

Connecting UCC and Disciples Congregations in Western New York

from Alfred C. Plant

What is needed...

for Advent Peace Sunday

On that palm and Hosanna day as He came into Jerusalem, Jesus wept.

"If only you knew what is needed for peace..."

"If only you knew..."

All these years later,
in this so-called enlightened age
Surely *now* we know what is needed for peace...
Surely *we* know...

The sun sets over purple mountains, a swan glides
on a mirrored lake,
An old couple cuddles on a park bench, children
share their toys...

Are these the things that are needed for peace?
Not really, but they'd make nice greeting cards.

When the bombs stop falling and the ammo runs
out, when the wounded are claimed by death,
And cold, ruthless men in a huge fancy room
decide who will own those who are left...
That war may be over, but you can't call it peace;
Just a break before the sin that comes next.

If Jesus asked in Hebrew, "peace" would be
"shalom"
And "shalom" means "harmony", the harmony that
is God's will for all creation.
Harmony implies relationship; otherwise there is
only melody (or silence).
And more than one melody without working at
harmony brings dissonance at best;
Beyond dissonance is cacophony, one of hell's
favorite sounds.

But before we can achieve harmony with anyone,
so many wounds must be tended.

Harmony's beauty can only resonate after the work
of reconciliation has earnestly begun.

We must reconcile with all we have wounded—our
family and friends for sure,

But also, those others to the ends of the earth:

The Third World villagers whose lives are
shortened by our investments' toxic waste;

The "collateral damage" and their families whose
misery was financed by our taxes;

Those whose oppressors are sustained by policies
deemed necessary by our greed;

The underpaid and abused workers who make our
clothes and our toys;

The injured planet and all that grows in it, walks on
it, crawls on it;

The infected water and all that live within it, have
to drink it;

The diseased air and all that fly through it, have to
breathe it.

But to do anything more than cover those wounds,
we must tend to our own.

Especially those we have brought upon ourselves,
As well as those we have accepted from others and
then nurtured into a flourishing necrosis.

Wounded body, wounded mind, wounded spirit:
Harmony born of these will be weak.

But if we hope to succeed in any of this, we must
turn back to God,
Seeking healing in our relationship with our
Creator.

Which brings us back to Jesus, entering Jerusalem
on that palm and Hosanna day...

Remember why He was there: "This is my body,
broken for you; this is my blood, shed for you."

He gave Himself to heal our self-amputation from
God.

(continued on page 2)

Do I want peace? Do you want peace? What stupid questions!
 But what do our choices say?
 Each thought, each word, each action; every minute, every hour, every day.
 A faithful, loving choice is its own reward;
 Don't dance just because your critic pulls a gun.
 We're preparing for a baby to be born on Christmas day;
 When His choices led to the cross, He didn't run.
 As a wise one said, "There is no way to peace,
 Peace is the way."

Thankfully, beginning the way of peace is not up to us.
 A vast flock has preceded us; their witness guides us.
 But it continues here, in me. It continues there, in you.
 Does it grow? Does it flourish?
 Is there hope? Will there be joy? Can love triumph?
 All we must do is our best, in faith.
 The result is in other, more powerful hands.

The soundtrack for the Story of the Cosmos includes a part,
 Written by God, for each of us to sing.
 Jesus wept because Jerusalem did not know what was needed for peace...shalom...harmony.
 How do you suppose He feels about those who *do* know but do not join the chorus?

