



MINISTER'S SLANT -

When despair for the world grows in me and I wake in the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be. . . . — Wendell Berry

Wendell Berry goes on to describe how he goes to the wild places to take in their beauty and peacefulness. He sits with beings who do not indulge in either regret or worry, beings who live in the present moment — free, and he becomes so himself.

Shakespeare explored the misery of “despair for the world” in “Hamlet.” He asks the question, “Why live?” and wonders if it is “nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take up arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing, end them?” But, tragedy ensues, because neither tactic — to suffer quietly and do nothing, nor to actively oppose — will settle that sea of trouble. There must be a third way!

In these troubling times (and all times are troubling,) we could use a remedy for worry. In the quote above, Berry is worrying about the future. Hamlet is obsessed about what happened in the past. Neither lives in the present moment. It's a universal dilemma, and various religious traditions address this dislocation in time. They advise spiritual practice. They teach prayer or meditation or chanting or mindfulness or dance — the third ways.

A few Sundays ago, we heard the story of the Buddhist sage, Milarepa, who tried different methods of getting rid of a horde of demons who invaded and occupied his cave (a lovely metaphor for feeling besieged by regrets and fears.) He discovered that the more he argued, opposed, and rejected them, the more firmly they established themselves in his cave, as though they fed off his oppositional energy. So he finally just welcomed them all, learned what he could from them and let them go. And, faced with Milarepa's courage and hospitality, they went! They left him in peace.

Jesus advised to “give no thought to tomorrow.” Focus on the problems of **this day**. Islam contributes the wisdom of the Sufi poet and religious innovator, Rumi, who, like Milarepa, compared our troubling thoughts and fears to unwelcome house guests.

***This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.***

***Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still treat each guest honorably.
They may be clearing you out
for some new delight.***

***The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.
Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent as a guide from beyond.***

Rumi says to entertain them all. Turn none aside, because they have come for our benefit, though it may not seem so at first — imperious, insistent, wheedling, mocking, frightening as they sometimes are, keeping us awake in the middle of the night. But who has patience for such house guests, who take up residence in our minds and regale us with grief, foreboding, nonsense, aimless jokes, fragments of songs. The task is to just observe them as they come and go — in and out the windows, as we used to sing. Just observe and not react, not respond, not get all in a tizzy. Just watch. It is like a parade, or a stream flowing by. Too often, I get caught by one or another of these passers-by and argue with them, and then how they settle in to stay! And the tizzy is on! How silly, when all that is required to do is nothing, which is precisely the point! Just see; give no thought, just watch; just bow, “Namaste” and let them go on their way.

Ah, such wisdom. It is high. I am a mere student; I do not fully understand. But, I see the paths to freedom from a too-busy mind, a mind plagued with grief and worry. Go into the wild places and let them speak; focus on the present moment and do what needs to be done; watch the breath; open the door like a gracious host and say, “Come in; sit down; I am listening.” More on this kind of weird hospitality on Sunday, October 8th, 10:30 a.m. Bring family and friends. Stay for games afterward!

Blessings,
Armida

Co-Moderator’s Report

The Touchstones theme for October is Hospitality. The Board is taking that to heart by inviting people around Apple Canyon Lake to a special service at the Property Owners Clubhouse on October 22nd at 10:30 a.m. Please make plans to attend! This is our effort to implement one of the goals you called out in the Cottage Groups. Wouldn’t it be great to have church at a new place and see some new faces? See you in church, both at Stockton and at Apple Canyon Lake!
- Mark Haman, Co-Moderator

DOROTHY HILL 1927 - 2017

"We are all visitors to this time, this place. We are just passing through. Our purpose here is to observe, to learn, to grow, to love...and then we return home."~ Aboriginal Proverb

Dorothy Hill left us this past summer. After years away, she has come home to stay beside Bob and near her people. She enjoyed a long life, and her many friends and family will remember her with joy and gratitude. Her mind was cool and collected, but her heart was very warm. We remember her wide and beautiful smile, the warmth of her welcome. Her family tells how they would volunteer to help with the dishes just to be with her in the kitchen and talk through some problem. She could listen to the very end, then offer a thoughtful perspective. She was so wise. But she also had a sense of mischief. She could usually find a slant-wise way of looking at a situation and come up with a wry and witty remark.

