



## The Kenilworth Union Church

211 Kenilworth Avenue Kenilworth, Illinois 60043 (847)-251-4272  
www.kuc.org

**Dr. Andrew Chaney**  
Senior Minister

**Dr. Gilbert W. Bowen**  
Minister Emeritus

**Sarah E. Garcia**  
Associate Minister

**Lisa R. Bond**  
Director of Music

**Anne S. Faurot**  
Director of Children's Ministries

### The Service of Worship

Sunday, January 22, 2012

8:00 am      Communion Service  
9:00 and 10:30 am      Worship Services & Sunday School

**Prelude**    *Lord Jesus Christ, We Turn To You*.....J. S. Bach

**Call to Worship and the Organ Meditation**

**Doxology**      .....No. 592

#### Responsive Reading

*The voice of the Lord is over the water;*  
The God of glory thunders over the mighty waters.

*The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness;*  
The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl, and strips  
the forest bare; and in his temple, all say, "Glory!"

*Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord  
in holy splendor.*

May the Lord give strength to his people!  
May the Lord bless his people!

**Hymn** "Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine!".....No. 341

**Anthem** *My God Is A Rock*.....Spiritual, Arr. R. Shaw & A. Parker  
Chancel Choir

#### Prayer of Affirmation

God of our lives, each new day and this day, we bring  
ourselves to you for forgiveness, clarity and renewal.  
Be our guide, we pray, when we are perplexed, our strength  
when we are weary, and our companion when we are lonely  
and are in need of your assurance. Help us to love you above  
all things, that we may love one another and ourselves as  
your beloved children.

**First Scripture Lesson**    Psalm 62: 1-12

**Sermonette for Youth**

**Sacrament of Baptism** 10:30 am

**Hymn** "Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart" .....No. 326

**Pastoral Prayer and The Lord's Prayer**

**Offertory** *Amazing Grace*.....George Shearing

**Hymn of Dedication**

We praise thee, O God, our Redeemer, Creator,  
In grateful devotion our tribute we bring.  
We lay it before thee, we kneel and adore thee,  
We bless thy holy name, glad praises we sing.

**Solo** *Psalm 62, In God Alone* .....David Haas  
Soloist, Alyssa Bennett

**Second Scripture Lesson** Genesis 21: 6

**Sermon** "Between Heaven and Mirth" .....Dr. Andrew Chaney

**Hymn** "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" .....No. 464

**Benediction**

**Postlude** *Thou Art the Rock*.....Henri Mulet

Tamaron Conseur, M. M.  
Asst. Dir. of Choirs

John Bryant  
Organist

Kelli Harrington, M. M.  
Asst. Dir. of Rejoice and  
Bell Choirs

<b>USHERS</b> 8:00 am Phillis Dunbar	<b>USHERS</b> 9:00 am <b>Ralph Smith</b> Judy Dold Robert Dold Linda Frothingham John Frothingham John Mayfield Holly Mayfield David Seibel Sallie Smith John Beam	<b>USHERS</b> 10:30 am <b>Dirk Degenaaers</b> <b>Doug Hanslip</b> John Fortson Steve Livaditis Rob Mathias Richard Patterson Todd Stephens	<b>BUS ATTENDANT</b> Barbara Besant
<b>GREETERS</b> Laura and Michael McColl  Dee and John Fortson			<b>ALTAR GUILD</b> Bob Cannon Bob Emerson

**A Stephen Ministry Congregation**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**ALTAR FLOWERS:** The altar flowers are given in celebration of the life of Sallie Van Norden McClure by her family.

**MILESTONES:** We welcome to baptism today at the 10:30 service Forrest Wiley Reuther, son of Kathryn (Schad) and Eric David Reuther, grandson of Susan Schad.

**FIRST WEDNESDAYS:** Join us at noon on February 1 for lunch and a program about the history of "Amazing Grace." Our presenter will be Todd Parkhurst. Please RSVP to the church no later than January 30, 251-4272.

**CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES: Jesus and Friends (Lambs -4th)** Jesus' mission depended on having friends and

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## (CONTINUED)

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living in community. We want our children to know how to attract and keep friends. Jesus, as our example, loved his friends, forgave them, stood by them, taught them, and depended on them.

