

Connecting UCC and Disciples Congregations in Western New York

By Pastor Krista Ulrich

I want more of Jesus in my every day.

I want to know what that woman's fingertips felt like when she touched Jesus' cloak.

What did the woman at the well hear first when she heard Jesus' voice?

Put me on the hillside as Jesus preached...make me a child at his feet.

Make me a soldier gambling for his clothes.

I want to feel it...to know it...to know him better.

I want to be asked, I want to deny, and I want to be forgiven.

I want to be chosen, taken from my seat in the boat and asked to follow. I want to wash his feet with my hair.

I want to understand the devotion of a friend and the denial of a brother.

I want to be washed in the waters of the Jordan River.

I want to hear the shouts and screams as the tables are overturned.

I want to be healed by grace...I want to be forgiven simply because I humbly ask.

Make me amazed as I gaze into an empty tomb.

Fill my heart with joy at the sight of the risen Christ.

Hold me, melt me, mold me...use me to do your will...I want to know more of You Jesus.

from Pastor Krista Ulrich

Western Area Youth (WAY) News

We have some exciting news to share with you regarding our youth programming in the Western Association! Let me begin by sharing news about our recent Winter WAY Retreat. From February 9th – 11th, 52 youth, Jr. leaders and adult leaders gathered at Epiphany UCC for a weekend of fellowship, community service, worship and fun. The photo embedded in this article was taken on the steps of Grace UCC, one of our Better Together churches. We spent the morning cleaning the church inside and out under the supervision of Pastor and Lady Jackson and Sister Peoples. Community service is always an important aspect of our youth gatherings. This summer, from July 8th – 14th, our WAY group will be traveling to Detroit for a weeklong Mission Trip.

Typically, Western Area Youth includes youth from 7th – 12th grade. Recently, we have had discussions about broadening our reach with WAY. Several of our 18-year-olds who have aged out of our typical activities have expressed a desire to remain active. At the same time, we have UCC churches in the Western Area that have only a few younger children and some with a larger elementary age presence. So...this is our plan! In addition to WAY (7th – 12th grade), we are in the process of creating both a Sr. WAY group (post high) and a Jr. WAY (grades K – 6th). Our first Sr. WAY Event will be planned for next winter when our post high youth typically have a break from college. Our first Jr. WAY Event with be on Saturday, March 9th from 9:30 -11:30am at Ebenezer UCC. We will be having a Jr. WAY Carnival Day! Our goal is to engage younger children from all Western Area churches so they might be active in fellowship with youth from other

churches. Our plan right now is to have four to six Jr. WAY activities each year. The location for the activities will rotate from church to church to accommodate demographics.

Our children are the future of God's church and any efforts we make to engage them in fellowship is very worthwhile effort. Investing in our youth programming is investing in the future of the Western Area of the UCC in NYS. All information regarding our WAY activities is posted on our WAY Facebook Page and sent to our area churches via email through the WNYACIC office. All our event registrations are online through Zion UCC's website. If you have any question regarding the information in this article, please contact Pastor Krista Ulrich at 716-572-5642.

Your church's support in furthering our youth mission is greatly appreciated!



Winter WAY Retreat February 2024



Time to sign up for the 2024 WAY Mission Trip! All UCC/Disciples youth in WNY, ages 13-18 are eligible.

Join us for this memorable, faith-filled experience!

Registration: www.zionuccton.com/WAY

Registration Deadline: May 1, 2024
Mission Trip Itinerary:

https://www.zionuccton.com/.../2024-Mission-Trip...

Mission Trip Packing List: https://www.zionuccton.com/.../Mission-Trip-Packing-List.pdf



from Rev. Miranda Hammer, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Tonawanda

Clergy Jail Visiting Project

The Erie County holding center and correctional facility are not places many enter willingly. Wrought with a tense history and tenuous relationship to community, many who live in Western New York

wish there'd be more transparency within these institutions.

