January 31st: "Where Can I Go?"; Psalm 139:1-18



This week's Psalm text brings home this message: we are in an intimate relationship with God. There is nowhere we go that God is not present—no state of our being that results in our being abandoned. God has knit us together, has woven us, knowing us from before our beginning. God, indeed, is holding our lives.

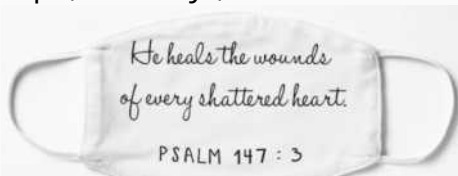
This week we will also be joined by world renowned Psalms scholar, Rev. Dr. Clint McCann who was Pastor Stacy and Pastor Tarrah's Psalms professor at Eden Seminary!



"The original music for the church."

Sunday, February 7th: "We Wait, We Hope, We Stay"; Psalm 147: 1-11

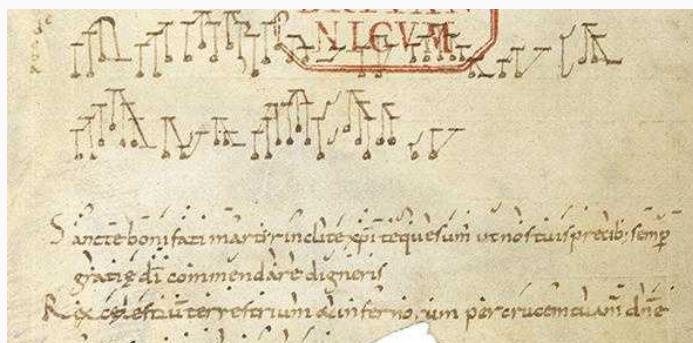
Today's Psalm comes late in the Book and offers a glimpse of a time when the exiled outcasts are gathering back together and seeing their world built back up. We too, yearn for a re-gathering and a day when we sing our praises and play our instruments with abandon together again. We wait, we hope, we stay firm in our faith, knowing as our ancient ancestors did, that God is indeed holding our lives.



This week we will be joined (virtually) by composer-theologian-psalmist, Richard Bruxvoort Colligan whose music helps us enter into the heart of each Psalm. Richard wrote several new compositions for this series—songs that invite us into the essence of each reading.



Photo to right: One of the earliest, preserved examples of a Psalter work; 16th c.





Lenten Worship Series: Listen...

Listen: Hearing that Still Small Voice and Finding Your Own



“Look, I’ll pour out my spirit on you. I’ll reveal my words to you.” - Wisdom (from Proverbs)

Have you ever misplaced your phone—which is on vibrate of course—and then asked someone to call it? We get really still and really quiet. Our ears perk up in all directions in order to be ready to hear that little buzz. It is a quieting down and high alert all at the same time. This Lent we will quiet things down and heighten our attention to the “still, small voice” of God and our own True Self. Listening through prayer as well as meditation on holy texts is an ancient Lenten practice. Come and rest, come and listen.



Lenten Series

listen...

Hearing that Still Small Voice and Finding Your Own



Join us for worship in-person or online!
Sunday mornings at 10am.
www.facebook.com/irvingtonucc

Lent: The 40 days before Easter

Lenten Series Snapshot

Ash Wednesday: February 17th; Finding Your Life - Listening Deeply



"...repent and believe in the Good News."
- Luke 1: 9-15

As we prepare for our 40-day journey of Lent, we "turn around" (the root meaning of the word "repent") from the distractions of daily noise and focus our attention on listening in a deeper way.

Writer Parker Palmer suggests we must listen "to what our life is telling us"—in other words, to listen to the deep wisdom God gave to us as a birthright, connecting to God's purpose once again.

1st Sunday of Lent: February 21st; Finding Your Own Cave - Listening Spaces

"...he went into a cave and spent the night... The Lord said, "Go out and stand at the mountain before the Lord. The Lord is passing by." A very strong wind tore through the mountains and broke apart the stones before the Lord. But the Lord wasn't in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake. But the Lord wasn't in the earthquake. After the earthquake, there was a fire. But the Lord wasn't in the fire. After the fire, there was a sound. Thin. Quiet..."

- 1 Kings 19: 11-12



Sometimes we just need to get away in order to hear from that "still small voice" within. This quiet voice is an attribute of the Holy Living God, as Elijah found out in a cave where he expected to experience God in big wind and earthquake and fire. What is your "cave" equivalent? What place (a park, a path, a rocking chair, a shoreline) and practice (walking, journaling, reading, making art) helps you get quiet enough for long enough so you can hear past the chaos and into the depths of your life?

listen

Repenting is
the act of
"turning around
and turning
towards God!"



