



Connecting UCC & Disciples Congregations of Western New York

By Pastor Josh Bower, Arcade United Church of Christ

I've been making a lot of lasagnas lately. In a way, it's my own form of meditation. I turn on music - most of the time 90's Alternative - gather all my ingredients together and get to work. There's something relaxing to me about chopping onions, carrots, and celery, the base for my homemade sauce. I love the sound the can opener makes as it glides around the large can of crushed tomatoes. I get to release tension as I smash garlic with the heel of the knife and mince it into fine pieces. The "glug" of the olive oil coming out of the bottle and the sizzle as I put the vegetables and ground beef into the pot are therapeutic to my soul. Not long after, the canned tomatoes are very carefully added as to not splatter so I don't have to clean up the kitchen too much when I'm finished. (Unfortunately, cleaning is definitely not a meditative practice for me.)

While the sauce simmers on the stove, I mix together the mozzarella, ricotta, and parmesan cheeses with a couple eggs in a big bowl. And then, once everything is prepped and finished, comes the methodical and mindless layering of sauce, noodles, cheese; sauce, noodles, cheese; sauce, noodles, sauce, shredded mozzarella and parmesan cheese. Over and over again. One lasagna after another. The night before the writing of this article, I made seven lasagnas. This normally happens about twice per-month.

While this process may sound tedious to some of you, it works for me. It's beneficial to my mental health. However, I have to admit, while a spiritual and meditative practice for me, there are often sorrowful

reasons behind why these lasagnas are being made. It is part of my ministry to my congregation at Arcade. As best as I can, whenever someone is ill, has come home from the hospital, or loses a loved one, I visit (whatever "visiting" looks like in a COVID world) with lasagna in hand. And unfortunately, over the last two years of this pandemic, I have had to make far too many lasagnas.

As we head into the third year of the COVID pandemic, there has been so much loss, grief, and pain. And so many of us just don't know how to handle it. We have lost loved ones; we have seen those we care about lose loved ones. Those around us and perhaps even we have tested positive for COVID and may still be suffering with the long-term symptoms. And in the midst of all of this pain and loss, we want to say something that will cut through the loss and offer hope, we want to offer words that will make those around us feel better, but we just can't think of what those words are. So instead, we turn to clichés of, "everything happens for a reason" or "God won't give us more than we can handle" when really, all of us are thinking, "God, this *IS* more than I can handle" and "God, for what possible reason could all of this death and destruction be happening?"

As we head into the season of Lent, a season of preparation and remembrance, we remember that Christ prepared his disciples for one of the most grief-filled times of their lives - a time when they would see their beloved rabbi killed by the empire - by showing up, spending time with them, and sharing a meal that he had prepared for them. And as we all wrestle with the collective grief that we have felt from the last two years, as we all try to think of the right words to say to

comfort one another, maybe we would be wise to do the same. Instead of searching for the right words to say, maybe we should just show up, break bread, be there for each other, and remember that Christ is present with us there. Sometimes, I would argue oftentimes, the best thing we can do to meet each other in the midst of our grief, is to greet each other with a hug and a tin foil pan full of comfort food.

So, my beloved siblings in Christ, if you are grieving as we head into this Lenten season, know that you are loved, know that Christ meets you just where you are on your journey, and know that a lasagna is just an email away.



Prayerlists – March – May 2022

March Prayer List

- People’s Community UCC, Buffalo
- Rev. Charles Henderson, pastor
- St. John’s UCC, Dunkirk
- Rev. Zoe Milliman, pastor
- New Light Christian Church, Buffalo
- Rev. Nadine Schrodtt, 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

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
- Harriett Tubman Christian Church, Buffalo
- Dunkirk Camp & Conference Center
- Coalition for Economic Justice
- WNY Peace Center

May Prayer List

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

Debora Cullen has retired as the Director of Christian Education at Amherst Community Church. Congratulations and best wishes, Debora! The new Director of Christian Education and Community Engagement is Carissa Gigliotti. Welcome, Carissa!

Trinity UCC of Gowanda has a new part-time pastor, Pastor Jess Kacalski. Congratulations to Trinity UCC!

from Rev. Gary Ferner, Associate Conference Minister

Churches in Transition

- Pilgrim Memorial/First Congregational Church, Jamestown
- Gasport UCC
- New Covenant UCC, Buffalo



from Rev. Lynn Morgan, treasurer, WNYACIC

Western Area Treasurer's Report

After two years of making constant course corrections and adapting to ever-changing circumstances, our Area churches continue to support the ministry and mission of the wider church faithfully and generously.