It is with this in mind that the Clergy Jail Visiting Project surfaced. The Clergy Jail Visiting Project (CJVP) enters the jails beyond the visiting area where they hear stories of jail residents and observe conditions. This project is directed by Pastor Miranda Hammer and supported by various local clergy of diverse religious backgrounds who take a few hours in a day to enter the facilities and speak with incarcerated individuals. So far, these visits happen quarterly.

The CJVP functions under a policy agreed upon by the Erie County Sheriff's department and a group of local clergy represented by John Lipsitz. This came about after visitation was frequently denied under the previous administration, and clergy were seeking access granted to them under New York State Corrections law 500J. So far, this policy has been upheld on each side and visitation has happened in each facility.

With each visit the clergy are trusted with stories personal and deep. Many of those incarcerated are trying to bide their time peacefully and plan for their future. One man who was getting close to release shared with Pastor Miranda what he wants people to know about him and his experience: "I just want people to remember I'm a person. I'm a person just like you, and him. I don't always get treated like I am one."

The clergy that participate in this project must be in charge of a congregation within Erie county. Other counties across the state are trying to create similar models. If you'd like to learn more, please contact Pastor Miranda at jvp716@gmail.com.

from Shannon King, on behalf of Arcade UCC

Community Youth Outreach at Arcade UCC



Nick Tillinghast reads to a class of Arcade Elementary students during the Christmas Extravaganza.



Students look on as the "Happy Scientist," AKA Pastor Josh Bower, demonstrates a science experiment.

For the second year in a row, Arcade UCC hosted their Christmas Extravaganza for the students of Arcade Elementary! Over the span of three days, every classroom from Arcade Elementary visited Arcade UCC to enjoy a read-aloud story and a fun experiment presented by the Happy Scientist! Holiday spirit was high and smiles were on every face! What a wonderful way to connect with so many of our area youth!



The Winter VBS at Arcade UCC takes to the rails!

Arcade UCC held their Winter Vacation Bible School from Tues.-Thur., February 20-22. The theme this year was, "All Aboard! Joining in God's Journey." Sixteen kids took part in this fun-filled event, along with five youth leaders and many adults! The three days were filled with crafts, games, activities, snacks, Godly Play stories, music and more! The highlight of VBS was a ride on the Arcade & Attica train!

Grants Available

Grants of up to \$1500 are available through the Department of Community Ministries to help congregations develop or build ministries serving their local community or bringing them into closer connection with their community or neighborhood. If you have an idea for outreach in your community (or a current program you want to expand), feel free to contact us and we will be glad to help you explore and develop a fundable plan.

Any member congregation in good standing with the WNYACIC is eligible to apply. A grant can be requested for a maximum of \$1500 and a church may request up to two grants per calendar year (total of \$3000 per year per church).

For more information contact Ted Brelsford (pastor@faithunitedchurchucc.com 716-941-3529).

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) - Offering 2024



Share the Light

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) special mission offering of the United Church of Christ on March 10, involves you in disaster, refugee/immigration, and development ministries throughout the world. When a disaster strikes or people are displaced or made refugees by violence or extreme poverty, you are part of the immediate response and of the long-term recovery.

Through OGHS you engage in holistic development programs including health care, education, agriculture, food sustainability, micro-financing and women's empowerment. Because the UCC relates in mutual partnership to churches and organizations through Global Ministries and worldwide response & recovery networks, your contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing put you in the right place at the right time for the relief, accompaniment and recovery of the most vulnerable. You meet immediate needs and you address the underlying causes that create those needs in the first place.

Mail checks to United Church of Christ, P.O. Box 71957, Cleveland, Ohio 44194 or Text OGHS to 41444 and follow the prompts to give securely or give online via a secure donation form by clicking:

https://support.ucc.org/ways-to-give/ourchurchs-wider-mission/one-great-hour-ofsharing/one-great-hour-of-sharing-donation

from Ginger Comstock, NY/HELP



NY/HELP is planning to have a mission trip to Honduras this year. Dates are being worked out, possibly in August. We are looking for people who have a heart for

working with and a willingness to get to know the wonderful people in the mountains of Honduras we have been visiting for more than 30 years. It has been a life-changing experience for some who have gone. Knowledge of Spanish is helpful, but not absolutely necessary; being willing to live out of a backpack and in a village where we have to bring in fresh water is. For much more information, please contact: Ginger Comstock at gkcomstock@gmail.com or Dona Roll at Drroll@yahoo.com.