She and Bob hosted many family Christmases and made room for young relatives to join their own children for extended stays, so that to this day, those youngsters, not so young now, feel bonded to one another like siblings. The food she provided was so good, but even better than that was the nourishment to your soul, your deep self, your whole being that she served up and gave you just because of who she was and how she cherished all of you. She was a long and faithful member of this church, and we feel privileged to have had her with us for those long good years. Blessed be.

Touchstones theme for October - HOSPITALITY

Please join us on Sunday, Oct. 15th 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 is at: <http://www.uuchurchofstockton.org/touchstones.html>. If you have a chance please look over the discussion material. 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 Dufford

A reminder to the Galena/West end group – next meeting is Wednesday, October 18 at 11:30 at E-Town.

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.

The People's Supper



The Rev. Jennifer Bailey and others launched #100Days100Dinners in January 2017 with the hope of encouraging dialogue across differences over dinner. The project continues and is now called *The People's Supper*.

They offer comprehensive resources to support you.

Website <https://thepeoplesupper.org>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/peoplesupper/>



Consider hosting your own supper to help to begin a process of building bridges across all that divides us. The point is to invite people you don't know or don't know well and have a conversation. The People's Supper is an important vehicle for extending hospitality and building understanding and trust by sharing meaningful stories, good food, and a sense of community.



I think our stories are a lot more complicated than our votes or politics would have us believe. They can shape and reshape us—and in doing so reimagine the contours of our collective selves. *Emily May*

Photo Source: <https://thepeoplesupper.org/our-impact>
(see bottom of page)

News and Notices

Ministry of Listening: Do you have two ears? Can you keep your mouth shut? Do you enjoy hearing people's stories? You might like to serve your church and fellow members and friends through the Ministry of Listening (formerly called the Care Committee.) The Listening Team will be trained to listen with compassion, look for spiritual growing edges, help with the discernment process, and respect confidentiality. If you feel called to this ministry, or if you want to know more about it, please call Armida (815)990-8200. When we have four volunteers, we will schedule training sessions, probably four Sunday mornings to get us started.

Ideas? Concerns? Howzitgoing? The Committee on Ministry is here to hear your ideas, worries, dreams about the ministries of the church. Talk to them; write to them; let them hear from you. Mark Haman, Randy Downing, Alice Ericksen, Nancy Schuldt.

Fund Raising Committee Report



The 4th Annual Council Hill Station Community Fundraiser was a success! Over \$3000 was raised to be split between our 12 Service Partners! Many thanks to all who supported this event in any way. A special thanks to our sponsors, Illinois Bank & Trust and Apple River State Bank/First Community Bank of Galena. Sponsorship added \$500; covering expenses. Thank you to all of you who volunteered that day: The Nottrott Family, Joan & Dick Harmet, Laura Brierre, Kate Rodgers, John & Sally Fischer. Thank you to Armida for offering her words of wisdom. Thank you to Laurie Wurster and Parry Stevens for managing the silent auction! It was a beautiful and profitable day in this gorgeous countryside!

Committee Members:

Sheila & Mark Haman Kate Miller Alice Ericksen Jen Nottrott
Laura & Doug Dufford Nancy & Bill Schuldt

Save the Date - Sunday, October 22, 2017

Put that date on your calendars and plan to attend church that day. But - allow some extra travel time as we will be holding our service at a different place - the Property Owner's Clubhouse at Apple Canyon Lake. This is an experiment to see if we can find some new members by reaching out to where they live. For this experiment to have half-a-chance, we need to demonstrate that we are a viable group by showing up in significant numbers. There is a sign-up sheet in the Patterson, so that we know who is coming and to allow for carpool coordination for those would like to do that.