In 2020, the Area had to use contingency funds to sustain our day to day operations. We 'borrowed' \$10,000 from ourselves, but bit by bit we have recovered from that cash-flow pinch. Due to the generosity of our churches and through some trimming of budgeted expenses, we were able to end the 2021 fiscal year with a budget surplus of more than \$8,000! We are using \$5,000 of that surplus to re-pay what we borrowed from the Budget Contingency Fund (rainy day savings).

By the time you read this, the Area will have received and distributed the annual income from the Endowment Fund. This year the Endowment income (\$24,740) will support Dunkirk Conference Center, the Center for Christian Growth, the mission initiatives identified by the Department of Community Mission as well as the United Church Home Society (Senior Wishes) and Western Area Youth.

Thanks to the churches who give their Covenantal Shares throughout the year! We're off to a good start financially. Let's hope this is a sign of a new season of flourishing!

from Jeff Mason, Finance Committee

ENDOWMENT NEWS

Our Endowment accounts did well during the fourth quarter of 2021. As of December 31, 2021, we had \$39,297.71 in the American Funds (up from \$35,487.07 in September); \$441,894.78 in the United Church Funds Account 009 (up from \$427,701.80 in September); and \$32,437.93 in the United Church Funds Account 010 (up from \$31,560.43 in September).

The total value of our Endowment on December 31 was \$513,630.42, which was an increase of \$18,881.12 over the September 30 total.

Our March 31, 2022 total will probably be lower than the December 31 total. This is partly

because the financial markets are off to a rocky start thus far in 2022. Also, our annual transfer from the United Church Funds Account 009 to the Western Area budget account is taking place in February. That amount is \$24,740, which will be disbursed according to the 2022 budget that was passed at the annual meeting in November.

Dunkirk Camp & Conference Center News



Please Save the Date

Dunkirk Camp and Conference is celebrating 100 years of "Entering to learn and departing to serve." You are cordially invited to join in a dinner to begin the celebration of our 100 years!

When: Saturday, April 30, 2022

Cash bar and Hors D'oeuvres begin at 5:30 pm. Dinner at 6:30 pm

Where: Michael's Banquet Center, 4885 Southwestern Blvd., Hamburg, NY 14075

Dinner will include salad, rolls, petite sirloin and chicken, seasonal vegetable, mashed potatoes and ice cream. A vegetarian entree and children's meal option will also be available.

There will be joyful camaraderie, music and a few surprises!

Tickets: \$50.00 per person

\$25.00 children 2-12 years

Registration forms will be available via email and on our DCC website. Questions? Contact: Nancy Pankow at nipankow@roadrunner.com

Dunkirk Conference Center

Annual Work Weekend May 27th - 29th

We need your help getting ready for Camp!

There are many indoor and outdoor projects to accomplish including: cabin cleaning, raking & picking up downed limbs etc., wood splitting, set out benches and picnic tables and more. Please bring rakes, gloves and any tools you might find useful to help out.

Call the office for more information on work projects available.

Accommodations available

Friday & Saturday

Meals provided on Saturday only.

**Please contact the office @
716-366-1900**

to reserve lodging and meals.

Upcoming Camps at Dunkirk Camp

Scrapbook Weekends: March 18-20 and
May 13-15

Superheroes Weekend April 29-May 1

Register online at Dunkirkcc.com

By phone (716) 366-1900



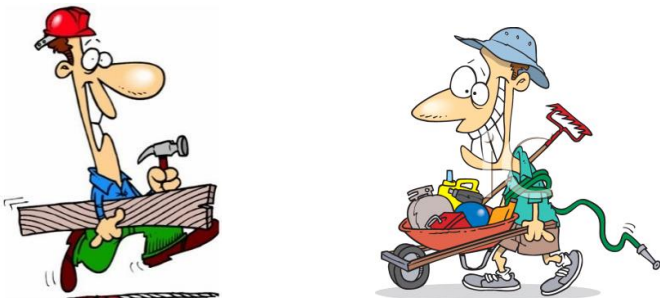
Support for Dunkirk Camp and Conference Center

Dunkirk Camp and Conference Center provides rich Christian camping experiences for kids and adults. Go to www.dunkirkcc.com for information about our programs.