In memory of Rev. James D. Hakes

April 11, 1931 - January 31, 2024

Rev. Hakes entered into his eternal rest on January 31, 2024. He resided at Fox Run at the time of his passing and is survived by several family members.

Rev. Hakes was an authorized minister in the United Church of Christ, graduating from Chicago Seminary and ordained in 1959. He had served many UCC churches since 1958, beginning with Marble Memorial Church (E&R) in New York City, Immanuel UCC in Buffalo (1962-1993) and several other churches in Western New York.

There are no plans for a memorial service at this time, but we will share any information about one if we hear of arrangements by his family.

In the Vineyard asks...

What good things happening in your church life now are a result of the pandemic experience?

from Patricia Burgstahler, Kenmore UCC



When we think of what has changed in our church life because of the pandemic, it is easy to remember the negative things but given more careful thought, one very important and wonderful thing has happened because of the pandemic experience. Our congregation (though smaller) has grown closer. We now know what it is to have the sense of family taken away from us. We truly value any opportunity to gather for fun, fundraisers, or community service projects as well as our weekly Sunday mornings.

An example of this took place on four evenings in November when we had 12-20 members and friends gathering at church to make paper tree favors for Ken-Ton Meals on Wheels program. We traced, cut, and folded over 300 small trees to be given to each client in the program. It was a labor of love and we were glad precision was not a criterion. We laughed a lot.

Besides the benefit this was to our group and the recipients, there was another great result. We could acknowledge the source of the folded tree pattern. Sarah Acton, daughter of Mike and Celeste Thorp of Zion UCC, made the sample we copied. So, this was her legacy to others and our tribute to her. A school teacher in Buffalo, Sarah passed away suddenly while on a trip with her students to Costa Rica. This March will be the 11th anniversary of her passing, but making so many people happy with this symbol of the holiday season will help to keep her memory alive.

We have many more plans for activities to keep bringing the members and friends of our congregation together. We pray that the isolation of the pandemic is truly in the past and that we will go forward and thrive together.

from Marianne Rathman, Pilgrim-St. Luke's UCC

As difficult and sometimes scary the whole pandemic experience was, at Pilgrim - St. Luke's we developed a whole new way of doing and being church – online, outdoors – and we found ourselves expanding instead of diminishing, especially our worship experience. We did not go to streaming because we feel that worship is a participatory, live experience, not something to watch or just look at. Like many churches, we went totally to Zoom for many weeks, so we got lots of experience. We worked on sound and video improvements and ended up purchasing, through the generous donations of a few of our members, new sound and video equipment. This has been a need in our sanctuary for some time and we could see that services on Zoom were not going to end.

We are blessed to have a pastor who is good at adapting and loves to design creative worship. Pastor Nancy led us to let our creative juices flow in expanding our worship rather than diminishing it. Worship became more inclusive, and anyone could (continued on page 7)

take part, even those who were homebound, sick or in the hospital. On some Sundays we used YouTube videos for special music or musical Calls to Worship.

Our congregation even grew closer on Zoom as Pastor Nancy helped us to figure out how we could create, be, and feel like we were together in community across time and space. Our hybrid worship today is definitely more inclusive and creative because of it. Unlike many churches, we actually grew in number, as well as in love and faith! New people expressed that they were longing for community and looking for ways to become involved in mission. People could "try us out" without actually going to the building, and they still do that today! We also didn't suffer financially. Members and friends of the church responded to what was being offered.

Another thing that developed and which we now have in place is a Rapid Response Team that can be called to action if a disaster should occur again. Just about all of our boards and committees now meet on Zoom. Members who work full-time and/or have families are grateful not to have to leave home for meetings.

All in all, with everything that was negative about the pandemic, we found and created a lot more positive!

