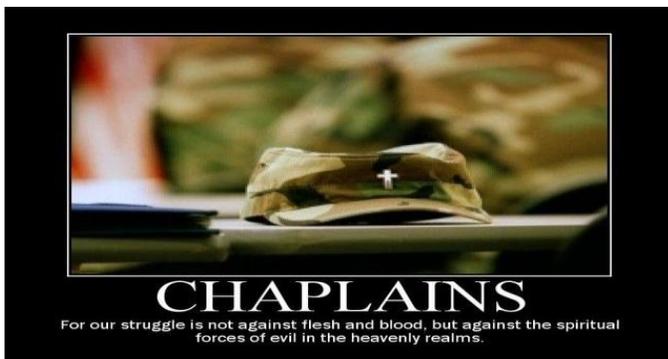




## Connecting UCC and Disciples Congregations in Western New York

### Ministry in the Military



*From Pastor Hope Schwartz, Epiphany UCC and Lockport UCC*

Did you know that there are chaplains that serve in the military? Indeed, there are! Chaplains from all different religious backgrounds and faith traditions serve in the military. Chaplains in the military serve as the presence of God on the bases and battlegrounds.

While at General Synod, I had the privilege and pleasure to catch up with Rev. Dr. Jeremy Lopez who was the former pastor at Salem UCC in North Tonawanda. He is now serving as a chaplain in the Air Force. I learned so much from him during our conversation together about the role of chaplains in the military. Things that I did not know . . . and that I want to share with all of you!

Quite surprisingly, the military places a high priority on and heavily protects the religious freedoms of the troops on base and on the battlefield. It does

not matter what faith tradition or religion is practiced, the military goes above and beyond to make sure that all people can worship God in the ways that matter to them. If someone's religious practice requires praying at specific times of the day or fasting for a time or attending weekly worship, accommodations are made to do so.

What was most meaningful to me in our conversation was the opportunity to ask him honest questions. One question was plaguing my heart and mind and soul; a question to which I needed an answer. As a self-professed pacifist pastor (that's me), I needed to know whether or not chaplains were required by the military to use weapons and fight in combat. And what I learned from Chaplain Jeremy gave me greater appreciation for the military. He told me that chaplains are not trained for combat, not trained in weaponry, and are not even permitted to touch a weapon.

Chaplains are nonviolent agents on the base and on the battlefield. In this way, chaplains are not to be considered a violent threat. Of course, this makes it possible for chaplains to become targets on the battlefield, but they do wear insignia that informs all around them that they are an unarmed and nonviolent presence. It seems to be an unspoken rule that chaplains are non-targets in active war zones.

Above all else though, by not allowing chaplains to fight in combat, a dividing line between what is "of

God” and what is “not of God” is established. God is not an active agent in the combat on the battlefield. **God is present as a witness to war** as evidenced by the presence of the chaplains . . . **but not as a participant in war itself.**

It cannot be overstated how important this distinction is, Church! All throughout history, wars were declared to have been fought in the name of God. Wars such as the crusades and the inquisition and so many more. By claiming to be by divine mandate, the wars claimed to be fought “because God said so” and have left blood stains on the history of the Church. By not allowing chaplains to engage in combat it reminds us that war is born from the agendas of the people and nations of this world . . . war is not of God and war is not part of God’s plan for this world!

Our scriptures teach us that it is God’s will that one day . . . we will learn war no more (Isaiah 2:4). May God hasten the day when our faith will be sight, and indeed we will learn war no more! Until then Church, let us pray for our military chaplains and for our troops!

## Greetings from Saudi Arabia!

*From Chaplain, Captain Jeremy Lopez*

Greetings from Saudi Arabia! Many of you may know or remember me as the former pastor of Salem United Church of Christ in Tonawanda. I now have the privilege of serving as a chaplain in the United States Air Force and am currently deployed to Saudi Arabia for a six-month assignment, representing the United Church of Christ.

My ministry here centers on the spiritual care and moral support of airmen and soldiers serving far from home. Through daily visits, counseling sessions, and pastoral presence, I have the daily opportunity to embody the compassion and hope of Christ in the midst of demanding circumstances.