We ask that you consider supporting our ministry in these challenging times. **Financial donations, estate bequests and attendance at our programs are greatly appreciated!** For those of you who use Amazon, consider making Dunkirk Camp and Conference Center your Amazon Smile recipient. Dunkirk will then receive a small donation from Amazon.

Here's how to shop AmazonSmile:

1. Visit smile.amazon.com.
2. Sign in with your Amazon.com credentials.
3. Choose a charitable organization to receive donations or search for the charity of your choice.
4. Select Dunkirk Camp and Conference Center.



11th ANNUAL

**FRIDAY
FREE
LUNCH
PROGRAM**

FEB. 18- APRIL 8

11:30- TILL GONE

DRIVE THRU ONLY

FAITH U.C.C

**1300 MAPLE RD/CORNER OF HOPKINS
WILLIAMSVILLE**



Dear New York Conference Members and Friends,

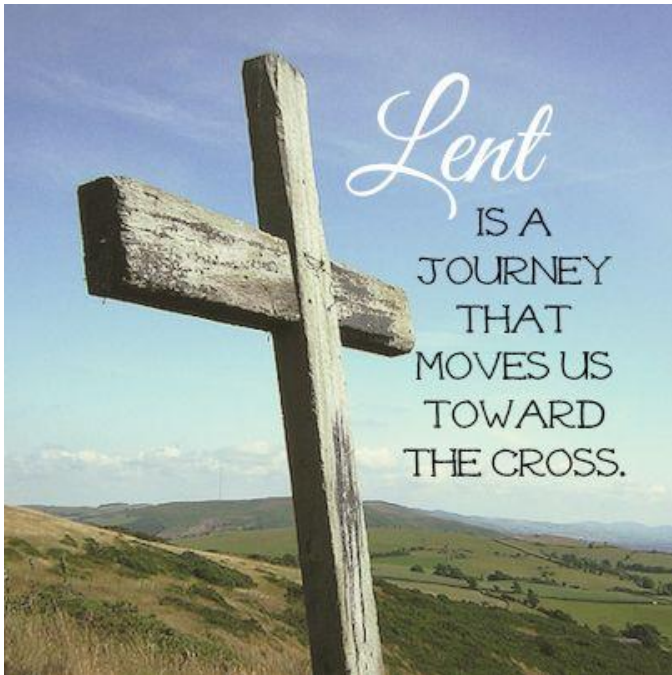
It has truly been my great privilege to serve in conference ministry for the past twenty-five years, the last ten years in New York. I have discerned that now is the time for me to retire. During Covid I have been working from our home in Maine. This is where I need to be. Therefore, my ministry in New York will conclude on June 30th.

I have done my utmost to serve you with integrity, honesty, and faith. I am grateful to all the conference leaders with whom I have served God. I could never say enough to express my appreciation, admiration, and joy of working with such a talented and deeply faith-filled staff.

I have no doubt that you will hear from our conference moderator, Dona Roll, soon regarding the transition period. She and the Conference Board have been in conversation with the national setting of the UCC which will assist the New York Conference during this period of transition.

I wish each of you wellness, deep peace, and the abiding love of God.

David Gaewski, Conference Minister at New York Conference United Church of Christ





UCC -NY Conference
and the
Center for Racial Justice
PRESENTS
"Let's Talk Race"



PART II
Online Learning Sessions
Mondays, March 7-April 11, 2022
7-9 p.m.

Building upon the film screening, we will examine the impacts of racism in our communities, the challenges of diversifying churches, and the tragic impacts of the "Unholy Trinity"—implicit bias, stereotypes, microaggressions. And we will discuss how we can make racial justice an important part of our faith journey.

"I cannot more highly recommend this course of study!

Our nation must finally reckon with the tragic elements of our racial history.

There will be no progress until this occurs. The first step is learning about it.

Conversations, difficult as they may be, will help us come to healing and reconciliation."

(Kathleen Elliott-Birdsall, educator and "Let's Talk Race" participant)

**Wellness Event Being Offered at
Good Shepherd Community of Faith**

For the next three months, we will focus on a variety of health care through **NUTRITION & HEALTHY COOKING** with **UNIQUE BROWN, NUTRITION EDUCATOR**



*Do you like to cook & eat?
All welcomed. We meet in Fellowship Hall and the kitchen. FREE!*

Date: Tuesday, March 22, 2022

Time: 6:00-7:30 PM

Location: Parking Lot Door, Good Shepherd Church, 187 Southside Parkway, Buffalo, 14220 (parking lot available)

Open to all. No need to sign up.