We thank all of you for your feedback and replies to our queries each quarter and encourage anyone who would like to submit a response to do so! We love to hear from you! Please send them to inthevineyardeditor@qmail.com. Thank you!





from Rev. Gary Ferner, Associate Conference Minister

Churches in Transition

Amherst Community Church, Snyder Church of the Nativity UCC, Town of Tonawanda St. John's UCC, Dunkirk

St. Matthew's UCC, Hamburg

St. Paul's UCC, Wendelville, North Tonawanda



Helping Hands for Haiti

By Sue Allen of Good Shepherd Community of Faith March 9, 2024, 9am-2pm

We will gather at First Baptist Church of East Aurora, 591 Porterville Road, East Aurora, 14052. Lunch will be offered. Please contact Sue at (716)-697-1657 or bsuea@yahoo.com if you will be coming so we can have a rough head count. (If you decide at the last minute to join us, no worries. We make extras). Certainly, invite friends/family. We can always find something for everyone to do!!

By the way, we also have our next date set for **November 9, 2024**; as well a special sewing dresses date for **May 9, 2024**. **MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

The main item we are in need of is sanitary pads, but any of the other items you know we can always use is greatly appreciated. Hope to see you March 9th.

from Rev. Lynn Morgan, treasurer, WNYACIC

Western Area Treasurer's Report

The Western Area ended 2023 with an operating surplus of almost \$3,000! This has allowed us to repay our rainy-day fund from our Covid borrowing. Thanks to all our Area Churches who made this possible. We exceeded our budgeted income expectations! Thirty-five out of 47 Area churches contributed to Covenant Share giving.

Please remember that the 2024 Per Capita rate is \$2.50 per member. Per Capita is sent to the Area but is passed on entirely to support the ministries of the NY Conference.

Each year, the interest income from the Endowment Fund enables the Area to support ministries and missions throughout WNY. This year, the Endowment income (\$32,906) has been distributed to Dunkirk Conference Center, the mission initiatives identified by the Department of Community Mission, and Plymouth Crossroads, as well as Senior Wishes and Western Area Youth.

Thanks to all the churches whose generous giving support the ministry and mission of the Western Area.

from Jeff Mason, Finance Committee

ENDOWMENT NEWS

Our three Endowment accounts did very well during the final quarter of 2023.

The American Funds account was \$42,001.13 on December 31, up from \$38,170.02 on September 30. The United Church Funds account ending in 010 was \$53,959.41 on December 31, up from \$50,807.01 on September 30. The United Church Funds account ending in 009 increased to \$641,042.32 on December 31, up from \$589,316.69 on September 30.

Our total on December 31 was \$737,002.86, up from \$678,293.72 on September 30. Every January, we make a disbursement from the Fund, based on an average of the quarterly totals. That disbursement, which was \$32,906.00, took place on January 10, and the funds were transferred to the Western Area's checking account. The Area Treasurer, Rev. Lynn Morgan, has since disbursed that money according to the amounts approved at the annual meeting in November.



Prayerlists - March - May 2024

March Prayer List

St. John's UCC, Dunkirk
Rev. Zoe Milliman, pastor
New Light Christian Church, Buffalo
Rev. Nadine Schrodt, pastor
Western Area Council
Center for Christian Growth of WNY
Plymouth Crossroads
Jennifer McAndrew, director
Global Partnership Prayers – Nicaragua,
Hong Kong, South Africa, Honduras, India
UCC Racial Justice Ministries

April Prayer List

Pilgrim-St. Luke's UCC, Buffalo Rev. Nancy Rosas, pastor St. John's UCC, Eden Rev. Dr. James Reidling, pastor Lockport UCC, Rev. Dr. Richard Danielson, pastor Dunkirk Camp & Conference Center Coalition for Economic Justice, Buffalo WNY Peace Center Practical Resources for Churches (PRC)

May Prayer List

Faith UCC, Boston
Rev. Dr. Ted Brelsford, pastor
Rev. Gary Burdick, Pastor Emeritus
Covenant UCC, Gasport
St. John's UCC, Strykersville
Western Association Church & Ministry Committee
Network of Religious Communities
UCC Coalition for Rural Ministries



Upcoming Events at Kenilworth UCC 45 Dalton drive Town of Tonawanda, NY 14150 716-835-4120

On Sunday, March 17, we are celebrating "All Things Irish" with Irish food, poetry, games and jokes. A 50/50 raffle will be held and winner prizes will be awarded. A love offering will be collected. Come spend an afternoon with us from noon until 2 pm. Get your Irish on with us!

