



Connecting UCC and Disciples Congregations in Western New York

From Alfred C. Plant

Pentecost

I can't remember when I first became truly aware of the significance of Pentecost – there aren't any gifts or baskets full of candy, so it's not a big deal to a little kid. And when I started preparing to write this, I realized I need to refresh what I had learned as an adult.

A little research reveals that "Pentecost" is from the Koine Greek word meaning "fiftieth", used to rename the Hebrew festival of *Shavuot* in the Septuagint (c. third century BCE translation of Hebrew scriptures). *Shavuot* – the Festival or Feast of Weeks – starts seven weeks after the start of the harvest. [Please see Deuteronomy 16: 9 – 12.] Thus, the Judaic celebration of Pentecost upholds the importance of thanking our Creator for the gifts of the harvest.

Now, moving through time to the events recounted in second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we see that the apostles have gathered on the day of Pentecost, which is seven weeks since the Resurrection, seven weeks after Jesus Christ was harvested from the tomb. We can be sure that they have been thanking God fervently. But here are new things: the "sound of a violent wind" and "divided tongues as of fire"! And a bunch of Galileans speaking of "God's deeds of power" in languages they shouldn't know.

And now we are in the time when we use our red altar cloths and stoles, sing happy birthday to the church around a cake with many lit candles, and hang red/orange/yellow streamers where they can flutter in the breeze from a small fan. But what does Pentecost really mean to us? How do we live faithfully in the light of those "tongues of fire"?

Reading the Acts passage again, I was struck by the section describing the apostles speaking in many languages (which of course is the Spirit's wind giving me a push). We are all painfully aware of how divided humankind is, and how difficult meaningful communication is, especially when trying to express our

thoughts to those who hold differing views. Just as regional dialects can make it difficult for people to express even basic information – in England a vest is an undershirt; in the United States, it's a garment worn over a shirt – the jargon and code words used by people of various positions within an issue may not be understood or just prompt knee-jerk responses that serve no productive purpose.

Just as speaking tongues requires someone to interpret, people of faith who truly wish to communicate with others of God's people regarding difficult matters need to find ways to express themselves faithfully in the language their partners in that conversation can understand. This requires getting out of the Spirit's way so that God's love is heard as undertone and harmonics in all we say. It requires effort to really hear what is meant by words and phrases that cause us to want to close our ears and turn away; to get past the speaker's defensive entrenchment and respect/minister to the woundedness and pain at the root.

In response to the vandalism of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst, many of their neighbor faith communities posted this message: "We need not think alike to love alike." It would be amazing to see that spelled out on all the UCC and CC(DC) church signs all over Western New York, and even more amazing for us to live it.

We, as Pentecost people, have a deep responsibility to prepare and maintain ourselves as fertile ground for the planting of the Spirit's Gifts. Farming is a 365-day-a-year calling, and so it must be with us as the stewards of these holy gifts. We must dedicate our entire selves – body, mind and spirit – to the joy-filled task of forging the true unity of love, the perfect reality found in God's intention for Creation.

May whatever harvest our Spirit-gifts produce be worthy of thanksgiving.

WNYACIC

May Prayer List

Faith UCC, Boston, Lynn Morgan, supply pastor
 Gary Burdick, Pastor Emeritus
 Covenant UCC, Gasport, John Tipton, pastor
 Friedens UCC, North Tonawanda, Thomas Hardy, pastor
 St. John's UCC, Strykersville, Jess Kacalski, pastor
 Church & Ministry Committee (UCC)
 Network of Religious Communities

from Jeff Mason, treasurer, WNYACIC

Treasurer's Report

We thank the following churches that sent Covenantal Share payments between March 9 and April 10: Lockport UCC and St. Stephen's-Bethlehem UCC (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.



Plymouth Crossroads Bluesfest 2018

SAVE the DATE! The Plymouth Crossroads annual Bluesfest will be held Saturday, June 16, 2018. Doors open at 2:00 PM at the Chicken Coop, 299 Leydecker Rd., West Seneca 14224. Music begins at 3 PM.

For the sixth year in a row Plymouth Crossroads will be hosting their famous Bluesfest, bringing together musicians from across the Buffalo area to perform to benefit Plymouth Crossroads.

Tickets go on sale soon for \$10 or you can buy one at the door for \$15. There will be basket raffles, food, drinks, and great music... all for a great cause. So, mark your calendars and spread the word!

