

Connecting UCC and Disciples Congregations in Western New York

*from Rev. Freeman L. Palmer, Associate Conference Minister
for Congregational Development*

Reflection on Life on the 4th of July

At an elevator in a hotel in Long Island I met him. Before I even knew this young man's name, he told me what happened to him less than an hour before. A police officer stopped him because in the officer's words the young man 'did not look like you should have been driving this car (a rented Infiniti). You look like a Mexican.' When asked why he was driving in the area, the man explained that he was Dr. Mohammed, M., a critical care pulmonologist in a hospital outside Miami, Fla. Born in Jamaica Hospital in Queens, graduated from SUNY Stony Brook's medical school, and completed a residency at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, Dr. Mohammed had rented the car while visiting family and friends in the area. But Dr. Mohammed, a Muslim of South Asian (Indian) descent, had brown skin, and was dressed in a black Puma T-shirt, shorts, a baseball cap turned backwards, looking at least ten years younger than his thirty-three years. Apparently, Dr. Mohammed's looks, as the saying goes, were so deceiving that the officer called the hospital after Dr. Mohammed presented his employee identification. Upon hearing that he was indeed a critical care pulmonologist, the officer let Dr. Mohammed go, because in his words 'you seem legitimate.'

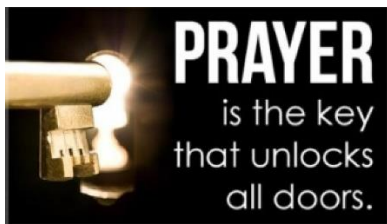
As we shared an appetizer at the hotel bar, Dr. Mohammed also shared the rawness of his pain and anger. I felt his humiliation and degradation caused by this indignity, the hurt at times making his eyes well up and his voice waver. Dr. Mohammed said he felt compelled to tell me what occurred because he wondered if I could relate to his experience as a person of color (one of few at the hotel). Indeed, I could. Traveling to the 2011

UCC General Synod in Tampa, I was stopped by an officer in Georgia near the Florida state line for 'straying' over my lane. Even after explaining I was a minister, I had to go inside the trunk of my rented Jeep Grand Cherokee (perhaps a vehicle I should not have been driving) to show him the opening worship liturgy where I was listed as a participant.

As Dr. Mohammed and I related our shared experiences, I also sensed in the Spirit a pastoral opportunity. So, I also shared with Dr. Mohammed that I was a minister, leading to a far-ranging theological and spiritual discussion in which he disclosed that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was one of his heroes because Dr. King championed equality for all people. Dr. Mohammed then asked what I thought Dr. King would advise him to do about what happened to him that day. I responded that I thought Dr. King would advise him not to be silent about this incident, to speak out, and seek justice. I strongly suspect Dr. Mohammed followed my counsel, as he had wisely secured the officer's badge number. As we parted, Dr. Mohammed asked if I would pray for him to get closer to God. I have done so to this day.

This day is the Fourth of July. There will be celebrations around the United States of America of a country founded upon 'self-evident truths' in the Declaration of Independence that all are 'created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights' among them 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' Yet when experiences such as what occurred with Dr. Mohammed become a thing of the past, when all are unequivocally seen and affirmed as beloved children of God, and when justice and freedom are a reality for all in this country, *that* will be the day when we can truly celebrate the United States of America.

(from the July 4, 2018 edition of "Happenings Around Our Conference" newsletter of the NY Conference UCC)



WNYACIC

September Prayer List

- St. Stephen's UCC, East Amherst.
Ned Holderby, pastor
- St. Matthew's UCC, Hamburg.
Lynn Morgan, pastor
- St. Paul's UCC (Shawnee), North Tonawanda.
Ronald Lord, pastor; Bonnie Kane,
Rebecca Pittler, Christian Ed
- St. Peter's UCC, West Seneca. Paula Gustafson,
Called pastor
- Grove Street Christian Church, Tonawanda.
James Girling, pastor
- Western Area Support Staff – Kathy Najuch
Budget & Finance Committee
- Commission on Ministry – Disciples of Christ
Western Area
- “In the Vineyard” Editorial Board



Northeastern Region – Regional Assembly “TOGETHER”

The Regional Assembly of the Northeastern Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will be held on Sept. 14-15, 2018 in Brooklyn, NY. The theme is “TOGETHER,” based on Psalm 133. Speakers include the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) the Rev. Terri Hord Owen, and the Acting Regional Minister of the Northeast Region, the Rev. Thaddaeus Allen. There will also be special mission projects for youth from grades 6-12.

