

2 Chronicles 20:5-12
Galatians 5:7-12
Psalms 13

Abraham, "friend of God"
Beware of false teachers
Will you forget me forever?

First Congregational Church, UCC in Charlotte, MI is committed to living out God's Good News in service to others. We are constantly seeking more and better ways to serve the needs of those around us. Whether it is taking communion to homebound members, volunteering at a local hospice, mentoring in a local elementary school, or any number of other activities, our members keep finding opportunities to serve. The funny thing is, the more ways our members find to serve, the more they find themselves rewarded - by feeling good, by making a difference, by strengthening their faith, by making new friends, by drawing closer to one another and God.

P R A Y E R :

Ruler of the universe, you call us to radical loyalty beyond all earthly claim. Grant us strength to offer ourselves to you as people who have been raised from death to life through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Genesis 26:23-25
Luke 17:1-4
Psalms 13

God says, "I am the God of Abraham"
Causing little ones to stumble
Will you forget me forever?

For Christian Educators, the greatest gifts of teaching arrive when heads lift, eyes open, and comprehension comes tumbling out in arms and words. The once silenced woman preaches an honest, impassioned sermon, engaging and illuminating the text. Strong skills from previous careers are reincarnated in the work of ministry. The hushed classroom becomes sacred space. Teaching in a theological seminary participates with the Spirit in the formation of individuals and communities for the mission of the church's witnessing to God's love for the world. Moving toward the justice and peace God intends for all the two-footed, four-footed, winged and furred, crawling and finned creatures that inhabit this marbled, blue and white wonder.

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Daring Discipleship

Genesis 21:8-21
Psalms 86:1-10, 16-17
Romans 6:1b-11
Matthew 10:24-39

The rescue of Hagar and Ishmael
Prayer for deliverance
Buried and raised with Christ in baptism
The cost of discipleship

Don and Anne Marie Coleman, co-pastors of University Church in Chicago, are committed to matters involving justice in Central America.

Members of their congregation helped form the

Sanctuary Movement in Chicago over 25 years ago and their church has been involved in several mission trips to Central America.

Since 1998, a delegation from University Church has gone to Fort Benning in Georgia each November to protest the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA). The soldiers trained at this facility have been connected to brutal crimes in Central America, earning the school the nickname "School of the Assassins." The church has a direct connection to the victims of SOA-trained militants: members of the Guatemalan military razed the village of Saq Ja and killed family members of a University Church member, Virgilio Vicente. For Virgilio and the thousands of others who mourn loved ones killed by SOA-trained militants, Don Coleman "crossed the line" onto SOA property in an act of civil disobedience. His intent is to call attention to the training that takes place there and to stand with others during the protests each year that call for the school to close.

In his statement to the judge who sentenced him, Don said that his act of civil disobedience was really an act of holy obedience to the God who called him to respond. He said he is confident that in God's long arc of justice, the school will be closed and justice will roll down like an ever-flowing stream.

P R A Y E R :

God of strength and courage, in Jesus Christ you set us free from sin and death, and call us to the risk of faith and service. Give us grace to follow him who gave himself for others, that, by our service, we may find the life he came to bring. Amen.

June 23

Genesis 16:1-5
Revelations 2:1-7
Psalm 86:11-17

The birth of Ishmael
Remember from what you have fallen
Give strength to your servant

The streets of San Francisco are now part of the UCC/Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) global mission thanks to missionaries the Rev. William and Veronica Kyles. Originally from Chicago, the Kyles serve as missionaries in South Africa running camps, outdoor ministries, and programs for women and youth – especially those living with HIV/AIDS. While on a visit to City of Refugee UCC in San Francisco, the Kyles spoke about their work in South Africa. The similarities between their work abroad and the needs of the inner city were unmistakable. When an audience member asked about becoming a missionary, the Rev. Kyle suggested that San Francisco could benefit from mission work just as well as South Africa. Global or local, God asks that we tend the flock.

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June 24

Genesis 25:12-18
Revelations 2:8-11
Psalm 86:11-17

Ishmael's descendants; his death
The faithful receive the crown of life
Give strength to your servant

When Alice Sell and her husband drove from Bippus, Indiana, to Hartford, Conn., they never imagined a New Orleans connection. But serendipity happens. While standing in a line at General Synod XXVI, Alice chatted with the woman next to her. They glanced at each other's nametags, and Alice noted that her friend was from New Orleans. The woman looked at Alice, and, with emotion in her voice, said, "Your conference sent my church quilt supplies after (Hurricane) Katrina." The New Orleans church had had a quilting group for outreach. They lost all their supplies in the flooding and devastation after the storm. In response Indiana-Kentucky had a conference-wide drive to collect quilting supplies to send to this New Orleans church, said the Rev. Carol Barth, associate conference minister for Indiana-Kentucky. Alice was touched to make this connection with a project she had worked on back home at New Hope UCC in Bippus.

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June 25

Jeremiah 42:18-22
Matthew 10:5-23
Psalm 86:11-17

Warning people not to go to Egypt
Jesus speaks about persecution
Give strength to your servant

What part should Christians -- both the international Christian community and our Palestinian Christian partners -- play in the Israeli/Palestinian peace process? The World Council of Churches (WCC) began work in 2006 for the Palestine/Israel Ecumenical Forum designed to encourage church advocacy for peace in the Middle East. The Forum was launched in June, 2007. Participants from around the world discussed the purpose and identity of the Forum as a place to face challenges and overcome fear, where the faith community would play a powerful role in building peace. These participants stressed that the Forum must ensure a strong Christian presence in the region and in Palestinian society. One participant noted that since religious dynamics have played such a large role in the conflict, religion has to be a large part of the solution. The Forum is to be an instrument in a multi-year plan for peace involving WCC member churches and related organizations.

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June 26

Micah 7:18-20
Galatians 5:2-6
Psalm 13

God's faithfulness to Jacob; Abraham
The nature of Christian freedom
Will you forget me forever?

The following was received by Cocoa Beach Community Church: My name is (name deleted), and myself as well as my co-workers here at the Al-Udeid Air Base Fire Department (in Qatar) would like to take the time to thank you all for the wonderful gifts that you packed perfectly into the package that we received today. Being able to taste things like Pringles and Slim Jims that we don't have the privilege of purchasing out here in the desert is awesome, and reminds us all of being home. It really is the simplest things like a letter, or a package that make all of us here smile, and know that there are people back home that love us and wish for a safe return. On a personal note, I have never been to the Cocoa Beach Community Church, but I can assure you that when I come home I will surely come by and thank everyone for their generosity. I can't express in words how very thankful we all are, and proud to be serving a country with such outstanding Americans as yourselves. . . . Thank you again from all of us out here. God bless America.

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