[quotes from Luke 19:42 and A.J. Muste]

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WNYACIC

December Prayer List

UCC Congregational, Arcade. Susan Hodges, interim pastor; Deb Wood, Christian Education; Charles Hobbs, pastor emeritus
 Immanuel UCC, Orangeville. Elizabeth Meacham, pastor
 St. Paul's UCC, Attica. Lauran Heidenreich, pastor; Marie Lowe, Faith Community Nurse; Charles Williman, pastor emeritus
 Salem UCC, Bennington. Rosann Lowder, pastor
 Payne Avenue Christian Church, North Tonawanda. Robert Fleming, pastor
 Endowment Committee
 Western Area Youth (WAY)
 NY Conference UCC, David Gaewski, Conference Minister

WNYACIC

January Prayer List

Good Shepherd Community of Faith, Buffalo. Supply pastors; Sue Allen, Faith Community Nurse
 Grace UCC, Buffalo. Larry Jackson, pastor
 Kenilworth UCC, Town of Tonawanda. Thunder Silk, Tina Bacon, supply pastors
 First Grace United Church (UCC/DC), Wellsville. Supply pastors
 Resource Center for Christian Growth Voice Buffalo
 Harriett Tubman Christian Church/Paradise House, Buffalo. Ann Paris, pastor

Creative Ideas Welcomed

Treasurer’s Report

We thank the following churches that sent Covenantal Share payments between October 16 and November 5: Ebenezer UCC (West Seneca), Faith UCC (Boston), First Congregational (Angola), New Covenant UCC (Buffalo), New Light Christian (Buffalo), Phoenix UCC (Amherst), Salem UCC (Tonawanda), St. John’s UCC (Dunkirk), St. John’s Community Church (Eden), St. Paul’s UCC (Shawnee) and St. Stephen’s Bethlehem (Amherst).

As we’ve done for many years, we ask for \$6.00 times the number of members you reported at the start of the previous year. Your 2018 Covenantal Share is based on the membership your church reported in 2017. All Area churches received a report of their 2018 giving in late September or early October.

In addition, the Western Area will be collecting an additional \$2.00 per member in 2019 from our churches in the United Church of Christ for the New York Conference’s new per capita income.

from amos acree

**Faith Community Nurse Notes –
We’re Built for Kindness**

Having a good life is about more than satisfying our every whim. How we treat others also has an impact. The Golden Rule says “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” That’s more than just a nice concept – it’s a blueprint for living a happy and healthy life. People who give practical help to family and friends may extend their lives by five years. Providing social support reduces blood pressure and may provide relief from chronic illnesses. Giving without expecting anything in return may help stabilize the immune system and protect against the effects of stress. Those who practice kindness report greater levels of thankfulness and contentment.

Just as a small stone tossed in a lake can create a wide ripple effect, so can we have a positive impact on our world. Start the new year by being kind, compassionate and considerate of everyone around us. Our nation and world could use more of this instead of the divisiveness that seems to be growing. (adapted from “Ways to Well-Being – 2018 Calendar – You’re Built for Good Health.” American Institute for Preventive Medicine).

The *In the Vineyard* Editorial Board is inviting responses from church folks who are home schooling Sunday School. Anyone out there? Does your church have a program where the parents tap into Sunday School materials that they can bring home and teach their own children? Is it a crazy notion or one that just might work? UCC Resources (Store@ucc.org), for instance, has a convenient one-room Sunday School kit for 3-to-12 year-olds called Deep Blue Kids Curriculum, “At Home with God.” The board is anxious to learn about new ideas we can all benefit from. Please respond to inthevineyard@juno.com.



**ST. PETER’S U.C.C. PRESENTS
FREE CHRISTMAS CONCERT**

St. Peter’s United Church of Christ, 1475 Orchard Park Road, West Seneca, NY 14224, will present a free Christmas concert on Sunday, December 2 at 7:00 p.m. in the church sanctuary. The concert will highlight St. Peter’s two musical groups, “Strike The Rock” under the direction of Mark Kasprzak and Chancel Choir under the direction of Alfred C. Plant, along with featured musicians.

All are welcome to attend and enjoy an evening of uplifting spiritual music. There is no admission to this concert, but a free-will donation will be requested.

Further information may be obtained by contacting the church office at 716-674-1233 or visiting the church’s web site at www.st-petersucc.org.