Lenten Series Snapshot

2nd Sunday of Lent: February 28th; Finding Your Breath; Listening to our Bodies

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words."

- Romans 8: 26-30; 38-39

Our sacred texts connect the breath of God with our own aliveness—God blew breath into us at creation and we continue to breathe all of creation in and out of our bodies constantly. The early church also believed that breath and Spirit were one in the same. How might the meditative practice of paying attention to our breath be, in and of itself, a prayer of connection to God? When we embrace our bodies as the holy vessel of God, we become even more our True Selves—which has been there all along.



Repenting is
the act of
"turning around"

3rd Sunday of Lent: March 7th; Finding a Word - Listening to the Texts



"Wisdom shouts in the street; in the public square she raises her voice. Above the noisy crowd, she calls out. At the entrances of the city gates, she has her say: "How long will you clueless people love your naïveté, mockers hold their mocking

dear, and fools hate knowledge? You should respond when I correct you. Look, I'll pour out my spirit on you. I'll reveal my words to you."

- Proverbs 1: 20-23

The Wisdom tradition within Christianity invites us to love knowledge, especially the self-knowledge that comes from examining ourselves in relationship to the liberating Word of God. Lectio divina ("divine reading") is an ancient tradition of mixing the reading of scripture with prayer and meditation. Rather than an analytical approach to the words of scripture, it is a way for the words to simply be present and live in us. What will we hear when we let go of what it all is "supposed to" mean and simply let it reside within us?

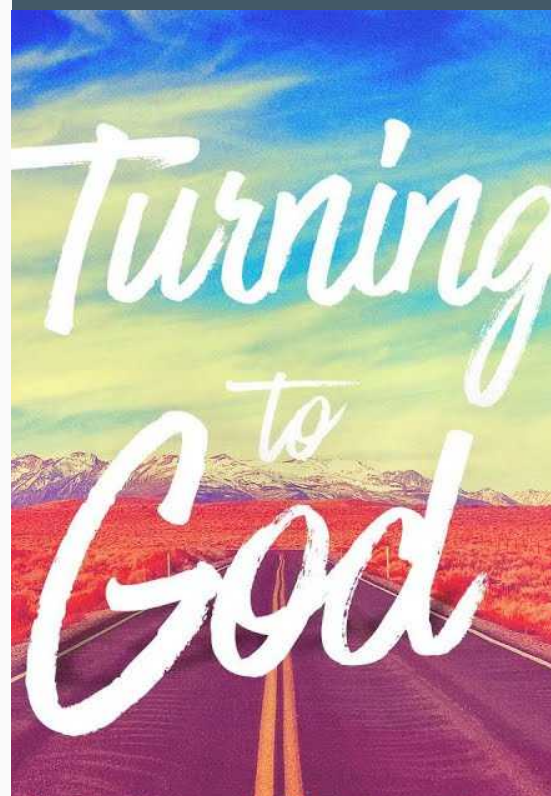
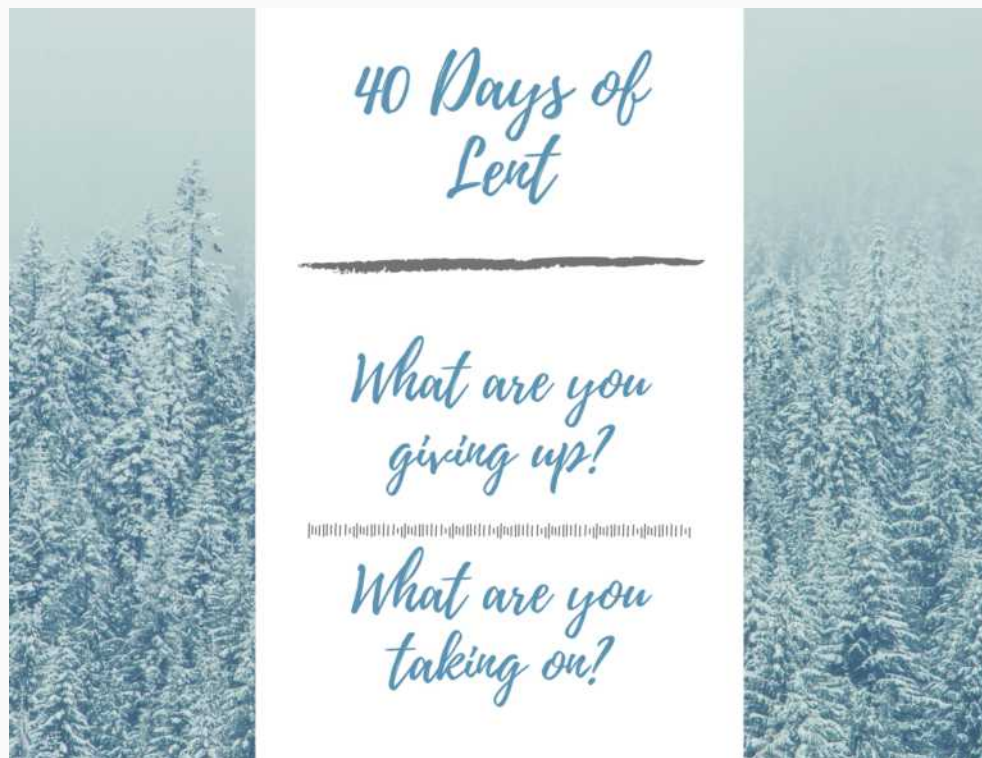