Each weekend, I lead worship services in our chapel tent, which regularly draws over one hundred

attendees, including the installation commander and other key leaders. Each service reminds us that faith has the power to draw people together and sustain us, no matter how far from home we may be.

Our chapel team also manages the distribution of care packages generously provided by individuals and church groups across the United States. These packages—often filled with snacks, hygiene items, and handwritten notes—bring tangible expressions of love and encouragement to those stationed here. A unique part of this ministry involves distributing popsicles to those working in the desert heat—made possible by generous donations from stateside supporters, including the congregation of St. Stephen’s–Bethlehem UCC.

Those wishing to support this ongoing ministry may send cards, notes, or care packages to:

Jeremy Lopez  
378th AEW/HC  
OPC 1277 Box 60  
APO, AE 09877

What we need most, however, are your prayers. Please continue to remember all who serve, their families waiting at home, and those who are working for peace throughout the world.

Thank you for your support.



*Chaplain Jeremy Lopez (far right), with US soldiers stationed in Saudi Arabia.*

**By © William A. Hyde, 1941, Submitted by Ginger Comstock (Given to Ginger by William A. Hyde's son, Dr. Carl Hyde, her former family physician)**

## **THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY COMET**

It's time somebody who was there put down a straight story of what happened out our way in the winter at the bottom of the depression. The papers had a little about it at first, especially about the comet, or northern lights, or whatever it was. Then they dropped the subject as if nothing had ever happened. I can't say I blame them. It was queer enough so that some of us who were there don't more than half believe what we saw. Just because the papers dropped it doesn't mean the story died out. It is still growing, and the farther you get from Palo Alto the bigger it is.

I suppose the whole thing began with the false rumor that a big construction job was starting up Stevens Creek. Actually, of course, only a few men were needed to work on the dam, but what with the depression being so bad and the fruit season over, several thousand showed up looking for work.

Joe and Mary Henderson came in just about at the worst of the jam. Joe had been a carpenter on a job I worked on near Riverside the summer before. He recognized me on the street and stopped to see if I could find them a place to stay. He hadn't had anything but odd jobs since I last saw him. He and Mary had put their last nickel into gas for their car, and here they were, stuck. Mary was pretty far along with a kid and the trip had been rough on her. I was running a tourist camp and would have put them up, money or no money, but I had two families to a cabin already. In the meantime, Mary was feeling worse, and Joe said she just had to have a place to rest. There was a barn back of the cabins that hadn't been used since Dad bought his tractor. One of the box stalls was pretty clean, so Joe and I threw down some hay and he spread a blanket on it for Mary.

It was plain enough now that the baby was on its way. We couldn't locate a doctor, but two women from the cabins promised to help. I had to get going because I had promised to drive a couple of sheep men up Black Mountain. Their truck had broken down and they had to get back to camp.

So far it is all a straight story. It is only from here on that it gets odd. It was dark before I got started with the sheep men. When we were about halfway up the mountain we began to notice a light over the valley. We stopped at the first place with a good view and looked back. The light, whatever it was, centered just about at my place. At first, I thought it was a fire, but the light was too white for that and ran straight up like a searchlight beam - only a searchlight beam spreads out as it goes up. This was clear and narrow as far up as you could see. We figured maybe it was a searchlight and went on.

At the sheep camp we really found a hullabaloo. Two Basque herders had been out after dark looking for strays. As near as we could make out their story, they had seen a light shine and had heard a voice tell them to go down in the valley and to look for a baby wrapped in a sack and lying in a feed box. You know how hard those fellows are to understand any time. These were excited and scared past where you could do anything with them. They said I just had to turn around and take them down into the valley to look for that baby in a feed box.

About this time, we all heard something. The nearest I can describe it is that it was as if a loudspeaker on an airplane was broadcasting hymns. I couldn't make out words, but the Basques acted as if they understood it. They calmed down and said it was a sign of good, not of evil, and that something was going to happen so there wouldn't be any more wars. They were still just as set as ever on looking for that baby.

All of a sudden, I put two and two together and I felt as if you had run ice water down my backbone. I piled the herders into the car and headed for home as fast as I could put road behind me.

