



**MINISTER'S SLANT - "Oh light, come down to earth, be praised!"**

Neighbors to the North (Lutheran Church,) are wrapping their lamp-posts with greens and red ribbons. Neighbors to the East have outlined their home in lights. Ah, it begins — the slow descent of our hemisphere into the dark season, when the Earth's slant aims us away from the sun. It used to be a more fearsome time than it is now, with the advent of electric lights, but it still causes some unusual behavior among our species and others. Crows and Ravens are always on the look-out for shiny things. If the things are small enough, the birds will take them, bring them home, decorate the trees, sometimes hide them in secret caches. We do much the same, going to far as to haul a tree indoors and decorate it there! We hang it with tiny lights and shiny objects that we bring out of hiding to reflect those lights, and this seems to cheer us a bit.

Much more than religious or superstitious lore is involved in this odd custom. Humans who live in the polar regions sometimes suffer from a temporary psychosis called "pibloktoq," caused by the too-long dark and lack of vitamin D. We who live a little south deal with a milder version - seasonal affective disorder. So, the addition of lights to street corners and living rooms makes some sense from a mental health point of view. Something, to remind us of light.

We UU's in Stockton are blessed with a building that has large and numerous windows to let in what light is left to us in December. As for the adornments, some of us are wondering if we could string lights on the Cloutie tree that we put up for All Souls Day. After all, it is an Oak branch, which would please our Druid ancestors! We could make some bright-colored sun faces to hang in the windows as a kind of sympathetic magic. We could, and probably will, bring in multitudes of poinsettias to brighten the sanctuary. Certainly we will bring out the old multi-cultural stories of how the Light came to Earth. And what of your own precious selves, my dears? What can you do to brighten your days? Reconnect with family and friends? Eat rich food? Imbibe, but sparingly if at all, of liquid spirits? Walk in falling leaves before the snow? Consider the spiritual adventure that could be! Wendell Berry describes such an adventure in this poem from his book, "Sabbaths."

***Slowly, slowly, they return  
To the small woodland let alone:  
Great trees, outspreading and upright,  
Apostles of the living light.***

***Patient as stars, they build in air  
Tier after tier a timbered choir,  
Stout beams upholding weightless grace  
Of song, a blessing on this place.***

***They stand in waiting all around,  
Uprisings of their native ground,***

***Down-comings of the distant light;  
They are the advent they await.***

***Receiving sun and giving shade,  
Their life's a benefaction made,  
And is a benediction said  
Over the living and the dead.***

***In fall their brightened leaves, released,  
Fly down the wind, and we are pleased  
To walk on radiance, amazed.  
O light come down to earth, be praised!***

And for those of you who are staying indoors for personal or health reasons, sit close to the windows by day and the hearth by night. Surround yourselves in light!

Blessings,  
Armida

## Co-Moderator's Report

The Board agrees that our church should provide gifts to a needy family again this year. We have also made some changes to our Service Partners list. We have replaced Purr-fection, Red Cross and FACC with the NW Illinois Gender and Sexuality Alliance, Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation, and the UU Service Committee. The amount collected for JDCF will be sent in as our "corporate membership". We will continue our monthly personal item donations to FACC as usual. Several things we will be doing in the New Year include looking at a remodel of our kitchen to help with traffic flow and organizing a "satellite service" in Freeport. This will be my last Co-Moderator report – I will be moving to the Steward position after the Annual Meeting in January. I have a few feelers out for a new Co-Mod, but of course, would welcome someone who comes forward to help "steer the ship" in the next few years!

See you in church! Mark

Pledge Drive Reminder Just a reminder, if you haven't turned in your pledge card yet, please do so soon! Thanks!

## Church Wish List

You know how, on amazon.com and other online shops, you can make a list all the things you want. . . someday, when you are ready, when you have the money? Okay, your church has such a list, too, of items we could use in the future — just in case you know where we could find them at reasonable prices.

- An energy star refrigerator with fairly large shelves.
- Electric stove, not a ceramic top.
- 3 Large round folding tables.
- 75 Comfortable folding chairs. Imagine — chairs with padded seats and runners that do not screech when you move them!

## CARE CARD GREETINGS

Your sending care cards to our church family shut-ins has been a loving participation. Thank you all so much for taking this extra time to think about our friends.

The cards have been changed to Christmas Greeting Cards for December. Let's keep sending them out until they are gone!! Joan Harmet

## **Touchstones theme for December - HOPE**

Please join us on Sunday, December 10 for the Touchstones Adult Discussion Group. We'll meet at 9:15 a.m. in the RE area. This group is open to anyone interested in some stimulating, thought provoking conversations. No need to sign-up, just show-up! The material that will be discussed can be found on line at <http://www.uuchurchofstockton.org/touchstones.html>. Hard copies are also available in the Patterson Room. Please look them over if you have a chance.

We're pretty loose, so we'll be happy to have your thoughts whether you've read the material or not. Please consider joining us! ~ Laura Differed

A reminder to the Galena/West end group – next meeting is Wednesday, December 13 at 5:30 at Weeders. ~ Sheila Haman

Armida would like to start a Touchstones group at her home midweek during daylight hours. Let her know you are interested, or sign up on the hospitality table.

Meetings are monthly and last for approximately 1.5 hours. Please see the sign-up sheet in the Patterson Room.

Everyone is welcomed and encouraged to read The Touchstones Journal whether you are part of a group or not. The Journal can be found at the online address listed above or go to our church website and look for the dark green band at the top. Click on "more" and then "touchstones". Hard copies will be available in the Patterson Room.