Summer Youth Mission Trip 2019

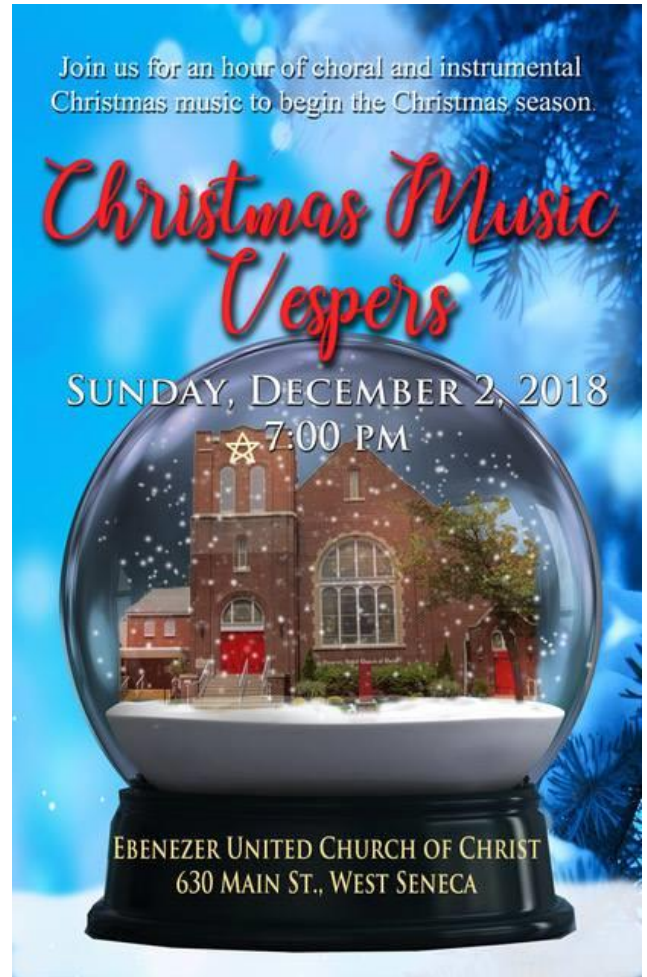
For the summer of 2019 mission trip, we will be traveling into inner-city Philadelphia for a week of mission work. We can only take 30 people at a time per week. Elizabeth Duffy will be traveling from July 15th-21st. Krista Ulrich will be taking a group from August 5th-August 11th. We are considering adding a week on in July if the numbers indicate that we need that third week. If you have any questions, please call Krista at 716-572-5642.

Blue Christmas Service

The holiday season can be difficult for those who have experienced a loss, illness or hardship. The Ken-Ton Clergy Association has chosen Monday, December 17th to hold a special Blue Christmas service to acknowledge the sadness some people may feel during the holiday season.

The service, on December 17th at 7:00 p.m., will emphasize the presence of God who comes as light into the midst of darkness, bringing comfort and hope. It will be held at Church of the Nativity United Church of Christ, 1530 Colvin Boulevard, one block north of Sheridan Drive in the Town of Tonawanda, 14223.

The church is fully accessible. Parking is in the rear. All are welcome.



Ebenezer UCC Annual Christmas Vespers Program

Ebenezer UCC invites all to worship with them as they present their annual Christmas Vespers program on Sunday, December 2 at 7 pm in their sanctuary at 630 Main Street, West Seneca 14224. This is an hour-long concert featuring vocal and bell choirs along with guest musicians. A reception will follow in their auditorium. There is no charge for admission.

Ebenezer UCC Annual Living Nativity Presentation

Ebenezer UCC would like to invite everyone to their annual Living Nativity presentation on Sunday, December 9 at 630 Main Street, West Seneca 14224. Two presentations will be held at 7 pm and again at 7:30 pm. Light refreshments to follow.