It was after midnight when we got in. The light was still shining and was directly over my place. The baby had come and one of the women had wrapped it in a clean cotton feed sack and laid it in the feed box of the stall. Quite a crowd had gathered and the herders circulated around in it with their version of what had happened. Their story was that this was some sort of a sign from heaven and meant jobs and no fighting.

Just before dawn a big car with eastern license plates pulled up and three distinguished looking old men got out - professors or something. They had seen the light and heard about the baby and had come to look into it. I took them out the barn and they talked to Joe and Mary, who was awake and in pretty good shape. The story of what those youngsters had been through really shook them. I guess they had never known what such people are up against. They said they wanted to give the baby something, and they wound up giving Joe all the cash they had on them - quite a bit of money.

Before they left, they took me to one side and said that the sheriff had told them that there seemed to be some kind of agitation going on at my farm and he wanted a report of it. I reminded them that he played too close to the vigilantes and that he would be sure to see something radical back of this excitement. They said they would just scatter back to their homes and not tell the sheriff anything. They did that, and as a result the sheriff decided he was being kidded and that he was going to get whoever was at the bottom of all this.

I tipped Joe off and just as soon as Mary was in shape to travel, they slipped away quietly and went down to old Mexico. The sheriff blew off steam by running all transients out of the county. He was pretty rough about it and a number of people got hurt.

Next election we got another sheriff and Joe and his family came back. He settled over at Boulder Creek, and very few people know that it was his family that

was under the "Santa Clara Valley Comet." I visited them a few weeks ago. Joe has a shop of his own and is doing his best to forget that anything strange ever happened to him. Mary is different. She remembers everything and keeps turning it over in her mind, wondering about it.



*By Jack Brown*

### **“Born to Give Us Second Birth”**

In our poverty of spirit  
Christ arrived as God’s good Word;  
(Grant us, God, good grace to hear it.)  
Christ was born to be our Lord.

In the gloom of deep, dull darkness,  
In the shade of endless night,  
Jesus came a child, a baby,  
Born to give us hope and light.

When we felt our hearts were broken,  
Jesus met us face to face,  
Loving us in word and token -  
Born to give us peace and grace.

Wisest one of all the ages  
Christ came here, a babe so small,  
Early blessed by wizened sages,  
Born to lead and bless us all.

**From Rev. Dr. Kandace Brooks, co-pastor  
Amherst Community Church,  
By Derek Heid, writer**

## **Amherst Jewish Congregation Returns to Church Where it Began 70 Years Ago**



AMHERST, N.Y. (WKBW) — Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein stood at the pulpit of Amherst Community Church on Friday, leading his Shir Shalom congregation in a special Shabbat service, marking their return to where their Jewish community first began.

For the first time since the 1950s, the synagogue held Shabbat at the Christian church where their predecessor congregation, Temple Beth Am, was founded in 1955.

"It just feels so special to be back in this original place," Lazarus-Klein said.

The reunion came about through the research of Marta Herzbrun, who attends both the church and synagogue. Herzbrun goes to Amherst Community Church but also attends Shir Shalom because her husband is Jewish.

While researching the temple's history, she discovered the connection between the two congregations.

"I got goosebumps, and I was very excited to think that the beginning of the temple was at my church," Herzbrun said.

Co-Pastor Kandace Brooks opened the church doors without hesitation for the special service.

"This is part of their DNA," Brooks said.

The story dates back to 1955, when Jewish families were moving to the Amherst suburbs and needed a place to worship. Temple Beth Am found a welcoming home at Amherst Community Church.

"There were very few Jews in the Amherst suburbs," Lazarus-Klein said. "They were moving here. They didn't know what they were doing, and this church, Amherst Community Church, welcomed them with open arms. That's a kindness, that even 70 years later, I get chills."

By 1959, the Beth Am congregation had grown enough to move to its own building. In 2012, it merged with Temple Sinai to become Shir Shalom, the synagogue that exists today.

"We share a common heritage. We share a common story. We worship the same God," Brooks said.