Performances include:

- Jony James Band
- The Rod Horning Project
- Blues Daddios
- Doug Yeomans
- Hayden Fogle

For more information, contact Plymouth Crossroads at 716-393-3906 or visit www.plymouthcrossroads.org.

from amos acree

**May Is Mental Health Month
 "We're Built for Creativity"**

People indulge their creativity in so many ways - through music, art, dance, writing, etc. No matter the medium, creative expression helps us uncover the joy deep in our souls. When used as a therapy, creative arts can also lead to health benefits, such as:

-Helping us recover from disease, injury and psychological trauma faster.

-Assisting in reducing stress and anxiety.

-Improving memory and helping us focus our attention better.

-Helping to fight infection and ease pain.

Playtime isn't just for kids. Adults should take time out to just have fun too. Play can help improve our creativity, problem-solving, and emotional well-being. Checkers anyone?



WNYACIC Spring Meeting

May 6, 2018, 1:00-5:00 PM

Covenant United Church of Christ

4449 Main Street, Gasport, NY 14067

This meeting focuses on church and ordination anniversaries, as well as celebrations and recognitions, including congregational participation in mission funding. The cost is \$8.00 which includes lunch. Cash or check (made out to WNYACIC) can be paid at the meeting registration table. At this meeting, there are two business items that will be addressed. Each of these matters are specific to the NY Conference United Church of Christ, Western Association:

1. Salamanca United Methodist Congregational Church has voted to leave both the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church. They have fulfilled all of the appropriate procedures and submitted appropriate documentation. At the May 6 meeting, the Western Area will vote to dismiss the Salamanca church from the United Church of Christ.
2. A vote will be held on a proposal from the NY Conference to implement a per capita share of \$2.00 per member. This would be collected by the Association and forwarded to the Conference. More information will be provided before the May meeting.

St. Peter's Meat Raffle

St. Peter's United Church of Christ, 1475 Orchard Park Rd., West Seneca, 14224, will hold a Meat Raffle on Saturday, May 12, 2018. Doors open at 6 PM. Presale tickets are \$7 per person, \$8 at the door. A table of eight can be bought in advance for \$50. Ticket includes admission, beer, pop, and sandwich. 50/50 raffles will be held throughout the evening. Guests are invited to bring their own snacks and coolers for their winnings. No outside alcohol allowed. A limited number of tickets are available. For further information, call 716-674-1233 or visit www.st-petersucc.org.

Being the Church

In the Vineyard asks the question: "What does your church bring to the neighborhood?"

St. Peter's UCC, West Seneca, Kathy Reandeau: "The spirit of St. Peter's is demonstrated through our faith, fellowship and service. We are a welcoming community of Christian believers who maintain a spiritual home that is filled with music, worship and love. A strong sense of service drives us to support those who experience food insecurity, uphold the homeless young adult men at Plymouth Crossroads, and sustain a desperately-needed medical mission in Sierra Leone. Our commitment to others is demonstrated by such acts as providing holiday meals for deserving families at Thanksgiving and Easter, as well as having a Christmas Giving Tree so that all can celebrate and participate in the joy of these holidays. Being the church means welcoming others to come grow with us in worship, in faith and in deed."



News from Dunkirk Camp & Conference Center

Ready for some summer? Go to dunkirkcc.com and check out the upcoming camp season!!! There are also some great pics from last summer to warm us up. **MARK YOUR CALENDAR – DUNKIRK WORK WEEKEND**, May 19-20, 2018 at the camp, 3602 East Lake Street, Dunkirk. Great service opportunity for youth groups, church mission groups and Dunkirk campers. Join us for a fun faith-filled weekend! More details at camp website.

2018 Camp Brochures have been mailed out and should be available at your church as well. Should you need a brochure, contact the Camp Executive Director at 716-366-1900.

Some exciting upcoming events include: DCC Open House, Saturday, May 12, 2018 and DCC Flea Market, June 1-2, 2018.

Just come to camp once and you will fall in love with this spirit-filled place!



Cinco de Derby!

Saturday, May 5th, 2018, 2:00-3:30 pm

Ebenezer UCC, 630 Main St., West Seneca, 14224

Come join the fun! All are welcome to join in High Tea to celebrate the Kentucky Derby and Cinco de Mayo. There will be petite sandwiches and cakes...as well as a few delicious surprises! Feel free to wear any Cinco de Mayo or Kentucky Derby attire! Tickets are \$10 and will be available during church services or during the week at Ebenezer UCC. Any questions call the church office at 716 -674-4566.



"Beast & Baskets"

Roast beef sandwich luncheon, basket raffle & baked goods sale

Sunday, May 6, 2018, Noon-4 PM

\$7.00 Luncheon includes sandwich with coleslaw or chips and a pickle.