News from the Resource Center of The Center for Christian Growth of Western New York

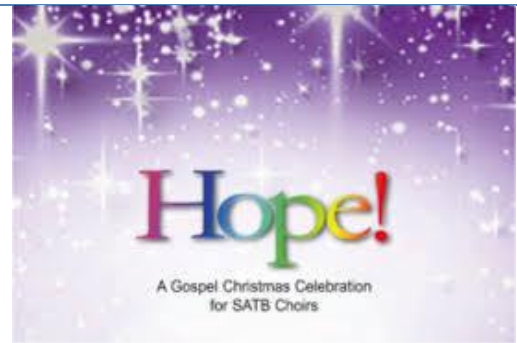
Advent and Christmas are soon to be upon us. Many of you will be planning special activities and programs for the upcoming season. There are many resources available in print on our bookshelves in The Resource Center and can be borrowed by Congregations of our denominations. Also available, and not needing to come to the Center to access, are many on-line blogs and web pages. One of these, we wish to recommend to you is not only FREE, but probably the most inclusive for this season, and the entire liturgical/church year, for ideas and suggestions for Faith Formation activities, and a great place to start when searching for new ideas: www.buildfaith.org. Hope this helps with your planning.

New resource for Small Group Bible Study

We have purchased a set of 18 books, **LISTEN UP! Bible Study**. The collection includes selected books of the Old and New Testaments. They have been written by members of The Stillspeaking Writers Group (UCC) and have been produced and published by The United Church of Christ, but are appropriate for use in UCC, Disciples of Christ and Presbyterian churches. Each book includes background information and an overview of the focus Book of the Bible, reading assignments, thought questions and discussion topics, in addition to a Leader's guide. Space for comments, notes and reflections is included in each workbook style book. Each unit/book provides for 6 sessions or classes, so some Books of the Bible are divided into 2 or 3 units. The selections we have are:

- Genesis – Parts 1, 2, and 3
- Exodus – Parts 1 and 2
- Ecclesiastes
- Job
- Mark – Parts 1 and 2
- Luke – Parts 1 and 2
- Acts – Parts 1, 2, and 3
- Romans – Parts 1 and 2
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians

The Center is staffed Monday through Thursday from 10 AM to 1 PM, and Monday and Thursday evenings from 4 to 7 PM. Call us at 716-631-0979 or email us at resourcecenterwny@gmail.com.



Cantata Performance – HOPE! A Gospel Christmas Celebration

Pioneer Association of Churches (PAC) will present their Cantata performance, HOPE! A Gospel Christmas Celebration, on Sunday, December 16 at 3 pm. It will be held at Arcade United Church of Christ, Congregational, 297 Main Street, Arcade 14009. The performance will include live local musicians from throughout the Arcade area. Everyone is a volunteer and amateur who just loves music! A small pit orchestra, also from the local area, will accompany them. This is a wonderful community event! Cookie reception to follow the performance. Admission is free and building is accessible to all. Please join us for this joyous holiday performance!

from amos acree

Christmas Special Offerings – UCC and DoC

Both the UCC and the Disciples have special offerings for Christmas. The UCC Christmas Fund is collected to provide support of a ministry that cares for the active and retired clergy and lay employees of the UCC. It provides support to pastors and families in a variety of ways, including supplements of Small Annuities and Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and a Christmas "Thank You" check next December to lower-income retirees. Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose low-income annuities make it difficult to meet increasing living costs.

For the Disciples, the Christmas Special Offering is designated to go to the various Regions in the US and Canada. The theme this year is "Come, They Told Me..." The offerings are distributed to the Regions as negotiated between the Regions and the General Church. They support programs that connect congregations to each other; foster faith

development; gather Disciples in camps, conferences, and assemblies; nurture the development of a new generation of pastors; assist churches in calling new ministers; interpret the global mission of the church; represent the church in ecumenical gatherings; counsel and pray with those who are troubled of spirit; walk with those in conflict; lead the church to address racism; inspire leaders to experiment and create; and witness to the power of God to make things new.

Please be generous as God has been generous to us.

ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER REPORT

ACM Report Nov 2018 - Churches who are in transition:

Kenilworth UCC - The church is being served by pastors Tina Bacon and Thunder Silk. They have a local church profile circulating. They have received six pastoral profiles and have narrowed them down to two to have phone interviews with.

