

JANUARY 2021

THE VOICE

Official Newsletter of Friedens
United Church of Christ



A Blessing for the New Year!

God of Love,

You are with us in every transition and change. As we enter into this new year with excitement and even some anxiety, we recall your deep compassion, presence, and abounding love. We thank you for the gifts, talents and skills with which you have blessed us. We are mindful of the experiences that have brought us to this moment and we thank you for journeying with us through each one of them. We thank you for the opportunities to reach out to each other in love, even when we don't see eye to eye. Be with us as we move forward, rejoicing with you and supporting one another. We ask this in your Holy Name. Amen.

~ Your Beloved Children

MAY YOU SHINE
THE LIGHT OF
CHRIST IN THE
NEW YEAR!

This issue:

A Blessing for the New Year

PAGE 01

God is Holding Your Life

PAGE 02

Prayer Bowls at Home

PAGE 03

New Terms for the Series

PAGE 04

Series Snapshot

PAGE 05 & 06

Advent Weekly

PAGE 05 & 06

Lenten Preview

PAGE 08

Meet Pastor Tarrah

PAGE 08

January Calendar

SEPARATE DOCUMENT



New Worship Series Jan 17th - Feb 14th

We begin a new worship series on January 17th that we pray will bring a “breather” and a sense of assurance to us all as we 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 will allow 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 be our “epiphany” in this new year.

"God is Holding Your Life"

SERIES BEGINS
JANUARY 17TH

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)



Create your Prayer Bowl

Pastor Stacy and Pastor Tarrah invite YOU to take up an at-home prayer practice with a designated prayer bowl to use throughout the season as we venture into this new worship series. This doesn't need to be anything fancy or a bowl that specifically says, "prayer bowl". It can simply be a specially chosen bowl you already own and set it aside as a designated vessel.

When we "hold one another in prayer," or "hold space" for loved ones who are experiencing difficult emotions and challenging experiences, we are co-creating a holy space with room for grace and acceptance of what is. An image of cupped hands placed at the bottom of the prayer bowl can serve as a reminder that God holds this space for us. Feel free to use the drawing on the bottom of this page as a cut-out for this purpose.

"When we "hold one another in prayer...we are co-creating a holy space with room for grace and acceptance of what is."





Create your own Collect

During this series, we will be using a form of prayer during worship called a "Collect" (call-ect). Each week a new prayer will be shared in this ancient form.

This prayer form has five parts:

- 1) name for God
- 2) why we call God by this name
- 3) a petition asking God for something
- 4) why we are asking for this... "so that..."
- 5) a sentence of praise.

This is one of the most meaningful ways we can teach people to write simple prayer liturgy. Give it a try! You may surprise yourself!

Here is an example of a "Collect":

Holy and Just God, (part 1)

You have shown us what is right and good. (part 2)

Open us this day to a vision of the world made all-right (part 3)

so that we might follow your ways and know the peace of your reign on earth as it is in heaven. (part 4)

We praise you for your steadfast presence,

holding our lives together in love. (part 5)

Amen.

What does "Selah" mean?

When you have read the Psalms, have you ever noticed the word "Selah" in the beginning, middle of end of a chapter? The Psalms have this word or direction written throughout the book. Scholars are not sure exactly what it means. Perhaps because the Psalms were to be used in worship, we can estimate that the word indicates a pause, or an invitation for a musical instrument to be played. In this worship series, we will use this mysterious word to denote a time of settled silence and sense of being held. You will hear the use an instrumental sound of some kind (chime, bell, gong, singing bowl, rain stick) to take a pause and settle in silence for a bit. The instrumental sound will then occur again to indicate the end of the silence.



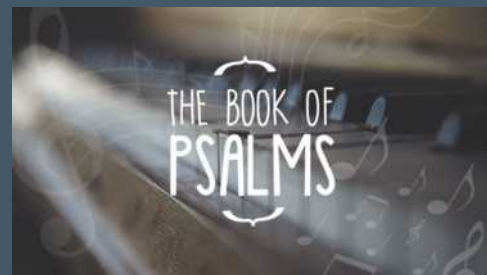


Series Snapshot

Sunday, January 17th: The Baptism of Christ, "Awe & Wonder"
Psalm 29



We will uplift and celebrate the Baptism of Christ this Sunday. We will also focus on the strength and peace of the prayer of the Psalm this. The Psalmist says "let me count the ways" that we can know the strength of the Holy One. With awe and wonder we behold the presence of God in all the elements of creation—water, fire, air, earth. And it is this glory that assures us that God, indeed, is holding our lives.



"The original music for the church."

Sunday, January 24th: "In God Alone"; Psalm 62:5-12

"My one and only!" So many songs have utilized this phrase to express devoted love. This week we see that this tradition goes back all the way to the poets of the psalm tradition. This is a love psalm of trust in the "Holy One and Only" who is the rock and refuge in the midst of life that sometimes feels as fleeting as breath. We put our trust in the One who, indeed, is holding our lives.



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!





Series Snapshot

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.



Sunday, February 14th: "Whole Heart Hallelujah"; Psalm 111

“One mode of poetry in the Psalms is all-out praise and thanksgiving, such as the one for today. We also find praise even in Psalms of lament and complaint because “God is good all the time and all the time God is good!” Life is not always good, but when we engage in gratitude, we remember the evidence of God at work in our lives and we remember that indeed, God is holding our lives, even now.



