

It's a Mystery

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." Matthew 17:9



When six-year-old Jackie asked me, "How is there oxygen in the winter when the trees have no leaves?" I realized the complexity of our world. We often think when we get older we will understand more. But as we get older we come to recognize that much of life cannot be explained.

The Transfiguration, which we will celebrate on Feb. 26, is a reminder that God, too, is mysterious. At the Transfiguration Jesus' appearance changed before his disciples' eyes and no one could explain what happened. This reminds us that, at times, God is puzzling and confusing. Sometimes God is amazing and dazzling. Surprisingly, God can transform the ordinary into the extraordinary. And from time to time we simply cannot explain God. The Transfiguration reminds us that mystery is not something to be afraid of and neither is God.

When you encounter a mystery, instead of feeling anxious, be at peace knowing that God is present even when we cannot explain it.

Journeying with you,

Pastor Jill

Religion in the News

Throwing the book at someone carries a different meaning to refugees in Austria. According to a new study from the Austrian Academy of Sciences, almost half of refugees in Austria believe the commandments in the Bible rank higher than the country's laws. The finding has prompted officials to push for a new integration plan.

The study also found that 90% of officially recognized Austrian refugees believe democracy is an ideal form of government, 80% believe in the equality of men and women, and 83% have no problem with other religions. However, 40% also said religion is a more reliable guide for behavior than the written law, with 80% supporting adherence to religious law in the public sphere. Of those surveyed, only 61% admitted to being religious.

The findings created a stir for Austria's foreign minister, Sebastian Kurz, who called for the expansion of controversial integration courses for refugees.

Lenten Mission Project

For this year's Lenten Mission Project we will be supporting the General Synod Service Project on Homelessness. How? By collecting hats, gloves, scarves and socks (We know you are GOOD at this!) to be distributed to the homeless. Adult sizes are needed for this collection. We will also collect donations of blankets and small pillows. All of these items will be taken to General Synod this summer and distributed next winter to the homeless throughout the Central Atlantic Conference.

For those of you who don't knit you will want to buy soon while you can still find these items on the shelves. Please remember that for this project we are looking for ADULT SIZES.

Pancake Breakfast

The children of the church school will be serving a pancake breakfast after church on Feb. 12. The menu will include: pancakes, sausages, fruit cups, juice, milk and coffee.

A free will offering will be taken. Please plan to attend the breakfast and support our children and the Christian Education Ministry.

Financially Speaking

The total receipts for the month of January were \$13,443. Our spendable income came to \$13,205, including our OCWM income of \$307.

We had charitable income of \$238 for the month of January. Distribution of the charitable income was as follows: \$210 went to the Hurricane Matthew Mission, \$25 went to the Building Endowment Fund, and \$3 went to the Christmas Fund (Veterans of the Cross).

ACTS Potluck

ACTS will have a potluck on Saturday, Feb. 25, at the church along with a short meeting at 6 p.m. We will then watch a movie together. A sign up sheet will be available in the Narthex.

Christian Education

Some children were able to attend the Advent Workshop with their families and enjoyed making crafts together. During Sunday school, the children made star and light ornaments for the tree in the Narthex. On Sunday, Dec. 18, the children joined the choir in singing a song during worship.

Little Hats, Big Hearts

St. Paul's knitters knitted 111 Red Hats for the Little Hats for Big Hearts, a promotion of the American Heart Association in cooperation with Advocate Health Systems.

The hats are given out to babies born in the month of February in honor of American Heart Month. This is the second year our knitters have participated in this program. Thank you to Sue Petty for her help and our knitters: Sis Gunnell, Arlene Huber, Judy Olsen, Bonnie Starr and Elsie Ward.

Song Leader

With the help of Jon Kobel and the choir, we have learned many new songs and have become familiar with old favorites in the last few years. We will now have a weekly "Song Leader" who will help lead all the congregational singing. Most weeks it will be Jon, but is open to anyone who would like to volunteer.

February Greeters

Feb. 5: Wayne and Linda Schambach
Feb. 19: Ralph and Elsie Ward

Feb. 12: Rita Rucker and Jeannette Franks
Feb. 26: Judy Olsen and Marge Dralle

We want your pictures

If you take pictures at a church event please email them to Linda at stpauls4me@yahoo.com. Please include any descriptions. Your photos could appear in the digital edition of The Chimes.

St. Paul's United Church of Christ Staff

Jill Terpstra – Pastor

Jon Kobel – Choir Director

Bill Wilson – Newsletter Editor

Linda Becker – Secretary

Gay Bouwmeester – Piano Accompanist

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