

Genesis 27:30-38
Acts 1:1-15
Psalms 40:1-11

Isaac and Esau discover Jacob's deceit
The promise of the Holy Spirit
Doing the will of God

One of the great gifts to come out of General Synod 19, held in Saint Louis, MO in 1993, was the adoption of the statement calling the United Church of Christ to become a Multiracial, Multicultural Church. Some fourteen years later, many people in the UCC are wrestling with what that means for them within their settings. Notably within the Philadelphia Association of the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference, the Reverend Geneva M. Butz heads up a small contingent of congregations. These dedicated folks are willing to go the extra mile together, learning, embracing and attempting to understand the impact of racism within church and society here in North America. Their journey began as many of the leadership within the congregations participated in an "anti-racism audit" conducted by an outside facilitating party. Please keep all of our congregations on this journey in your prayers. For more information about this or any other process contact: Bentley deBardelaben, Minister for Racial Justice at the UCC national offices in Cleveland, OH.

PRAYER:

Steadfast God, you have enriched and enlightened us by the revelation of your eternal Christ. Comfort us in our mortality and strengthen us to walk the path of your desire, so that by word and deed we may manifest the gracious. Amen.

1 Kings 19:19-21
Luke 5:1-11
Psalms 40:1-11

Elijah calls Elisha to follow him
Jesus calls the first disciples
Doing the will of God

Concerned by the displacement of over two million Iraqi refugees, First Congregational Church of Deerfield, Massachusetts held a fundraiser to benefit Iraqi refugees being resettled to the United States. The church gave the proceeds to Refugee Ministries of Wider Church Ministries for the resettlement of Iraqi refugees. These funds assisted in the resettlement of a widowed Iraqi woman, Zahury Abbas Jabawy, and her three daughters resettled through Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS) in New Haven, Connecticut. Her eldest daughter, with five-year-old twin sons, was also resettled in New Haven.

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Accompanying Spirit

Isaiah 42:1-9
Psalms 29
Acts 10:34-43
Matthew 3:13-17

The servant of God brings justice
The voice of God upon the waters
Jesus' ministry after his baptism
Christ revealed as God's servant

One encouraging characteristic feature of a theological education is the spiritual and intellectual effort made to discern and experience the truth of, and be convinced by, the truth of

the Gospel. This happens not in an abstract way, but in a living creative theological community (your church) which has the God-inspired capacity to illumine the human situation and to provide motivations and directions for transforming it.

Whatever else theological education aspires to accomplish, it must remember that it does not exist for itself. It exists to serve a purpose, to serve God and God's church. Precisely because it does not exist for itself, it must learn to be a movement rather than a monument.

The Henry 'Opukaha'ia Center For Pacific Theological Studies (HOC) exists as a movement to serve God through Hawaiian and Pacific Island churches. HOC is a small theological entity attempting to teach God's people that "to be good at reading the Bible, one must read to the point where one's hands and feet dance, for only then does one avoid getting caught in literalism." Small it may be, but it aspires, with God's help, to move God's people to greater services. When all else is long gone and forgotten, theological education as carried out by HOC and similar institutions remain.

PRAYER:

Creator God, our soul's delight, your voice thunders over the waters, liberating the future from the past. In the Spirit's power and the waters of rebirth, Jesus was declared your blessed and beloved Son; may we recall our baptism, and be disciples of the Anointed One. Amen.

January 14

Genesis 35:1-15
Acts 10:44-48
Psalms 89:5-37

God calls and blesses Jacob
Through Peter, God calls Gentiles to be baptized
God anoints David to be a son

Wherever you grew up, chances are that you can remember a place from your youth that doesn't exist anymore. When the old places are torn down, it seems as if a part of our memories go with them. Now, however, residents of CHHSM member Good Samaritan Home in Evansville, Indiana, are rediscovering memories through an innovative project that has recreated the streets of the city in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

Halls at Good Samaritan were renovated using a 3-D effect along with material that looks like brick and stone, while floors give the appearance of grass, cobblestones and pavement. Indirect lighting suggests sky and clouds and porches, street lights and mailboxes remind residents of home. Good Samaritan anticipates that the project will help many of its residents who suffer from memory loss by providing comfort, stimulating long-term memory and decreasing agitation.

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January 15

Jeremiah 1:4-10
Acts 8:4-13
Psalms 89:5-37

God calls Jeremiah
Philip preaches and baptizes
God anoints David to be a son

CHHSM member Phoebe Home Nursing and Rehabilitation Center has offered the Bridgeways Program to people with dementia for twenty years. The program's renewal has made a significant difference in quality of care.

As part of the Bridgeways renewal, Phoebe has revamped food service to increase choice and repainted hallways to promote a sense of calm and serenity using home-like murals and pictures. Aromatherapy, music, plants and animals have helped lower stress. Familiar objects—such as an old typewriter, a tea pot, or a basket full of clothing ready to be folded—promote conversation and purposeful activity among residents.

Staff who work with Bridgeways residents are encouraged to examine the needs of each individual resident and use new ideas and approaches to enhance their lives. These changes at Bridgeways have made a positive difference in resident well-being and staff satisfaction: Resident weight loss and falls have decreased, and smiles have increased!

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January 16

Isaiah 51:1-16
Matthew 12:15-21
Psalms 89:5-37

Through water God's people cross over
The words of Isaiah applied to Jesus
God anoints David to be a son

The Spirit descended from heaven and rested like a dove upon Jesus as he was baptized by John in the Jordan. That Spirit of peace is alive today in the brightly colored peace-themed murals made by children involved in Kids as Peacemakers. The program is part of The Dove Campaign - a coalition of organizations and individuals who foster non-violent environments for children. The Dove Campaign grew out of Bible study at Central Congregational Church in Newburyport, MA and Kids as Peacemakers sprouted from the parent organization after a dozen children from the church painted a mural and displayed it in front of the church. The peace murals are painted on 4' x 8' plywood and displayed in front of businesses and along fences in Newburyport and surrounding towns. The Rev. Kent Allen, pastor of Central Congregational, hopes "that this idea will spread and hundreds of communities will participate in this program that delivers a subtle but powerful message."

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January 17

Isaiah 22:15-25
Galatians 1:6-12
Psalms 40:1-11

God replaces disobedient leaders
Paul's calling through a revelation of Christ
Doing the will of God

Elinore Gold, recipient of the 2007 CHHSM Towel and Basin Award, has volunteered at the Phoebe Richland Health Care Center for five years and more than a thousand hours. Many of those hours have been spent with the Abiders ministry, a program that ensures that actively dying residents are offered the opportunity of companionship and comfort in the last moments of their lives if family members are not available. Elinore's belief in eternal life provides her the tremendous strength needed to stand witness to the end of someone's life.

Elinore is also the director of the resident chorus, the "WeeBee Phoebe Singers," and regularly fills in as a pianist for church services and memorials. Her ministry has brought confidence and beautiful music to both the residents and community members; her concern, care and love for the residents she serves has had a significant impact on everyone who knows and works with her.

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