‘Gifts of the Dark Wood’ is Lenten theme; Sunday worship to allow time of reflection

The Worship Committee and Pastor Alicia are busily working on plans for our Lenten season. As with Extended Advent, we will have a theme and special visuals in the sanctuary to reinforce that theme.

For Lent 2016 we will ponder “Gifts of the Dark Wood.” The dark wood may mean either the cross or the dark times in our lives or possibly something else to you.

This seasonal theme comes from the book, “Gifts of the Dark Wood: Seven Blessings for Soulful Skeptics and Other Wanderers” by Eric Elnes, which will also be offered as our small group study through Lent.

You’ll find a few changes in the service. The choir will sit with the congregation on the main floor most of the time because we will weave music throughout the hour, beginning each service with a sung poem, “There’s a Path.”

After the sermon each week will be a time of reflection.

You’ll find we will have more time spent in prayer, as is befitting the season of Lent.

And you’ll hear some favorite spirituals in February to mark Black History Month.

Each week has a theme, such as gifts that come out of uncertainty, emptiness, getting lost or temptation.

The book also follows these same weekly topics and therefore will be explored in both worship and in small group study.

If you’re interested in the Lenten Study, you can attend one hosted Sundays at 3 p.m. by Dean Moyer See ASHES, Page 6

Angela preps books for our library

You’ve likely seen our Little Free Library at the Peale entrance on University Avenue. It has books free for the taking for anyone walking by.

But unless you’ve been at the church Friday mornings, you probably haven’t seen Angela Palmieri, the “librarian” or caretaker of the library.

Angela is at UUMC on Fridays staffing the door to allow Friday Community guests into the building. She also has been stamping books donated for the library so that anyone taking a

See UUMC’s, Page 5

Sunday potluck!

Remember to bring to church this Sunday, Feb. 7, your dish to pass and a place setting for the Congregational Potluck right after worship in Fellowship Hall.

We’ll learn the state of the church and what’s new at UUMC.
From our pastor...

This year, let’s focus on building relationships, so that…

Greetings,

This year, let’s focus on building relationships, so that…

I hope this Lent you will be able to dive into self-reflection through worship and our small group study.

Feb. 10 starts Lent with Ash Wednesday. Feb. 14 is the first Sunday of Lent.

Please join us as we transform our sanctuary to bring our theme to life, make more space for prayer and reflection.

This year I would like to have us focus on four words: “building relationships” and “so that.”

I’m hoping that everything that we do will build relationships — within the congregation, with our neighbors, with the city UMC churches and with God.

The words “so that” come from the book “Bearing Fruit” we read for Hand to Plow in December.

The words “so that” will keep us focused on the “why” we do what we do.

For example, I’d like to focus on relationships so that we can share God’s love.

We can go further. I’d like to focus on relationships so that we can share God’s love so that people will know UUMC is not only about feeding the hungry but loving all of God’s children.

The “so that’s” can continue on and on. The purpose is to do everything with intention and purpose.

This is going to be a great year full of fun and faith!

Peace be with you until we meet again.

— Pastor Alicia

Alicia Wood

The website dedicated to the Lenten study book, Eric Elnes’ “Gifts of the Dark Wood: Seven Blessings for Soulful Skeptics (and Other Wanderers),” describes The Dark Wood this way:

“The Dark Wood is the surest place to meet God. It is a place where you may feel uncertain, empty, lost, tempted and alone.

“Yet these feelings — these gifts of the Dark Wood — can be your greatest assets on your journey because they invite you to probe, question and discover.

“According to the ancients, you don’t need to be a saint or spiritual master to experience profound awakening.

“You don’t even have to be ‘above average.’

All you really need to be is struggling.”

Elnes said it took him five years to write the book.

He said, “It’s all about those dark wood experiences of life where life hits us hard, presenting us opportunities that we don’t necessarily consider to be gifts.

“And yet if we see them, we work through them in the right ways, they do end up becoming avenues of revelation, finding who we are, who God is and what we’re about in this world.”

Those opportunities are evident in the title of most of the chapters in his book:

1. Where We Find Ourselves
2. The Gift of Uncertainty
3. The Gift of Emptiness
4. The Gift of Being Thunderstruck
5. The Gift of Getting Lost
6. The Gift of Temptation
7. The Gift of Disappearing
8. The Gift of Misfits
9. Where We Go from Here

Here’s an excerpt from the book:

“As we explore the Dark Wood, I’ll serve as an interpretive guide of sorts. While I take up this task as an ordained Christian minister with twenty years of experience serving churches, you will not find any attempt made to convert you to Christian faith. If I attempt any conversion, it will not be to make you a believer, but to convert you to being more fully yourself, as you were created to be.”