St. Matthew's, Hamburg - The congregation has voted to call Rev. Lynn Morgan as its settled pastor. An installation service will be announced.

Pilgrim-St. Luke's - They have a church profile circulating and have received several pastoral profiles.

First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ in Niagara Falls- They continue to work on their Local Church Profile but continue to search in the meantime outside of the UCC system.

Trinity-Gowanda -The local church search team has decided to create a Narrative local church profile. It is circulating, and they have received six pastoral profiles.



*from amos acree, convenor, "In the Vineyard"
Editorial Board*

"In the Vineyard" Changes

At the Annual Meeting of the WNYACIC, the 2019 budget that was voted on and passed included a significant reduction in the budget for the Area's Newsletter, "In the Vineyard." The Editorial Board of the newspaper was alerted to this possibility shortly before its last meeting in October. The original direction that the Area Council took was to eliminate all funding, but at the Council's next meeting, it was decided to go with a minimal budget, suggesting only four issues a year, rather than the current 10.

At our October meeting, the Editorial Board began discussion about what to do. It means our editor's stipend will be significantly reduced, which means our editor will have to decide what, if anything, would be acceptable in terms of a stipend for the time she spends on putting together each issue. It also means we will be reducing drastically the number of "hard copies" of each issue we publish and mail out. We will have to depend on local congregations finding ways to distribute issues to those unable to access it electronically or receive "hard copies" at church.

The specific timing of each issue has yet to be finalized, but we hope to center them around the major "Holy Days" of the church year: Lent/Easter, Pentecost, summer/early fall, and Thanksgiving/Christmas/ Epiphany.

We will be meeting in December to try to finalize publication schedules, and other issues that arise. The hope is also that the webmaster of the Area's Website will be able to work closely with the Editorial Board to communicate news and events of interest to our people.

East Aurora Christian Church celebrated its 175th anniversary in October.

Disciples News

Churches from across the Northeastern Region of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ met September 14 and 15 at Evangelical Crusade Christian Church in Brooklyn, New York for their biannual Regional Assembly. This joy-filled assembly was led by Regional Minister, Rev. Thaddaeus Allen and Moderator Ron Strong. We rejoiced that Rev. Charles Lamb, Rev. Philius Nicolas, and Rev. Angel Bonilla, some of our leaders who have served the region for many years, were present for this gathering. We also recognized and celebrated those ministers who had been newly ordained since the last assembly. It was an honor to have Rev. Lori Tapia, National Pastor, Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries as the keynote speaker Friday evening and Rev. Terri Hord-Owens, General Minister & President, as the keynote speaker on Saturday afternoon.

As part of the Regional Assembly, on Saturday Sept 15, 2018 the youth from the churches in the northeast region met at Stuyvesant Heights Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Brooklyn, NY. The young disciples packed lunch in brown paper bags, geared up with work gloves, and cleaning supplies, heading into the local streets of their community. These young disciples went into the streets on a mission to serve with love and purpose! As the young disciples commenced to cleaning the streets and handing out lunches in the community, residents of the community applauded our young disciples and joined in to clean the community as well. This mission taught and showed our youth, that kind acts are contagious.

During the gathering, the Assembly welcomed New Light Christian Church from Buffalo, New York as a fully participating member of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ. Rev. Nadine Schrodtt and two church members who were also in attendance were presented with the official Assembly banner which proclaimed "Welcome" in five languages including, Karen, the native language spoken by many of the members of New Light Christian Church.

Several churches across the Region recently held anniversary celebrations. Community Christian Church of New York celebrated its 2nd anniversary in August. St. Phillips Christian Church in Brooklyn celebrated its 65th anniversary in September, and

Advent Meditation Series



No Room at the Inn?