Registration forms and more information are available at www.northeasternccd.com, or from the Moderator of the Region, Ronald Strong, at rstrong1950@gmail.com. You can also contact Ron Strong about shared transportation to the event.

from Gary and Rev. Cheri Keipper

WNY UCC & DC Retired Clergy Luncheons

Greetings and peace to our colleagues in ministry! On behalf of the WNY UCC and DC retired clergy and their spouses, I wish to extend a warm invitation to you to join us for camaraderie and a tasty lunch on the first Thursday of each month. For those who desire to pray and start the day with a brief meditation, we meet at 11:30am. At noon, we all gather for lunch and catch up on the area doings and/or concerns, celebrations of joys and send cards to those who are ailing. Occasionally we present a program, and more often than not, simply enjoy our fellowship and reconnect. Every three months we rotate to a different restaurant in the area. We welcome your ideas for a new place to eat!

Please join us for our next luncheon in West Seneca at Pasquales Italian Restaurant, 3720 Seneca St., West Seneca, 14224. Save the date! September 6, the first Thursday of the month. For reservations or questions, contact Rev. Cheri Farr [Keipper](mailto:Cheri.Farr@wnyucc.org) at 585-547-3605.



from amos acree

“Finding the Abundant Life...Hope and Light in the Midst of the Storm”

The Parish Nurse Ministries of NY, Inc., announces its Bi-Annual Conference on Monday, Oct. 15, at the Tonawanda Castle, 69 Delaware St., in the city of Tonawanda 14150. Time will be from 8:15am – 4:30 pm. Speakers will present on crisis preparation, prevention and how the faith community can support, provide guidance, and be a beacon of hope in the midst of life's storms. Included will be sessions on ‘active shooter’ in church, medical crisis during worship, Fire Prevention and Response, Mental Health First Aid, “Stop the Bleed.” Closing the session will be an interfaith panel discussing responses to emergencies within their faith communities. For more information, go to www.pnmny.org or email at pnmny179@gmail.com. You may also contact Rev. amos acree, RN, at revrn@juno.com, or call 671-8125. Registration forms available soon.

from amos acree

Faith Community Nurse Notes – “Wallet-friendly Workouts”

Finances are one of biggest reasons people don't use gyms. Although, today, many health care plans provide reduced-rates for gym memberships.

However, gyms aren't the only way to get good workouts. Try the following:

--use home items as workout tools. Instead of buying weights, use canned goods or fill used milk/juice containers with water or sand.

--put gravity to work for you. Many resistance exercises use only your body weight and gravity to help you get stronger. Think push-ups, squats, leg lifts, arm raises.

--use stairs for a step training workout. Or use a low, sturdy step-stool. Play music while stepping.

--borrow fitness DVDs from the library or look for used ones at garage sales.

--utilize community resources. Senior centers and community programs offer free or low-cost fitness classes. Walk a local walking path or step through a scenic park for fresh air and fitness.

--consider used items – bikes, exercise equipment. Local yard sales are good places to start.

--“YouTube” and other social media have a variety of workout programs that allow you to exercise at home or even on vacation/job travels.

(adapted from “Healthy Life Letter,” Sept. 2018, American Institute for Preventive Medicine.

www.healthylife.com)

from Karl Shallowhorn

Register Now: UCC Disabilities Ministry Conference in NY

The UCC Disabilities Ministries, in collaboration with the New York Conference, invites you to join us for the 2018 "Widening the Welcome Conference: Living, Learning, Leading"! This year's event will be held in Niagara Falls from Thursday, Nov. 1 through Saturday, Nov. 3. Registration is now open! For registration information, an event schedule, and more information go to: www.moredomainsforless.com/wideningthewelcome/index.htm



Annual Labor Day Weekend Garage Sale Faith United Church of Christ, 1300 Maple Rd. Corner of Hopkins/Maple, Williamsville 14221

Thurs. Aug 30 6:00pm- 7:30pm

Fri. Aug 31 9:00am- 4:00pm

Sat. Sept. 1 9:00am- 4:00pm

Mon. Sept. 3 10:00am– noon

Baked Goods!! / Hot dogs (Sat. Only)

Huge Event! Something for
everyone!

