

Facing Forward by Pastor Tarrah

*"It is written from the desert
To the mountains they shall lead us
By the hand and by the heart
They will comfort you and me
In their innocence and trusting
They will teach us to be free."*

~ Rhyme and Reason (regarding children), John Denver



Beloved church, hear the prophetic words from the 1st, 2nd, and 6th verses of Isaiah's 11th chapter, regarding *"The Peaceful Kingdom"*: "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and reverence for the Lord. The wolf shall live with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion will feed together, and a little child shall lead them."

Whether you resonate with the words from our sacred text, or with the lyrics from Singer Songwriter, John Denver, we all recognize the truths within both of these readings about children. Once upon a time, we were all children. We were filled with awe and wonder about the mysteries of the stars above us and were equally curious to dig into the earth under our wiggling toes as we marveled at what was hidden beneath. I'm sure we all find moments to gaze upon the inky velvet skies of night from time to time...but the "awe and wonder" that may have once overtaken us as children, is now tempered with the learning of "where, why and what" we are looking at in the night skies. With learning comes knowledge, and with knowledge comes our personal inquisition of what is "fact", "theory" and "fiction". And to be sure, our learning and knowledge is influenced by the story of what is happening around us: our lived experiences...our hardships and our comforts.

Consider now with me, how as a child you once experienced the stories, sights, and sounds within the sacred walls of a church building. Were they the walls of our own church buildings or of a different worship space? How did your body move when you came towards the altar the first time and why? How did others around you respond to your presence? If you are unable to recall these particular things, are you able to recall how you felt? We may not be able to recall specifics, but more often than not, we can't as easily forget how we've felt or were made to feel.

As we grew into adulthood, and in our own unique ways, we began to imagine, stretch, and take steps towards what we envisioned the ministry of the church to become. And not just for ourselves, but for our children, our children's children, and the cloud of witnesses that will live on long after we have passed onto life eternal. Many of you sitting in the pews on Sunday mornings bore witness to the yoking together of Holy

Ghost Darmstadt and Trinity Biddleborn, and all the growing pains that went along with that era...which I'm quite certain included moments of exhilarating joy and celebration as well as periods of stubbornness, hard-fought victories, and fracturing defeats. We are nearing two years of ministry together, beloveds. I remember the conversations and dreams shared around the table when we first came together to explore the possibility of our relationship and my calling. It was the season of Lent...the season of renewal and turning. The season of remembering that it was from the dust we were created and to the dust we shall all one-day return. Dust that's been created with the same carbon building blocks which can also be found in the origins of the stars and planets that sparkle above us. I find it quite timely that we once again find ourselves together at the threshold of the "new thing" that you had collectively voiced during our first meeting.

The ministry and outreach we live into each day pours forth from one collective body. We worship as one body. We grieve, mourn losses and tragedies as one body. We uplift each other as one body. We love, care and support each other as one body. It is by listening and discerning the guidance of the Holy Spirit that we forge our congregational path into the unknown beyond ourselves. It is through our love and commitment to one another, and our desire to ensure the longevity of this Beloved Community, that we now step boldly together into a new way of being in the world.

The Apostle Paul, long ago, penned a letter to the beloved church of Galatia. In that letter he envisioned a new way of being in the world that was essential to the proliferation of our Christian faith. Many of us know the words from his letter by heart, "There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) And now, I humbly and prayerfully come to each of you with a similar message. A message that echoes the words of Paul and it's just as transformational for our congregations now in 2024 as it was for the Galatians almost 2000 years ago. "There will no longer be division within our congregations; there will no longer be their church and our church; there will no longer be Holy Ghost Darmstadt or Trinity Biddleborn, for the two are one in Christ Jesus."

It is through the wisdom of the youth in confirmation, alongside my Spirit guided discernment, that the decision was made that this Confirmation Class be received into dual membership upon their Confirmation. So, the question and conversation that began to unfold from that decision was, "How do we faithfully affirm and support this new way of receiving not only our confirmands, but also any potential new members that seek to formally join our beloved congregation?" On Easter Sunday, March 31st, 2024, we will celebrate more than "just" the resurrection of our Lord and Savior. With the rekindled awe and wonder from the earliest beginnings of our faith journey, we will formally enfold ourselves into a new covenantal relationship by granting dual standing and membership within both of these long-ago yoked families of faith. During worship, an invitation will be extended for all those who wish to be a part of this visioning that

was spoken into being by your church leadership the night of my interview in 2022, and was voted into practice at the January 2024 Joint Council meeting. After this historical moment during worship, we will then welcome and formally enfold our newly joining members into the membership of Holy Ghost and Trinity United Churches of Christ; living out the words of Jesus as written in John's Gospel from the 17th chapter (v.20-23), "I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

Jesus' words of prayer from John's gospel illustrate God's will for us as members within the Body of Christ. These too were the words that formed the motto of our denomination, "That they may all be one", as the United Church of Christ was birthed into on that historic Tuesday, June 25th, 1957. From these youthful years as a denomination, the saints who came before us (and many who still stand alongside us), experienced and approached this "new thing" with reservations and uneasiness. And yet, all of the Evangelical and Reformed churches, responding to a responsibility laid upon them by their church tradition, moved a step closer toward reunion of the Christian church; as with faith in God and growing trust in one another.

