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UCC/VF's Weekly Newsletter

The **FORGE**

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The United Church of Christ at Valley Forge, following in the Way of Jesus, is called by God to deepen our relationships with the Spirit and our faith community so that we will be empowered to reach out widely to our neighbors in love, justice, hospitality, healing, and hope.

Scripture for This Sunday

Genesis 2:18-25
Galatians 3:26-28
Mark 10:2-16

Dead-ends and Ways Forward

If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell. - Jesus in Mark 9:43-48

On Sunday we talked about a woman who had learned a way of life in which she used food and alcohol to numb pain and to cope. She then discovered that this did not heal, but rather created a kind of "hell" for her and for others. We recalled that the word translated as "hell" in the Greek text in Mark (above) is *Gehenna*, which was the name of a geographic locale just outside Jerusalem where there had been child sacrifice to the god Moloch (2 Kings 23:10) and where the historian Josephus says that the quickly multiplying bodies of the dead were dumped during the siege of Jerusalem by Rome in 70 C. E. A Jewish commentator in 1200 C. E. explains that Gehenna was the "garbage dump" of Jerusalem – a foul, awful spot, where refuse was burned. Jesus likely has "hellish" imagery in mind when using this word, but is not describing what many latter Christians would think of as the after-life "hell" – the place "unsaved souls" go after death where there is eternal conscious torment.

Jesus reveals that there are ways we live *here and now* that result in "hellish" existence – a life that is cut-off from Spirit, from generosity, compassion, steadfast love, and the deep truth of who we are as God's beloved children. These well-established patterns feel very much a part of us, like extensions of our being. He recognizes that it hurts to unlearn what we have so deeply learned, even if living what we have learned causes hellish dead-ends for us and others. This is why he uses the stark language of cutting off hands, feet, or plucking eyes. It is painful to engage in such unlearning. But Jesus also teaches us that this moves us out of dead-ends and into new ways forward which bring healing, love, and justice in us and through us for the healing and hope of the world.

What ways of living, thinking, and/or doing leave you in dead-end places? Jesus reminds us that we have a choice: we can live in ways that keep us "cut off" from deep connection with God, others, and the truth of who we are, or we can choose to unlearn, to let go, to "cut off" some of those hurtful ways we live, so that we can leave dead-end cul-de-sacs of life and move forward in receiving and sharing the fullness of God's mercy, love, justice, and hope. I have included the "prayer of examen" that was mentioned on Sunday below.

Love in Christ,
Pastor Michael Bush

SUNDAY - OCT. 7

COMMUNION

9:00 a.m. Inquirer's class
10:30 a.m. All Ages Worship
Celebration/Communion
NO Sunday School classes
12:00 p.m. White Privilege Class
12:00 p.m. Confirmation class

THIS WEEK

Wed. - 7:00 p.m. Caring Crafters
7:30 p.m. Spiritual Life Group -
Matthew
Thur. - 10:30 a.m. Spiritual Life
Group - Luke
11:45 a.m. Worship Committee
7:30 p.m. Senior Choir rehearsal

NEXT SUNDAY - OCT. 14

10:30 a.m. Worship Celebration
Sunday School/Sunday Morning
Breakfast Club
12:00 p.m. White Privilege Class

UPCOMING

Mon. Oct. 15 - 7:00 p.m. Church
Council meeting
Sun. Oct. 28 - New Member
Welcome
Congregational Meeting
following worship

Listen to & download Sunday's message

<http://www.uccvf.org/sermonmp3.html>

EXAMEN PRAYER

Gracious God, I choose right now to enter into some self-examination in Your gracious presence, in the midst of Your forgiving love. I look now back on the past day, and ask you these questions. I take time to listen to myself and to you . . .

What am I most/least grateful for during that time?

When did I feel a sense of love, peace, joy, life (gifts of the Spirit)?

When did I feel exhausted, numb, drained, dead, annoyed, angry, mean? Why did I feel these things - - what in me causes them?

What specific events, thoughts, or experiences draw my attention?

What aspects of that time repel me?

What moments from that time speak to me of my deepest longing/desire?

What things feel out of place, uninteresting?

When did I notice You during this time? What felt like a time of Your absence?

