



MINISTER'S REMARKS

*But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach you;
and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell you;
or speak to the earth, and it shall teach you;
and the fishes of the sea shall declare to you. — Job 12:78*

A generous friend took me to England some years ago. We saw theater and bought Brit rail passes to get out into the country. It was like a homecoming for me, since the family Branch, of whom I am a late twig, emigrated to the U.S. in the mid 17th century, from County Kent. I had a few romantic notions about “the old country,” and those notions rose up before my eyes, more beautiful than I had imagined. It was Spring, and the hedgerows were in bloom. Where farmers here use stones or barbed wire or split-rails to separate fields, the English had let rows and rows of intersecting wild rose bushes grow up to form thorny barriers and to shelter wild creatures like Peter Rabbit and Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle, along with beetles, butterflies and bumblebees. It is a magical and evocative place for any student of English literature. Why, it’s Maid Marian in bridal veil, and Robin o’ the Green, and there’s Will Scarlet! The stories are in the land, yes? I sighed wistfully to my traveling companions, “Oh, why did they (the Branches) ever leave?”

Later, in the lower, darker regions of the monarch’s castles, I found the answer — dungeons (no dragons,) torture chambers, obliettes — the full arsenal of oppression. I began to understand how my ancestors, un-landed commoners no doubt, perhaps troublesome and opinionated as well, might favorably consider a perilous journey across the sea to an unknown country without royalty. Without nobles. Without taxes. (Well, maybe not.) Without a state established religion, bigod! My family and thousands of others left Charles I, tax-collectors, and the roses, and followed the scent of freedom to America. Then, oddly, and against all hope, the old system reestablished itself here. What strange set of mind led the immigrants to create the very situation their ancestors wanted to escape? What old ideas did the early settlers bring with them which, like a virus, infected our economic and political systems? I am beginning to see American history, and my family story within it, as a mixture of lofty political principles, assumptions of moral and religious superiority, renegade economic practices, and the resultant ironies. Over time, the English gradually curbed the power of their monarchs while we in the U.S. elevated the “rich and famous,” beyond all sense and sensibility. Slowly it dawns on me that in the U.S. , the 1% stand in the same position to the 99% as the ancient kings and queens of Europe did to the un-landed commoners. How weird is that!!

What wisdom did the native tribes possess that allowed them to live here for thousands of years and preserve the land in such health and abundance that the early Europeans imagined it was unoccupied? What, in that wisdom, threatened Manifest Destiny? What stories did the original people tell about their relationship with the land and its creatures? Who are Coyote, Iktomi, Inyan, and where are the boundaries and corners where they can be sheltered and kept alive? Where are the hedgerows? The roses? Where are the recesses of our minds and hearts where wisdom still lives? Where?

BOARD REPORT

At the April Board meeting it was decided not to participate in the Stockton Community Garden this coming year. Randy Downing, Laura Dufford, and others have provided most of the labor that goes with the planting, upkeep, and harvesting of the produce. Their time there was well spent, bent over the plot working and delivering the produce to the local nursing home. The roadside clean-up will be organized by Ted Davenport this year and will have already taken place by the time this newsletter arrives. Thanks to all who volunteered to help. Memorial service luncheons are becoming difficult for us to provide. We just don't have enough people available to provide food and work in the kitchen especially during the week. The board is encouraging that a catering service be used during these times.

Contact Rev. Armida or a co-moderator for help in arranging a luncheon. A reminder that the Church plant sale will be May 13th at the Church from 8 – noon. On Saturday May 6th our Church will have a cookout, selling brats and hot dogs at Sullivan's grocery store in Stockton. Stop and have a picnic lunch with friends. Some of the artwork in the sanctuary is being removed and if you have a piece that you want to show off there are places to hang it.

Co-Moderators Mark Haman-Ted Davenport

WORSHIP COMMITTEE NEWS

May Services Will Put a Spring in Your Step.

May 7 Nan Mosher will do a presentation on the religious significance of the cave paintings of southern France and Spain.

May 14 Mother's Day Service. Three of our members will share the influence that their own mothers had on their spiritual growth.

May 21 Rev. A. will regale us with story and commentary: Job and His Friends, perhaps(?)

May 28 Rev. A. again: Story and comments as usual. Subject is TBA. Something will occur to her, or one of you will ask an important question, and that will be it!

See you in church!

CHURCH NEWS



Many thanks to everyone who continues to support the Freeport Area Church Cooperative with donations of personal items and toilet paper. Though our donations have been increasingly generous, the FACC always runs out of these all-important items quickly as there is great need in our community. Please continue to give generously and know how much our contributions are appreciated!

