Prayers are requested for St. Paul’s (Lionville) UCC in Exton and Rev. Jonathan Hauze.

November 2, 2014

Message from Rev. William P. Worley, PSEC Conference Minister

“Protestants need more saints,” so says Rev. Martin Copenhaver. He went on to write that, “The Roman Catholics have over 10,000 canonized saints. By my count, we Protestants have as few as five: Oscar Romero, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. And while these folk ARE saints, they are not ordinary enough—they are almost too heroic. What we need are more examples of people like us who have let the love and light of the gospel change their hearts and lives.”

Bob Rettig is my saint. He grew up horribly abused by a father who was himself horribly abused. Somehow through drug and alcohol addiction, Bob managed to carve out a life—a steel mill job, marriage, two sons. The day his demons finally caught up to him, Bob was dead spiritually and about to die physically in an armed confrontation with police. But at the intersection of unrelenting grace, family intervention, rehabilitation and community action, Bob was resurrected—in every sense of that word. He is, today, a church sexton; a keeper of the sacred. When asked by others how he transformed his life, he only ever offers one word. “God.”

“Here’s what it means to be a saint,” says Quinn Caldwell, “it means you have direct access to God. It means that you can see the Heart that breaks for all that is broken. Here’s who is a saint: every member of the church, and that means you.”

Throughout history, the church has recognized certain people for their closeness to God. But in our tradition, everyone who is a member of the church is a saint, able to communicate directly with God, gifted, at least sometimes, with visions of God’s heart. And when we’re really getting it right, we saints find ways to pass what we know about God on to the people around us, spreading vision and grace.

Today, pick at least one saint who has gone home to God, and at least one that is still with you. Say their names out loud and offer them up to God. Remember at least one thing that each taught you about God. Then go into your world and live it.

Thanks be to God for the Saint in you,
Pastor Bill

“Though she be but little, she is fierce.” So wrote Shakespeare, and so one might say of us, though our ferocity is more in the loving and caring line. The cultivation of friendship, the bearing of one another’s burdens, the building up of the body—these are some of our core values at St. Paul’s of Lionville as we strive to minister grace in a subdivided suburban landscape. We recently started a “First Friday” night where we come together to share a common meal and an intergenerational activity. Last month we ended the evening by singing songs around the campfire.

Last year we started a new women’s group, the Divine Sisterhood, to make a space for mutual support, listening, and meaningful relationship. Community is our bag. Creativity is a close second. In our well-attended Bible studies (every Wednesday morning) we put into practice Emerson’s observation that “there is then creative reading as well as creative writing.” Our members do both: every Advent and Lent we write our own daily devotionals, with meditations and prayers written by more than a dozen members and our pastor. Once or twice a year our creative arts team plans a festival worship service—shadow puppets, anyone? We also create our own VBS curriculum. Last summer we taught the kids about Heroes of the Faith, exploring the lives of Sojourner Truth, William Wilberforce, Julian of Norwich, Brother Juniper, and Dorothea Dix. We even made a telephone booth out of a giant cardboard box so that the kids could make their superhero costume changes.

We have a special appreciation for the UCC statement that we are called to be “servants in the service of others.” Twice monthly we send teams to the W.C. Atkinson men’s shelter in Coatesville to prepare and serve supper. Every fall we send an energetic bunch to the Downingtown CROP Walk (pictured). We are longtime supporters of the Lord’s Pantry in Downingtown. These and other missions relating to hunger and homelessness have been very important to us. We also love offering hospitality to the wider community every November when we hold our holiday fair. Visit saintpaulsucc.net or our Facebook page to learn more.

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