



Connecting UCC and Disciples Congregations in Western New York

from Karl Shallowhorn

Is That You, God?

*"Perhaps this is the moment for which you've been created."
– Esther 4:14*

*"Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived
forwards." – Soren Kierkegaard*

If only I had known these two things when I was in the depths of my despair in my late adolescence and early adulthood. It was during this period that I suffered (and I mean really suffered) from the effects of bipolar disorder and co-occurring addiction. There were certainly periods of time when I experienced what is commonly called, "the dark night of the soul."

I spent years of cycling through mental health facilities, multiple psychiatrists, seemingly innumerable medications and a regular series of therapists. It was during these times that I truly wondered what the future would hold for me.

But there was something inside. Call it my competitive nature, drive, or sheer determination; I managed to pull through it all in one piece. This was, by no means, an easy feat. I had many a day of wondering exactly where I was headed.

Interestingly though, things began to take shape. The catalyst was my getting into a formal addiction recovery program. It was here that I began to nurture my belief in God. I had been raised UCC so the whole idea of believing was already instilled in me. But being part of this program made it real. Like my life depended on it.

It was through this affiliation that I chose to enter the field of addiction counseling and landed my first position working at a Buffalo area hospital-based clinic. It was about three years into this job that I experienced another manic break. This took me out of work for three months; however, my employer was very gracious in allowing me to return and I was even transferred to a less demanding area.

I then returned to school and earned my Masters Degree in Student Personnel Administration and subsequently entered the field of higher education for 12 years.

But it was near the end of this period that I began to feel a call. At first, it was more like a whisper. It was like hearing God say to me, "Go. Tell people about your

life and the healing you have received. And by the way, don't forget to give me some of the credit."

It was then that I went to my pastor and said, "I just want to tell my story." And this is where the transformation began. This was about 12 years ago. I was allowed to briefly share my story in church. And then from there, I actively sought out ways to do the work, that now, I believe, God has asked me to do.

In the years since, I returned to the field of human services, working at a behavioral health provider, Horizon Health Services, for 3 ½ years and then as a mental health advocate and educator for the following four at the Mental Health Association of Erie County and Compeer Buffalo. I now work for an organization called Therapy.Live where we have developed a mental health curriculum for high school students called Prepare U.

I currently serve on several Boards (including the UCC Mental Health Network), as well as on advisory groups and do some consulting work on the side.

I can honestly say that I have found my calling. It has taken me well into my fifth decade of my life to do this but I could not be happier. The fields of mental health and addiction are not easy to work in. Many times, we deal with situations that are complex in nature and challenge even the most experienced professional.

And then there is the stigma that goes along with these two conditions. It often feels like an uphill battle. But it is one that we must fight, nonetheless.

When I look back on my life, I can say two things. First, it's far easier to see the connections and actions that got me to where I am today. And secondly, while I would never want to endure the pain of those early years again, I cannot deny how important they were in helping me to do the work I do today.

Yes. I do believe that God has called me to do this work, just like any other kind of ministry that exists. I do not wear vestments of any kind, nor am I able to quote scripture off the tip of my tongue. But regardless, I believe that God is using me to do the work he is asking of me in the way that I am able to serve best.

What has God called you to do? If you listen carefully, you may just find out.

WNYACIC**June Prayer List**

St. John's UCC, Buffalo. Elaine Utech, supply pastor
 Trinity UCC, Gowanda. Supply preachers
 First Congregational UCC, Jamestown
 (now worshipping with Pilgrim Memorial UCC,
 Jamestown), Doris Landy, Parish Nurse. Supply
 preachers
 St. Paul's UCC, Wendelville, North Tonawanda.
 Ann Quinn, pastor
 Christian Temple – merged with 1st Congregational
 Church, Wellsville. Supply pastors
 Department of Community Ministries
 Chautauqua Association of the Disciples of Christ
 Chautauqua United Church of Christ Society
 Lighthouse Ministries

from Jeff Mason, treasurer, WNYACIC

Treasurer's Report

We thank the following churches that sent Covenantal Share payments between April 11 and May 12: Church of the Nativity (Tonawanda), Cleveland Heights Christian (Cheektowaga), Ebenezer UCC (West Seneca), Pembroke Community, Salem UCC (Tonawanda), St. Paul's UCC (Attica), 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.