"This world is so fractured, so just to know we have a friend down the road means the world," Lazarus-Klein said.



*Thank you to all who attended the WNYACIC Annual Meeting on Sunday, November 2!*

### Congratulations, Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams!



Reverend Dr. Marsha E. Williams is Conference Minister of the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ, supporting 230 churches statewide.

With over two decades in ministry, she has served in multiple pastoral roles across Indiana, Washington, and the Pacific Northwest.

An ordained pastor, mediator, and author, she is currently writing *Pastoral Leadership in Black and White*, exploring diverse leadership in faith communities.

Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams received the Excellence in Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations Award on Thursday, November 13 at the Crowne Plaza Albany. Congratulations from all of us in the Western Area! This prestigious award is well deserved!

### Congratulations to Newly Ordained, Rev. Kalee Mielke!



Congratulations to Rev. Kalee Mielke on her ordination, Sun., October 5! She is serving at First Congregational UCC, Niagara Falls. All of the Western Association of the NY Conference is so proud of you and we are excited to see what's to come through your continued work in Christ's love!

**From Rev. Daniel Schifeling, Pastor Emeritus,  
Church of the Nativity UCC**



## **Compassion Not Cruelty Movement and Prayer Vigils**



What would Jesus do? We live in a time when cruelty is the modus operandi of our current federal administration. Every day compassionate Christians are shocked by federal policies that harm and hurt us and our neighbors. Surprise raids round up immigrants with no known criminal history. Children are zip-tied and separated from their parents. There are inhumane conditions in detention centers.

Immigrants are deported with no due process. Now food stamps are reduced or withheld, and health insurance is sky-rocketing.

What would Jesus do in the face of such cruelty? Jesus would speak up and stand up for those who are harmed and hurt. To express our concern and push back against these policies, a growing group of United Church of Christ clergy and laypeople, as well as friends from other denominations, are joining together in a movement to call on our nation to govern with “Compassion Not Cruelty.” We deeply believe that our faith calls us to remember and proclaim that every person is sacred. Every person deserves to be treated as a child of God with compassion. This is what Jesus did. This is what he would do now.

In this spirit, we gathered at the No Kings Rally in October and held several prayer vigils locally including at the Batavia Federal Detention Center, Epiphany UCC church in Clarence and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo. We helped to collect over 130 letters which our conference minister, the Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams, hand delivered to our elected representatives in Washington, DC.

Working with Dr. Williams, we are striving to become a voice of hope for those suffering under the cruelty of our present administration. We will continue to lift up the true values that Jesus expressed in his life. And we will call for a return to compassion, respect for all, and the practice of democracy -- not authoritarianism -- in our life as a nation.

Your church is invited to join us! For further information, contact any of the following pastors: Ruth Snyder, our Convenor ([compassionnotcruelty1@gmail.com](mailto:compassionnotcruelty1@gmail.com)), or Ted Brelsford, Paula Gustafson, Bruce McKay, Dan Schifeling, Hope Schwartz, Dale Stanley, or Paul Werner.

Also look for our Facebook Page under Compassion Not Cruelty.

## New Clergy Feature



### ***Pastor Lisa Peterangelo at a No Kings protest.***

Cleveland Heights Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have welcomed Transitional Pastor Lisa Peterangelo to support the church’s next chapter. Lisa comes to Cleveland Heights with experience in both healthcare chaplaincy, substance abuse prevention, early childhood education, and congregational life.

Working as a Chaplain in hospitals, nursing homes and most recently Hospice Buffalo, Lisa brings with her the capacity to support her congregation as they face life’s challenges.

Lisa graduated with an M.Div. from Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester and was certified with the Association of Professional Chaplains in 2015. In ministry, Lisa’s interests are spiritual care, social justice and mental health as a spiritual journey.