Any questions? Contact Sue Allen, Wellness Coordinator for Good Shepherd Community of Faith, 716-697-1657 (bsue@yahoo.com)

from Lois Vidaver for RACHELS

RACHELS NO MORE

RACHELS had its last gathering in 2021 after meeting for more than 38 years. Meg Bourdette, Betty Lamb and Marge Neal introduced the concept of a Ministers' Wives support group and in January of 1983, a number of us ran with it up through last September. Not a bad record. We feel especially blessed that we had the opportunity to present our workshops at Chautauqua Institution for 10 years. Quite a wonderful experience, that was.

Along the way, a multitude of clergy wives came and went on Saturday mornings, seeking us out to listen to their stories. Were they enriched by our presence? We can only hope they were. At some point, several of our husbands joined us at the restaurant while sharing their own table and conversation. It worked out very well.

Grateful that we were called to share in this mission...



Emmaus Eyes
by Hope Douglas Harle-Mould

Like the disciples we have Good Friday eyes-
eyes downcast from life's betrayals of the
heart,
from the tearing down of our preciousness,
eyes that have witnessed in our world
hate's violence, evil's terror, and death's
darkness.

But the *Risen One* walks into our lives
like a stranger bearing a surprise,
the gift of **Emmaus Eyes**:

Emmaus eyes that see the *Alleluia One*,
alive over death and on the loose again,
Emmaus eyes that see *Christ Incognito*
in the guise of the refugee -
who teaches us how to hold onto
hope,
in the guise of the burn survivor -
who relights within us a flame of
new courage,
and in the guise of the orphan-child -
who bids us to believe in Easter
miracles
already on their way to us,
already bathing our faces
in alleluia light.

The gift of Emmaus eyes.
Behold and see.



**HAM & SCALLOPED POTATO
DINNER**

Sunday, March 20, 2022
11:30 AM - 4:30 PM or sold out
First Congregational UCC
132 N. Main Street
Angola, NY 14006
716-549-2115

DRIVE THRU-TAKE OUT ONLY
ENTER ON N. MAIN ST. and EXIT ONTO
HIGH ST.

Includes: Ham, scalloped potatoes, vegetable,
roll and dessert
\$ 11.00 / person Exact Change Appreciated!
Pre-sale encouraged Mon.-Fri.
9am-1pm at the church office.

Painting with a Purpose logo
PLYMOUTH CROSSROADS logo

Sunday, April 24, 2022
1-3pm
1054 Union Road
West Seneca, NY 14224
(Southgate plaza next to Applebees)
\$40 per person
Take home a self created painting
Bring your own beverages and snacks
(Must be 21 to consume alcohol)
****Raffles and Wine Pull****
Registration at www.plymouthcrossroads.org
or use QR Code
All proceeds benefit Plymouth Crossroads
For questions please contact
Michele Harrington
716-593-3906
michele@plymouthcrossroads.org



Rev. Gary Burdick receives a pin marking his 50th anniversary. Gail Burdick, his spouse, pins it to his lapel.

50th Ordination Celebration for Rev. Gary V. Burdick

On Sunday February 13, St. Matthew's UCC in Hamburg held a special service to honor the Rev. Gary Burdick for more than 50 years of ordained ministry. Gary was ordained June 7, 1970. He began serving Pembroke Community Church as a student pastor in 1968. In 1972, he began a 35-year pastorate at Faith UCC in Boston. Since his official retirement, he has been an interim on three separate occasions: once at First Congregational UCC in Angola and twice at St. Matthew's UCC in Hamburg, where he and his spouse Gail are members. In addition to his pastoral ministry, Gary has been a faithful minister at Dunkirk Camp and Conference Center, providing leadership to Family Camp 2 since 1979 and has been a member of the Dunkirk Board of Trustees for several terms. He has served in the community in many ways — from coaching softball to sing-alongs at nursing homes — spreading the Good News and John Denver songs wherever he goes.

Representatives from Dunkirk Camp and the churches Gary has served shared their grateful memories of his ministry during the service. Doug Charles, Association Registrar, and Barb Schifeling from the Church and Ministry Committee represented the Area and presented Gary with a pin marking his 50th anniversary.