Lenten Traditions

Often people want to give up some sort of food for Lent. Lent is not a short term diet plan. Traditionally this is a time of fasting and we are encouraging you to give up (fast from) or take on something that will build your spiritual life. Perhaps give up cursing or harsh words.

Maybe you will take on a new physical activity to practice better self-care. Maybe you will carve out time to read the Psalms every day during Lent or join our book study on Wednesday evenings. Whatever you chose we pray that it will bring you closer in your relationship with God.

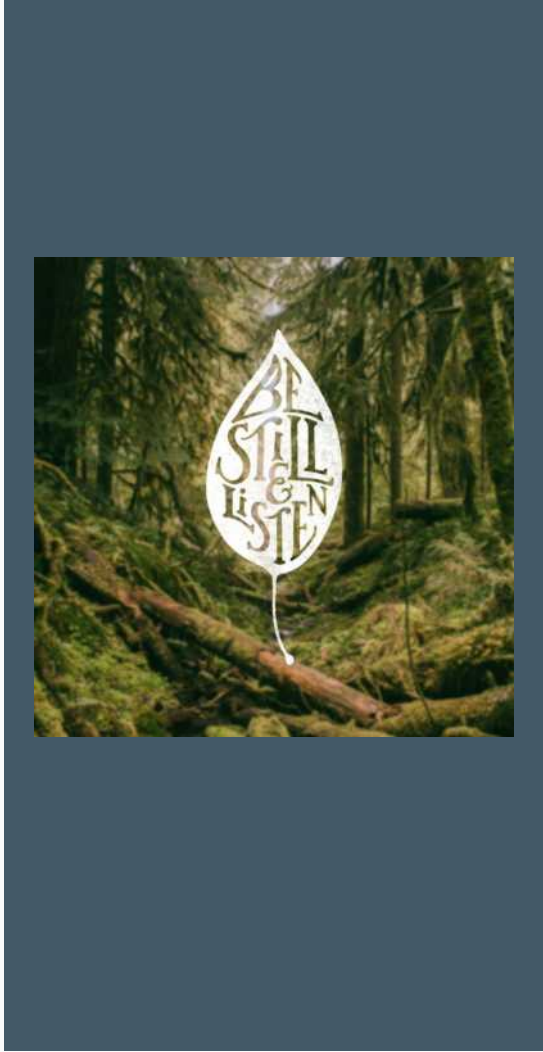
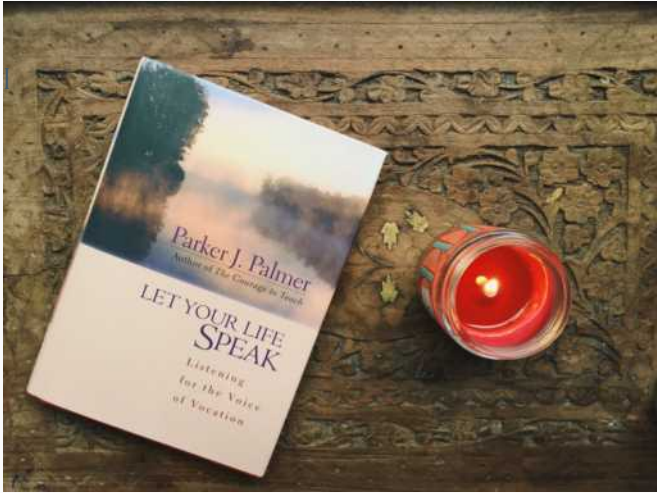




Lenten Series 2021

This Lent we will be working on our "Listening Skills" together as we journey through this next season of the church which moves us into Easter. Lent begins on Wednesday, February 17th with Ash Wednesday worship.