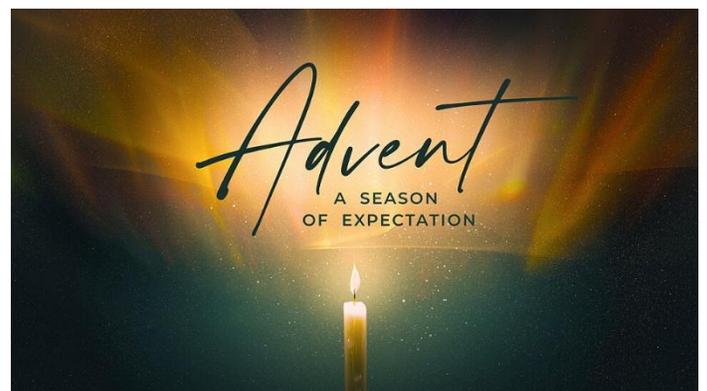
Social Justice issues are weaved into Lisa’s sermons as often as possible. “If we’re reading the Gospel,

then we’re reading about social justice. It will be the message of the Christian church until all people have the quality of life that they desire.”

To support this message of justice Lisa led a Transgender Remembrance Service on Thursday November 20<sup>th</sup> at Cleveland Heights. This service was meant to acknowledge the sacred loss of our Transgender brothers and sisters who in the past year have been taken from their family, friends and community by violence.

Lisa’s personal interests include abstract art, 12-step spirituality, and the healing arts. Her favorite quote is from Thomas Merton: *“Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy. That is not our business, and in fact it is nobody’s business. What we are asked to do is to love, and this love itself will render both ourselves and our neighbors worthy.”*

We would love to feature all new clergy members to introduce them to all of the Western Area! Please contact us if you or a new clergy member of your church would like to be featured in our future issues!





## Fundraising Success for NY/HELP Honduras

In August, a remarkable partnership blossomed between **NY/HELP Honduras** and **Pampered Chef**, aimed at uplifting the Mataderos people around La Laguna in northern Honduras. Our ambitious goal was to raise **\$1,417.00**, a sum calculated to cover one month’s salaries, essential medical supplies, and contribute to the purchase of much-needed school supplies for the community.

## Community Generosity Shines

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our congregation, supporters across the **NY Conference**, and the dedicated team at Pampered Chef, we are thrilled to announce that we raised **\$1,336.39!** This impressive amount brings us very close to our goal and demonstrates the power of community spirit and collaboration. If you feel inspired, just an additional **\$80.61** will get us to our goal!



SCAN ME

## A Heartfelt Thank You

Congratulations to everyone involved! Your contributions will have a significant impact on the lives of the Mataderos people, providing them with vital resources and support. Together, we are making a difference, and we look forward to continuing this important work in the future. Thank you for your unwavering support!

Loving,  
 Dona Roll and friends  
 Pampered Chef Independent Consultant

## Money for WNYACIC Churches

**Does your church have an outreach ministry to your community, or hopes and dreams of a new initiative?**

*Enhance a clothing or food ministry ... strengthen outreach to homeless or refugees... build or enhance a website... fund a free lunch or afterschool program... start a support group...*



The Community Ministries Committee (formerly Department of Community Ministries) provides grants to congregations to help them develop new and/or expanding ministries or

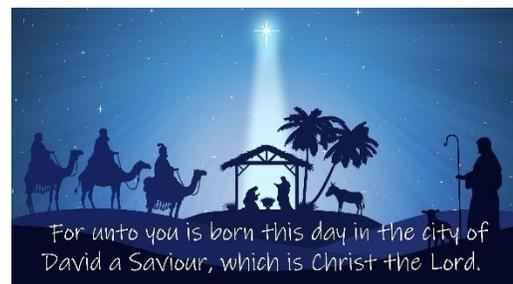
projects that bring them into closer connection with their community or neighborhood.

We also seek to encourage members of WNYACIC congregations to be involved in community groups doing community ministry.

A grant can be requested for a maximum of \$2000 and can be renewed for a maximum of three years per project, per church. A church can request a maximum of two grants per year.

Send applications or inquiries to: Hope Harle-Mould ([hopeharlemould@gmail.com](mailto:hopeharlemould@gmail.com)) or Michelle Kemp, [area.office@stmattsucc.org](mailto:area.office@stmattsucc.org)

Western New York Area Churches in Covenant,  
 5289 McKinley Pkwy, Hamburg, NY 14075-3925



## From Pastor Elizabeth Duffy, Zion UCC Western Area Youth (WAY) News



There is so much happening with the Western Area Youth (WAY) and Jr. WAY groups! They continue to grow and are on the move!