**Strawberry Social**

Saturday, June 16, 11am-2pm

Payne Avenue Christian Church

1459 Payne Ave., N. Tonawanda 14120

Tickets \$8 each and include a hot dog, drink, chips and a strawberry shortcake for dessert!

Strawberry shortcake only, \$4. There will also be fresh strawberries available for purchase!

Call Becky at 716-998-9052 or the Church Office at 716-260-1217 for more information or tickets.

**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 are on sale 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

Chautauqua Summer

If you're still looking for a summer vacation that involves relaxation, recreation, educational and spiritual experiences, and great arts, have you considered Chautauqua Institution? Although many of the denominational houses are getting filled up, there are still rooms available in some of them, including the first week at the Disciples House. The themes for the summer include:

Week 1 – For Love of the Written Word; 2. American Identity; 3. The Art of Play; 4. Russian and the West; 5. The Ethics of Dissent; 6. The Changing Nature of Work; 7. The Arts and Global Understanding: Week Featuring The Silk Road Ensemble with Yo-Yo Ma; 8. The Forgotten: History and Memory in the 21st Century; 9. The Impact of Cinema: Storytelling and Social Change: A Chautauqua Film Festival. For more information, check the Institute's website at www.chq.org.

from Beth Stormer, St. Matthew's UCC

Being the Church

St. Matthew's UCC is a welcomed presence in the town of Hamburg. Our congregants are warm and friendly when welcoming newcomers and visitors. There are many opportunities to serve those in need in our community. We provide hands on help, as well as food and monetary donations to local food pantries and missions. Our activity group for Seniors meets once a month and is open to all. We support the Dunkirk Camp and Conference Center and provide scholarships for campers. While our doors are always open year-round, we have a lovely pavilion where outdoor summer services are open to all during July and August. St. Matthew's is also a member of Churches in Action, a local organization that provides many services to those in need.



Celebrating with Faith

On Sunday, June 3 at 10:15am, Faith UCC, 1300 Maple Rd, Williamsville, NY 14221, will be having a special service celebrating the burning of the church mortgage. This is a joyous occasion and we invite friends of Faith to attend. The Rev. Martin Hamann will be officiating at the service and we hope to have spirited music to go along with this festive service. Pictures of the sanctuary under construction will be on display. A catered, reservation-only luncheon is planned after the service.

Food Truck Monday

Monday, June 18, 5-8pm

Ebenezer UCC

630 Main St., West Seneca, NY 14224

No need to cook, come to EUCC for a Food Truck and musical treat!

In the Vineyard New Submission Deadline

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. Please include your name and telephone number. Send newsletter items to:

inthevineyard@juno.com

TV Shows that Inspire

from Jean Edgcomb, Kenilworth UCC

"There are not many happy endings in our country right now. So I am looking for TV shows that have good things happening to people. That's why I watch the Hallmark Channel for its romance and holiday movies. I also watch "MASH" for its humor. (Reruns of this popular sitcom highlight the Korean War.) They both make me feel better about life."

from Linda Godzich, St. Stephen's Bethlehem UCC

"If you're searching for an inspirational television program to watch, I would suggest *American Ninja Warrior*. This is a series that showcases the athletic abilities of its contestants.

"I happened on *American Ninja Warrior* one night a few years ago and became hooked. The object of the show is for the contestants to complete an obstacle course. Men and women compete in various cities across the country for the chance to qualify for the final challenge in Las Vegas. Any person able to complete the final course is named the *American Ninja Warrior*.

"Now the obstacle courses are, naturally, designed to test agility, strength and endurance. The contestants come from all walks of life. Some have overcome personal adversity to compete. All have trained untiringly for the chance to face the obstacles of the course and they are sometimes obstacles that the contestants have never seen.

"I am impressed by the physical abilities and tenacity of these men and women, but I am inspired by the back stories that the program includes about the contestants. The stories of their journeys are amazing and remarkable. These warriors are awesome!"

**BLESSED.....**

is how you will feel when you choose to help out at **Memory Lane Respite Program....**

A **RESPITE PROGRAM** provides family caregivers of someone with early to mid-stages memory impairment (ie: dementia, Alzheimer's) a much needed break....time for them to do some personal "catching up" with errands, rest or activities.