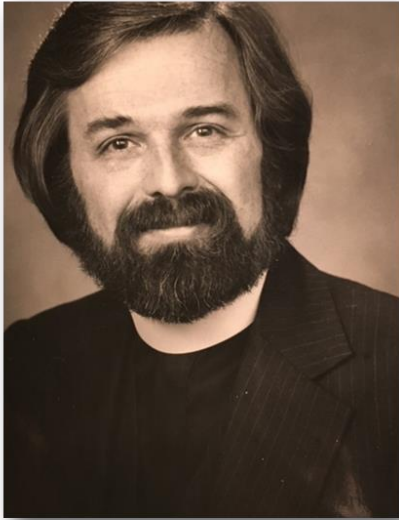


Pictured are Betty Krist (Western Area Church and Ministry representative) and Rev. Donner, along with the God and Country Award Recipients

Rev. David Donner Celebrates 50th Ordination Anniversary

On Sunday, January 30th, First Congregational UCC—Angola celebrated the 50th Ordination Anniversary of Rev. David Donner. Rev. Donner was ordained in June of 1970, but like many things over the past two years, this recognition was delayed due to the pandemic. Betty Krist, a member of the Western Area Church and Ministry Committee joined us to present Rev. Donner with his 50-year pin. Rev. Donner began his ministry in Connecticut but has spent the majority of his time in the Western region of New York State serving churches in the Buffalo and Rochester areas; Grace-Delavan UCC, Henrietta UCC, St. Stephens-Bethlehem UCC, Salem UCC, Zion UCC, Faith UCC (Williamsville) and First Congregational UCC (Angola).

Pastor Donner shared the morning's celebration with eleven children and youth from our Sunday School who received their God and Country Awards! The celebration continued after worship with a wonderful coffee hour reception!



In Memorium

The Western New York Area Churches in Covenant extend Condolences to the Family of The Rev. Dr. James Allen Fishbaugh

September 15, 1937—January 17, 2022

Dr. Fishbaugh, 84, was born and brought up in Rochester, NY. He was baptized, confirmed, and ordained in Salem United Church of Christ in Rochester.

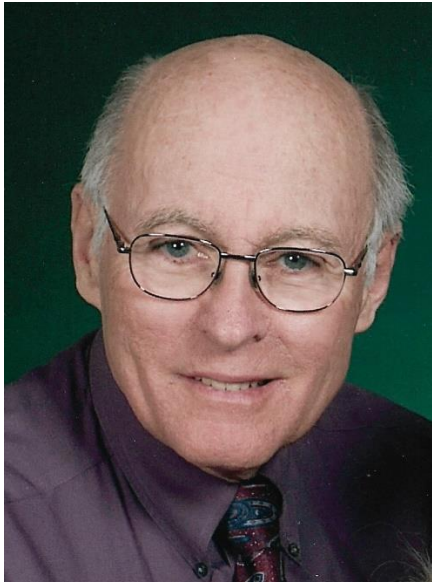
He received his B.A. from Heidelberg College, Tiffin, Ohio; his B.D. from Lancaster Theological Seminary in Lancaster, Pennsylvania; his Th. M. from Colgate Rochester Divinity School, Rochester, New York; and a D. Min. from Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. He did additional graduate studies at the University of Edinburgh New College, in Edinburgh, Scotland, Mansfield College of Oxford University, in England, and the University of Detroit, in Michigan.

Dr. Fishbaugh served as the Associate Conference Minister for the Western Area for eight years. He also led many parishes of the United Church of Christ as pastor or interim throughout his career and even in his retirement. He served the United Community Church (UCC) in Carthage, New York and other New York Conference churches as interim. He served as well at First Congregational UCC in Winter Park, Florida; Harmony UCC in Zwingle, Iowa; St. John's UCC in Monroe, Wisconsin; First Congregational UCC in Royal Oak, Michigan; and as interim at a Presbyterian church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

In addition to his pastoral and Conference ministry, he taught church history and pastoral psychology at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary and at Epworth Theological College in what is now Harare, Zimbabwe.

In addition to his wife Roslyn, Jim is survived by his sister, Mary Rogan; three daughters, Kathleen Geib, the Rev. Kristen Farrington, Kara Schwabel, and eight grandchildren.

Pastor Fishbaugh passed on January 17, 2022, in Arlington, VA from Alzheimer's Disease. A memorial service will be held at, and streamed from, the Orchard Park Presbyterian Church in July. The family suggests any memorial gifts go to your local Hospice or Alzheimer's Association.