God, as I see these times of presence or perceived absence, I ask You to help me know how to move forward more awake to You and the truth of who I am in You. I listen for ways You are speaking to me, calling me to live in the day (or moments) ahead (Take some additional time to be in silence and listen for what God is speaking into your mind and spirit). I thank You. Help me to keep listening, receiving, and sharing in Your Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

In Our Prayers

- Healing and strength for Roslyn Nilson.
- Healing and strength for Betty Follansbee as she continues to recover from surgery at Shannondell
- Strength and healing for Chris Maurizio as he recovers from back surgery.
- Healing for Kathy and Colleen Kait.
- Complete healing for Walt Glazier, son in law of Doug and Joan Johnson, who will have a third back surgery in the near future.
- Comfort and peace for Martha Parrish Bush's sister, Maggie, who has stage 4 bone cancer.
- Healing and strength for Emily Mancuso.

NIN offering THIS SUNDAY October 7

Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the [Council for American Indian Ministry](#) (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. This year, special consideration will be given to projects focusing on serving our immigrant neighbors and communities.

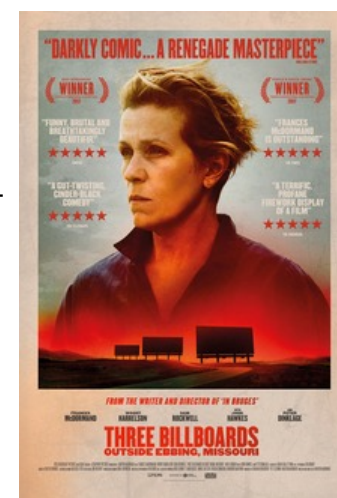
At UCCVF we will receive the NIN offering this Sunday, October 7, 2018, as part of our World Communion Sunday observance. To learn more about the offering you can go to <http://www.ucc.org/nin>.

INQUIRER'S CLASS THIS SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7

This **Sunday, October 7**, there will be a Membership Inquirer's Session at 9:00 a.m. This session is designed for those who have been worshipping and participating in the life of the church to learn more about becoming a member of this congregation. This gathering will give you a chance to meet others interested in belonging, to speak with the Pastor about your spiritual journey, and to learn of ways you can grow in the Way of Christ. We plan to receive new members into the Church on **Sunday, October 28**, during our morning worship. Please note that there is no obligation to join the Church by coming to the session, although it is our hope that you would choose to commit to join together with us on this faith journey. ***Please contact the church office if you would like to join the class.***

MOVIE NIGHT

Juliana Flora will be hosting a movie and discussion at her home - 294 Harleysville Pike, Souderton, PA 18964 - on Saturday, Oct. 20 from 2:00 -5:00 p.m. The movie will be **Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri**, a 2017 crime drama film written, directed, and produced by Martin McDonagh and starring Frances McDormand as a mother who rents three billboards to call attention to her daughter's unsolved murder. Woody Harrelson, Sam Rockwell, John Hawkes, and Peter Dinklage appear in supporting roles. A sign up sheet is posted on the bulletin board in the Gathering Area.



Save the Date! – Tuesday, October 23, 2018 – 7:00-8:30 PM

Please join POWER-Metro, a faith based team organized to dismantle racism. The evening is design to explore Racism and how to defeat it. A system of power and privilege and how it is different from prejudice and bias.

UPCOMING GREETERS

Oct. 7 - Diane Ludovic
Oct. 14 - The Pennypacker family
Oct. 21 - Brian Wynne

UPCOMING USHERS

Oct. 7 - Phil and Sue Clark
Oct. 14 - Randy Hove and Grover Emrich
Oct. 21 - The McAleer family

UPCOMING COFFEE AND CONVERSATION

Oct. - The McKinley Flock
Nov. - The Bradley Flock
Dec. - The Neubig Flock

SOUNDBOARD

Oct. 7 - Jim McKinley
Oct. 14 - Lauren Patrick
Oct. 21 - Joe Sciandra

WORSHIP CANDLE

Oct. 7 - Angela Steel
Oct. 14 - Kim Mehle
Oct. 21 - Christy Fox and Sammy

UPCOMING LITURGISTS

Oct. 7 - Jody Canale
Oct. 14 - Jane Groves
Oct. 21 - Ellen Matthews



HAVE YOU LIKED US ON FACEBOOK?

Our Facebook page offers links to articles connected with faith life, periodic reminders, photos and more!

Click [HERE](#) to visit.

SMALL GROUPS - Join us as we move forward together!

Whether you have previously participated or not, you are welcome to try one out.

Sunday afternoon - Racism, Privilege, and Faithful Ways Forward - class is full!

Wednesday Night Spiritual Life Group - Gospel of Matthew

The group meets at 7:30 p.m. We begin with prayer, read a portion of the story of Jesus and his ministry, and then we discuss what the story meant in its own time and how it may form and shape us in our time. Matthew's Gospel is often best known for the Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount. We will look at these teachings, the context, the symbols, and more. Pastor Michael Bush will facilitate the conversation.