(Pre-sale Special - \$6.50)

Good Shepherd Community of Faith

187 Southside Parkway, Buffalo 14220

716-824-4112, gscfchurch@gmail.com

Your Help Is Needed! Family Promise of WNY

My name is Madelyn and I am a senior at Canisius College. I am in a class called Social Entrepreneurship and for this class my group is to work with a nonprofit organization in the Buffalo area and complete a project for them. My group has chosen to work with Family Promise of WNY, which is an agency that houses families experiencing homelessness and allows the entire family to stay together. They help the parents find new housing, jobs, health services, and anything else they need at the time, while still allowing the children to go to their own schools. We will be renovating their living room/dining room area where the families spend much of their time. We are looking for donations of new or gently used furniture of the following items: leather/pleather couches in dark colors, large rectangle tables to be used for dining tables, up to 15 chairs for the dining room tables (comfortable, nicer than regular metal and plastic conference room chairs), and lightweight organizational structures such as shelving, drawers and cabinets. The renovated multipurpose room will truly give the organization new energy and help them utilize the space to their advantage. If you have any of the desired furniture items that you would consider donating, please call me at 716-997-6536.



Flea Market and Craft Sale At Dunkirk Camp & Conference Center

Two days – rain or shine
Friday and Saturday, June 1 & 2, 2018
8 AM-4 PM

Free Parking
Dunkirk Conference Center
3602 East Lake Rd.
Dunkirk, NY 14048

Space applications accepted until May 16, 2018. Vendor spaces 20'x10' - \$30 for two days/\$20 for one day. Baked goods and food available during the event.

To reserve vendor space, call Anne at 716-366-1900, ext. 12.

from Ken Shallowhorn

Becoming WISE

One in four people lives with a diagnosable mental illness in a given year. There are many individuals in our congregations who are dealing with a variety of conditions, including depression, anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and bipolar disorder, to name but a few.

While we are taught to provide an extravagant welcome to all who walk through our doors, those living with mental health challenges may feel uncomfortable or unwelcome. With this in mind, the United Church of Christ Mental Health Network has created an initiative to address these issues. The WISE (Welcoming Inclusive Supportive and Engaged) Covenant was formally adopted at the 2015 General Synod.

The intent behind the WISE Covenant is to promote an environment that is both supportive as well as raising awareness about mental health and at the same time address the stigma that surrounds mental illness.

Thus far, several churches throughout the U.S. have adopted the Covenant, including those in Colorado, Florida, and North Carolina. In addition, the Florida Conference itself has adopted WISE as a statewide initiative. Locally, Pilgrim St. Luke's-El Nuevo Camino has begun to take the steps to becoming WISE.

The process to become WISE is similar to that of becoming Open and Affirming or A2A. The steps to do so are listed on the UCC Mental Health Network website – mhn-ucc.blogspot.com.

There are a variety of actions for churches who are WISE, including having a support group, taking part in Mental Health Sunday (which happens to be on Pentecost this year), encouraging prayers of intercession for those struggling with mental health challenges in the time of prayers for the people and holding a book study.

If you have any questions or are interested in having your congregation become WISE please contact Karl Shallowhorn at karl.shallowhorn@gmail.com.



from Rev. Hope Harle-Mould

Mission Money for the Asking!

Have you ever thought to yourself: "Our church has this great idea for a new mission project in the community—touching many families in need and strengthening our church in the process—but we just don't have enough money in the budget for anything new."

We have the answer for you. Our Department of Community Ministries (DCM) has a pot of money to give away every year with the express purpose of revitalizing our churches through catalyzing new, innovative community outreach projects of our congregations.

There is no form to fill out. No deadline. Just send in a detailed proposal of the project and any supporting information that may strengthen your request. Send it ASAP, and we may approve you for up to \$1500 to put to immediate use!

Our committee meets throughout the year, whenever we have proposals to vote on. Please send your proposal in printed form to me, co-chair of the DCM: Rev. Hope Harle-Mould, 44 Allegany Ave., Kenmore, NY 14217. If you have any questions, please contact me at hopeharlemould@gmail.com or (716) 868-5533. You may also direct questions to co-chair Rev. Ted Brelsford at theodore.brelsford@gmail.com or (716) 601-8511.

During 2017 we funded four projects:

1: Pilgrim St. Luke's/El Nuevo Camino (PSL/ENC) UCC, Buffalo, requested funds to help construct laundry facilities and male & female showers in support of its ministry as WNY's first (and so far only) Sanctuary Church for refugees, which has already sheltered 30 adults and 11 children on their way into Canada and asylum hearings.

