

Ekklesia

January 10, 2019



Today's picture is one Joni Lovegrove shared with us in 2016.

Sunday Worship

This Sunday marks the coming together of three significant moments in the Christian church. It marks, of course, the second Sunday of the new year and the rebirth of hope in facing into a new year and a new day. It also marks the second Sunday of Epiphany when we focus on the manifestation of God in the coming of Jesus and particularly on the visit of the Magi, seen as symbolic of God's revelation to the Gentiles. In the U.S., Sunday is also prelude to the celebration of the legacy of Martin Luther King on January 21. All three share a common theme: the promise of a new day.

Sunday, we will join the three emphases as we ask ourselves about our readiness for the coming year in church and community. Do we face into 2019 with a sense of expectation for what is to come, or do we enter the year with a sense of foreboding that the tensions manifesting themselves all around us are likely to be accentuated and grow? Do we celebrate the spreading light of God's coming into our midst anew, or are we tempted to withdraw from the world scene into our own comfortable, protected, little islands that close themselves off to those who are different from us, as if the hope of God's coming in Christ has been overwhelmed by the paranoia and fear that grips our day? Will we allow ourselves to engage the remarkable achievement represented in Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement that we may look remaining societal challenges in the face, or will we allow the temptation of discouragement to so occupy our thoughts that we abandon the monumental work yet to be done?

The answers to the questions posed before us in this new year are not simple. Feeling ourselves tempted to turn aside from the challenges that lie before us is a reasonable response to the realities that seem to be confronting us on every hand. We are not, however, the first generation to experience such a challenge. The question that finally matters, however, is how we respond. Do the resources of the faith we celebrate galvanize us for the work ahead? And if so, how do we claim those resources in the coming year so that we can demonstrate ourselves to be among those who do not put their hand to the plow and look back?

Join us Sunday as we work on it. Text: Isaiah 42:5-9.

Prayer Concerns

Available to members.

Wednesday Dinner: Prepared

Because the cold weather discouraged attendance at last night's Table of Grace, we have a full meal of tasty leftovers planned for next Wednesday evening—Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes, green beans, tossed salad, rolls and dessert. You won't need to sign up Sunday; just join us Wednesday at 5.

Advent/Christmas Choral Service

Last Sunday, January 6, Grace Chorale led our morning service, sharing a selection of Advent/Christmas anthems we had enjoyed this season. If you would like to view the service, you may do so at <https://vimeo.com/309883468>.

Thank You, LUAPA

Last night three of our regular workers were on a trip and one was sick, cutting into our regular volunteer force for Table of Grace significantly. Thankfully, Martha, Jasmine, Patty and Russel joined us from LUAPA, providing quite needed help. Sarah also brought her friend Aaron, which was a big help. Thanks to each and every one of you for your thoughtfulness.

Attendance last night was down, due probably to the cold weather. We still, however, served 31 guests + send out another 28 meals to family and neighbors, in addition to feeding around a dozen very hungry volunteers. It was a lovely evening.

Church Directory Update

Please update your church directory to reflect David Gilbert's new phone numbers. His home number is 423-628-4630; cell is 931-584-9176.

Human Rights Rally

Women's Interfaith Dialogue is joining other organization in Oak Ridge in sponsoring a Human Rights Rally from 2 to 5 p.m. on Saturday, January 19. Corresponding both with the celebration of Martin Luther King weekend and the 2nd Annual Women's March in Washington D.C., the event will not highlight what we are against, but rather what we are FOR: Inclusiveness, Justice, Equality. The tone to be joyful, positive, and uplifting, designed to help build community in our Oak Ridge. The rally will start in the Sanctuary of the Unitarian-Universalist Church at 2 p.m. with a musical program and messages from local leaders and pastors. Inclusiveness; kindness; caring for your neighbors; and the words of Martin Luther King will be the themes sounded. At 3:30 p.m. weather permitting, the group will walk on the grass and sidewalks to First Presbyterian Church for fellowship, hot chocolate and dismissal.

PFLAG

PFLAG meet Monday, January 14th at First United Methodist Church, 1350 Oak Ridge Turnpike in the Choir Room. Social time is at 6:45pm and the meeting begins at 7. The program will be on LGBT community connections with representatives from various organizations including the Knoxville Gay Men's Chorus in attendance. Park in the lot closest to OR Turnpike or in the parking lot across Tulane Ave at the Chamber of Commerce. Use the lower office level entrance at the front of the building to enter. All are welcome.

Calendar

Weekly GCC Calendar

Sun: 10:30a—Fellowship

11:00a—Worship

1:30p—LUAPA

Wed: 5:00 p.m.—Thoughts and Prayers

6:00 p.m.—Dinner

7:00 p.m.—Grace Chorale

Sundays Iglesia Apostolica worship service (1:30 p.m.) Thursday evenings/Saturday—Iglesia Apolsolica service & music practice

January 10 Table of Grace

January 28 Next Leadership Council Meeting

January 30 Next Congregational Meeting

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[Because of Grace Chorale's Christmastide concert last Sunday, we did not have a sermon; and thus do not have a sermon to post in this week's Ekklesia. In its place, I have chosen in its place Children's Defense Fund President Marian Wright Edelman's first Child Watch Column for 2019, "A New Year for Children."]

As we begin the New Year, every new headline reminds us that these are very tumultuous times. I start this season redoubling my determination to focus all my energies towards helping build a transforming movement for children to end child poverty and inequality at this extremely dangerous



time of attempted regression. And we must all strengthen our efforts to continue to try to provide a moral compass and example for our young and organize relentlessly to protect all of our children. The Children's Defense Fund's mission to leave no child behind and ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities has never been more important. These are extremely perilous times for children and for our nation and world. Although we face unprecedented challenges and threats to the safety and well-being of children at home and around the world, we must all resist and take whatever actions are required for as long as it takes never to go backwards.

So often we procrastinate and make excuses for our inaction, depression, and despair. It's not the right time. I can't make a difference. It's not my business. Nobody will pay attention. It's overwhelming and my little bit doesn't matter. We must struggle with ourselves and ask God's forgiveness and help to keep being useful and not let daily distractions keep us from pushing forward. And we always must remember that it is always the right time to do right. I share an adapted version of Madeleine L'Engle's poem "First Coming" (used by permission in my book *Guide My Feet* as published in *Imagining the Word*):

God did not wait till the world was ready,
till . . . nations were at peace.
God came when the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.

God did not wait for the perfect time.
God came when the need was deep and great.
God dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine.

God did not wait till hearts were pure.
In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
God came, and God's Light would not go out.

God came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

These words are a reminder and encouragement for all we must and will do in the new year. As the holy season comes to a close and the time for new beginnings emerges, let's commit to moving forward together for children with purpose, determination, gratitude, and joy.

[May we take Ms. Edelman's words and our sense of being commissioned by the love of God in Christ to heart. As we enter this new year, may we be dedicated to working with "purpose, determination, gratitude, and joy" on behalf of children and all the vulnerable members of our society and world so desperately in need of peace and justice.]

Ekklesia

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