

Central United Methodist Church



From Pastor Biel

Lectionary Readings for Sunday, March 12, 2023,

Third Sunday in Lent.

Exodus 17:1-7 Psalm 95 Romans 5:1-11 John 4:5-42

Narnia, Middle Earth, Star Trek's holodeck, the cockpit of the Millennium Falcon; these were places I imagined escaping to as a kid. Maybe you had your own private Wonderland, Lilliput, Xanadu, or Neverland. Their complexity of both good and terrible makes these fantasy places all the more realistic and adventurous. They are at once beautiful, fun, exciting and dangerous. Dangerous enough to bring characters that venture into them into crisis.

As people of faith, we know that experiences that take us to the edge of our competence, "the end of our rope," so to speak, are the very places where we encounter the divine.

People who've not been to Narnia sometimes think that a thing cannot be good and terrible at the same time.

"The Lion was coming on, always singing, with a slow heavy pace. Though its soft pads made no noise, you could feel the earth shake beneath their weight. The children could not move. They were not even quite sure that they wanted to. The Lion paid no attention to them. It passed by them so close that they could have touched its mane. They were terribly afraid it would turn and look at them, yet in some queer way they wished it would."

C.S. Lewis.

Lent began with Jesus' journey into the desert wilderness. There, Jesus experienced exhaustion. We might say it's where he came to the end of his human competencies and proved his reliance on God. During his forty-day fast, Jesus faced his limitations and the attentions of his tempter, ultimately resting in faith in God. After the ordeal, angels and wild beasts waited upon him.

Stories of close encounters between wildlife and religious leaders abound in our tradition. For example, the desert mothers and fathers in the deserts of Syria and Egypt have tales of monks who raised leopards, were followed by gazelle on their night walks, could soothe lions, keep wild donkeys out of their gardens with a word of love and who even rode the backs of crocodiles.

We don't need to book a trip to an actual desert retreat center to encounter the "great beasts that prowl at the edges of uncertainty" (Belden Lane). The simple act of praying can be as dangerous as exposure in the wilderness. Prayer can lay us as bare as the painful shifts in the landscape of our lives. We take a risk when we enter into prayer that moves us to a place beyond our words, our human control, our limited languages. In a single word, this kind of apophatic prayer helps us experience God's presence with "awe".

According to Desmond Tutu, governments would outlaw apophatic prayer if they understood how it makes the practitioner more loving and, therefore, less able to be manipulated. Mike Battle writes that "The apophatic tradition is about letting God empty us of ourselves and instead fill us with God's fullness so that we become more and more Godlike."

Take care, however. God can play rough; rougher than the inhabitants of the fantasy places of our favorite fiction stories. For our God, sending poisonous snakes into a Hebrew camp, having a giant fish swallow up a favorite prophet and driving the Beloved Son into the arms of the tempter are fair game. There will be times when it feels like God is hiding. Truth be told God may well be hiding and waiting for you to seek in earnest if the stories of the Hebrew Bible are any indicator of God's character.

It's good to be Christian. For those who've stopped playing at church, giving one's whole life to God's control, also has moments that are terrifying.

God bless you this Lent as you travel to and dwell in the wild and good and terrible places that are part your faith journey.

Deep Blessings,

Pastor Biel

Bible Study

Join us for Bible Study from **9 am to 9:45 am** - Sunday morning via Zoom. If you would like to be on the Zoom list for the Bible Study Class, please email the church office by clicking on this link: centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org.

Worship Service

Join us this **Sunday at 10:30 am** in the Sanctuary for our in-person service.

Masks and social distancing will be optional.

The worship service is available on Zoom at 10:30 am. Please email or click this link: centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org to request the Zoom Link information.

Altar Flowers



The altar flowers this Sunday are given by the Villamayor Family. Flowers are also given by Tina DeOcampo in celebration of her daughter, Christine's birthday.

Nursery

The Nursery is open and located on the south side of Fellowship Hall.

Fellowship



Fellowship this Sunday will be hosted by Tina DeOcampo.

There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board just outside the kitchen in Fellowship Hall.

United Women of Faith

Join us this evening, **Friday, March 10, at 6 pm**, in the Log Cabin. We will not be having dinner together, but please bring a dessert to share.

Things we can discuss:

1. Sewing, crocheting or knitting personal handbags for the Girls of Ghana;
2. The Saturday - Day of Spiritual Renewal - we will be hosting this event for the NIC Lake North District United Women of Faith "UWFaith";
3. Response Magazine;
4. Interior Decorating Skills Needed.

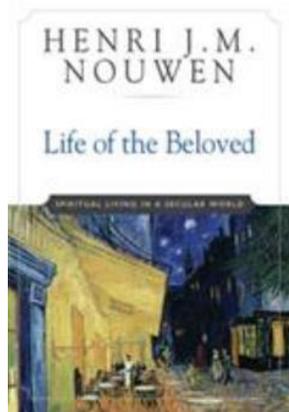
Beautification Award

Central's Parsonage has received a Beautification Award from the Village of Skokie for its beautiful garden, lovingly tended to by Victoria Biel.

The date to receive the Church's Beautification Award at the Village Board Meeting is Monday, April 3 at 7:30 pm in the Council Chamber, Village Hall, [5127 Oakton Street](#).

Those who would like to attend, RSVP the church office at centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org.