UU DIRECTORY UPDATES

If you have any changes in your contact information (address, email, phone, etc.), please let us know right away! You can contact anyone on the Board or Rev. Armida, and they will pass the information on to Sheila Haman who will get it posted in the newsletter. Sheila's email is sheila.haman626@gmail.com or you can call or text her at 563-552-8596.

Please make note of the following contact information updates:

Lee Anderson's new address: 555 N. Pearl, Apt. B2, Stockton, IL 61085

Jean Logemann's new phone: 608-325-1416

Dana and Randy Vincent's new email: dvincent8629@gmail.com

and new phone: 815-985-9387

Mark Haman's new email: mark.haman49@gmail.com

Sheila Haman's new email: sheila.haman626@gmail.com



Spring Plant Sale - May 13th

On Saturday, May 13th, the Saturday before Mother's Day, the Patterson Room will be filled with plants and people from 8 a.m. to noon!

Our popular fund-raising event, the spring plant sale is just around the corner. Why is this plant sale so popular? It's because of the quality of the plants and their reasonable prices. However, we are only able to hold this popular sale because of the support of all of us. Here's what you can do to help.

- By now we're sure that you have been out in your garden. Have you noticed that some of your perennials need to be divided. As you're doing this, why not re-pot some of them for the sale? Hostas and lilies are particularly popular. But all plants are welcome.
- Do you have any house plants that you can divide or share? Think about re-potting them as well.
- What about taking cuttings and rooting some of your favorite plants?
- Do you have any bulbs? These are also very popular.
- We could also use any pots you no longer need.
- But most importantly, we need volunteers to help with the sale. The first opportunity for you to volunteer will be on April 29. From 9:00AM to 3:00PM we will be gathering at Bright Flower Farm to pot our donations for the sale. We will also be setting up the Patterson Room for the sale on May 12 from 10:00 to Noon. And then of course we need help on the day of the sale, May 13 from 8:00 to Noon. Many hands make light work!

This year we are also adding "ready-made" planters. Things that you can put on your deck or porch immediately or give as Mother's Day gifts. Can you help with any of these?

Our Spring Plant Sale can only be successful if we all help in whatever way we can. Contact Parry Stevens at 815-238-4628 parrystevens@gmail.com or Alice Ericksen at 815-858-3880 paulandalice11@outlook.com for more information.



BRAT AND HOT DOG COOKOUT AT SULLIVAN'S!

Saturday, May 6, from 10 am to 2 pm at Sullivan's in Stockton. This will kick off our **fund-raising events** for the year! Come and enjoy a juicy dog or brat before - or after - you do your grocery shopping.

Passover at Stockton UU



The Seder dinner following our April 9 service was well-attended. Byron Ackerman led us all through a shortened version of the Haggadah, the telling of the story of the Passover and explaining this ancient Jewish tradition. With some researching and a lot of work, Joan Metzger, along with some helpers, provided foods meaningful to this family celebration. We learned about and enjoyed eating kugel (a potato pudding), tsimmes (a vegetable stew) charosets (chopped apples, nuts and cinnamon) and even bitter herbs (horseradish) along with the roasted chicken. We all felt it was a meaningful way to deepen our understanding of this religion.

- Lee Anderson

Book, Art, Music & More Sale

Sept. 2 @ our church.

So, if you are cleaning and sorting this spring, please hold onto books, music, art and other fine items for this sale. Details to follow. Thanks!

Far-Dreaming? You are invited!

What challenges and blessings await us in the future? How will Stockton fare in the coming decades? Will population decrease, or will there be a renaissance? How does the church plan for change? We are wondering if the present roof is original with the building — 117 years old?!! Is it time, perhaps, to put a new roof in the long-range budget?

Your board, in conjunction with the ad hoc “Long Range Planning Committee,” will be hosting a series of cottage meetings to seek your input.

We want your ideas and suggestions to reinvigorate our church, and to make short and long-term plans for the very important work of this church— not just to survive, but to thrive!

Everyone will be asked to participate in a session, either in Freeport, Galena or Stockton, and sign-up sheets will be available at the church.

We will also make personal calls to encourage you to participate, and will try to accommodate a variety of schedules.

Please make a commitment to be part of this process! Perhaps never in our lifetimes has there been a greater need for institutions that stand for reason, justice and compassion.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

ATTENTION: THE NEWSLETTER DEADLINE WILL ALWAYS BE THE 20TH OF THE MONTH AT 5 P.M. PLEASE GET YOUR NOTICES AND ARTICLES TO TED (TKDAVENPORT@HOTMAIL.COM) OR MARK AND SHEILA (HAMAN@ATT.NET).