It was a busy day on Sat., September 20 at Pastor Josh Bower’s Good Vibes Farm of Ellicottville as they welcomed the Jr. WAY to the farm! They played games, made crafts, went for a hayride, and of course, picked as many veggies as they could! (see picture below).

Over 50 people attended the Halloween Happenings WAY Retreat at Dunkirk (see group picture above). It was a huge success and a spook-tacular time was had by all!



WAY also has a Winter retreat coming up from Friday, February 6 through Sunday, February 8. This retreat is for students in grades 7-12. Be sure to register today!

And mark your calendars for the summer mission trip from July 6-12. More information to come!

For current and upcoming information for WAY and Jr. WAY events, please visit:

[www.zionucc.com/WAY](http://www.zionucc.com/WAY)

WESTERN AREA YOUTH  
**Winter WAY Retreat**  
Grades 7-12

**FEBRUARY 6-8, 2026**

EPIPHANY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
9365 CLARENCE CENTER RD,  
CLARENCE, NY

REGISTER:  
[WWW.ZIONUCC.COM/WAY](http://WWW.ZIONUCC.COM/WAY)

DROP OFF:  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 6-7PM

PICK UP:  
FEBRUARY 8, AFTER WORSHIP  
AROUND 11AM

**WESTERN AREA YOUTH  
MISSION TRIP**

JULY 6-12, 2026  
LOCATION TBD

*Save the Date*

INFORMATION COMING SOON!  
[WWW.ZIONUCC.COM/WAY](http://WWW.ZIONUCC.COM/WAY)



## DUNKIRK CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTER

[www.dunkirkcc.com](http://www.dunkirkcc.com)

It's been a wonderful few months at Dunkirk Camp & Conference Center, and we're excited to share some recent news.

In August, we gathered for our **Annual Picnic**, a day full of sunshine, good food, and community. We were proud to recognize our **Volunteers of the Year**, Sharon Cleveland and Jennifer Vacanti, as well as Jeff Ribbeck and Wanda Chase, who received the Lifetime Service Award for nearly 40 years of dedicated leadership and love poured into Senior High Camp and countless DCC events.

September kicked off our fall programming with Fall **Outdoor Adventure Camp**, where campers spent the weekend hiking, cooking over the fire, geocaching, playing sardines, and winding down with a movie marathon. Soon after, our **Women's Wellness & Mindfulness Weekend** offered a chance to slow down and reconnect through yoga, meditation, mindfulness sessions, and heartfelt community building. We rounded out the season with a **Harry Potter Camp**, a magical weekend filled with quidditch, potions class, beach hikes, and movie nights—truly a highlight for our young wizards.

In October, we hosted our annual **Halloween Happening**, which brought families together for trick-or-treating through camp, a spooky haunted house, a costume contest, and a dance party that kept everyone moving.

Later in the month, volunteers returned for **Fall Workday**, which began with a bit of rain but turned into a gorgeous fall afternoon. Our small but mighty crew got cabins closed, buttoned up Mother's Memorial, and tucked away benches for winter.

### UPCOMING WEEKEND CAMPS

Can't wait until next summer to get back to camp? No problem! Registration is now open for winter weekend camps!



**Winter Weekend 1 | January 17 - 19, 2026**

**Winter Weekend 2 | February 14 - 16, 2026**

### **Grades 3–9**

Come explore the winter wonderland that is the Dunkirk Camp and Conference Center. Spend the weekend hiking, exploring, sledding, playing outdoor games including "winter rules" Capture-the-Flag and much, much more!!! Parents, enjoy a quiet weekend alone after the busy holiday season and let us watch the kids. Reserve your spot today!! Directed by Mike Hanes, Scott Benaglio, and Allison Aungst.



### Scrapbook Weekend

January 31 - February 2, 2026

Have a box of photos that need to be shown off? Are your baby photos still in their envelopes? Then it is time to come to Dunkirk to get them in order! If you are an avid scrapper or new at this, you are welcome to join us for some fun! We not only make photo pages, we share fun, food, and fellowship at our scrapbook retreat! Directed by Jennifer Vacanti.