**Bible Habitat (5th & 6th)** The children will be working on the Habitat today.

**WINTER WARM-UP SUPPER, TODAY,** 5 pm is our annual Winter Warm-up Soup Supper. This is a fundraiser for the high school mission trip to New Orleans. Tickets can be purchased at the door or online through the link on [www.kuc.org](http://www.kuc.org). For more information, please contact [silvi@kuc.org](mailto:silvi@kuc.org).

**KUC WRITER'S GATHERING:** If you have written a book, screenplay, or picture yourself as a contest creator, or you are just thinking of one of these fun projects, come to the Culbertson Room to share ideas and meet new friends on Tuesday, January 24 (9 to 10:30 am). Please RSVP to Sallie Smith, [slsy2k@yahoo.com](mailto:slsy2k@yahoo.com).

**INTERFAITH PRESENTATION: "HEALING AND WHOLENESS"** with Shaman Elizabeth Clemants, Thursday, January 26, 7-8:30 pm in the Centennial Room. Come and learn about the shamanic understanding of healing. Elizabeth is a full mesa-carrying shaman and has an active shaman practice in New York City.

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAM,** Tuesday, January 31, 7:30-9:00 pm. Join us for a presentation, "Transforming K-12 Education: What Will It Take?" Our presenter is Ralph Martire who will discuss the quality of our public education system.

**ZEST FOR LIFE COOKING SCHOOL:** The next adult cooking class on party appetizers will be on Saturday, February 4, 6-9 pm. This is a hands-on class and all proceeds support KUC outreach agencies. Contact [jenburch@comcast.net](mailto:jenburch@comcast.net) for details and to register.

**GOSPEL SUNDAY IS FEBRUARY 5** at the 9:00 and 10:30 services. Vernon Clark and the Heirs of Joy will sing along with the Chancel Choir and KUC Youth Choir. Gospel music will

be a part of the preludes, so please arrive early.

**SUNDAY SCHOOL PARENT SOCIAL, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2012,** "Tables for Eight" potluck style dinners for Sunday School parents. Please contact Laura McColl for more information, [m.mccoll@sbcglobal.net](mailto:m.mccoll@sbcglobal.net).

**ASH WEDNESDAY IS FEBRUARY 22.** Join us for a worship service at 7:00 pm in the Schmidt Chapel.

**JR. & SR. HIGH SKI AND SNOWBOARD TRIP!** 2012 is the 5th anniversary of Deep Freeze! Come join the fun, Feb.17-19. Registrations are due Feb. 1. Email [silvi@kuc.org](mailto:silvi@kuc.org) or visit [www.kuc.org](http://www.kuc.org) for a link to registration.

**THE GREATEST TALENT & ART SHOW ON EARTH,** Sunday afternoon, Feb. 26, The Kenilworth Club. Contact Sallie Smith, [slsy2k@yahoo.com](mailto:slsy2k@yahoo.com) to be part of the fun.

**FAMILY SERVICE PROJECT, SATURDAY, MARCH 10:** Please join us as we head to Chicago to serve the children of Holy Family Ministries in Chicago. The event is for children in 3-8th grade and their parents. For more information and to RSVP, please contact Laurel Lien at [llien@kuc.org](mailto:llien@kuc.org).

**CONFIRMATION SUNDAY IS MARCH 11:** Join us for an inspiring event at 10:30 am when we welcome our confirmands into the KUC church family.

### Preaching Schedule

Jan. 29-Dr. Gil Bowen  
Feb. 5-Dr. Chaney  
Feb. 12-Dr. Chaney  
Feb. 19-Dr. Chaney  
Feb. 26-Dr. Chaney  
Mar. 4-Dr. Chaney

Please turn off all electronic devices while attending services. Thank you.