In Memorium

**The Western New York Area Churches
in Covenant
extend Condolences to the Family of
The Rev. Michael B. Vidaver
August 16, 1934-December 17, 2021**

Born in Santa Monica, Calif., Mike earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from San Francisco State University in 1959. As a registered conscientious objector, he fulfilled his obligation to national service by working for two years in Vienna, Austria, helping to rebuild a large downtown middle school that had been damaged during World War II. Having felt a call to ministry, he entered Bethany Theological Seminary in Oakbrook, IL, graduating with the Master of Divinity degree in 1968. He was ordained in August 1968 at First Church of Lombard, United Church of Christ, in the Chicago suburb of Lombard, IL.

While still in seminary, Mike began serving Caledonia Congregational Church, UCC, in Caledonia, IL. His subsequent churches included Sheffield Lake UCC in Sheffield Lake, Ohio; Painesville UCC in Painesville, Ohio; and after a

move to the Western Association of the New York Conference, Kenmore UCC and St. John's UCC in South Buffalo.

He established a successful Marriage Encounter program in the Cleveland, OH area, which he co-led with his wife, Lois Vidaver.

In his ministry to the larger church, Mike served on the program committee of the Dunkirk Conference Center; on the Western Association Church & Ministry Committee; on the United Church Home Society board of trustees; and as a delegate to the Greater Buffalo Council of Churches. A longtime pacifist and advocate for peace, he also had been a member of the Western New York Peace Center.

In addition to his wife of 57 years, survivors include a son, Mark, a daughter, Christa, and a granddaughter, Isabella.

A memorial service was held Dec. 22 at Kenilworth UCC in Kenmore, N.Y., where Mike was an active member.

In a ministerial profile statement, Mike cited the Gospel of John and wrote of his understanding of the church as a place, much like the wedding at Cana, where healing and growth are possible: "Brothers and sisters, who may not have spoken for years, begin to reconcile their differences. Great, healing memories are shared. Family roots are strengthened and deepened. Hearts filled with pain and guilt can be unburdened to sympathetic listeners. ... What makes the wedding at Cana so special, however, is that these kinds of meaningful human interactions all happen within a divine context. They went on in the supercharged atmosphere of God's sacred presence. At least for the folks at the wedding susceptible to that presence, they know a new sense of unity, joy and intimacy."

from Beverly Schotz, Chairperson, Church of the Nativity



Celebrating 75 years

Faith – Fellowship – Freedom - Welcoming – Nurturing – Empowering

The Church of the Nativity, located at 1530 Colvin Blvd in the Town of Tonawanda, is celebrating its 75th year as a place of worship. It started in 1946 when our Founding Pastor Huyett Sangree went door to door looking for members. The initial church service was held on December 15, 1946, at the Little Chapel of the Elms in Elmlawn Cemetery. The Church of the Nativity received its charter on February 2, 1947 and had a groundbreaking ceremony on the current church site on July, 3 1949.

A 75th Anniversary committee was formed in 2020, but then put on pause due to COVID-19. The committee reconvened in summer of 2021 and decided to have a “toned down” celebration year. The committees from Nativity have put on programs and special services to commemorate our 75th.

The special events that have already taken place: A special service on a Saturday in October at the Chapel of the Elms. Rev. Kay Woike and Rev. Daniel Schifeling provided special memories of Nativity.

Rev. Ruth Snyder gave us history of the church in her sermon series. The Sunday School's Rally Day was anniversary themed. Nativity's Outreach Committee hosted a Mission Fair. Starting in October, our Stewardship committee started working on a new Anniversary Church Directory. In December, our Annual Advent workshop was cancelled but there was a display of items that were made at previous Advent workshops. In January, there was an Art display in our Gathering space. Artwork from various members was displayed.

Upcoming events: In February, slides are being shown before the services: “Worship through the Years”. In March, the Endowment Committee is having an informational booth on Nativity's Endowment Fund.

The final celebration is on June 5th. David Gaewski, our conference minister will be preaching and following the service there will be a banquet at Classics V Restaurant.

If you would like more information about our 75th Anniversary or would like to come to our banquet, please contact the Church of the Nativity, 716-875-3365, office@nativityucc.org. More banquet information will be available in April.



Questions Jesus Asks
A Responsive Reading
by Hope Harle-Mould

Sips, Suds & Sweets
at Home

Jesus loved asking questions: shocking and delighting people with new vistas of God's *agape*, provoking people to turn around and enter God's movement.

O God, may Jesus' questions challenge and transform us anew.

Jesus asks, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know I must be in my Abba's house?" (Luke 2:49.)