Elnes is senior pastor of Countryside Community Church, a United Church of Christ congregation, in Omaha, Nebraska.
On Jan. 16 we welcomed about 35 guests to UUMC to watch Wake Forest University take on Syracuse University in an away men’s basketball game. Nelson Price and Terry Kubat made the initial connections to ensure the game could be broadcast on large screen.

I brought in lots of good food and drink and had a couple of posters made that were displayed outside the Peale entrance.

Steven Bacon set up the AV equipment and drafted perfect directions for Starke Donnally and guests Phil and Tony to follow.

The game was displayed with great sound in the Pettengill Center. It was a wonderful afternoon filled with warmth, happy ribbing and cheering for our local players.

Several of our guests were new visitors to UUMC and were happy to be welcomed into our gathering.

This “Game Day” was born out of Outreach’s Listening Grant. A conversation between past “Listener” Lori Wyman and Terry identified this community need.

It has grown tremendously with only this second offering. We have hopes that our March 5 event when SU takes on Florida State will be even better attended.

The evening after the Game Day my older daughter, Aydan, sent my husband and me the cartoon above.

Aydan came with me to Game Day on the 16th to help me set up and make a veggie tray. I introduced her to some of the guests and congregation folk who I knew, and she spoke to a couple schoolmates she recognized. Then she sat and watched the game and the people. Soon Aydan left on her daily adventures. But she found this cartoon as she was out and about.

Aydan’s text to my husband and me, which included the cartoon, also said, “This sounds like you guys.”

Over a basketball game and a meal on a snowy day maybe we changed a few borders, beliefs and structures.

Maybe one teenager didn’t see separatism but togetherness.

— Galyn Murphy-Stanley
Outreach Coordinator

Galyn and her husband received this cartoon their daughter Aydan had found after attending Game Day at UUMC.

Images from Outreach
MEMORIAL SERVICE
- The memorial service for Sue Bambacht will be 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 14. Her daughter, Karen, is asking that anyone who is comfortable doing so will share a memory of Sue during the service.

THANK YOU
- From Nancy Nevin: Thanks to all of you for the beautiful flowers that were on the altar Jan. 24. They were brought to me at home where I was recuperating from surgery.

ACHIEVEMENTS
- Alphonzo Devine Cooper, son of Eva Cooper Jah, has been elected general secretary of the Liberian Community of Syracuse Inc. Devine arrived in July 2015. Congratulations, Devine!

PRAYERS REQUESTED:
- For those in military service: Jim Pettyjohn and Matt Fischer
- Sunday, January 10
  - Dan and Morgan: Safe travels and good weather as we travel to Mexico.
  - Elise: Prophet Jesus, Bless Phera to her journey Home, in Monroe County, Rochester.
  - John: My uncle had a very bad stroke. Please pray for him
  - Maureen: For a job soon
  - Be with the family of Genn Thuma, who died Saturday — and peace be with Genn.
  - Prayers for improved health.
  - For Russ and an upcoming Social Security hearing.
  - For the sick and shut-in. May Christ heal and provide them the comfort they need in their times of need.
  - Prayers for North Korea and the government there to show peace
  - Sunday, January 17
  - Diana: For peace and understanding in all relations. For discernment along my journey with God.
  - Jayne Humbert: God’s blessings on Joviet and Devine, who are at orientation now and start at OCC on Tuesday
  - Ralph Best: Prayers requested for Beverly Schmidt, who will be undergoing an eye operation tomorrow morning.
  - Remembering my mom, who died 21 years ago today
  - For all who are lonely and hurting
  - Prayers for peace, love and respect for all people and a world unified.
  - To find a good lawyer to help me find justice
  - Sunday, January 24
  - Elise: Prophet Jesus, Praise and bless Mr. Willie, for his lungs breathe and function freely!
  - Jim: Thank you, Dear God, for answering my prayers in finding my new job.
  - John: My uncle is still in the hospital from the stroke he had two weeks ago.
  - Having a test for glaucoma on Tuesday. (need a good result).
  - For Richard Yost, pastor of Emmanuel Lutheran Church, on the death of his mother.
  - Prayers and encouragement to President Obama and his sincere concern for veterans like myself.
  - Prayers for reconciliation with oneself and others while embracing change.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 31
- Diana: To find my own safe sanctuary “home.”
- Elise: Prophet Jesus, I give praise to you to give me a new place called home!
- John: Pray for my Uncle Russ still in the hospital.
- Peter: Thanks for the community’s growing awareness of the need for reconciliation, peace and common security.
- Pray for Helena Schmidt as she continues to struggle with medical issues.
- For reconciliation of all types and new beginnings.
- For all those with harsh words.
- For guidance during this time of voting for our political leaders.
- For all Middle Eastern refugees still struggling to escape persecution and starvation right now!