Cleveland Heights Christian Church Seeking Children's Christian Education Teacher

Cleveland Heights Christian Church is seeking a Children's Christian Education Teacher beginning September 2nd, 2018. Most weeks we have 3-5 children in worship between the ages of 4 and 10. Total time commitment for the position is approximately 3 hours per week. Compensation is offered at \$50 per week. The Children's Christian Education teacher is required to be at Cleveland Heights Christian Church on Sunday mornings from 10:20 AM – 11:50 AM to teach Sunday School. Curriculum is provided. Occasional Sundays off can be arranged with prior notice. Candidates must be age 18+ and be willing to submit to a background check. For more information, please contact Rev. Jen Heckmann at 716-361-7870 or chccjen@gmail.com. A great opportunity for college students, retired persons, or anyone who enjoys sharing the love of Jesus with children!

from Jeff Mason, treasurer, WNYACIC

Treasurer’s Report

Our income has suffered a greater summer slowdown than normal this year, but our bills have kept coming. As the summer draws to a close, we urge you not to forget about your Covenantal Share.

We thank the following churches that sent Covenantal Share payments between June 8 and August 12: Amherst Community Church, Church of the Nativity (Town of Tonawanda), Ebenezer UCC (West Seneca), Epiphany UCC (Clarence), Kenmore UCC, Lockport UCC, St. Paul’s UCC (Shawnee), 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. 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. The 2019 Western Area Covenantal Share and the UCC per capita will be based on the membership reported by churches in 2018.



Acre of Caring

Covenant UCC’s Acre of Caring was planted for another growing season. Located along Rte. 31 between Gasport and Middleport, the church plants a food crop on an acre of land donated by a local dairy farm.

While the last two years yielded a harvest of 23,000 lbs. of winter squash for distribution through the Western New York Food Bank, crop rotation necessitated something new for this year. So, sweet corn was settled upon by the ‘Order of the Butternut,’ the group of volunteers that Covenant organized among its membership to tend to the planting, weeding and eventually harvesting of the yearly crop.

An emerging drought had complicated their efforts this year. Niagara County was running a deficit in terms of rain and experiencing a moderate drought. While field crops like corn can rely, to a limited extent, on soil moisture, too little rain as the season advances depletes

what moisture was in the soil when the crops were sown.

They have some watering resources at hand: two 1500-gallon drums with a sprayer to hose over the field provided by a local dairy farm. But this is only a stop-gap measure. When one inch of rain falls on a field, it’s the equivalent of 27,000 gallons. Obviously, they don’t have those kinds of resources. Recently rain has arrived, yielding a harvest of 12 ½ bins of sweet corn. Twenty-five church members and friends gathered on a Thursday evening to pick corn for Food Link, a non-profit which distributes food to area food pantries and distribution sites in seven Western and Finger Lake New York counties.

from Larry Paul

Endowment Fund: Mid-Year 2018

The Endowment Fund of the Western New York United Church of Christ and Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in Covenant ended June 30, 2018 with assets of \$438,618.66. This was \$26,806.66 less than the assets of the fund at the end of 2017.

Most of the decline resulted from the distribution in January of \$22,330 to various ministries – an increase of some \$1,350 more than a year earlier. But some was due to the up-and-down stock market. “So far, the market hasn’t hurt us a lot,” the Rev. George Cushing, Endowment Fund chairman, said. “But it hasn’t helped us a lot either.”

Meantime, the various ministries to which these funds went in January include the United Church Home, the Dunkirk Camp and Conference Center and several Community Ministries programs.

Below is a breakdown of Endowment Fund assets at mid-year 2018 and the end of 2017:

	Mid-year 2018	End 2017
1) United Church Mutual Funds	\$390,643.13	\$394,208.94
2) American Funds	\$47,975.53	\$71,216.38
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Grand Total	\$438,618.66	\$465,425.32

St. Matthew's Marks Their 150th Anniversary

St. Matthew's United Church of Christ carries on a tradition of faith as it marks their 150th Anniversary. Their sesquicentennial theme is "Celebrating 150 years of Sharing Christ's love".

The civil war had just ended and on Jan. 12, 1868 a group of German immigrants met to discuss the founding of St. Mathias Evangelical Church on Swan St. in the Hydraulic section of Buffalo which is now known as Larkinville. Within a year the church building was erected and the first service was held Feb. 3, 1869.

The church grew over the years and at one point the congregation was about 400 people. Two churches were formed from this membership. In 1880 under the leadership of Rev. Bemmer, Friedens Church was organized on Eagle St. and in 1898 under the leadership of Rev. Robertus, Christ Church on Clinton St. was organized.

St Matthew's was very Christian Education-minded and six young men went into the ministry. Rev. Herman Fenske was one of them and eventually became St. Matthew's minister for 29 years and then became the Administrator for the United Church Home on Amherst Street.