*The Care Guild Leader for January is Lyn Little. To volunteer or to let us know where help is needed, please call the Care Guild number at (847) 853-3534 or email [careguild@kuc.org](mailto:careguild@kuc.org).*

Rev. Jane Lionberger "Beginning Again"

Today is a day of new beginnings. On New Year's Day we start a new cycle of time - 365 days in which we will live out the seasons that God has built into our lives and the life of the world. St. Benedict in his Rule for monasteries wrote, "Always we begin again." This impulse is the heart of what makes anticipation of the New Year kindle all of our longings for a richer way of being in the world. There is something hopeful in this fundamental impulse. January 1<sup>st</sup> brings out our fervent desires for the future and our commitment to change, whatever that change entails. Our inclination is usually a set of "resolutions" aimed at working harder for whatever it is we want or fixing our self-perceived flaws. Perhaps this morning you have come to church with the New Year's resolutions you scribbled down last night tucked away into your purse or stuck in your back pocket. We all make these resolutions because we are encouraged, at the beginning of this New Year, to take stock of our lives and decide what we want to keep, what we want to throw away in our lives. With any luck this is the year you will turn your back on your mistakes and disappointments of the past and start out on a new path. This is the year, you tell yourself, you will get organized, spend less time watching TV, read through the Bible, spend more time with family or going to the gym. This is the year you hope you will fulfill your resolutions.

And so, perhaps, you are here this morning hoping to hear an encouraging message that would give you a jump-start on birthing the new you. You probably had hoped to hear words of encouragement like those words of Jesus recorded in Matthew, "Ask and you will receive. Search and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened for you," to give you the will to make your resolutions come true. It might come as somewhat of a surprise then that the Old Testament reading suggested for New Year's day by the lectionary, that collection of readings put together for churches to use weekly in preaching and teaching, are these words of Ecclesiastes. How strange to begin the New Year with a passage that is most often used at funerals and memorial services when, along with remembering the person who has died, we all face the mystery and reality of death itself and, if we will

let ourselves, our own death. There is a time for being born and a time for dying, our author writes. There is a time for all matter under the sun. We can't stop the passing of time that brings both the good and the bad into our lives. It can seem like a somewhat dreary message for New Year's Day. I know I would like to take the author's list of every matter under heaven, cut it in half, discarding all the painful and difficult seasons and claiming for myself only those seasons of healing, planning, laughing, dancing, embracing, and loving. That is certainly what I think I would like to have for myself in 2012. I'm sure you have wondered though, as I have, what it would be like if we only got what we thought we wanted.... if there was only birthing without dying, laughing without weeping, dancing without mourning. It is obvious that the preacher from Ecclesiastes is speaking to us from his own experience of facing both the good and the bad in life. Is he a pessimist or a realist? Whatever he is, he knows that our wondering is pointless. There is a season, a time for everything, and we have little control about much of what comes our way in life. His message, though not much fun to preach or hear in the midst of our New Year's celebration, is a somber reminder of the challenges we face in life.

For over 2000 years both Jews and Christians have been somewhat perplexed about Ecclesiastes. It was one of the last books to be included in the Old Testament because scholars argued that it had such a negative interpretation of the providence of God. Ecclesiastes was written 200 years before Christ during a period of cultural melancholy, malaise and turbulent socio-economic change much like our own. The crisis that people faced made the author of Ecclesiastes, who called himself the Preacher, question the wisdom of the past and doubt any assurance of a welcoming future. The Preacher wrote about the themes of impermanence and the folly of believing that humans could control their destiny or even understand God or the world and how it worked. Ecclesiastes is a recording of the author's desperate search for meaning in the face of his temptation to see only meaninglessness around him. It was accepted into the books of the Bible, in part, because it reflects with such honesty the reality of human existence... and the existen-

tial questions we all face.

We find these questions asked as well in the other wisdom books of the Bible— Job, the Psalms and Proverbs. The wisdom writings affirm the realities of life and help us navigate the complex questions about the meaning of our lives. The Torah, the first five books of the Bible, gives us the law – the stable, unchanging way things are to be. The prophets proclaim a new truth and offer a critique of the way things are. The wisdom books, says Walter Brueggemann, encourage us to “fear God, to let God be God, to let *mystery* be definitional for life.” The wisdom books are full of the experience of humans struggling to make meaning in the middle of lives that are filled with disappointments and loss in order to find God in the midst of their experience. They probe very important questions, namely, who is the God who created the universe, does God care about me and is there a point to this repetitious turn of events that constitute my life.