THE BOOK OF
PSALMS

GOD'S
got you



2021 VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING

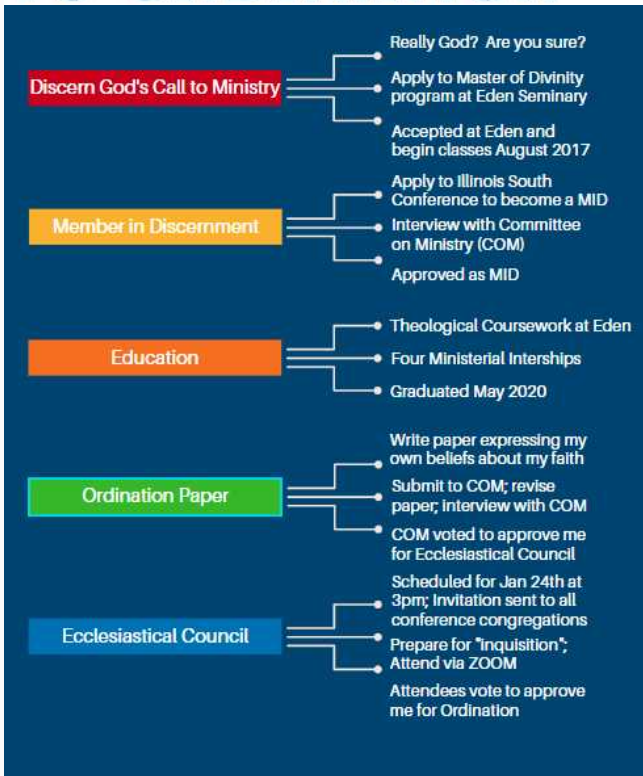
Our Annual Meeting will be held VIRTUALLY on Sunday, January 24th at 11:30am via ZOOM. Special seating in the church will be made available for those that do not have access to this feature. Stay tuned for more information upcoming including the 2020 Annual Report.



Pastor Tarrah's Ecclesiastical Council

You are all invited to attend Pastor Tarrah's Ecclesiastical Council on Sunday, January 24th at 3pm via ZOOM. This meeting is a crucial and necessary step before Pastor Tarrah can be ordained as a pastor in the UCC. A ZOOM link will be made available to all as the date draws closer. Please plan on attending to show her support as this is a very intimidating part of her path to ordination.

The path TO ORDINATION



Ecclesiastical Councils may not look like this anymore, but they certainly still feel that way for those that are being interviewed! Please attend so you can make her feel loved and supported!

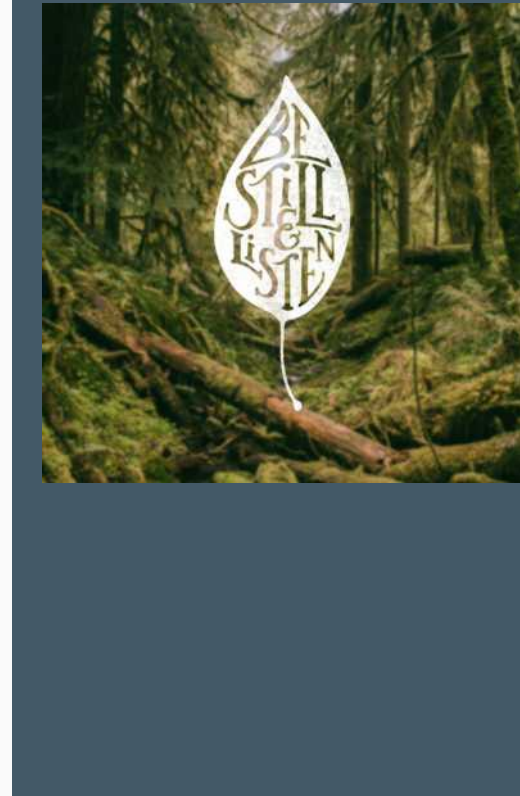
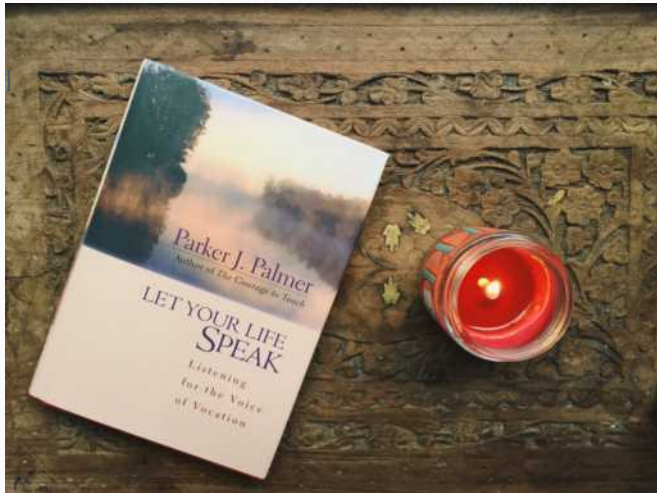




Lenten Series 2021

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!





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