The neighborhood started to change in the 1950's with people moving to the suburbs. It was decided in June 1958 to relocate to the southtowns. The land where the present church is located was donated by Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Rich Sr. Jacob was baptized at St. Matthew's in 1898.

The old Church was sold to the Delaney-Waring AME Church and they are still worshipping there. While the new Church was being built, the congregation met at the Armor Fire Hall and the first service in the new church was held Aug. 6, 1961 The dedication service was held on Oct. 22, 1961.

They will end their 150th celebration with a luncheon in their Fellowship Hall on Oct. 28, 2018.

Celebrating
150
YEARS



from Angela Staniszewski

New Western Area Website

Check out the new Western New York Area Churches in Covenant website - <https://wnyuccdoc.wixsite.com/wnyacic>. The main goal of the website is communication and collaboration amongst the member churches and our wider partners. The website looks great on a smart phone, so Western Area information is always at your fingertips. You can even read In The Vineyard at any time; several issues can be found on the "RESOURCES" tab. When the website is brought up on a smartphone, there are three horizontal lines below the logo, to the right of "Western New." This is called a hamburger menu and touching this brings up the pages menu so you can navigate through the website.

You will notice the website is still being developed. There are many sections that contain generic information or instructions on what kind of information to populate. These were kept as place holders, until best use is determined. The "EVENTS" tab will be used to highlight big events and as a vehicle to register for events requiring registration. The "MEMBER CHURCHES and PARTNERS" tab, lists our churches by denomination as well as wider church sites. Clicking on any of these will take you to the respective website, or email if website is unknown. On the "HOME" tab there are a couple of events advertised, and a calendar.

The best way to keep this useful is to have timely information. We are using Google Calendar, and you can scroll forward through many months. Each event can be clicked on to get more information and recurring meetings can be built as recurring. At the bottom of each page, you can "SUBSCRIBE FOR EMAILS." If you do this, Kathy Najuch will get a notification, and can add your email to her list if needed, and your email address will be added to a notification list that the webmaster can use to send out update notifications or other worthwhile communications.

Explore the site and learn what you can do. Remember development is ongoing. Stay tuned for additional information. What I need right now is pictures to replace the generic ones, event information to populate the calendar and the events page, any updated church information, and ideas. Please email angela.staniszewski@verizon.net.

“As I See It”

As we begin another football season, the controversy over some players not standing at attention when the national anthem is being played continues to be a matter of controversy and misunderstanding. As this is being written, the NFL and the Players Association are trying to work out an agreement, after the initial “proposed” NFL “policy” required any player on field to stand or could choose not to come out on the field until after the anthem had played. Politicians on one side of the political spectrum, as well as many other folks still living back when “whites – only” was the norm in society, think it is a matter of disrespect for the flag. The players themselves who participate in kneeling or raising fists say it is a call for that flag which supposedly symbolizes “liberty and justice for all” to actually call our society to honor that pledge.

It seems strange to me, though, that “kneeling” is a sign of disrespect. Don’t many people of faith think it important in worship or prayer or devotion to “kneel” before God? And if we were to be in the presence of royalty, to stand at attention before them is likely to get your head chopped off, or at least you would be hustled out of the royalty’s presence, as to “stand at attention” is not the sign of respect. So, what’s the problem with some players kneeling, raising their fists, bowing, or linking arms? Only some misguided thinking about what patriotism actually is. I grew up saying the pledge of allegiance to the flag because it stood for “liberty and justice” for all. But it seems too many of our “all” aren’t receiving real “liberty and justice,” when unarmed people of color are gunned down just because some folk feel “threatened” by them and aren’t held responsible for their acts.



St. Peter’s Presents 2018 Mystery Dinner Theater

St. Peter’s United Church of Christ, 1475 Orchard Park Road in West Seneca 14224, will present its 2018 Mystery Dinner Theater, “The Mis-Match Game,” on Friday, October 12 and Saturday, October 13 in the church’s fellowship hall. Guests are invited to follow the clues behind a mysterious death during a zany game show taping and figure out “whodunit” along with their table mates.

Host Molly Ringfield has her hands full trying to corral a wacky cast of characters that includes stage and film star Mimi Van Dooran, action film hero Alan Thinne, comedienne Hedda Hooper and rock musician Jon Bon Groovy. Contestant couples include the lovey-dovey Phil and Sue Mi from Philadelphia and the sometimes cranky Colleen and Travis McMurphy from Dayton, Ohio. Along the way there will be plenty of crazy questions, outlandish answers and a chance for audience participation.