THANKS AND PRAISE
- Sunday, January 10
  - I bless God for my family.
  - Prayers of thanks for Katie Flynn getting a permanent job! And for Katie continuing to grow stronger and healthier
- Sunday, January 17
  - We give thanks for glimmers of hope for peace in the Middle East, a non-nuclear Iran and peace talks on Syria
- Sunday, January 24
  - Prayers of thanks for Jim’s new job! Prayers for Oliva.
  - I bless God Almighty for his grace upon my family and the church.
- Sunday, January 31
  - Thank you, God! Devine and Joviet are attending OCC.
UUMC’s Little Free Library caretaker is an avid reader

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A book knows where it came from and, she restocks the library as needed.

The stamp says:
“I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library.”
– Jorge Luis Borges

Courtesy of your friends at University United Methodist Church

It’s natural that Angela, 37, would have something to do with the Little Free Library as she worked at the county library at The Galleries downtown from 2002 to 2014.

Before that she had worked at the Burger Kings on Erie Boulevard East and ShoppingTown Mall.

Angela, who lives in Eastwood with her mom and stepdad, attended nine different elementary schools in Syracuse before she got the services she needed. She graduated from Nottingham High School in 1997.

Angela said she was named after actress Angela Cartwright, who played Brigitta in “The Sound of Music,” her mom’s favorite movie.

She’s an avid reader and in 1996 began keeping track of how many books she’s read. She’s up to 980.

Her favorite books include history, mystery and biographies. She especially liked a biography of Robin Williams. Other hobbies include going bowling and watching movies.

Angela attends James Street United Methodist Church, where she was baptized.

Altar flowers

Altar flowers were given:
- by Rosemary Chappell in memory of loved ones.
- by Bob and Ginny Dewey in memory of loved ones.
- by a grateful son, Charles Chappell III, in memory of his father, Charles Chappell Jr.

Flowers were given to John Indick, Margo Koten, Mary Wilson and Nancy Nevin.

Flowers were delivered by Margo Koten, Don Koten, Starke Donnally and Jo-Ann May.

Guild meeting

The next meeting of the UUMC Guild will be 1:30 p.m. Feb. 24 in the Chappell Room.

The speaker is Pastor Alicia Wood, and Janet Sciscioli is the hostess.

March birthdays

2 – Jerry Cargo, Emelia Weah
3 – Julia Ross
4 – Grace Bradshaw
5 – Doug Hemphill, Bob Coutts
6 – Aimie Sarkodie-Mensah Best
9 – Kirsten Magowan, Keith Wellner
11 – Rita Souferis
16 – Nichola Weah
17 – Jonathan Weah
19 – Stuart Hosler
20 – Donald Koten, Vito Sciscioli
22 – Craig Myers
23 – Bill Potter
24 – Lisa Weah
25 – Michael Fay
26 – Barbara Nunn
27 – Rosemary DeHoog, Denise Marshall, Jeanne Finlayson-Schueler
29 – Renee McKay

If any birthdays are wrong or missing, please contact Tom Boll at uumctb@twcny.rr.com

Save these dates!

It’s still winter, but you’ll want to save these dates in June:

Dr. Mark and Deirdre Zimmerman and family will be visiting churches in the U.S. this year. They will be at UUMC on Sunday, June 5. Plans are being made for their visit with us.

UUMC has been asked to host the annual Pride Interfaith Worship Service on June 14 at 7 p.m.

Movie viewing planned

The movie “An Act of Love” will be shown at UUMC at 5:30 p.m. March 5 after a 5 p.m. supper. The film is about Rev. Frank Schaefer, who was defrocked and refrocked. Discussion, dessert will follow.
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or one at James Street United Methodist Church at 6 p.m. Sundays led by Pastor Alicia. Both start Feb. 7.

Contact the office to get a book and directions to Dean’s house, or if you are attending the James Street group, to let Pastor Alicia know so you can get the book there and you’ll be able to get inside the building. Books are $12. Scholarships are available.

For Ash Wednesday, we’re planning an informal imposition of ashes on the East Genesee Street/University Avenue corner in the morning and a special service at UUMC at 6 p.m.

There will be a drama for Holy Thursday at James Street UMC. On Good Friday the UMMC sanctuary will be open for quiet prayer and reflection. Each person will receive a nail to hold as they enter.

We will have an Interfaith Easter Sunrise Service at Woodlawn Cemetery in the mausoleum at 6:45 a.m. Our Easter worship service will remain at 11 a.m.

The Syracuse United Methodist Churches, led by Nelson Price and Barbara Fought, have again created a daily Lenten devotional. Get your copy this Sunday after worship.
They look orderly now, but parts of the body later became unruly during Peter’s reading of the Scripture.
The children put Mr. Potato Head back together — another example of all the parts being needed and not one being above the other, as in the Scripture.