Dunkirk Camp and Conference Center was voted 2025 Best of the Best Summer Camp in Chautauqua County for the third year in a row. Come experience why!



For information about renting at our facility for weddings & receptions, banquets, meetings, picnics and more, visit our website [www.dunkirkcc.com](http://www.dunkirkcc.com)

or call our camp office at  
716-366-1900.

From Patricia Burgstahler

### Kenmore UCC Updates

It was a great fall here at Kenmore UCC. Our meat raffle in September was fun and a financial success. In October, we participated in the Halloween Happening at Dunkirk Conference Center. We had a special service followed by a luncheon to celebrate our 99<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The congregation at KUCC is looking forward to many traditions which serve the community around us. These activities include donations to Harvest House, our annual Mitten Tree, boxes for Samaritan’s Purse, Toys for Tots and gifts for Western New York Heroes. We have an ongoing sale of handmade quilled snowflake ornaments to benefit ALS research. Other traditions include the Hanging of the Greens, Advent lunch and craft workshop and of course, the annual Christmas program.

And finally, our best news for the future. We are pleased to announce that **Rev. Darryl Barrow**, who has been serving as pulpit supply, will be our **called pastor beginning in January**. What a blessed way to start 2026!



***From Rev. Lynn Morgan,  
Treasurer, WNYACIC***

## **Western Area Treasurer's Report**

The 2026 proposed budget was passed unanimously at the Annual Meeting of the Western New York Area Churches in Covenant, held November 2 at Zion UCC. The budget for 2026 is a very conservative budget, making few changes from this year, apart from making inflation adjustments to staff salaries and increasing the stipend for the person who will take up the role of treasurer in 2026.

The other changes to the budget are in the ways the Endowment Fund interest will be distributed in 2026 and subsequent years. Dunkirk Camp and Conference Center and Plymouth Crossroads will receive 25% each; the Community Ministries Committee will receive 20% to fund grants; the United Church Manor has been added as recipient at 10%; Western Area Youth and Senior Wishes will each receive 7.5%, with the remaining 5% left to the discretion of the Area Executive Council.

Because we received a large donation from the Good Shepherd Community of Faith as they closed and liquidated their assets, we have a sizable budget surplus. If that gift had not been received, our budget deficit would be (\$3,887.20), which is not remarkable for this time of year.

Giving from our churches has been faithful and consistent. We deeply appreciate the commitment of our churches to the shared wider ministry of the Area! To date, 24 churches have paid some or all of their Covenant Share. Many churches pay their Covenant Share at the end of the year, so I am hopeful that we will close out the year without a deficit.

This is my last report as treasurer; my term ends at the end of the year. My successor has not yet been named. For that reason, it would be deeply appreciated if end of year giving arrived before the end of the year. We always keep our books open for a little while in the new year in which we continue to credit giving intended for the previous year. With my departure, that becomes more problematic. So, please try to mail your checks to the Area in time to arrive in 2025. If you send a payment in January that is for 2025, please be sure to indicate that on the check so it gets attributed correctly.

It has been a privilege to serve as your treasurer, and I thank you for all the kind expressions of appreciation I have received throughout my term and especially as I prepare to surrender my office.

---

***From Jeff Mason,  
Finance/Endowment Committee***

## **Endowment News**

All three groups of investments in the Endowment Fund continued to increase in value during the third quarter of 2025. The value of the Osaic Funds account on September 30 was \$53,156.12, which was an increase of \$2,285.18 over the June 30 value. The United Church Funds account ending in 10 stood at \$82,399.16 on September 30, which was an increase of \$3,684.37 since June 30. Our largest investment is in the United Church Funds ending in 09, and its value on September 30 was \$682,141.20, which was an increase of \$32,463.34 since June 30.

The total of all investments on September 30 was \$817,696.48, an increase of \$38,432.89.

For those who attended the Annual Meeting on November 2 or received a copy of the Annual Report, please note there was a \$10 error in the amount of the United Church Funds account ending in 09 and in the total value of the endowment as of September 30. The numbers above are correct.

