

The Courier



for the Orion United Methodist Church

March 2018

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When God's Gift of Free Will is Abused

As humans, we have been lovingly created by God. One of the ways God has expressed his love to us is by giving us a free will. We have the power to choose our own course in life. Most of the time, the gift of free will works out well. However, every so often that gift erupts into a horrific tragedy, as it did this past Valentine's Day when a 19-year-old individual opened fire at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, leaving fourteen students and three faculty members dead. *How could a good and loving God let this happen?*

It happened because God loved us so much that he gave us a free will. Most, like Chicago first baseman Anthony Rizzo, use their freedom for good. Anthony Rizzo uses his free will to give millions of dollars and untold hours of his time to help people suffering from cancer; Anthony is himself a cancer survivor as well as a 2007 graduate of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

Tragically, others use their gift of a free will to commit unspeakable crimes against humanity. When such tragedies strike, some say, "It just must have been their time." I can't tell you how appalling I find that theology. Consider Nicholas Dworet, a 17-year-old senior and the captain of his swim team at Stoneman Douglas. Nick had committed to swim on an athletic scholarship to the University of Indianapolis; he had hoped to swim at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. Instead, he was laid to rest on Wednesday, February 21, one of the gunman's 17 victims.

I do not believe it was God's will for Nick Dworet to die at the age of 17; I'd rather believe that it was God's will for him to die of natural causes 60 or more years from now. But sadly, God's will was thwarted because one person chose to use his gift of free will for evil purposes.

So where was God last February 14? I believe that God was right there during the carnage at Stoneman Douglas High School, giving courage to the frightened and guiding many to safety. God was in the courage of men like assistant football coach Aaron Feis who threw himself in front of students, shielding them from the onslaught of bullets, laying down his own life for others. And God was right there to receive those who died into his everlasting arms. And just as Christ wept at the tomb of Lazarus in

John 11:35, he wept with Nick's family and friends at his funeral.

After the shooting, I saw a Facebook post urging readers, "If you see something, say something." One of the most heartbreaking aspects of the Parkland shooting was that authorities were tipped off multiple times about the danger posed by the gunman; still, the shooter was able to make a name for himself as one of the worst mass killers in US history.

You'll notice I've not named the shooter. I believe one way that society can stem the tide of such tragedies would be for media to covenant together and refuse to release the names and the pictures of shooters like the one who terrorized Parkland. Stricter gun laws may very well help, but as long as our society—fueled by our media—insists on making these shooters famous—or *infamous*—I'm afraid we'll see more shootings like this one. I pray I'm wrong. But I also pray that our media outlets would forever embargo the names and pictures of such shooters, thereby taking away from them the promise of infamy.

Please join me in prayer,
Pastor Dave

Special Worship Services at OUMC

Sunday, March 25 – Palm/Passion Sunday
Worship at 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.

Friday, March 30 – Good Friday
Worship at Noon & 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 1 – Easter Sunday
7:00 a.m. Sunrise service with Communion presented by the youth of the church

8:00 a.m. Breakfast served by our youth in Fellowship Hall.

A free-will donation will be accepted.

10:30 a.m. Traditional worship with Communion and special music. Pastor Dave will be preaching.

We hope you will join us at these special worship services and throughout the year!

Prepare Your Hearts for Sunday

On February 18, I began a series of sermons on the Lord's Prayer. I will continue that series for most of March and beyond, taking a break for special occasions such as Palm Sunday and Easter.

Communion will be served on Sunday, March 4. Scriptures include Exodus 20:1-7, Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 and John 2:13-22.

Scriptures for Sunday, March 11 include Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107; Ephesians 2:1-10 and John 3:14-21.

Sunday, March 18 we'll take a look at Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51; Hebrews 5:5-10 and John 12:20-33.

Sunday, March 25 is Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday. Scriptures include Mark 11:1-11, Psalm 118; Isaiah 50:4-9; Philippians 2:4-11 and Mark 14:1-15:47.