2: Pilgrim St. Luke's also requested funds for the Listening Post Campus Ministry at Buffalo State College of Rev. Linda Harle-Mould, which is now solely supported by PSL/ENC, has formed connections with students, faculty, and staff, and which houses the Food Gnomes Mobile Food Pantry of WNY, founded by Linda and former student, Matt Schwartz, now an active PSL/ENC member.

3: New Covenant UCC, Buffalo, and Rev. Jacquelyn Ross Brown requested funds for Moms Inspiring Moms Resource Ministry, a faith-based, educational, and support program designed to enrich the lives of African American teen and single mothers (up to age 35) and their children, providing a safe and confidential environment where teen and single mothers (members and nonmembers) gather once a month to

discuss their lives, as well as providing literacy enrichment programming for children, including free books and a monthly book club led by reading specialists and educators.

4: Faith UCC, Williamsville, requested funds to support an expansion of their Community Outreach Ministry 8-week "Free Lunch on Fridays" during Lent, with church members providing 4-5 cooks, 4-5 kitchen volunteers, grocery donations, baked goods, getting local merchants to donate food and gift cards, and recruiting volunteers from Clarence and Williamsville high schools as well as Girl Scout Troops. "Come and eat!" (Isaiah 55:1.)

In previous years other congregations have received funds for many innovative projects:

When I was at St. Peter's UCC, West Seneca, the DCM funded my outreach idea of a Poetry Contest in WNY schools (senior high, middle school, and elementary) on the theme, "What If I Could Change One Thing," making scores of connections with teachers, parents and students, and drawing numerous families and teachers to our press-covered award presentation during a Sunday service.

Covenant UCC, Gasport, supported a **Youth Mission Trip** to Braxton County, WV. Cleveland Heights Christian Church, Cheektowaga, funded their **Park 'N Pray Saturday Worship Service** and their **Trunk or Treat Event**. Pembroke Community Church, Pembroke, supported their **Ministry to Handicapped Young People**. United Church of Christ Congregation, Arcade, supported their **Monthly Free Community Dinner** project. Payne Avenue Christian Church, North Tonawanda, supported their **Bagged Lunches for Neighborhood Needy**. Riverside-Salem UCC/DC, Grand Island, supported their **Environmental Task Force Campaign** to prevent expansion of a toxic waste dump in Niagara County. Lockport UCC, Lockport, supported the **Samaritan Pastoral Counseling Center** with scholarships. Harriet Tubman Christian Church, Buffalo, supported their **Computer Program to Assist Residents of Paradise House** to help equip them finding employment. Good Shepherd Community of Faith, Buffalo, supported their **Outreach Program to Families of Addicts**. Cleveland Heights Christian Church supported their **Health Care Bags for Youth at Compass House**. And many more.

What bright idea do you have to help your church and heal the world? "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19.)

**New at the Resource Center:
Embraced and Embracing
Workbook: Exploring the Foundations of
Confirmation**

I've had the privilege of teaching a confirmation class each year at the church where I've served as the church educator for the last twelve years. This has been a mixed blessing. I've enjoyed getting to know the youth and observe their thoughts and faith development. Some of the confirmands I taught were happy to be in the class; others not so happy. Some of these confirmands were there as the result of parental pressure. For some, there was also the agreement that once they were confirmed, they would then choose whether or not they'd attend church.

I often wished that I had time with parents, grandparents and even session members to talk about confirmation before the class began. I've found a new workbook from the Embraced and Embracing series that would help this conversation. This book is called *Embraced and Embracing Workbook: Exploring the Foundations of Confirmation*. This is not the new Presbyterian confirmation curriculum that will arrive later this year. This Workbook is designed for session members, worship committee members, parents and grandparents. This workbook consists of six sessions designed for congregations to have a better understanding of the foundations of confirmation. If we ask our youth to take the confirmation process seriously, I believe we as adults should also invest time and effort ourselves.

Each of the six sessions in this workbook could be used instead of a devotion before a session or worship committee meeting. Or parents, mentors and grandparents could meet to cover these sessions at the same time their youth are attending their class. We ask our youth to make a personal profession of faith and faith in the church. We, their parents, leaders, mentors and fellow congregation members, need to be clear about the purpose of confirmation both for ourselves and our children.



