

February 8

Jonah 4:1-11
Romans 1:8-17
Psalm 51

God mercifully reproves Jonah
Live by faith
Create in me a clean heart

Transforming events can present themselves to us when we least expect them. Countless times, missionaries experience the surprise of being the one changed instead of the one making change happen. The Rev. Holly McKissick, a short-term volunteer for Global Ministries to Lesotho, South Africa, found her ideas about solidarity strengthened and nourished while serving at Inanda Seminary. She expected her experience and her service to be one of accompaniment and came away “energized by the wisdom and maturity of our partners.” She was struck by the humility and insight of the people in the communities where she served. Holly said she learned far more than she taught and gained wonderful insights into the culture and faith of students and faculty at Inanda.

PRAYER:

God of mercy, your word was the sure defense of Jesus in his time of testing. Minister to us in the wilderness of our temptation, that we who have been set free from sin by Christ may serve you well into life everlasting. Amen.

February 9

Isaiah 58:1-12
Matthew 18:1-7
Psalm 51

The fast that God chooses
The humble one is the greatest
Create in me a clean heart

Like the Bible story of the widow’s mite, it is often the poor among us who offer comfort to the very poor. Diane Faires, Global Mission intern in Sri Lanka, experienced this attitude of abundance at Jennifer Girls Home in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Diane found the girls preparing flour to give to impoverished families at a church-run nursery school. Their local pastor, Joshua, asks the girls to make this small donation once per month as a lesson in “nesam” – a Sri Lankan word for love which translates as the kind of selfless, spiritual love we learn about in 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Diane sees a transformation in these young girls when they realize they have the power to improve the lives of others.

PRAYER:

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SUNDAY FEBRUARY 3

L A S T S U N D A Y A F T E R T H E E P I P H A N Y
T R A N S F I G U R A T I O N S U N D A Y



Holy Encounter

Exodus 24:12-18
Psalm 2
2 Peter 1:16-21
Matthew 17:1-9

Moses enters the cloud of God’s glory
The one begotten of God
Shining with the glory of God
Christ revealed as God’s beloved Son

Two clergywomen are honored with the United Church of Christ’s Antoinette Brown Award at each General Synod. You can read about these women in “Women: Finding Voice,” available at www.ucc.org/women. Dallas Dee Brauning developed

this resource for the church’s 50th anniversary celebration. UCC historian Barbara Brown Zikmund, a 2005 recipient, introduced this project by describing the life of Antoinette Brown herself:

Antoinette Brown was born in 1825. She joined her local Congregational Church when she was nine years old. She always loved her church and she came to feel that God was calling her to be a minister. Yet everyone said that was impossible. The Bible and church tradition only allowed male priests and preachers. Antoinette, however, went to Oberlin College — one of the few colleges in the 1840s where women could study theology. She became a popular preacher and writer. In 1853 a small Congregational church in South Butler, New York, formally called her as its pastor — the first woman ordained by a sizable recognized Protestant denomination in the United States.

Her early years in ministry were difficult. She struggled with doctrinal questions and encountered general social resistance to female leadership. After a short time she abandoned parish ministry for the lecture circuit. In 1856 she married and devoted herself to raising five daughters. She remained active in social movements, including many of the earliest struggles for women’s suffrage — and cast her vote for the president of the United States in 1920, a year before she died.

The Bible says that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. May God help each of us find our voices.

PRAYER:

O God of the covenant, the cloud of your splendor and the fire of your love revealed your Son on the mountain heights. Transform our lives in his image, write your law of love on our hearts, and make us prophets of your glory, that we may lead others into your presence. Amen.

February 4

Exodus 33:7-23

Acts 7:30-34

Psalms 78:17-20, 52-55

Moses asks to see God's glory

Moses on holy ground

Israel led to God's holy mountain

When Ed Finertie was placed as a “Partners in Service” volunteer at Pilgrim Heights Conference and Retreat Center in the Iowa Conference no one knew what a time of transition this would be. Ed has served in several diverse settings through UCC Volunteer Ministries during the past five years from camp and conference centers in Hawaii and Iowa to the Dakota Association of South Dakota. He has been with the Prodigals Community in North Carolina serving with people and families with long-term substance abuse and with an organization named Open Ground in the Appalachian region of Kentucky. At Pilgrim Heights, doing maintenance and grounds-keeping, Ed along with others in Iowa, served as a presence of continuity and shared a love for outdoor ministries that helped make it possible for the Conference to make difficult decisions about the future of their camp in a spirit of mission and connectedness.

PRAYER:

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February 5

1 Kings 19:9-18

Romans 11:1-6

Psalms 78:17-20, 52-55

Elijah hears God

A remnant chosen by grace

Israel led to God's holy mountain

In Frederick, MD, the Religious Coalition for Emergency Human Needs is an ecumenical organization that coordinates donations of time, talent, money food, and other resources to meet the urgent needs of people of their local county. In Belgium, Thierry Lievens heard of the experience of UCC Volunteer Ministries through his friend, Luc Trusgnach, who had previously served as a UCC “Partners in Service” volunteer. In Germany, Christian Koelzer sought a volunteer position in which to do his alternative to required military service. UCC Volunteer Ministries brought them all together as Thierry and Christian serve as full-time volunteers with the Religious Coalition, talking to each other in French and in German, brushing up on English and Spanish, and providing necessary coordination in the office to make it possible for the churches of Frederick County to act through the Religious Coalition to manifest God's caring presence through acts of compassion.

PRAYER:

O God of the covenant, the cloud of your splendor and the fire of your love revealed your Son on the mountain heights. Transform our lives in his image, write your law of love on our hearts, and make us prophets of your glory, that we may lead others into your presence. Amen.

February 6

Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Psalms 51:1-17

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Return to God

Plea for mercy

Now is the day of salvation

The practice of faith

There are times and people in our lives that can inspire great change. Even when conditions are right, change can come slowly – as a work in progress instead of a sudden transformation. Jayanthi Wilson, a missionary to Botswana, has witnessed both kinds of change through Sedibeng, a non-profit organization which helps empower women and young people. The Christian program attempts to help people discover their talents, to gain marketable skills and to give them the confidence they need to make life changes. Thato, a woman of 50 or so, was a victim of spousal abuse and limited educational skills. Sedibeng provides support, guidance and resources to Thato and continues to encourage her independence as she begins her transformation at her own pace.

PRAYER:

O God, you delight not in pomp and show, but in a humble and contrite heart. Overturn our love of worldly possessions and fix our hearts more firmly on you, that, having nothing, we may yet possess everything, a treasure stored up for us in heaven. Amen.

February 7

Jonah 3:1-10

Romans 1:1-7

Psalms 51

Nineveh hears Jonah's preaching and repents

Appointed to preach the good news of Christ

Create in me a clean heart

Wider Church Ministries; it's a name we hear and read about on the UCC website, in our church bulletins and in UC News. While there are needs to be addressed here “in our own backyard” WCM responds to hardships and situations that most U.S. citizens do not experience – lack of safe drinking water, massive refugee problems, occupation, genocide and uncontrolled disease to name a few. WCM funds respond to global needs through programs like Refugee Resettlement Ministry, Health and Wholeness Advocacy, Mission Education and Interpretation, Global Ministries, Volunteer Ministry, National Disaster Ministry and Child Sponsorship. These ministries endeavor to transform our world by following Jesus' example in helping those who are poor.

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