Finally, why not consider starting a Touchstones Adult Discussion Group of your own? The recommended size is 6-10 people and meetings are held September through May at any agreed upon location and time. Discussion groups are a great way to share ideas and strengthen our relationships with each other. If interested, please let Armida or anyone on the Board know.

## **News and Notes**

**Before Church Doings:** All during December, Choir Practice at 9:45 a.m. at the Patterson Room piano. Come sing!

**After Church, Coffee Hour Doings:** After each service during December, there will be added activities in Patterson Room — a 1000 piece puzzle to assemble, a creative craft table with materials to make images of the sun, a table to string cranberries or popcorn for our tree. If you have old magazines with colorful pictures, please bring them to the craft table for the collage projects.

It is a joy to welcome new members into our church. We will hold a brief orientation meeting on Sunday, December 10, right after the service. Just bring your coffee to the conference area by the pianos.

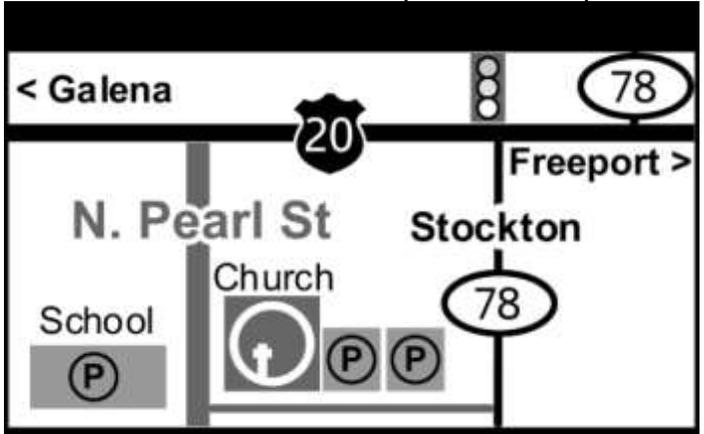
As we age, our energy tends to decrease; we do not get around as easily as we once did. Yet there is much that we can still accomplish and contribute. Even if all you can do is remember someone in love, hold them in your heart and wish them well, this will be a great service. I (the rev) will list the names of people who could use those loving thoughts in the Newsletter and the

Friday Dispatches. Any and all of you who are so inclined may “pray” for them. Altogether, we are the Prayer Circle. Welcome to it! And here is your first assignment:

Keep Jean Logemann, Betty Rausch, Don Mueller, and Ed Reisinger in your hearts; they are struggling with health issues. Also Martha Wolf, Taylor Rockwell, Chris Fye and Paula Morhardt, all of whom have suffered recent losses of a parent.

Notice something in the church building that needs attention? Please email Ted Davenport with your observation, or write it on the clipboard in the kitchen.

Who is interested in joining a new Touchstones Group? Armida will host one in her Stockton home. Email her or sign up at the Hospitality Table.

CALENDAR- December 2017	CHURCH INFORMATION
<p><b>Sunday, December 3, 10:30 a.m.</b> Rev. Armida will share thoughts about “Hope,” the Touchstones theme for December. Hope is like a road in the country; there was never a road, but when many people walk on it, the road comes into existence. — Lin Yutang This is R.E. Sunday for our children! “Stories of Our Birth” will introduce the holiday season. After church — Collage a Sun Face. Puzzle Table. String cranberries or popcorn for the tree.</p> <p><b>Sunday, December 10, 10:30 a.m.</b> “Can You Hear Me Now?” One of the best gifts you can give a beloved is to listen, to hear them as they grapple with life, change, worry and hope. Listening is a profound spiritual practice that can transform your life and the lives of your family and friends. Those who have ears to hear Rev. A. again. After church, 11:40 a.m.+ -: Brief meeting with potential new members. Everyone welcome to bring their coffee to the conference space upstairs by the pianos. <i>Before Church, 9:15 a.m. Touchstones Group meets in R.E. space.</i></p> <p><b>Monday, December 11, 6:00 p.m.</b> Board of Trustees</p> <p><b>Wed. December 12, Noon</b> — Worship Com. Let’s meet at noon at E-Town in Elizabeth. If you would like to do a reading on a Sunday morning in December, please email Armida, <a href="mailto:revinres06@yahoo.com">revinres06@yahoo.com</a>. Open to all members and friends.</p> <p><b>Sunday, December 17, 10:30 a.m.</b> Alice Ericksen will speak on “Jesus as Archetype”. Jesus represents an archetype that speaks to something very deep in the human psyche. This is the reason that his story is told over and over and has lasted some 2000 years. This service will help us to think about how we can celebrate both reason and the Jesus story during the Christmas season.</p>	<p><b>219 N PEARL STREET, STOCKTON, IL</b></p>  <p>Wheel chair parking and elevator access is available from the rear parking lot.</p> <p>Sunday Services at 10:30 AM          Rev. Armida Alexander  <a href="http://UChurchOfStockton.org">UChurchOfStockton.org</a>  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/UChurchOfStockton">Facebook.com/UChurchOfStockton</a>  <a href="mailto:uustockton@gmail.com">uustockton@gmail.com</a></p>

**Sunday, December 24, 10:30 a.m.** The Day Before the Day Brunch with seasonal music from whichever musicians appear on the scene! This is Christmas-lite so you can return for Vespers at 7:00 p.m.! Bring cookies!

**Christmas Eve 7:00 p.m.** Out of the Stars," with videos from the Hubble Space Telescope, readings from Ray Bradbury's "Christos Apollo" and the story of the "Light-Bringer," narrated by Rev. Armida and friends.

**Sunday, December 31, 10:30 a.m.** "Hope for the New Year" and New Year's Brunch in Patterson Room. Bring your favorite fruit, Danish, or snack food. We'll provide a main dish and coffee.