Thursday Morning Spiritual Life Group - Gospel of Luke

We gather 10:30-11:30 a.m. at UCCVF each week for prayer, conversation, laughter, sharing, learning, and sometimes eating, too. This group is focusing on the stories in the Gospel of Luke to learn and live more fully what it means to follow in the Way of Jesus and to live in Gods hospitality, healing, justice, and love in the world. New folks are always welcome to join us. This group is facilitated by Pastor Michael Bush.

Prayer Advocacy Ministry: This group meets quarterly at 12:00 p.m. to learn about prayer practices and pray together. They receive requests in confidence and holds individuals in prayer. For more information contact [Gwynne Hagee](#). The next meeting is Sunday, November 11 following worship .

Grief Support Group: Pastor Michael continues leading a monthly Grief Recovery group here at UCCVF for those who have suffered the loss of a loved one and are grieving. The next meeting will be held on Monday, September 24 at 1:00 p.m.

Lean on Me Prayer Ministry: The Lean On Me prayer ministry is a one-on-one prayer time that is offered *every Sunday after worship*. Two of our Prayer Partners will be seated in the chapel chairs in the Sanctuary. You are welcome to come and sit next to one of them, tell them what you would like to pray about (a joy, concern, or thanksgiving) and then the Prayer Partner will lift you up in prayer.



CONGRATULATIONS!

We celebrate the marriage of Paige Morgan Stark, daughter of Ron and Karen Stark, to Chris Alan Strauch on September 29, 2018 in Lake Lawn Resort, Delavan Wisconsin.

Updates on the PSEC/PNEC merger

I hope by now you have heard that Penn Northeast and Pennsylvania Southeast Conferences have been in conversation about joining together. I hope you have joined in that conversation at Annual Conference Meetings, in Zoom video calls or at Association or Ministerium meetings; or at least read the online documents that have begun to shape our potential future.

I realize this conversation may be far removed from the local ministry on which we're primarily focused but the theological and ecclesial principles that form it are fundamental to our ministerial identity -- from the individual to the global level. We are a people who are bound together by covenant. We are aware that among some of our congregations the level of unity in our "United Church" is at best loose. We have placed our value of autonomy above the ties that bind us in the Body of Christ. We are convinced that a reclamation of our commitment to covenantal connections and the embrace of new relationships is an act of faith that will increase our capacity to realize the dream "that they may all be one." (from the ['Case Statement for a New Conference'](#))

Both the PSEC Consistory and the Penn Northeast Board recently approved a resolution to consolidate and become a new conference. (You can read that [here](#).) That resolution will come before both Conference bodies for consideration and vote -- at our Annual Fall Meeting Saturday, November 10, 2018. Registration for that event is now open. (Click [here](#) to register.)

The Joint Conference Vision Development Team posted to our conference web site several documents that will help you and our congregations discern the movement of the Holy Spirit in this process. (You can find those here: [psec.org/conference-merger/](#)) AND have scheduled times to meet face-to-face and digitally to share information, answer questions, hear concerns and dream dreams. Oct. 16: Zion Blue Mountain UCC, Bernville at 6:30 p.m. and Oct. 23: Reformed Church of the Ascension, Jeffersonville at 6:30 p.m. Keep reading. And keep praying.

Bill

Rev. William Worley
Conference Minister

UCCVF Worship Music Group Interest Survey



As we enter our year of discernment for the future of UCCVF's Music Ministry, we are exploring the development of a volunteer worship music group to deliver the music ministry on select weekends (in partnership with Jo Ellen and the terrific choir). To that end, Tim Dougherty is looking for interested members of the congregation to join the merry group! At this point, Tim's team will be responsible for delivering the music on the second Sundays of the month, and we are looking for folks who'd like to share their musical gifts at any level of commitment. Want to play each month for every song? Great! Want to share your instrumental gift for one song just once or, perhaps, every once in a while? Terrific! Above all, we are trying to create an invitational and community-led worship singing experience through this experiment. We welcome your gifts at whatever level of polish, and your time at whatever level of commitment. We also welcome your patience with us as we novices try something new with our musical ministry here at UCCVF.

Even if you don't want to play yourself, please take a few moments to fill out [this brief interest survey](#). It will help us to shape the direction of the tunes to come.

CONGREGATIONAL PRIORITIES: REMINDERS

Your Church Council has distributed the various priorities we discerned together this past Spring to committees and teams so they can work on developing strategies and implementation.

Even so, we are the church together, and so it is good to remind one another of our priorities. Please review them, pray them, and listen for ways you may be called to help us live into them!