Your elected church leaders shall continue in conversation throughout the year around the delineation of our constitutions, by-laws, and financial profiles moving forward. It was and is with great faith, trust and deep discernment that you called upon these members to step into service and leadership to ensure the well-being of our faith family and our church buildings. There will also be opportunities for greater discussion during our singular Annual Meeting on February 25th. Until then, beloveds in Christ, "May God bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you. May God's countenance be lifted upon you and give you peace." Amen, and amen.

Scripture Readers

Scripture readers are always encouraged and welcomed to take part in our worship services. Please sign-up to be a reader of our sacred scriptures on any given Sunday. There is a sign-up sheet on the information table. Thank you!!

Special Music Offerings

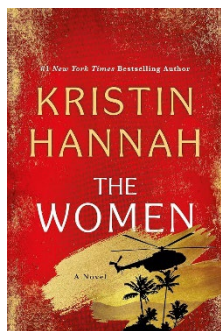
Are you interested in providing special music for one of our upcoming services? Do you know someone or a group that you think would be a terrific addition to one of our upcoming services? Please reach out to Pastor Tarrah so we can get you/them on the worship schedule. Thank you!!

Men's Fellowship



Pastor Tarrah has been working with Pastor Bob Koch (St. John's, New Athens) and Pastor Brett Palmer (Friedens, Marissa) to develop some new fellowship opportunities for the men of our congregations. If you have any ideas that you would like us to consider, please let Pastor Tarrah know as soon as possible. Stay tuned for more information as things come together.

Book Club



Our Book Club's new selection will be "The Women" by Kristin Hannah. We will get together at Machete's in New Athens on Thursday, February 29th at 5pm for our discussion.

"Women can be heroes too." "When twenty-year old nursing student, Frances "Frankie" McGrath hears these unexpected words, it is a revelation. Raised on idyllic Coronado Island and sheltered by her conservative parents, she has always prided herself on doing the right thing, being a good girl. But in 1965, the world is changing, and she suddenly imagines a different choice for her life. When her brother ships off to Vietnam, she impulsively joins the Army Nurse Corps and follows his path.

As green and inexperienced as the men sent to Vietnam to fight, Frankie is overwhelmed by the chaos and destruction of war, as well as the unexpected trauma of coming home to a changed and politically divided America.

The Women is the story of one woman gone to war, but it shines a light on the story of all women who put themselves in harm/s way to help others. Women whose sacrifice and commitment to their country has all too often been forgotten. A novel of searing insight and lyric beauty, *The Women* is a profoundly emotional, richly drawn story with a memorable heroine whose extraordinary idealism and courage under fire define a generation."



If you are interested in being a part of the choir, please join us on Sunday mornings at 8:30am prior to the beginning of worship. Rehearsals will begin again on Sunday, February 18th, to prepare our piece for Easter Sunday!

Sunday Lenten Worship Series: "Bend"

"Blessed are the flexible, for they will not get bent out of shape." ~Molly Baskette



This Lenten season we will be utilizing the new publication from Pilgrim Press entitled, "Bend", by the StillSpeaking Writers Group. During our Sunday 9am worship services, we will reflect and engage more deeply into the offerings from the powerful writings within this 'new thing' that the authors have developed. If you are interested in receiving a full copy of this contact Pastor Tarrah.

PRAYER LIST

Richard Juenger, Les Erb, Dorothy Herzog, Bradley Funk, Rick Schaeffer, Skip Horton, and Lucas (4-year-old with leukemia in Darmstadt).

People of Ukraine, People of Maui, People of Israel and Palestine, Jane Kish (Friend of Cathy Harms), Matt Reidy, Fredrick (Ginny W's brother), Clarence Hayes (Cathy Harm's Father), Janette Hall, Gina Schifferdecker, Angel & Heather Sheridan, Martha & Larry Wagner, Melvin and Faye Helbig, Dwight Shubert, Gracelynn Norgaard, Marvin Wiegmann, and Family and Friends of Virginia Funk.

HISTORIC Annual Meeting by the Joint Church Council



Mark your calendars, it is Annual Meeting time! For the first time in 70+ years of worshipping together as a combined congregation, everyone will come together for ONE Annual Meeting! On February 28th, immediately following Sunday worship at Darmstadt, we will gather in the hall and meet together as the beloved community of Holy Ghost and Trinity United Churches of Christ.