O God, teach us where to look for Christ—from sanctuary to city streets—wherever you open our minds to deeper truth and our hearts to wider compassion.

Jesus asks, "Which of these three was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" (Luke 10:36.)

O God, help us to grow beyond our prejudices and borders to embrace your grace as it comes to us in the form of the stranger.

Jesus asks us, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" (Mark 4:40.)

O God, when winds and waves threaten to overwhelm us, may we remember that in our boat is Christ, and in his storm-stilling voice is a peace that passes all understanding.

Jesus asks us, "Do you see this woman?" (Luke 7:44.)

O God, forgive us for being blind to the world's forsaken ones, and hard-hearted to the people you send us to love.

Jesus asks us, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Luke 18:41.)

O God, may we dare to come inside your embracing presence, and dare to leap into your promises that we can't yet see but only receive.

Amen.

Sips, Suds & Sweets at Home to benefit Senior Wishes

Senior Wishes, founded by the United Church Home Society in 2013, will be offering a take-out version of its wine, beer, and dessert sampling fundraiser on April 28. In addition, a virtual basket raffle will run from March 25-May 2.

Presented by Geico, with additional support by many caring corporate sponsors, this year's event will be a sampling of beer, wine, and sweets from mostly local businesses for participants to enjoy at home. A \$45 donation will allow guests to pick-up their event box at one of three locations: Fox Run at Orchard Park, BCBS Medicare Center in Amherst, or Nativity UCC Church in Kenmore, on Thursday, April 28 between 3-6pm. Delivery may be arranged for a \$10 fee.

Deadline to order tickets is April 18. Basket donations are welcome until March 15th and may be dropped off at Fox Run. For specific details and to purchase an event box, or to participate in the basket raffle, visit SeniorWishes.org or our Facebook page.

In 2021, Senior Wishes continued granting life-enriching wishes to seniors, as well as granting group wishes to senior apartments and care facilities. The program also received a grant from the Odd Fellow & Rebekah Benefit Fund to provide iPads to 16 care facilities. Additionally, programs including HERO boxes for Veterans, Simple Wishes for the Holidays, and "Remembering a Senior on Valentine's Day" were expanded. Senior Wishes operates in Erie, Niagara, Orleans, Wyoming and Genesee counties.

Community support of this event will assist the program's mission to continue these services. Visit www.seniorwishes.org/events, or call 716-508-2121 for more information.

from Rev. Gary Ferner



Sacred Seeds A Reflection on Scripture

Luke 4:14-21

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

The gospel reading above recalls a time when Jesus was in the synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath.

He read from the scroll, a revered passage from the prophet Isaiah, a passage that heralded a time of healing, forgiveness, freedom, and a time of the Lord's favor.

It was very important to the faithful that prophetic pronouncements in the sacred texts be shown to come true.

This was reassuring and it reinforced the sacred message contained in the holy scriptures.

Jesus ended his reading from Isaiah by saying that 'Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing'.

To our ears, since we believe that Jesus is the fulfillment of prophetic scripture, this makes a lot of sense. It wouldn't bother any of us. But to those who heard it that day, this was revolutionary, maybe even blasphemy. At the very least, it was shocking!

But it got me thinking: how much do I need scripture to be fulfilled in order for me to believe? Most? A lot? Some? A little? None?

How about you? How much of scripture needs to be fulfilled in order for you to believe in who and what Jesus is and was?

I ask these questions in order to plant some Sacred Seeds among us. If, in the miracle that is our lives, you find something that grows from it, let me know! Amen.



A Little Winter Joy

Since we could all use all the joy we can find or look for or make ourselves, I share this fun memory provoked by the recent snowfall. Years ago, when our grandchildren (who are all now between 20-30 years old), would come for the weekend, we built snowmen. After one particular weekend and one very handsome snowman, the doorbell rang and I found a note that said, "If you ever want to see Frosty again, put chocolate chip cookies in the mailbox across the street!" I looked in that yard and there was Frosty tied to a tree blindfolded with a HAIRDRYER hanging around his neck! I was filled with horror, so I baked and delivered as demanded!! And as much as I tried to monitor out of the windows, I never caught the "snow nappers"! But our snowman came back! 😊
Make some joy!!

Community Meals at Trinity UCC

Saturday, March 12, 2022: Roasted Chicken, mashed potatoes, carrots and cookies

Saturday, April 9, 2022: Pork Chop, mashed potatoes, vegetable, bread & cookies.