The Preacher starts his book with these words: “Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.” Wisdom is meaningless, pleasure is meaningless, and work is meaningless for the Preacher. “Disillusionment can be corrosive, obscuring possibilities and potential under a sheen of regret and despair,” writes Neal Miller. And the Preacher gives in to his despair. “What do people gain from all their toil at which they toil under the sun?” the Preacher asks. Very few of us even leave a mark behind, and when we are gone we will be forgotten.

Dionne Warwick sang the same questions:

“What’s it all about, Alfie?”  
“Is it just for the moment we live?  
What’s it all about when you sort it out, Alfie?  
Are we meant to take more than we give  
or are we meant to be kind?  
And if only fools are kind, Alfie,  
then I guess it’s wise to be cruel.  
And if life belongs only to the strong, Alfie,  
what will you lend on an old golden rule?”

We can find ourselves in a kind of spiritual wilderness when we are overcome by our fear that our short lives are meaningless. “Wildernesses come in so many shapes and sizes that the only way you can really tell you are in one is to look around for what you

normally count on to save your life and come up empty,” writes Barbara Brown Taylor “No food. No earthly power. No special protection...Needless to say, this is not a situation many of us seek. Most of us, in fact, spend a lot of time and money trying to stay out of it; but I don’t know anyone who succeeds at that entirely or forever. Sooner or later, every one of us will get to take our own wilderness exam, our own trip to the desert to discover who we really are and what our lives are really about.

I guess that could sound like bad news, but I don’t think it is. I think it is good news—because even if no one ever wants to go there, and even if those of us who end up there want out again as soon as possible, the wilderness is still one of the most reality-based, spirit-filled, life-changing places a person can be.” The wilderness can clear the mental decks; help lead toward reorientation of life; and make us slow down long enough to ask ourselves on what we are basing our life anyway.

“The outcome of the examined life and the world,” writes William Brown, is a heightened awareness of life’s ‘vanity’, better translated as emptiness or futility. Saul Bellow humorously puts it, “Socrates said, ‘The unexamined life is not worth living.’ My revision is ‘but the examined life makes you wish you were dead.’ The outcome of the examined life and world, says the preacher in Ecclesiastes, is a heightened awareness of life’s futility and fragility, its absurdity and obscurity that are all rooted in the inscrutably sovereign will of God.”

What the life of Jesus teaches us is that in the midst of the wilderness of despair, fear and the temptation to settle into a cynical view of life, God is with us and that within our very struggle we will find the seeds of new life. If we examine our lives, we can find that new life comes through a kind of dying, a giving up, a letting God be God and living with as much truth and joy as we can muster. Being smart can’t save us. Neither can the results of our work or what we accumulate. All we have will come and go. Everything has its time but then is gone. All will become dust the Preacher says. That’s not because who we are or what we accomplish or what we have is worthless...it just isn’t lasting. Everything has a season and it will come to an end.

This time of year is one of light and celebration. But darkness was all around on Dec. 25, 1939, as citizens of the British Empire faced another world

war. Amid the gloom, King George VI resurrected a tradition his father launched: an annual Christmas message to all inhabitants of the English Empire to encourage them in the midst of the coming cataclysm. In his speech, immortalized in the movie, *The Kings Speech*, the king quoted from a poem by Minnie Louise Haskins:

“I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, ‘Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.’ And he said to me, ‘Go out into the darkness, put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be better than a light, safer than a known way.’”

The world, according to Ecclesiastes, is not so much a theater of the absurd, suggests William Brown, as the arena of God’s mystery. We want purpose, meaning and a sure way forward into the New Year. What we get is the promise we aren’t alone regardless of what happens. The Preacher can only assure us that great is the mystery of faith. When we are tempted to be overwhelmed by the seasons of our lives and the sense of meaningless we sometimes face, we can remember God’s promise to the Israelites in the book of Isaiah, “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” That may not be the good news you were looking for this New Year’s Day but if you think about it that is the best news you could hope to find. Amen.

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