SOUL MATTERS

Join us for our Soul Matters discussion group. We'll meet on Sunday, May 21st at 9:15 in the R.E. area of the church. Discussion materials are at the end of the newsletter. It's helpful to look the information over before the gathering, but not necessary. We welcome all who are interested in attending. Discussions are diverse and interesting! Please join us! This will be the last Soul Matters discussion until we start up again in the fall.

Soul Matters/Spirit Journey May 2017

What Does It Mean To Be A Community of Embodiment?



“I spend most time wondering if I should be somewhere else. Instead, I’m learning to shape the words “thank you” with my first breath each morning. My last breath each night. So when the very last breath comes, at least I will know I was grateful for all the places I was so sure I was not supposed to be.”

- Sarah Kay, Poet, from The Paradox

Every religion worth its salt will tell you that the reason to pay attention to the present moment is so that we can better hear what life and our hearts are trying to tell us! Embodied living is not simply about being grateful for the unnoticed gifts in front of us; it’s also about noticing that every moment and every context — no matter how imperfect, messed up and incomplete — is trying to talk to us. The reason we are called to sink into and care for our bodies is not just to relieve stress; it’s so that our body’s voice no longer gets drowned out by all the other noise. The reason we are called to allow nature to embody us is not simply so that we can feel our interconnectedness; it’s so that we can allow that interconnectedness to tell us its wisdom. The reason to stop trying so hard to change our current circumstances is not simply to “be here now;” it’s so that our current circumstances will finally be able to get a word in edgewise about where *it thinks* we should go!

And if we do this friends - if we shape our ‘thank you’s’ and take listening seriously – then that elusive gift of embodiment will be ours: that sacred sense of being exactly where we are supposed to be.

May this month’s work help all of us stumble back to and better embody that wonderful space!

Spiritual Exercises

A: Right Where You’re Supposed To Be? Here are your instructions: 1. **Pick a random day on the May calendar.** 2. **Begin that day by “offering thanks.”** Do it in your own way. 3. **Center on the words “This is right where I am supposed to be.”** Before the day gets going, get yourself in the mindframe of this sentence. Meditate on it. 4. **Start listening.** The whole point of paying attention is for us to “better hear what life and our hearts are trying to tell us.” 5. **End with thank you...and a thank you note.** As a way of saying thank you, write a paragraph

or two about why this particular day of yours was “exactly where you were supposed to be.” Come to your group ready to share your note and your experience.

B: A Love Letter To Your Body *Deep Breaths are like little love notes to your body. - Anon*

In a vulnerable and insightful [essay](#), Christine Valters Paintner asks, “How many of us treat our bodies with the lavish attention they deserve?” She goes on to challenge us to “write a love letter to your body, offering both gratitude and forgiveness. Instead of using words, offer it in food, in warmth, in touch... Instead of rushing from place to place until you crash into bed exhausted, allow holy pauses to breathe deeply, take a long bath as an act of offering, lavish yourself with oil. Prepare a nourishing meal for just yourself. Eat chocolate, but make sure it is the deepest, darkest, richest kind you can find and eat it with as much attention as you can summon. Make an appointment for a massage and receive some loving touch imagining that you are being anointed for blessing others.”

CALENDAR – MAY 2017

Sat. May 6, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. BRAT & HOTDOG SALE!!

SULLIVAN'S in Stockton. Come for lunch!

Sunday, May 7 Nan Mosher, Cave Paintings

Sat. May 13, Plant Sale 8:00 a.m. - Noon

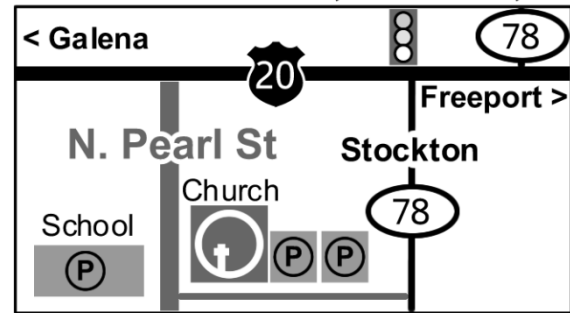
Sun. May 14 Mother's Day Celebration

Sun., May 21 Oh Job, the Forsythia! Rev. A.

Sun. May 28 Who Knows? Rev. A.

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

CHILD CARE EVERY SUNDAY AT 10:30 AM

REV. ARMIDA ALEXANDER, MINISTER

UUCHURCHOFSOCKTON.ORG



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

219 N PEARL ST, STOCKTON, IL 61085