Q 1: What are commitments that UCCVF currently makes or could make that would help us deepen our roots in God? (deepen relationship with God).

- **Continue to develop and increase opportunities for all-ages inclusive worship**, which includes creativity (making room for the Spirit to do new things among us), such as using different types of media and members of all ages leading parts of worship.
- **Each member of UCCVF participates in our increasing number of Spiritual Formation small group opportunities** - from Bible studies to film series to retreats to small groups for regular prayer/mentoring/spiritual direction, etc. Also, consider having some of these outside church building, including in homes).
- **We tell our stories of how Spiritual Formation with UCCVF has impacted/transformed us (verbal, written, etc) throughout the year (not just summer, stewardship).**

Q2: What are commitments that help or would help our congregation deepen roots as a church community together (deepened relationships within the faith community)?

- **Mindful of and present to church members' joys and concerns** -all members do this, not just staff or Elders. Perhaps prayer partners/buddy system. Idea of training people for in-home or hospital visits ("Called to Care" or "Stephen's Ministry").
- **Gathering regularly (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly) with other people in our faith community in a variety of settings beyond Sunday worship:** in-home prayer/fellowship group, work projects (in church and in community), parent groups, Elder flock gatherings, take someone to lunch, have over for dinner, hike in VF, bike, run, game group, etc.

Q3: What are commitments that help or would help our congregation to reach out widely to others by helping others experience the goodness/gifts of God (invitation)?

- **Focus discernment on what social justice work looks like for us (which includes discerning God's call in how we serve/work in the wider world** - education and spiritual practices), and then create opportunities for action (forming actions teams or inviting broader congregational participation). We can also partner with other groups (like POWER Metro or prison ministry) and churches to help us better know what needs work and how to do it. Focus energy and attention on 1 or 2 partnerships rather than widely dispersing our energies. One idea: Intergenerational mission trip (could be as close as Philly) to engage in this work with one of our selected partners.
- **Tell our UCCVF story (bear witness) in wider community** - Participating in public events, talk to neighbors, sponsor spiritual music concerts, etc). Properly resourcing our web/social media presence can be part of this.
- **Stretch more widely our extravagant welcome** - Not complacent with what we already do, but discerning how we might welcome those who are not yet welcomed (non-binary restrooms, for example, worship that is not as euro-centric, more lgbt events, welcoming message on web, social media, signage).
- **UCCVF building used more for reaching out (not just rentals)** - AA, Support groups, homeless shelter rotations, etc. to share ministry in our community.

SERVING THIS SUNDAY

Greeter - Diane Ludovic

Ushers - Phil and Sue Clark

Lighting the Worship Candle -
Angela Steel

Liturgist - Holly Branham

Soundboard - Jim McKinley

Lean on Me Prayer Partner -
Jeff Durst and Shannon
Mudd

Infants/Toddlers - Tori Hall
and Barb Fox

FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

The **Caring Crafters** meet on Wednesday evenings from 7-9 p.m. at UCCVF to create items for charity. No crafting experience necessary! Email the [church office](#) if you would like to join the group.

The **Monthly Dinner Out** group meets monthly at local eateries for fun and fellowship. Members are asked to sign up to pick a place to eat and organize the meal. If you would like to join the group, please let [Rosemary McKinley](#) know.

UCCVF Bridge Group - We meet once a month at various locations. All are welcome - any level of expertise is invited from novice to experienced. It is a social group. Dessert and coffee or tea will be served and then we start playing cards. Contact [Phil Clark](#) for more info.



ALTERNATIVE GIFT MARKET 2018

Saturday November 10 - 9am-3pm

Sunday November 11 - 9am-3pm

Saint Luke Lutheran Church

203 North Valley Forge Road, Devon PA

Buy a Present. Give a Future!

Looking for alternatives to mall-shopping this holiday season? Wondering what to give Uncle Bob instead of one more necktie? Want your holiday gifts to make a difference in the world?

Then come to the 6th annual **Alternative Gift Market** – **now in a new location and with extended hours!** – offering "alternatives" to standard commercial gifts during the holiday season. You will find **unique hand-made and fair-trade gifts** for everyone on your list, and your purchases will help local artisans and people in need around the world!

Proceeds from the Alternative Gift Market will benefit [T&E Care](#), a local network of families helping families in Tredyffrin and Easttown townships.

When you come to the market, please bring a non-perishable food donation for the [Great Valley Food Cupboard](#) .

Check out our [website](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#) for the latest updates!

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The Rev. Michael T. Bush
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Co-Moderators of Elders

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