

IN THE NEWS....

What the media is writing about PTCA Churches

Has your congregation been in the news recently? Let us know at the Presbytery office (office@ptcaweb.org), and we'll make sure the whole Presbytery can read what you're doing.

The Owatonna People's Press wrote the following story about Associated Church in Owatonna. We're re-printing it in full here, with permission, because a paywall would prevent you from reading it online.

Owatonna church highlights diversity with stars

By [ASHLEY REZACHEK](#) ashley.rezachek@apgsomn.com

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Astronomers estimate that the Milky Way galaxy alone is home to [100 to 400 billion stars](#), with an uncountable number in the universe. Recently an Owatonna church has added a few more of their own stars to that count.

Associated Church has launched an initiative to celebrate everyone's individual uniqueness while also shining a light on the fact that everyone is a part of humanity and a greater whole.

A string of lights is suspended between poles with several handmade stars hanging from the starry ropes. Using recycled material, members of the community have been invited to create their own star to add to the string. Each star is unique and different, just like its creator. The display, titled "We are All Stardust! Let Your Light Shine," is easily viewable when driving along Havana Road.

“The campaign is based on the unifying affirmation of science that all humans are composed of stardust,” Leslea Partridge, Congregational Life Ministry Team member wrote in an email to the People’s Press.

The idea came about last year after Partridge visited her brother’s church in Kansas City. There she saw the church had decorated the sanctuary with homemade stars in all sizes, colors and used a variety of unusual materials.

“It was really a neat looking thing,” she said.

Taking inspiration from the Kansas City church, Associated’s ministry team hoped to get members to create their own stars over the summer to decorate the sanctuary come Advent. But the pandemic soon put those plans on pause. That is until Pastor Coqui Conkey and the team were trying to brainstorm creative ways to let the light of the church shine out into the community, Partridge says.

With the church’s desire to be involved in the Steele County Historical Society’s Holiday Lights Tour fundraiser, they felt it was a good time to revisit the star idea. While the team already knew that they wanted people to upcycle materials into stars, they wanted a unifying theme for the display.

“As we talked, John Boris, retired UCC minister, sat quietly in our Zoom meeting and then at the end, he mentioned stardust and how we are all made of it,” Partridge wrote. Thus the theme was born.

Studies and science has shown that humans are made of remnants of stardust and massive explosions in the galaxies. Elements found in the human body, such as carbon, nitrogen and oxygen come out of dying or exploding stars, astrophysicist Karel Schrijver told National Geographic.

“Each chunk of stardust, everything in this whole planet is unique and individual, and we loved that concept, but collectively we are the human race, we are the planet, we are Owatonna,” Partridge said. “Collectively we are parts of many things, but individually we are unique.”

The community is invited to create their own unique stars to hang on the roadside display (Associated Church, 800 Havana Road, Owatonna). Using already owned items and recycled materials is encouraged.

“We encourage the community to celebrate how diverse we all are, but how collective we all are as we have moved through 2020,” Partridge said. “We are a community together,” she wrote.

Similar to the paper hearts hung in windows throughout the pandemic, people are also encouraged to hang their stars in their home window. The stars will send a positive message

that all humans are deserving of love and respect, and that everyone should be embraced for their differences, Partridge said.

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