During our Annual Meeting, we will touch upon our continued efforts towards revitalization and through the introduction and approval of new programming which will include: Pastor Tarrah's vision for a new way of educating through Confirmation; new opportunities for educating our children and youth within and outside of Sunday morning worship. We will approve budgets that ensure the proper maintenance, continuity, and care for both of our church building locations. We will discuss ways to further enhance our worship experiences, outreach and evangelism to continue in our thriving and growth towards the "new" reality of what the faithful "local church" looks like in the world.

A Joint Resolution, shall be proposed by our Joint Church Council regarding the further unification; to include the duality of membership standing within Trinity Biddleborn and Holy Ghost Darmstadt which shall read, “Members of Holy Ghost and Trinity United Churches of Christ, and the Joint Council of these congregational bodies, assembled this day in the city of Darmstadt, Illinois, do hereby declare that the furthering of our yoked unification be affirmed through dual membership. May this life-giving covenant be formally pronounced in the name of Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit. Be it further declared that voting, discernment, and visioning, be extended to all members in good standing with dual membership with the united and uniting church of Holy Ghost and Trinity United Churches of Christ.”

Upon the passing of this declaration, all that choose to hold dual membership, shall humbly and reverently receive the privilege of voice and vote pertaining to all matters in conversation and debate before the body of Holy Ghost and Trinity United Churches of Christ.

Annual Reports

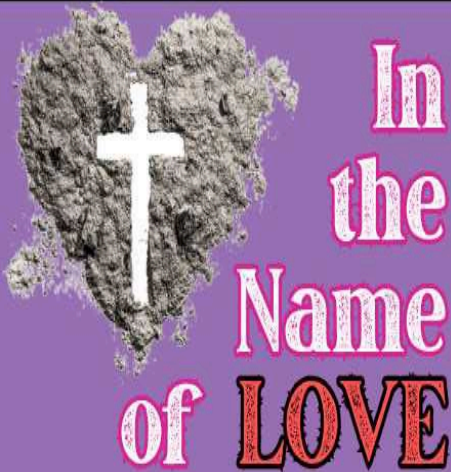
Please submit all council, committee and ministry reports to Kim no later than Sunday, February 18th, so she can build the Annual Report booklet. Thank you in advance for meeting this deadline.

New Members



We rejoice in sharing that we will be welcoming new members into our church family on Easter Sunday, March 31st during 9am worship! Pastor Tarrah will be hosting a luncheon on Sunday, March 10th at 11:30am in the hall to share information about our United Church of Christ denomination and, of course, our local church, history, and visioning. Please RSVP to Pastor Tarrah by Sunday, March 3rd. Current members are welcome and encouraged to attend as well to pour out our hospitality and love upon all those who will gather.

2024 ROTATING LENTEN SERIES



**WEDNESDAYS
DURING LENT
5:30 PM - LIGHT SUPPER
7 PM - SERVICE**

All three pastors will be present at each service, with the host pastor preaching.

PARTICIPATING CONGREGATIONS



Rev. Dr. Bob Koch

ST. JOHN UCC
NEW ATHENS ILLINOIS



Rev. Tarrah Vaupel



Rev. Brett Palmer

FRIEDENS UCC
820 N MAIN ST. - MARISSA, IL

FEB 21

Genesis 34, "Dinah & Shechem"
@ St. John UCC - New Athens

FEB 28

Genesis 25-27, "Jacob & Esau"
@ Holy Ghost UCC - Darmstadt

MAR 6

1 Corinthians 13: "What Love Is"
@ Friedens UCC - Marissa

MAR 13

Luke 19: 1-10, "Zacchaeus"
@ St. John UCC - New Athens

MAR 20

Luke 15: 11-32, "The Prodigal Son"
@ Trinity UCC - Biddleborn

MAR 28

Maundy Thursday Service
@ Friedens UCC - Marissa

MAR 29

Good Friday Services (no meal)
@ Holy Ghost & St. John

EASTER LILY ORDERS

If you are interested in getting an Easter Lily in memory or honor of someone orders will be taken soon. At this time, I don't know what the prices are, so be on the look out for more information in the church bulletin or contact Jan Dietrich. Please be sure to let Jan know who your Lily is in memory/honor of.

EASTER SUNDAY

POT- LUCK STYLE CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

One of the greatest occasions for joy-filled fellowship and community building, is found when we gather around tables to enjoy a meal together. On Easter Sunday, prior to 9am worship, all are encouragingly invited to come together for a 'continental breakfast' from

8am-8:45am in the hall at our Holy Ghost Darmstadt location. Most assuredly, what food is actually provided at a 'continental breakfast' varies depending on what continent we reside in, right?!? (Insert laughter here) But I digress... True to the German heritage and traditions these congregations were built upon, NO ONE will leave our 'continental breakfast' tables hungry:) There will be a variety of things to choose from, such as coffee cakes, pastries, donuts, fresh fruit, coffee, juices, etc. All are welcome to bring something to share for breakfast. There will be a sign-up sheet on the information table. Please prayerfully consider joining us for this meal as we gather to celebrate the glorious resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.