The evening features a sit-down dinner by Cenzo’s Catering, a basket raffle, and a cash bar. Doors open for the basket raffle at 6:00 pm. Dinner begins at 6:45 pm. Tickets are available in advance only, and must be purchased by Tuesday, October 2. Cost is \$37.50 each, or \$290 for a table of eight purchased with the same reservation form/check. Ticket reservation forms may be obtained from church members or the church office. No reservations will be accepted without accompanying payment.

Further information on this or any other activity of St. Peter’s may be obtained by calling the church office at 716-674-1233 or visiting the church’s website at www.st-petersucc.org.

The Little Free Food Pantry Blessing Box

In June of this year **The Little Free Food Pantry Blessing Box** officially opened at Faith UCC, 1300 Maple Road (corner of Maple and Hopkins) in Williamsville 14221. **The Little Free Food Pantry Blessing Box** is a community outreach project that arose out of an increased need to help those in our neighborhood who struggle to make ends meet. There are thousands of people living below the poverty level in this area, many of whom are children and our elderly. Others find themselves in temporary circumstances that leave them with essential needs. In all of these instances, we are here to help. Our philosophy is "Take what you need, give what you can".

All are welcome anytime. No identification, paperwork or qualifications are required. This is totally confidential. Just drive up and take what you need out of the pantry, no questions asked. The pantry can be found at the corner by the playground as you enter the parking lot from either entrance.

Items in the pantry might include but are not limited to: nonperishable food, canned goods, boxed dinners, paper products, small toiletries, personal hygiene products, coffee, tea, juice, drink boxes, condiments, cleaning supplies, etc. As this is a community outreach project we are always looking back to the community for help in the following ways:

- Spread the word to families in this area who find themselves in need.
- Contact businesses, schools, senior centers, churches, and scout troops to ask for donations to the pantry.
- Bring in donations to help keep the pantry stocked. Donations can be placed right in the pantry if there's room or dropped off at the church during regular office hours, Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm (noon).
- Volunteer to help replenish the supplies so we always have plenty of items available that people might need.

If you would like to help or have any questions, please contact us at pantryblessingbox@aol.com or like us on Facebook at Little Free Food Pantry Blessing Box.





September Calendar Notes

- 1 & 3 Faith UCC Annual Labor Day Weekend Garage Sale, 1300 Maple Rd., Williamsville, 14221, Sat., Sept. 1 – 9am-4pm, Mon., Sept. 3 – 10am-noon
- 6 WNY UCC & DC Retired Clergy Luncheon, Pasquales Restaurant, 3720 Seneca St., West Seneca, 14224, 11:30am
- 10 Western Association Church & Ministry, Ebenezer UCC, 630 Main St., West Seneca, 14224, 9:30am-3:00pm. For more information call 716-882-7705.
- 13 Education Committee, Resource Center, North Presbyterian Church, 300 N. Forest Rd., Williamsville, 14221, 1pm
- 14-15 Regional Assembly of the Northeastern Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Brooklyn, NY
- 15 RACHELS - breakfast group for clergy spouses, Denny’s, 3920 Maple Rd., 9am
- 17 WNYACIC Council, St. Stephens-Bethlehem, 750 Wehrle Dr., Buffalo, 14225, 7pm
- 20 North Towns Clergy, Church of the Nativity, 1530 Colvin Blvd., Buffalo, 14223, 12pm

October Calendar Notes

- 10 Western Association Church & Ministry, Ebenezer UCC, 630 Main St., West Seneca, 14224, 9:30am-3:00pm. For more information call 716-882-7705.
- 12&13 St. Peter’s 2018 Mystery Dinner Theater, 1475 Orchard Park Rd., West Seneca, 14224, 6pm
- 13 Education Committee, Resource Center, North Presbyterian Church, 300 N. Forest Rd., Williamsville, 14221, 1pm
- 15 Parish Nurse Ministries of NY, Inc.’s Bi-Annual Conference, Tonawanda Castle, 69 Delaware St., Tonawanda, 14150, 8:15am-4:30pm
- 15 RACHELS - breakfast group for clergy spouses, Denny’s, 3920 Maple Rd., 9am
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- 20 North Towns Clergy, Church of the Nativity, 1530 Colvin Blvd., Buffalo, 14223, 12pm



In the Vineyard is published periodically by the Western New York Area Churches in Covenant (WNYACIC).

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

Send newsletter items to: inthevineyard@juno.com

In the Vineyard, published 10 times a year, invites you to send us your comments and opinions, expressions of faith and announcements of events by the 14th of each month. 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.

*****November 4 – WNYACIC Annual Meeting**