During Lent, there will be opportunities for Small Group studies; one of which will include the book "Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation" by Parker Palmer. This book was life changing for Pastor Stacy and prayerfully will be for yours as well! Stay tuned for more information on Lent as we draw closer!



Lenten Series

listen...
Hearing that Still Small Voice and Finding Your Own

Join us for worship in-person or online!
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Friedens
P • E • A • C • E



Confirmation Retreat

Calling all Confirmands! Calling all Confirmands!

You are needed and wanted for a Confirmation Retreat at the church on Monday, February 15th from 10am-4pm! We are going to be creating packages for to deliver to our church family in preparation for Ash Wednesday and the Lenten season. We will also have lunch, play some games and spend time together.

We will need parent volunteers to help us deliver the packages to our church family. Don't forget your masks.




GAMES

FOOD

Fun

**FAMILY FRIENDS
YOU**



Let's join the Presbytery of Southeastern IL in eliminating medical debt in Southern IL!

RIP MEDICAL DEBT

The Problem

Right now, about \$1.7 million dollars of medical debt is owed by people living below or near the poverty level in the 44 counties of our presbytery. This debt doesn't come from bad decisions—it comes from seeking life-saving medical care. With medical debt on their credit report, our neighbors can't get a job, rent a home, get a loan, or buy a car. Medical debt locks our neighbors into poverty.

A Remedy

RIP Medical Debt (ripmedicaldebt.org/) is one of several organizations started by individuals from the debt-collection field who want to forgive debt instead of collecting it. They pool money from donors to buy medical debt in large portfolios. They then contact those families and forgive their debt with no tax consequences for the donors or recipients. \$17,000 leveraged through RIP Medical Debt can wipe out much of southeastern Illinois' \$1.7 million dollars of medical debt.

Our Response

Our presbytery has decided to demonstrate Christ's love to our neighbors in a concrete way. By our May 13th presbytery meeting, we are attempting to raise \$17,000 and partner with RIP Medical Debt to wipe out most of the medical debt in southeastern Illinois. That's only about \$3.40 per member of our presbytery. By pooling our resources, we can make a huge impact on those in need in our communities and often in our own congregations.

Join Us

You can contribute to this campaign online at the presbytery's website (pseillinois.org) by clicking the "Give Now" button in the top-right corner or by mailing a check to:

Rev. Wade Meranda, PSEI Treasurer
PO Box 278
Hoopeston, IL 60942

ABOUT MEDICAL DEBT

66%

of all US bankruptcies are tied to
medical debt.

25%

of all US credit card debt is medical
debt.

1 in 2 Americans

don't go to the doctor when they're
sick because of the high costs.

79,000,000 Americans

have to choose between paying their
medical bills and basic needs like food
and shelter every day.

2,030,686 Families

have had their debt forgiven through
donations to RIP Medical Debt.



We are hosting the Food Pantry on Sunday, February 21st.

Contact Sonya Germann if you are interested in helping this month!



We have some volunteer opportunities that have been made available with the "Sign-up Genius" program. Links have been posted on Facebook and have been emailed out to our distribution lists.



Backpack Program

Our children need your help! We have some amazing children in our community of Irvington that are "Food Insecure" on weekends when they are in their homes and away from school provided meals. Will you prayerfully consider volunteering for the Irvington Grade School Backpack Program? All of the food and supplies needed will be purchased (thank you Lisa and Stephanie!) and available in the church kitchen. We simply need the hands to pack the bags in preparation for the coming weekends. After the bags are filled, tie them shut and place them in the bin (trashcan). Blaine will take care of the rest. Just give him a call and let him know that they are ready to go:) We recommend that you sign-up for 1 month as you are able. The bags for the upcoming weekend need to be ready no later than Tuesday of each week. You are welcome to come anytime before the Tuesday of each week to pack. Thank you in advance for your help!



<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050a4daba72fa46-backpack>

Backpack Program



We are in need of some volunteers to help organize our creative worship spaces and Sunday School classrooms! Many hands make light work and we need your hands to get these spaces in order:)Thank you in advance for your help!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050a4daba72fa46-organization>

The top half of the page features a decorative background. On the right side, three red hearts are suspended by thin red strings. The background is a soft-focus bokeh of warm, yellow and pinkish light spots. On the left side, there is a dark blue rectangular box containing text.

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