Kenilworth UCC Community Giving Cupboard will have an open house for distribution Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week (March 25, 26 and 27) from 5 pm until 8 pm.

Please join us on **Maundy Thursday**, March 28, for the **Annual Seder Meal** which starts at 5:30 pm. Reservations are required; participants are asked to bring a can of chicken-broth-based soup (any variety but no cream) or a can of vegetarian/vegan alternative soup. A love offering will be collected.

On Good Friday, March 29, we will have open

prayer from 10 am until 2:30 pm. There is a 2:30 pm Taize-style chapel service ending with the tolling of a bell at 3 pm, and then we have a 7 pm Good Friday worship service.

On Easter Sunday morning, March 31, we have a Son-rise chapel service at 8:30 am, an Easter Breakfast at 9 am, and Traditional Easter Worship at 10:30 am.

On Sunday, April 14, from noon until 2 pm, it's "Gardener's Delight" with a raffle on baskets filled with gardening items. Tickets for the raffle will be sold in batches of 7 for \$5. Light refreshments will be available and we humbly ask for love donations.

Sunday, May 12th is **Mother's Day!** Families are invited for a tea party from noon until 3 pm with finger foods and a variety of teas. Cost is \$10 per person. There will also be a 50/50 and flower raffle that day!



Dunkirk Camp and Conference Center 2024 Camp Schedule www.dunkirkcc.com/ (716)366-1900

Women's Weekend: May 31-June 2 NEW! Fun After 50 Camp: June 24-28 Senior High Camp: June 30- July 6 Pilgrim Camp: June 30-July 6

Pilgrim Mini Camp: June 30-July 3

Family Camp I: July 7-13

Outdoor Adventure Camp: July 14-20

Family Camp II: July 21-27

Pioneer Camp: July 28- August 3

Soccer Camp: August 4-10 Swim Camp: August 4-10

Junior High Camp: August 11-17 One Piece at a Time: August 22-25

HAM & SCALLOPED POTATO DINNER

First Congregational UCC 132 N. Main Street Angola, NY 14006 716-549-2115



Sunday, March 10, 2024 11:30 AM - 5:00 PM or sold out

Dine-In or Take-Out Available
Includes: Ham, scalloped potatoes,
vegetable,
roll and dessert

\$ 15.00 / person Pre-sale encouraged Mon.-Fri. 9am-1pm at the church office or call 716-549-2115.



St. Peter's UCC, 1208 Oliver St. North Tonawanda, NY 14120 will be serving fish fry dinners Fridays on March 15th, March 22nd, and March 29th.

Dinners will consist of a generous portion of fish breaded and deep fried or baked or shrimp. Also included, will be homemade German potato salad, French fries, or baked potato, desserts of pie or cake, coffee or tea. A children's menu consists of chicken nuggets plus sides.

Dinners are served from 4:00 pm until 6:30 pm. Adult dinners are \$18.00. Children's dinners are \$7.00.



St. Peter's United Church of Christ, West Seneca, will hold a Food and Wine Pairing fundraiser on Sunday, April 21, 2024. The event will be held at Bravo Café, 5781 Seneca Street in Elma, 14059, with doors opening at 4:30 p.m. and dinner and pairings beginning at 5:00. Bravo's owner has designed a menu that will pair a gourmet meal with the perfect wines, including appetizers, entree and dessert. Tickets are \$65 each, not including gratuity, and are available only in advance at Bravo, by calling 716-674-1233, or stopping by the church office at 1475 Orchard Park Road in West Seneca, 14224.