Our program, **Memory Lane**, runs ONCE a month – the 3rd Tuesday, year round beginning August 21, from 10:30am-2:30pm at **First Presbyterian Church**, 149 Broad Street, Tonawanda, NY 14150.

We are looking for dedicated volunteers to become a one-on-one BUDDY to a "guest" for those 4 hours. As a volunteer BUDDY you will participate with them in crafts, snacks, games, music, lunch & various activities. Please refer to the Volunteer Profile Information form for other ways in which you can participate in this program.

*No previous experience necessary.

*You will be trained.

*You do NOT have to help out every month.

*There are a variety ways you can help – not just as a Buddy.

If interested, please contact us at 716-692-1319, or email at: church@firstprestona.org

Please join us in offering **Memory Lane, a RESPITE PROGRAM to those in need.**

Memory Lane Respite Care Program training will be held Thursday, June 28, 10am-1pm at First Presbyterian Church, 149 Broad St., Tonawanda, 14150. Volunteer Profile Information forms must be returned no later than 2 weeks prior. Please call Judy at 716-692-1319 for more information.

Faith Community Nurse Notes:

June is

National Safety Awareness Month

Keeping your family out of harm's way is your number one priority. Unfortunately, many of our homes can be dangerous – preventable injuries and deaths continue to rise in homes and communities. The Council estimates everyday approximately 245 people die of unintentional injuries in homes and communities. In 2007, the six leading causes of unintentional injury death in the U.S. were: motor vehicle crashes (many from DUI or distractions like texting), poisonings (including unintentional overdoses), falls, choking, drowning and fire, flame, and smoke.

Week 1 emphasizes **prescription drug abuse**. Make sure if you have unused medications, you dispose of them properly. Contact your pharmacy. Be sure to keep accurate count of your used medications. Notice unusual behavior by family members.

Week 2 emphasizes **slips, trips and falls**. Highlight steps with color tape; make sure banisters are secure; area rugs on polished/wood floors shouldn't be easily moved. Wear proper footwear, especially when hiking or for exercise or sports.

Week 3 emphasizes **awareness of your surroundings**. Don't be distracted in driving, biking or hiking. If unfamiliar with the area, be cautious - don't let kids run off without direction or protection. Wear proper clothing, including protection from sun and insects.

Week 4 emphasizes **distracted driving**. Again, eating, texting, phone conversations, etc. are distractions. So is changing discs or radio stations by driver while in motion. Loud music also is a distraction. (adapted from www.nsc.org)





Flea Market and Craft Sale

At Dunkirk Camp & Conference Center

Two days – rain or shine, Free parking

Friday and Saturday, June 1 & 2, 2018

8 AM-4 PM

Dunkirk Conference Center

3602 East Lake Rd., Dunkirk, NY 14048

Come to Have Your Questions Answered and to Better Understand Mental Health Issues at... Mental Health 101

By Karl Shallowhorn

On: Sunday, June 24, 2018 at 11:30am

At: St. James United Church of Christ, 76 Main St.,
Hamburg, NY 14075 in The Horton Lounge

This presentation will help provide some basic information and resources for those who want to know or need support around various Mental Health concerns from anxiety and depression to BiPolar Disorder and Schizophrenia.

Karl Shallowhorn is the Director of Community Advocacy for the Mental Health Association of Erie County and Compeer Buffalo. Karl is a New York State Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor and also serves on the Board of Directors for the UCC Mental Health Network, the Mental Health Association in New York State and the 4th and Forever Foundation. He is also a contributing writer and blogger for BP magazine.

Strawberry Festival

Monday, June 18, 5-8pm,

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

Join us for strawberry shortcake, the
Theresa Quinn Band and the West
Seneca Art Society.

All ages are welcome!

from amos acree

ANNUAL MEETING



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.

NY/HELP – What we did in 2017



There were two **NY/HELP mission trips** to Honduras in 2017. In **January**, a group led by retired Spanish teacher David Makepeace (Honeoye UCC) worked with local people in putting a floor in a kindergarten, helping a family build a house, and helping families build stoves. School supplies were distributed by Judy Toner (Salamanca UCMC & Bridgeport). The sewing academy prospered, with the women learning to make patterns. All these projects were selected by the Tribal Council and quickly accomplished because our coordinator Joel Ramirez had everything well organized.