THE SEASON OF
Lent

Wednesday, February 14th - Ash Wednesday at Trinity Biddleborn
7pm - Service of Ashes and Holy Communion;
"In the Name of Love": "The Church at Ephesus"

Sunday, February 18th - First Sunday of Lent at Holy Ghost Darmstadt
9am - Worship; "Bend" Week #1

Wednesday, February 21st - Lenten Rotation at St. John's, New Athens
5:30pm - Soup and Sandwich Dinner in the hall
7pm - Worship; "In the Name of Love": "Dinah & Shechem"

Sunday, February 25th - Second Sunday of Lent at Holy Ghost Darmstadt
9am - Worship: "Bend" Week #2

Wednesday, February 28th - Lenten Rotation at Holy Ghost Darmstadt
5:30pm - 6:30pm - Soup and Sandwich Dinner in the hall
7pm - Worship; "In the Name of Love": "Jacob & Esau"

Sunday, March 3rd - Third Sunday of Lent at Trinity Biddleborn
9am - Worship: "Bend" Week #3

Wednesday, March 6th - Lenten Rotation at Frieden's, Marissa
5:30pm-6:30pm - Soup and Sandwich Dinner in the hall
7pm - Worship; "In the Name of Love": "What Love Is"

Sunday, March 10th - Fourth Sunday of Lent at Trinity Biddleborn
9am - Worship: "Bend" Week #4

Wednesday, March 13th - Lenten Rotation at St. John's, New Athens
5:30pm - 6:30pm - Soup and Sandwich Dinner in the hall
7pm - Worship: "In the Name of Love": "Zacchaeus"

Sunday, March 17th - Fifth Sunday of Lent at Holy Ghost Darmstadt
9am - Worship: "Bend" Week #5

Wednesday, March 20th - Lenten Rotation at Trinity Biddleborn
5:30pm - 6:30pm - Soup and Sandwich Dinner in the hall
7pm - Worship: "In the Name of Love": "The Prodigal Son"

Sunday, March 24th - Sixth Sunday of Lent at Holy Ghost Darmstadt
9am - Worship: "Bend" Week #6

Thursday, March 28th - Lenten Rotation at Friedens Marissa
5:30pm - 6:30pm - Soup and Sandwich Dinner in the hall
7pm - Maundy Thursday Service

Friday, March 29th - Lenten Rotation at Holy Ghost Darmstadt
7pm - Good Friday Service featuring special guest musicians:
"The Lewis and Clark String Quartet"

“W.O.W.” Retreat: September 17th – 19th, 2024



Calling all Women Of Wisdom (W.O.W.) to come together for a Women's Retreat! The retreat will be held in Branson, MO, and there is sure to be something for everyone to enjoy. One of the activities during the retreat will be a night out to the Sight and Sound Theatre to see the live stage production of "Queen Esther". Throughout the retreat, there will be time for spiritual growth, rest, fellowship, creativity, and fun. And, of course, no trip to Branson would be complete without some "shopping therapy!" ***If you are interested in being a part of this retreat planning team, please reach out to Pastor Tarrah.***

The cost for the retreat is yet to be determined as we need to get a "fairly solid" headcount. As a reflection of our ministry, outreach, and stewardship, we want to ensure that any women interested in attending not be discouraged from attending due to the undetermined, finalized retreat cost. If this is the case for any potential participants, please know that you can speak with Pastor Tarrah with complete confidentiality about financial assistance. A sign-up sheet is available on the information table. Even though the retreat isn't until September, let's all give our best effort to RSVP no later than Sunday, February 25th (Annual Meeting Sunday) so we can get the best pricing available with advanced planning.

February Birthdays

1 Jim Jones
4 Penelope Triefenbach
6 Nancy Shubert
6 Austin Prosisie
8 Dalton Norgaard
15 Brittany Segelhorst
16 Kim Sinn
19 Jim White
21 Dale Wojtkowski
27 Caitlin (CJ) Henson
29 Rhonda Rettle

February Anniversaries

14 Martha & Larry Wagner
20 Mark & Sara Leonhardt



March Birthdays

12 Ruth Triefenbach
17 Patrick Leonhardt
17 Dillon Mesch
18 Suzette Diecker
19 Liam Bollmeier
24 Lennie Sinn
27 Lucas Leonhardt
27 Brandon Vaupel
31 Trevor Sinn

March Anniversaries

6 Suzette & Ryan Diecker
13 Michael & Lauren Triefenbach