All meals are drive-thru only; everyone is welcome.
Distribution starts at 4 pm until gone.
Trinity United Church of Christ
30 Erie Avenue
Gowanda, NY 14070
716-532-3004



St. John's UCC of Strykersville Chiavetta's Chicken BBQ

Sunday, April 3rd from 11am-Sold Out
Includes: Chicken, Roll & Butter,
two sides, and Dessert
St. John's United Church of Christ
608 Centerline Rd.
Strykersville, NY 14145
Located at the corner of Dutch Hollow &
Centerline Roads in Strykersville
Handicap Accessible



St. John's UCC, Strykersville Treasure Sale

Saturday, May 7th
Doors open at 9:00AM
Something for EVERYONE! One man's
trash is another man's treasure!
St. John's United Church of Christ
608 Centerline Rd.
Strykersville, NY 14145
Located at the corner of Dutch Hollow &
Centerline Roads in Strykersville
Handicap Accessible



In the Vineyard asks the following question:
“What hymn or anthem feeds your soul?”

From Chris Kelter, Strykersville UCC

For St. John's UCC in Strykersville, our hymn would be ***“The Church in the Wildwood”***. It has become our "theme song" so to speak. We do change the word "brown" to "grey" when we sing it, so that it fits us more--We are the Little Grey Church in the Vale.

From Zoe Ann Milliman, St. John’s UCC, Dunkirk

These days the hymn that feeds my soul is ***“Be Still, My Soul.”*** The tune slows me down and helps me relax from the craziness of the world, and the words are so very reassuring. I play it before starting work pretty much every day.

From Betty Lamb

Without a doubt, the first hymn that comes to my mind is ***“Because He Lives”!*** No further explanation needed! Don’t you agree?

From Linda Dudkowski, Kenilworth UCC

“Lord, I Have Come Down to the Lakeshore” – I have always felt a calmness when I go down to the lake and I feel so close to God. It’s a song about the simple life.

From Gary Burdick

Two songs that I have sung lately really inspire me: ***“Because He Lives”*** and ***“His Eye is on the Sparrow.”*** A couple of favorite traditional hymns are: ***“Be Thou My Vision”*** and ***“O Master Let me walk with Thee.”***

From Judy Deck

The hymn that feeds my soul is ***“Abide with Me.”***

From Karen Zmich, Property Manager, United Church Manor

For me, I like contemporary praise and worship music. There are so many contemporary artists with great song messages. I especially, like ***“Your Love Defends Me”*** by Matt Maher. You can hear this on Pandora’s Praise and Worship Radio (free). Hope you get a chance to listen to it.

From Rev. Elizabeth Duffy, Zion UCC

“It is well with my soul” is the hymn that always feeds my soul. Especially when I'm sad or missing a loved one who now resides in the Kingdom of God, I sing this song and remember, "It is well with my soul". Knowing the history of the song gives it even more meaning. I sing this song and remember that we can have peace, even in heartbreak.

From Gaye Mehlretter

The hymn/song that feeds my soul is ***“When We All Get To Heaven”*** by Brad Paisley and Dolly Parton.

From Joyce Dolce, Zion UCC

I love the hymn ***“He is King of Kings.”*** Used to sing it all the time at Epiphany UCC when I was younger!



Sight & Sound Theater Trip

Faith UCC, Williamsville, is sponsoring a trip to go to the [Sight & Sound Theater](#) in Lancaster, PA, to see DAVID July 13-14. They are opening it up to others from other churches. Read more about the trip and show in the flyer (link below).

<https://wixsite.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=793bc9720d9c19db01d5d1212&id=3b943ee652&e=41480cd40a>

**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!

from Ginger Comstock, NY/HELP

NY/HELP



**News From NY/HELP
Honduras**

HONDURAS

NY/HELP’s mission in Honduras is continuing. However, the volunteers have not been able to actually travel there since March of 2020. Even so, the new middle school is still progressing. The third of what will be six rooms is just now being completed. One of the next three rooms is expected to serve as a satellite clinic with the other five being classrooms. The clinic in La Laguna, which was renamed the Dr. Gordon Comstock Clinic, is still serving the people of the area. To keep these projects going, we are still dependent on churches and individuals and any and all donations are very much appreciated.

Donations can be made to NY/HELP Honduras and mailed to:

NY/HELP Honduras
c/o Arcade United Church of Christ
Arcade NY 14009



The third classroom of the new middle school under construction.