Advent Series of Meditations and Prayers

Thursday Evenings 7pm on Zoom

zoom.us/j/343894848

December 6: Peace, Peace, But
Around Me There is No Peace
Led by Marsha Williams

December 13: Make My Joy
Complete
Led by David Gaewski

December 20: God is Love
Led by Marjorie Purnine

Join us for 30 minutes each
Thursday evening.



December Calendar Notes

- 2 Free Christmas Concert, St. Peter's United Church of Christ, 1475 Orchard Park Road, West Seneca, NY 14224, 7pm
- 2 Christmas Vespers Program, Ebenezer UCC, 630 Main St., West Seneca, 14224, 7pm
- 6 WNY UCC & DC Retired Clergy Luncheon, Ilio DiPaolo's, 3785 S. Park Ave., Blasdell, 14219, 11:30am prayer, 12-2pm lunch, RSVP Cheri Keipper, 585-547-3605
- 8 Education Committee, Resource Center, North Presbyterian Church, 300 N. Forest Rd., Williamsville, 14221, 1pm
- 9 Living Nativity Presentation, Ebenezer UCC, 630 Main St., West Seneca, 14224, 7pm & 7:30pm
- 12 Western Association Church & Ministry, Ebenezer UCC, 630 Main St., West Seneca, 14224, 9:30am-3:00pm. For more information call 716-882-7705.
- 13 North Towns Clergy, Church of the Nativity, 1530 Colvin Blvd., Buffalo, 14223, 12pm
- 15 RACHELS - breakfast group for clergy spouses, Denny's, 3920 Maple Rd., 9am
- 16 Cantata Performance – HOPE! A Gospel Christmas Celebration, Arcade UCC, 297 Main St., Arcade, 14009, 3pm
- 17 Blue Christmas Service, Church of the Nativity United Church of Christ, 1530 Colvin Blvd., Buffalo, 14223

January Calendar Notes

- 3 WNY UCC & DC Retired Clergy Luncheon, Ilio DiPaolo's, 3785 S. Park Ave., Blasdell, 14219, 11:30am prayer, 12-2pm lunch, RSVP Cheri Keipper, 585-547-3605
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- 17 North Towns Clergy, Church of the Nativity, 1530 Colvin Blvd., Buffalo, 14223, 12pm
- 19 RACHELS - breakfast group for clergy spouses, Denny's, 3920 Maple Rd., 9am
- 21 WNYACIC Council, St. Stephens-Bethlehem, 750 Wehrle Dr., Buffalo, 14225, 7pm

February Calendar Notes

- 7 WNY UCC & DC Retired Clergy Luncheon, Ilio DiPaolo's, 3785 S. Park Ave., Blasdell, 14219, 11:30am prayer, 12-2pm lunch, RSVP Cheri Keipper, 585-547-3605
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- 16 RACHELS - breakfast group for clergy spouses, Denny's, 3920 Maple Rd., 9am
- 18 WNYACIC Council, St. Stephens-Bethlehem, 750 Wehrle Dr., Buffalo, 14225, 7pm
- 18 *In the Vineyard* submissions due to inthevineyard@juno.com
- 21 North Towns Clergy, Church of the Nativity, 1530 Colvin Blvd., Buffalo, 14223, 12pm



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Editorial Board

amos acree Larry Paul
Rev. Robert Dievendorf Pierre Albrecht-Carrié
Alfred C. Plant

Editorial Assistant -Lois Vidaver

Editor – Shannon King

Distribution-Kathy Najuch

45 Dalton Dr., Buffalo, NY 14223-2310

716-835-4120

E-mail - uccnywes@verizon.net

Visit the new WNYACIC website:

<https://wnyuccdoc.wixsite.com/wnyacic>

Send newsletter items to: inthevineyard@juno.com

In the Vineyard, published four times a year, invites you to send us your comments and opinions, expressions of faith and announcements of events. We welcome information regarding the health and welfare of our clergy and others in the Western Area. Please write us when you know of a birth or celebration, a serious illness or a death in our church family – please include your name and telephone number. Please have submissions for the upcoming issue in by February 18, 2019.

