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Star Gifts

The magi who traveled great distances to offer their gifts to the newborn Christ-child were responding to the gift first given to them. They received God's gift, then offered their gifts to God.

As we commemorate the arrival of the magi and remember their offerings, we delight in stars that symbolize God's generosity in our lives.

Throughout the Christmas story, we are told that "Mary pondered these things in her heart," and that is what I asked you to do with the star gifts that were passed out last year on Jan. 3.

Do you remember what your star gift word was? Did you see your word play out in your life over the past year?

My word was "Listen." At the beginning of the year, I thought that I needed to be a better listener with other people. But as the year went on, I realized that maybe I should try to listen better to God's leading and guiding in my life. I don't know how well I have done, but I am trying and that is all that God asks of us.

Join us at worship on Jan. 8 to receive a Star Gift for 2017.

Journeying with you,

Pastor Jill



Religion in the News

It just might have been the most liked post in Facebook history. On Christmas Day, Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah on the social media site, and then responded to a comment saying he is no longer atheist.

“I was raised Jewish and then went through a period where I questioned things,” Zuckerberg said, “but now I believe religion is very important.”

Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, had a meeting with Pope Francis last summer to discuss how to bring communication technology to the poor. Zuckerberg was impressed with Francis’ passion. Chan practices Buddhism, which appears to be Zuckerberg’s religion of choice.

Open and Affirming

In April as a congregation we voted to begin the process to determine if we are being called to become an Open and Affirming Church. Open and Affirming is the official designation of the United Church of Christ for congregations that are officially welcoming to lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender persons. This will be a year-long time of listening and learning in hopes of discerning where God is calling our congregation at this time.

We began this process by having small group listening sessions. The final listening session was Tuesday, Dec. 13 at the St. Paul’s Ministry House. In the spring we will have other opportunities to learn more and determine where God is leading.

We want to get input from as many congregation members as possible. So, please don’t hesitate to contact one of the team members—Pastor Jill, Anne Heinrich, Judy Olsen and Doug Volkening.

In the event of bad weather . . .

Before we know it, winter storms will be upon us. In order to keep informed about church cancellations, we have set up an account through Remind. If you signed up last year you do not need to do anything. If you have not signed up, or if your e-mail or phone number has changed, please follow the steps below.

To sign up for text alerts from St. Paul’s text this: @stpaulsuc to 224.231.5038. You will immediately get a text back asking for your name. Reply with your name.

To sign up to receive e-mail alerts send an e-mail to: stpaulsuc@mail.remind.com. You can leave the subject and message of the e-mail blank.

If you do not have texting or e-mail, sign up for a phone call by calling the church office (847.628.6118) or leave your name on the sign-up sheet on the back table in the Narthex.

Christmas at St. Paul's



Updated Prayer Cards

A couple years ago at St. Paul's we began making available a "We prayed for you . . ." card for members to send to the people they lifted up at prayer time during the worship service. It was meant to extend God's love and comfort to those who needed to feel the presence of God in their lives during a difficult time. In an effort to re-energize this ministry, the prayer card has been re-designed and updated with a new, powerful image. There is space on the other side for someone to write a personal note as well as the address.

Starting this fall the cards will now be postage paid! As an outreach of St. Paul's Church, the Evangelism Ministry will be covering the cost of mailing the card for you. So when you lift someone up during prayer time, remember to get a card and send it to them and share God's love in this simple but meaningful way.

Dates to Remember

Here are some important dates in January:

Jan. 8: "Star of wonder, star of night! Star with royal beauty bright." Celebrate the coming of Magi on Epiphany. Everyone receives a star gift on this day.

Jan. 12: St. Paul's new women's Bible study begins and will be held from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and again from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The seven-week series will be based on Ephesians 6, "The Armor of God." The study will be led by Linda Schambach and Pricilla Shirer (on DVD) and held at the church. Study books are \$15. Come for a special time of lively discussion and sharing and caring. For more information, contact Linda at 815. 272.8099.

Jan. 29: Our fifth Sunday of the month is Mission in Action Sunday. Guest preacher will be James Olson, who is the acting Associate Conference Minister for the Fox Valley Association United Church of Christ.

Financially Speaking

The total receipts for the month of December were \$15,612.52. Our spendable income came to \$15,012.52, including our OCWM income of \$485.

We had charitable income of \$600 for the month of December. Distribution of the charitable income was as follows: \$100 went to the Music Fund, \$100 went to the Building Endowment Fund and \$400 went to the Christmas Fund (Veterans of the Cross).

Please remember we are no longer collecting for World Service. Any donations to that fund will be placed in OWCM.

January Greeters

Jan. 8: Ralph and Elsie Ward Jan. 15: Greeters needed

Jan. 22: Greeters needed Jan. 29: The Smith's

The Chimes is now digital . . .

If you would like to receive The Chimes electronically please email Linda at stpauls4me@yahoo.com.

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 Linda Becker – Secretary

Jon Kobel – Choir Director Gay Bouwmeester – Piano Accompanist

Bill Wilson – Newsletter Editor Dale Volkening - Janitor

St. Paul's United Church of Christ Council

Anne Heinrich – President

Karen Westerman – Vice President

Sandy Volkening – Financial Secretary

Myron Meglin/Dave Thompson -Treasurer

Cindy Heinrich – Recording Secretary

Christian Education – Karen Smith

Evangelism – Polly Russell

Fellowship/Hospitality – Janet Werner

Mission – Barb Kamp

Calling & Caring – Ginny Mursewick

Properties – Dan Heinrich

Stewardship – JoAnn Pate

Worship – Vernon Knaak