



THE CHIMES

IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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“Revlections”

February 2018

“He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Can you see anything?” The man looked up and said, “I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.” Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again, and he saw everything clearly.” - Mark 8:23-26

If you’ve been immersed in this year’s plague zone, we should talk. Why is it so hard to get well this winter? I’m sure I need to keep decontaminating my house, laptop, phones, remote controls and everything else. But, it occurs to me that wellness is one of “inside out” spiritual things, too. As I think about Lent 2018, what internal germs (sins, if you want to be churchy) are we bringing with us?

I know where I need to start. As an activist, I’m always contending with a constant companion of political agitation that keeps pushing me into endless emails and phone calls. So, this Lent, I’m limiting the time I spend with my favorite talking heads on cable news and will read a book to feed and challenge my soul. My diet needs less media and more leafy greens and water. How about you? Where do you put the majority of your limited free time and mental/spiritual energy?

Each of us will be bringing distracted, cluttered and way less than really good lives into Lent this year. It’s no surprise that so many of us can’t get beyond lifetimes of bad habits, some destructive choices, and the burdens of our private hidden histories. It’s so easy to get caught up in daily grinds and forget who and what we are called to be.

As a Samsung commercial running during the Winter Olympics states, *“We were born to do what can’t be done.”* That’s what discipleship is for anybody who wants to help create a future that God is dreaming for us. Lent is an invitation and a challenge to do a spiritual wellness check and create more God space in our tight time schedules and compromised heart and soul places.

So, I invite you to create a personal wellness plan during these 40 days to get better from the inside out. Keep it simple and reachable. Then, we can recharge our life together here at the church so we will be better equipped to do more outside our walls as a church with a missional heart. Welcome to Lent 2018! Out of dusty ashes, new life can come to anyone seeking a better way with more of God’s light and less of the world’s noise. In the meantime, wash your hands!

Peace...
Rev Bev

UCC leaders grieve, urge activism after another deadly school shooting in South Florida

February 15, 2018

From the UCC Website. Written by **Connie Larkman**

Seventeen people died in a school shooting Wednesday afternoon in South Florida, killed on Valentine's Day by a former student expelled from the high school for disciplinary problems.

"Oh, my heart aches at news like this. I hate watching these stories unfold," said the Rev. John Dorhauer, UCC general minister and president. "The senseless loss of young life; the random violence that takes the lives of innocent students; the growing sense that our schools are not safe. There is a burgeoning helplessness we all feel as we know no words will ease the pain of the victims' families; and no amount of response on our part seems to mitigate the likelihood that it will happen again."

The shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High in Parkland, Fla., about an hour northwest of Miami, took the lives of both students and adults and injured more than a dozen other people. It is the deadliest school shooting since the 2012 massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., which claimed the life of 20 children and 6 adults.

"Our condolences go out to all involved, but our condolences are not enough," said the Rev. John Vertigan, conference minister of the Florida Conference UCC. "And so, I pray, 'have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love,' and I strive to keep faith with a hurting people, a devastated community, and a nation in need of repentance at our lack of resolve to bring an end to the senseless gun violence that continues to scar the lives of so many young people and their families who start each school day with a hug they hope will be returned later that very same day."

Teenagers waiting to be dismissed for the day heard a fire alarm, and then gunshots. Students taking cover recorded cellphone videos, capturing the sounds of rapid gunfire.

"The Florida Conference of the United Church of Christ is a member of the Florida Coalition for the Prevention of Gun Violence and today proves that membership is not enough," he continued. "Activism and advocacy are essential. It's past time for the Church to act. It's past time to stand up to the gun lobbies and to advocate for Jesus' way of peace that just can't imagine how sisters and brothers or a nation can dwell together in unity while doing nothing to train our common spirit in the ways of justice, while doing nothing to mitigate the availability of weapons that enable such rampant violence, while doing nothing to stand in the public square and shout with a prophet's heart that our prayers are not adequate and our faith demands more. We cannot pray 'How long, O God, how long!?' and stand by doing nothing in the face of evil."

Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel said the suspect is in custody, arrested in a neighboring city about an hour after leaving the school. He was armed with a semiautomatic AR-15 assault rifle, and a substantial amount of ammunition. He's now [charged with 17 counts of premeditated murder](#).

"The tragic shooting took place on Ash Wednesday when the church enters the season of Lent which is a time of repentance," said the Rev. Jim Moos, UCC national officer and executive minister of Global Engagement and Operations. "Responsibility for these ongoing, senseless attacks rests not only with the shooters, but also with a society that refuses to repent from its idolatrous attachment to guns and gives virtually unlimited access to weapons capable of inflicting mass casualties."

Seven weeks into the year, and there have already been 18 school shootings in 2018, eight of which have resulted in death.