13th Annual

Friday Free Lunch Program

Feb. 2- March 22

8-week Program

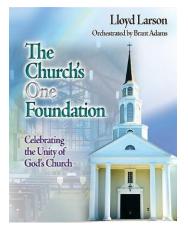
Faith United Church of Christ 1300 Maple Rd. Williamsville, N.Y. 14221

11:30 - till gone

<u>Drive thru only!</u>

ALL WELCOME!!!





Palm Sunday Cantata

YOU are invited! This year's Pioneer Association of Churches (PAC) Palm Sunday Cantata will be performed at Hope's Community Center,

2 E. Main St., Arcade, 14009, March 24th at 3:00 p.m. Free admission! Accessible to all!

Come and experience the age-old story of the Passion of the Christ presented in a new, different way by Pioneer Area musicians, dancers, and friends. Following that, "The Church's One Foundation" by Lloyd Larson will be performed by our community choir and instrumental ensemble. This short cantata expresses Jesus' prayer for unity in his earthly kin-dom. Please come and enter into Holy Week with us. Donations of toiletries and non-perishable food items will be collected to support our PAC Food Pantry and Satellite.

52nd Annual Strawberry Social 2024

First Congregational UCC 132 N. Main Street Angola, NY 14006

Thursday, June 13th 11am-8pm Friday, June 14th 11am-8pm

Hot dogs, Hamburgers, Cheeseburgers, Grilled Cheese, Italian Sausage, Grilled Chicken, Curly French Fries and Sweet Potato Fries, Sundaes, Milkshakes, Cones & Strawberry Shortcake Pop, Water & Coffee

Children's Pedal Tractor Pull
Ages 6-8 years old
4:00-6:00pm
Entertainment from
6:00-8:00pm on Thursday
and 1:00-8:00pm on Friday.
Please Bring Your Lawn Chair.

Please contact church for details 716-549-2115. *Menu subject to change.*



St. Paul's United Church of Christ 11 Washington St Attica, 14011 Indoor Garage Sale Saturday, March 9, 2024 9-5 pm

Lunch will be available by Bey Bites.





Free to a good home!



30-40 hymnals from an area church member's collection.

Most of them different from each other.

Please call 716-207-7466

to leave a message.

Trinity Cooks for their Community

Trinity United Church of Christ 30 Erie Avenue Gowanda, NY 14070

Drive up and walk up. 4 to 6 pm or until gone.

Menu:

Sat., March 9th - Italian sausage hoagie, baked beans, veggie, fruited jello, cookie **Sat., April 13th** - goulash, tossed salad, bread & cookie

Upcoming Events at
St. John's United Church of Christ
608 Centerline Rd.
Strykersville 14145
Located at the corner of Dutch Hollow
& Centerline Roads in Strykersville



Chiavetta's Chicken BBQ

Sunday, April 7th from 11AM-Sold Out Includes: Chicken, Roll & Butter, Baked Beans, Potato Salad, and Dessert ** Take Out ONLY** Handicap Accessible



Treasure Sale

Saturday, May 4th
Doors open at 9:00AM
Something for EVERYONE! One man's trash is another man's treasure!
Handicap Accessible

Faith United Church of Christ presents

Elvis and Buddy Holly



as performed by Nathan Pittorf

Come and be a part of the fabulous '50's and '60's as Nathan performs his award winning show!

April 20, 2024

Showtime 7:00PM Door

Door opens at 6:40 PM

\$20 presale \$25 at door

(no will call - cash only)

\$100 Door Prize Drawing

Theme Baskets

8651 Boston State Road

Boston, NY 14025

faithunitedchurchucc.com

716-941-3529

The "In the Vineyard" Editorial Board welcomes any meditations or devotions that tie into the church year for our newsletter's front page.

(Word count of 400-475 words, please.)

Please submit your piece to inthevineyardeditor@gmail.com
Thank you in advance!





Church & Ministry Meetings -

2nd Monday of each month, 9:30 am to 2:00 pm Ebenezer UCC, 630 Main St., West Seneca, 14224. Members & guests are notified directly of any changes.

New York Area Churches in Covenant (WNYACIC)

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inthevineyardeditor@gmail.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 summer issue in by May 14, 2024.