**Call to the 55th Annual Meeting of the
New York Conference
United Church of Christ**

The 55th Annual Meeting of the New York Conference United Church of Christ will convene at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 701 East Genesee Street, Syracuse, NY 13210, beginning at 2:00 PM on Friday, June 8, 2018 and will be in session until after the Closing Service of Worship on Saturday, June 9, 2018. Worship, prayer, community building and business all add up to an engaging event. Included in business will be Constitution and By-Law changes. Keynote speaker and retreat leader will be the Rev. Dr. Emily C. Heath. Emily is the pastor of the Congregational Church in Exeter, New Hampshire. A native of Virginia, Emily grew up in Winter Park, Florida and is a graduate of Emory University, Columbia Theological Seminary, and Andover Newton Theological School. Before serving in Exeter, Emily served as a hospital trauma chaplain, and later as the pastor of a UCC congregation in southern Vermont, and as a volunteer firefighter on the local fire department. Outside of the parish, Emily serves as a member of the Alumni Council of Columbia Theological Seminary, and previously served on the National Board of Directors of the United Church of Christ. Emily also coaches speech and debate at Phillips Exeter Academy and is an accomplished writer who is a regular contributor to the UCC's Still Speaking Daily Devotionals, as well as the Christian Century and Huffington Post's Religious section. Her first book, *Glorify: Reclaiming the Heart of Progressive Christianity*, was published by Pilgrim Press in 2016, and her second, *Courageous Faith: How to Rise and Resist in an Age of Fear*, was published this winter. Emily's hobbies include fly fishing, watching the Atlanta Braves and Boston Red Sox, and managing a fantasy football team that manages to regularly implode spectacularly during the first round of playoffs. To register, or for more information, check out the "Annual Meeting" page of www.uccny.org, under the "Events" tag.

Lives Matter

In Erie County the opiate epidemic is taking 1.5 lives a day. Good Shepherd Community of Faith, 187 Southside Parkway, Buffalo NY, 14220 is once again responding to the opioid epidemic in WNY. They will be housing a COMMUNITY TRAINING OPIOID OVERDOSE RECOGNITION & NALOXONE USE workshop offered by Erie County Department of Health on Tuesday, May 22, 2018 from 6-8pm. Attendees will learn how to recognize symptoms of drug overdose and how to administer naloxone (Narcan) via nasal spray. A free two-dose naloxone kit will be given to persons older than 16, upon completion of this two-hour workshop. There is no charge. To register online go to www.ecdoh-May22a.eventbrite.com. Contact Sue Allen, Good Shepherd Community of Faith, Wellness Coordinator, if you have any questions. 716-697-1657, bsuea@yahoo.com

38th Annual Appreciation Dinner of the NRC

Thursday, May 3, 2018, 6:00 PM
Samuel's Grand Manor
8750 Main St., Williamsville, 14221
Guest speaker Bishop Anthony Troy Bronner
For more information, call
716-882-4793, ext. 201 or email
nrc@religiousnet.net.



Boundary Awareness Training (BAT)

Our New York Conference, United Church of Christ (of which we are a covenant partner) requires ALL authorized ministers (Ordained, Licensed and Commissioned) and MIDs (members in discernment) and NYSOM (New York School of Ministry) enrollees to attend Boundary Awareness Training (BAT) every three years, to maintain their standing in our Western Association. After initially attending a twelve-hour boundary awareness training, each authorized minister must complete a six-hour training every three years. These sessions bring to the consideration of all authorized folk as well as MIDs and NYSOM students relevant areas of ministry which can be prone to overstepping boundaries.

Areas included in these trainings include (but are not limited to) power, financial transparency, sexual misconduct, technology, and the list goes on. Since this training is required by our Conference to maintain standing, failure to take this training can lead to suspension of your standing and/or incompleteness of your theological studies. We, who are elected to our Western Association Church and Ministry Committee, take very seriously this training and certainly encourage each of those for whom it is necessary to do the same.

Under the proposed revision of the denomination's Manual on Ministry, an exemption from BAT is available for those who seek what we call in the Western Association Intentional Retired Status (IRS). This recognition is applied for via letter to the Church and Ministry Committee and can be granted to those individuals who are totally removed from active ministry (meaning, no preaching, no officiating at weddings or funerals, no leadership roles in a congregation [like teaching Sunday School], etc.). Please contact your Church and Ministry Committee if you have questions about your eligibility for IRS.

If you are due to take BAT this year, there is one more event scheduled for Thursday, May 24 at Ebenezer United Church of Christ, 630 Main St., West Seneca. For registration, please contact Rev. Robert Dievendorf at dievenrc@gmail.com or 585-322-4958.

BAT is an important mandate to keep your standing current and six hours every three years is a miniscule commitment of your time. Hope to see you at upcoming BAT events.