Lenten Series



Starting on Wednesday, March 1st, at 7 pm, we will be holding a Lenten series on the book "Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World" written by Henri Nouwen, and will be led by Mar Hadieres via Zoom. The book was originally written to describe the spiritual life for a secular Jewish friend of the author. This experience is for all those who want to have a spiritual life in a secular world. A copy of the book can be downloaded onto your Kindle.

Click on [Lenten Link](#) to join the discussion.

Dial in: 1-312-626-6799

Meeting ID: 851 8022 0876

Passcode: 128086

From the grey of Ash Wednesday to the brilliant dawn of Easter Sunday, the season of Lent is a journey through color. And so what better guides to this journey than the words of Scripture and the art of Henri Matisse, one of the most daring, influential artists in modern history?

In this devotional full of Scripture, art and weekly practices, we walk alongside Matisse from his childhood in northern France to what he called his “masterpiece,” the Chapel of the Rosary in Vence.

He once said he liked to pray with a pencil: “At the moment I go every morning to say my prayers, pencil in hand; I stand in front of a pomegranate tree covered in blossom, each flower at a different stage, and I watch their transformation... filled with admiration for the work of God. Is this not a way of praying?”

So grab a pencil (or a paintbrush!), your favorite Bible and a decent internet connection (all the paintings referenced here can be found online). Week by week, we’ll travel through the colors of Lent – all the way to the beautiful, joyful dawn of Easter morning.

The scriptural passages in this devotional correspond to Year A in the Revised Common Lectionary – but since their themes are universal, this devotional can be used fruitfully during any Lenten season.

Files: This listing is for a downloadable PDF, printing instructions, an e-reader version, and a companion “Link Sheet” with hyperlinks to all the art mentioned in the devotional.

[Link A](#)

[Link B](#)

[Link C](#)

[Link D](#)

It's Nearly Blooming Time!



CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH- LOG CABIN FUND



Spring is nearly here and it's time to start planning our gardens. We hope you will participate in our annual fundraiser for Central Church and order plants to make your garden even more beautiful this summer. If you don't have a garden, you can make a donation towards the church's gardens.

Each order form has room for four individual orders. Please share this with your friends and neighbors and make sure to write their name and phone number at the top of the order form.

Karen Buccola will be handing out the order forms after church on Sunday. Forms will also be available in the office on Wednesdays from 9:30 am to 4 pm and on Friday mornings from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm.

Order forms with checks need to be turned in to the church office by **Friday, March 31**. Checks should be made out to "Central United Methodist Church" or "CUMC." The order forms and checks can be mailed to Central Church at [8237 North Kenton Avenue, Skokie, Illinois 60076](mailto:centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org).

The plants will be delivered in May (exact date to be determined).

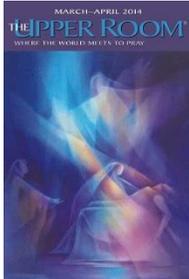
If you have any questions, please contact Karen Buccola at 312-343-4139 or klbuccola@aol.com, or the church office at 847-673-1311.

Freshening Up

The Church would like to freshen up the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall, including the Kitchen. We are looking for volunteers to help make decisions about how to lightly renovate and improve the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall/Kitchen.

Please contact the church office at centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org if you are interested in helping with this project.

Upper Room



The Upper Room Devotional for March/April is available in the Narthex and the office.

Mini Food Pantry

Thank you to everyone who brought food for our Mini Food Pantry. The Pantry needs filling every day, especially in the cold, snowy weather. Please bring something on Sunday - even a couple of cans would be gratefully accepted.

Please do not bring any containers - empty jars, etc. Below is a list of suggested items - because the Mini Food Pantry is outside, it's important to only contribute non-perishable items, such as:

- [Canned goods](#) with ring-pulls
- Hygiene products: toothpaste/toothbrush, deodorant, soap, menstrual products, etc.
- Tuna and crackers
- Spices; salt and pepper
- Cooking oil
- Sugar
- Tea and coffee
- Peanut Butter
- Kids' snacks
- Dish Soap
- Stove-top Stuffing
- Non-perishable foods
- Bottled water



Thank you for your support in helping others less fortunate.
If you have questions or suggestions, please email the church office at centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org

Donate



We appreciate all the financial support that has been received to support the church and missions. You can now give your financial support to Central in many ways.

CASH and CHECKS– Cash and check donations can be placed in the offering box at our church services. Checks can be mailed to the church.

VENMO – Using the VENMO app, pay by credit card. Enter Central Church's Venmo email: centralchurchgiving@gmail.com.

ONE TIME DONATIONS OR SET UP RECURRING DONATIONS BY CREDIT CARD OR BANK TRANSFER USING THESE OPTIONS:

ONLINE GIVING – go to <https://onrealm.org/skokiecentralumc/give/now >:

or use the QR Code.

TEXT TO GIVE – Using our secure online giving platform, TEXT to 73256 and send the message GIVECHURCH. A response will appear with a link to our online giving web page.

Central United Methodist Church

Rev. Timothy Biel Jr., Pastor
Rev. Adrienne Stricker, Deacon

8237 Kenton Avenue
Skokie, Illinois 60076

Church Email:
centralchurch@skokiecentralumc.org

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(847) 673-1311

[Send Us An Email](#)