Please sign up! Your presence is critical to the future of this church. Besides that, it will hopefully be a great day to enjoy the colors of the fall season and for maybe having lunch at the Lakeside Cove restaurant after services. Have fun and support your church - what a deal! The address of the clubhouse is 14A157 Canyon Club Drive, Apple River, Il.

CALENDAR- September 2017

Sunday, October 1 10:30 a.m. Radical Hospitality with Mark Haman, featuring readings from Touchstones and music by Joan Harmet. This will introduce October's theme –hospitality–and begin our month-long exploration of its parameters, limits, and joys.

Sunday, October 8, 10:30 a.m. C'mon In: Welcome Them All, a further exploration of the wisdom of the Buddhist sage, Milarepa, a nominee for the title of the world's best host, master of hospitality. Stories and songs with Rev. Armida and Mel at the piano. Bring family and friends. After Service Re: Gathering: Mini Sub sandwiches, chips, and Games.

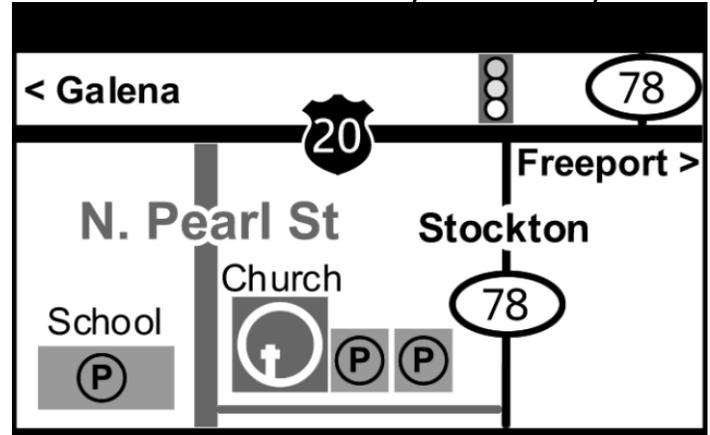
Sunday, October 15, 10:30 a.m. Dick Harmet will speak about What I Learned in Church. It will be a reflection on a lifetime of Church experiences in the suburbs, the city, and the country. As Yogi Berra wisely said, "You can observe a lot by watching." Before Service Pre-Gathering: 9:15 a.m. Touchstone Adult Discussion Group, 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 is in the Newsletter and at uustockton.org If you have a chance, please look over the discussion material. 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!

Sunday, October 22, 10:30 a.m., off-campus at Apple Canyon Lake! Spiritual Awakening with Rev. Armida and Joan Harmet at the piano. The first word of Fitzgerald's Rubiayat is "Wake!" Wake from what -- sleep, ignorance, boredom, a dream, an illusion? And why wake up if the sleep is sweet, the dream pleasant or the illusion reassuring? There must be a reason, right? Sign up on the hospitality table to car pool to this beautiful site. After Service Re-Gathering Options — Lunch at The Cove Restaurant next door, or just mosey around the grounds.

Sunday, October 29, 10:30 a.m. All Souls — A day borrowed from ancient Aztec tradition; our annual celebration of the bonds of love and loss that hold the living and the dead in the embrace of one human family. Who do you want to honor? Who has influenced you, helped you, inspired you, opposed you, loved you? Bring their names. This is a joyful re-gathering of the clan, the tribe, the community when we remember those who have died and those yet to come. After Service Re-Gathering: We will share Three Sisters' Stew, a Native American staple made of corn, beans, and squash.

CHURCH INFORMATION

219 N PEARL STREET, STOCKTON, IL



Wheel chair parking and elevator access is available from the rear parking lot.
 Sunday Services at 10:30 AM
 Rev. Armida Alexander
UUChurchOfStockton.org
[Facebook.com/UUChurchOfStockton](https://www.facebook.com/UUChurchOfStockton)
uustockton@gmail.com