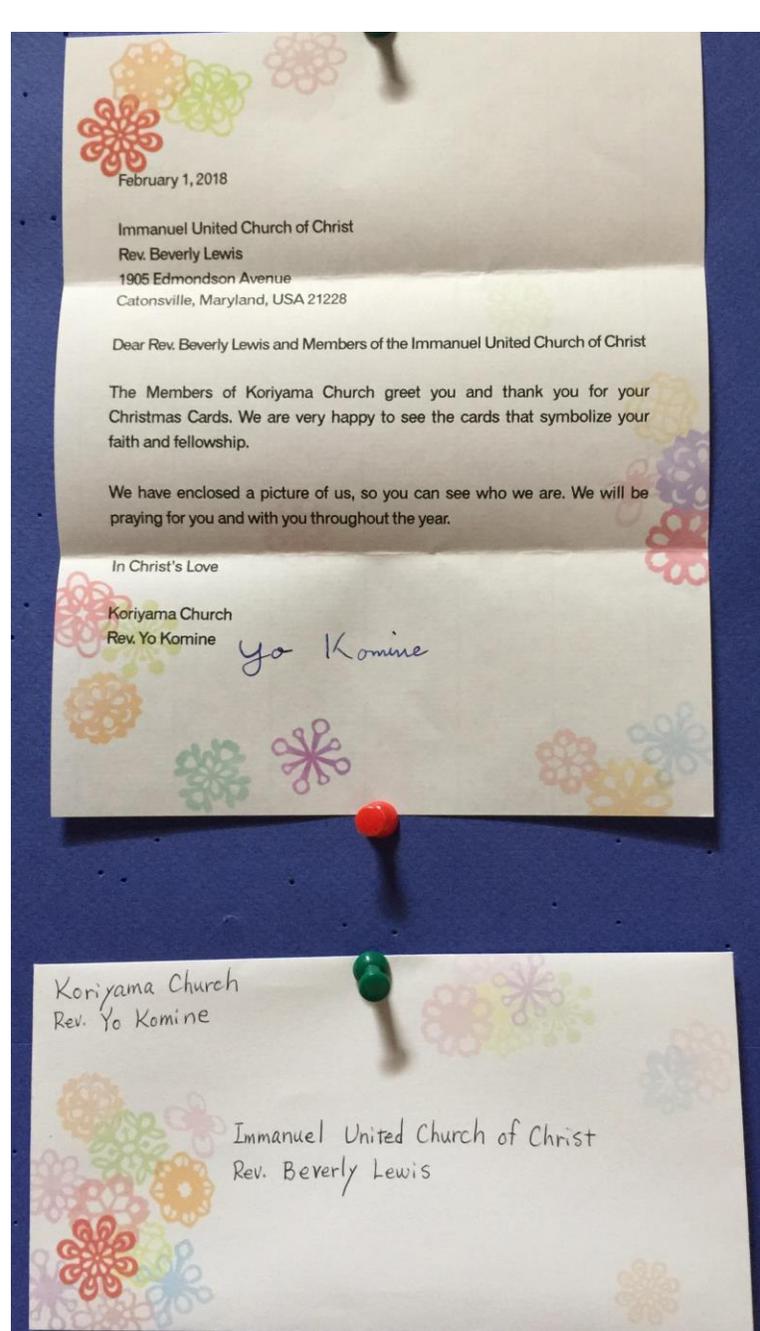
"Our hearts ache with news of another gun violence tragedy, and we lift up prayers for the victims, their families, and the school community. But our words and actions cannot end there," said Sandy Sorensen, director of the UCC Washington, D.C. office. "We must remember in November, and commit to tirelessly raising the issue of gun violence prevention in this pivotal midterm election year."

"As we begin the season of Lent, let us all reflect deeply on how we worship violence and rely far too heavily on brute force to get our way, resolve our conflict, or express our rage," Dorhauer said. "Let us commit to turning around a Congress beholden to the Military Industrial complex and the NRA when next we cast our vote. Let us use our time in worship to not only pray for the victims of this and all other random acts of violence, and to remind the people of faith with whom we gather that violence begets violence and that the way of Jesus is the way of peace."

"Pastors, find your people today and console them. People, find your pastors today and ask them to lead with you in a movement to end violence in our communities. Remember especially the people of Parkland, Florida whose anguish cries out and whose pain demands justice," Vertigan said. "Help build communities where this doesn't happen. Use your own compassion and power to heal this national sin. And, yes, continue to pray."



CARD FROM KORIYAMA CHURCH, JAPAN



February Birthdays

03 – Michael Fell
14 – Sara Avery-Babel

07 – Ray Abel
22 – Marjay Contwor



Upcoming Events

- “Undies Sunday” – Sunday, March 11 – all sizes and kinds of new men’s underwear and socks are needed.
- Consistory – Sunday, March 18
- Last Day for Easter Flower Orders – Sunday, March 11 (order slips will be in February 25, March 4, and March 11 bulletins)
- Palm Sunday – Sunday, March 25
- Maundy Thursday – Thursday, March 29, 7:30 pm service
- Good Friday – Friday, March 30, 7:30 pm service
- Easter – Sunday, April 1



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Lectionary Readings

(Day-Date; First Reading; Psalm; Second Reading; Gospel)

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany – February 4, 2018

Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-11, 20c; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39

Transfiguration Sunday – February 11, 2018

2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9

Ash Wednesday – February 14, 2018

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

First Sunday in Lent – February 18, 2018

Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

Second Sunday in Lent – February 25, 2018

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38

Prayer Concerns

PLEASE REMEMBER OUR HOME-BOUND MEMBERS:

PRAYER CONCERNS IN THE CHURCH FAMILY:

Rev. Bev; Patrick and his family following the death of Patrick's mother. Richard Canter, recovering from surgery; Beverly Simpson recovering from knee replacement surgery.

PRAYER CONCERNS IN THE EXTENDED CHURCH FAMILY:

Bryan Holley's brother's impending surgery in February; Sue and Steve DiPaula's extended family; Central Atlantic Conference; residents and staff of Earl's Place.

PRAYER CONCERNS IN OUR REGION:

Dreamers facing uncertain futures and all undocumented residents; Baltimore gun violence; refugee families in Baltimore County; safety of law enforcement and first responders.

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL PRAYER CONCERNS:

Victims, students, and families of Parkland, Florida, school shooting; all UCC disaster relief projects; earthquake victims in Taiwan; Puerto Rico; prayers for our country; families fearful of deportation; all U.S. military deployed and stateside; refugees seeking safety and compassionate care.