Jesus instituted Holy Communion on what we now know as Holy Thursday. I will be serving Holy Communion during our Thursday morning Bible study which begins at 9:30.

I'm planning two identical services on Good Friday, at noon and 7 pm. Please choose the one which best fits your schedule. Scriptures include Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Psalm 22; Hebrews 10:16-25 and John 18:1-19:42.

As always, scriptures for liturgists are underlined.

I'll see you in church,
Pastor Dave

Special Music in March

The sanctuary choir will be singing March 4 and March 25.

The adult bell choir will be ministering on March 11.

Youth chimes & youth bells will be playing on March 25.

We are very thankful to have so many people share their gift of music with us during our morning worship services. We hope you will be able to attend and enjoy this ministry of music!

CHURCH DIRECTORIES

If you had a picture taken for our church directory, your directory is in the lower narthex labeled with your name. Please stop by and pick it up. If you did not have your picture taken and would like a directory, please contact the office. We have a few extra ones.

Get Your Tickets!

You have an opportunity to be the lucky recipient of a quilt! YouthWorks missionaries are earning money towards their summer trips by offering tickets to win a quilt. The winner will be announced at Trivia Night. Please see a missionary to get your tickets.

Circa 21 Tickets

We have reserved 20 seats at Circa 21's showing of *Rise Up, O Men* for the matinee show on Friday, April 13. If 20 people attend, the price will be \$41.25 per ticket.

Please contact the church office at 526-8511 if you are interested.

From the Missions Team

Thank you to all who donated chili and soup for our annual fundraiser for Missions. Thank you to those who participated by eating and by donating. \$138 was raised for mission projects. We were blessed with so many willing workers in the kitchen for clean-up. Of course, the real winners are those who benefit from our mission projects. Thank you!

Mission of the Month

As we begin our Lenten journey, we remember that Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Our March Mission of the Month, "Thirty Pieces of Silver," is an opportunity for us to so our love for Christ by giving to God thirty pieces of silver. Each year our Mission Team selects a different project to fund with our Thirty Pieces of Silver offering.

This year our March Mission of the Month offering will be directed to a new initiative by our Conference called, "Our Conference, Our Kids." The goal is to establish and fund a \$2.5 million endowment which will support five different agencies connected to the United Methodist Church in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference. Those agencies are Chaddock in Quincy, Cunningham Children's Home in Urbana, the Baby Fold in Pontiac, Lessie Bates Neighborhood House in East St. Louis and the United Methodist Children's Home in Lawrenceville.

The endowment itself will generate income every year to support the children touched by these ministries. Your gift to "Our Conference, Our Kids" above and beyond your regular tithes and offerings will have a lasting impact on children for countless generations to come. Thank you in advance for your giving.

In Appreciation

I would like to thank all of those who came out and participated in our Annual Ladies Luncheon. I believe it was a huge success thanks to the efforts of so very many people. Our table decorators never cease to amaze me with all the new and creative ideas they come up with. Every year is a delight and surprise. So much creativity to help others have a wonderful time.

Our guest speaker, Doug Vroman, was outstanding. I hope all of you enjoyed his tale of hiking the Appalachian trail as much as I did. To all the men and Scouts who served, as well as Doug from HyVee in Moline, I thank you. I also want to thank Karl for his beautiful musical stylings. We are blessed with such an amazing musician. Thanks as well to my husband, to Jean Combites who makes sure I don't fall off the ladder, and the ladies in the office who do behind the scenes little things to make it all come together to make it a brown paper package tied up neatly with strings.

*Much love & many thanks to all involved,
Candice*

*For those who want to know next year's theme, we are going to go with the obvious traditional one since our luncheon will be held the 27th of January and that is only two weeks from Valentine's Day.
The theme is "Love is in the Air".*

Ladies Day Out

All ladies of the church and friends are invited for a day of crafting and fellowship March 3 beginning at 9:00 a.m. Please bring your own snacks and drinks. Come and go throughout the day!