In **July**, Dr. Gordon Comstock and Jeff Dorfman (Arcade UCC) made a short trip to La Laguna, to follow up on our projects and work in the medical clinic, where our nurse Mirtila Garcia provides care all year.

We were invited to a Lempira Day celebration at a nearby community's school. (Lempira Day celebrates the famous Indian chief who in 1536 out-generated the Spanish *conquistadores* – who then killed him by treachery).



A **January 2018 trip** was planned, but was delayed due to political unrest in Honduras, following their presidential elections. Things are much quieter there now, and a mission trip to the mountain communities is on for **June 2018!** Five people, including Pastor Justo Gonzales (taking a break from his new Michigan duties!) will be working with local primary schools and with the sewing group.

Finally, we updated our **Vision and Mission Statements**, to help us clarify our goals.

- **VISION STATEMENT:** The people of the Mataderos tribe will have an accessible path to a healthy, educated and economically self-sufficient life.
- **MISSION STATEMENT:** NY/HELP Honduras works cooperatively with the Mataderos tribe to provide access to health services, education through 9th grade & beyond, and vision statement-related skills training.

All of **NY/HELP's** work is made possible by your prayers and donations. ***Muchas gracias!***



Kevin Guest House Benefit

St. Stephen's UCC (the church that is open on the road that is closed!), 8520 Tonawanda Creek Rd., East Amherst, NY 14051/Town of Clarence, NY 14031 (GPS), presents toe-tappin' Bluegrass music with Creek Bend on Sunday, June 17 at 3pm. Join us and celebrate Father's Day and support the Kevin Guest House of Buffalo, NY – America's first healthcare hospitality house, serving Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center and other area hospitals. Please note: Approach St. Stephen's UCC from the Transit Rd. connection to Tonawanda Creek Road. You can go around all "road closed" signs to get to the church. Call 716-984-0363 for more information.



June Calendar Notes

- 1-2 Dunkirk Camp & Conference Center Flea Market, DCC, 3602 East Lake Rd., Dunkirk, 14048, 8am-4pm, rain or shine
- 3 Celebrating with Faith, Faith UCC, 1300 Maple Rd., Williamsville, 14221, 10:15am
- 8-9 NY Conference Annual Meeting, Crowne Plaza Hotel, 701 E. Genesee St., Syracuse, 13210, 2pm
- 11 Western Association Church & Ministry, Ebenezer UCC, 630 Main St., West Seneca, 14224, 9:30am-3:00pm. For more information call 716-882-7705.
- 14 Education Committee-Resource Ctr.-1:00pm
- 16 Plymouth Crossroads Bluesfest, Chicken Coop, 299 Leydecker Rd., West Seneca, 14224, 2pm
- 16 Strawberry Social, Payne Avenue Christian Church, 1459 Payne Ave., N. Tonawanda, 14120, 11am-2pm
- 16 RACHELS- breakfast group for clergy spouses, Denny's, 3920 Maple Rd., 9am
- 17 Creek Bend to benefit Kevin Guest House, St. Stephen's UCC, 8520 Tonawanda Creek Rd., East Amherst, 14051/Town of Clarence, 14031 (GPS), 3pm
- 18 WNYACIC Council-St. Stephens-Bethlehem-7pm
- 18 Strawberry Festival, Ebenezer UCC, 630 Main St., West Seneca, 14224, 5-8pm
- 18 Food Truck, Ebenezer UCC, 630 Main St., West Seneca, 14224, 5-8pm
- 19 Samaritan Society-St. Stephens-Bethlehem-12-2pm.
- 21 North Towns Clergy-Church of the Nativity-Noon
- 24 Mental Health 101, St. James UCC, 76 Main St., Hamburg, 14075, 11:30am
- 28 Memory Lane Respite Care Program training program, 10am-1pm, First Presbyterian Church, 149 Broad St., Tonawanda, 14150

July Calendar Notes

- 9 Western Association Church & Ministry, Ebenezer UCC, 630 Main St., West Seneca, 14224, 9:30am-3:00pm. For more information call 716-882-7705.
- 12 Education Committee, Resource Center, 1pm
- 16 WNYACIC Council-St. Stephens-Bethlehem-7pm
- 17 Samaritan Society, United Church Manor, 50 North Ave., West Seneca, 14224, 12-2pm
- 21 RACHELS - breakfast group for clergy spouses, Denny's, 3920 Maple Rd., 9am

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



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

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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.