Easter Lily Collection

The Worship Committee will collect for Easter lilies to decorate our church for Easter. Please watch for information on the sign-up dates if you'd like to honor or remember a loved one with a lily.

POTATO BAR

March 4 following the 10:30 service, the youth are hosting a potato bar lunch in Fellowship Hall. A free-will offering will be taken. Please plan to attend!

OUMC Scholarship

Applications are available to high school seniors and college undergraduates for a scholarship through the Orion United Methodist Church. If you have applied in the past, but did not receive a scholarship, you may re-apply. Applications are available on-line at www.orionumc.org.

TRIVIA NIGHT – APRIL 7 in the MAC

Doors open at 5 pm with Walking Tacos available for purchase. Games begin at 6 pm. Tables of eight are \$80; prizes will be awarded. Proceeds will go to our youth missionaries and their summer mission trips.

Deadline to apply is the second Thursday in April. Applications must be delivered to the office by 3:00 pm or postmarked by April 12.

PERFECT SUNDAY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE FOR JANUARY

Mandy Browning
Sophia Seys
Leah Manning
Diane McCunn
Cullen Langley
Barb Cooper
Rachel Girotti

Nevan Browning
Dylan Nelson
Hope Seys
Noah Seys
Tara Miller
Carrie McCunn

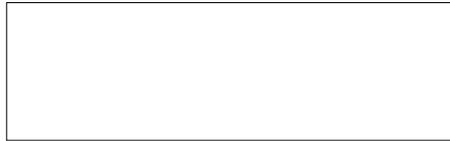
Thea Seys
Adam Browning
Amaya Versluis
Maryn Bollinger
Autumn Manning
Deb Miller

Peggy Crayne
Derek Nelson
Nick Browning
Karsyn McCunn
Joy Seys
Jane Meyer

Owen Bollinger
Rachel Bollinger
Greg McCunn
Clayton Browning
Betty Jo Versluis
Margaret Johnson

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**Orion Ministerial Association
Community Lenten Services & Lunch**

All services begin at noon and are followed by a light meal at 12:30 p.m. A \$2 donation is suggested for lunch.

(If Orion Schools are cancelled due to bad weather, the Lenten worship service will also be cancelled.)

Friday, March 2 at Augustana Lutheran Church
World Day of Prayer with the program by Church Women United

Friday, March 9 at St. Paul Lutheran Church
Guest preacher will be Rev. Reed Pederson of Augustana Lutheran Church

Friday, March 16 at Beulah Presbyterian Church
Guest preacher will be Rev. Mike Lawyer of St. Paul Lutheran Church

Friday, March 23 at Faith Family Church
Guest preacher will be Rev. Sheila Sheer of Beulah Presbyterian Church



Blessings on Your Birthday!

03/03 Kayci Mikrut (nee Woodley)	03/18 Matt Browning Kelly Gladkin
03/04 Kylee Johnson Anna Lindgren	03/19 Jennifer Green
03/05 Ethan Faulkner	03/20 Bret Lefever
03/06 Anna Green John Pierce	03/21 Jack Schultz
03/10 Bruce Gainey Roy Riedesel	03/22 Chriss Smith
03/11 Judy Ziemer Matt Bollinger	03/23 Merrick Magee Alan Wright
03/13 Rona Roessler Rachel Bollinger	03/24 Jeff Johnson
03/14 Emma Bingham Audrey Cook Mandi Sawlaw Emalee Moody	03/26 Eric Doxstader Mary Eccher Margie Whitsell
03/16 Debbie Mason	03/27 Courtney Magee Barb Norton Brian Miller
03/17 Zack Anderson Rich Straub	03/28 Trevor Ditzman
	03/29 Nicholas Browning
	03/31 Svea Carlson

Please let the church office know if your name should be added