## Prayer Lists



### December 2025

UCC Congregational, Arcade:  
 Josh Bower, Pastor  
 Deb Wood, Christian Education  
 Rev. Robert Dievendorf, Pastor Emeritus

Immanuel UCC, Orangeville:  
 Rev. Elizabeth Meacham, Pastor

St. Paul’s UCC, Attica:  
 Rev. Laurie Heidenreich, Pastor  
 Rev. Charles Williman, Pastor Emeritus

Salem UCC, Bennington:  
 Rosann Lowder, Pastor

Payne Avenue Christian Church,  
 North Tonawanda:  
 Rev. Hope Harle-Mould, Pastor

Western Assoc. Church & Ministry Committee  
 Western Area Youth (WAY):  
 Rev. Krista Ulrich, WAY Advisor

NY Conference UCC:  
 Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams,  
 Conference Minister

### January 2026

Grace UCC, Buffalo:  
 Larry Jackson, Pastor

Kenilworth UCC, worshipping at  
 Stephen’s Bethlehem UCC, Buffalo

Grace United Church, Wellsville  
 FeedMore WNY

### February 2026

Amherst Community Church, Snyder:  
 Rev. Dr. Kandace Brooks, Designated Pastor  
 Rev. Dr. Richard Danielson, Designated Pastor

New Covenant UCC, Buffalo:  
 Reginald Burt, Pastor

Kenmore UCC, Kenmore: Rev. Darryl Barrow

Cleveland Heights Christian Church, Cheektowaga:  
 Rev. Lisa Peterangelo, Transitional Pastor  
 Rev. Kenneth Neal, Pastor Emeritus

Riverside Salem UCC, Grand Island:  
 Roger Cook, Co-Chair  
 Shirley Chan, Co-Chair  
 Environmental Task Force

Lockport UCC:  
 Rev. Hope Schwartz, Pastor

Lay Ministers/Members in Discernment (MIDs)

United Church Manor:  
 Sarah Bohnstadt, Manager

United Church of Christ, National Office:  
 Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson,  
 General Minister and President



**The *In the Vineyard* Editorial Board would like to recognize Pastor Lynn Morgan for his years as Western Area Treasurer.**

**Thank you, Pastor Morgan for your time and dedication to this important position for the Western Area!**

**We appreciate you!**



**Kenmore Tonawanda Churches' Blue Christmas Service at Church of the Nativity United Church of Christ**

The holiday season can be difficult for those who have experienced a loss, illness or hardship. The Ken-Ton Clergy Association has chosen **Tuesday, December 16<sup>th</sup>** to hold a special **Blue Christmas service** to acknowledge the sadness some people may feel during the holiday season.

The service, on **December 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm**, will emphasize the presence of God who comes as light into the midst of darkness, bringing comfort and hope. It will be held at Church of the Nativity United Church of Christ, 1530 Colvin Boulevard, one block north of Sheridan Drive in the Town of Tonawanda, 14223. The church is fully accessible. Parking is available in the road off of Thornclyff Blvd. Access to the recorded service will be available the following day at [www.nativityucc.org](http://www.nativityucc.org). Call 716-875-3365 for questions.

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**HAM & SCALLOPED POTATO DINNER**

**Sunday, March 8, 2026**

**11:30 am - 4:30 pm or sold out**

**First Congregational UCC**

**132 N. Main Street**

**Angola, NY 14006**

**716-549-2115**

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

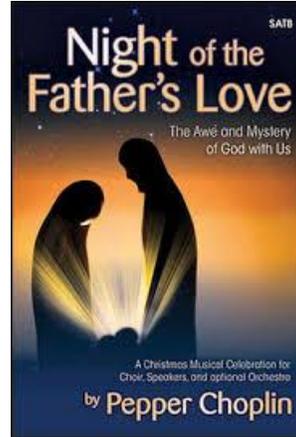
**\$ 16.00 / person**

**Pre-sale encouraged Mon.-Fri., 9 am-1 pm**

**at the church office**

**Or call 716-549-2115**

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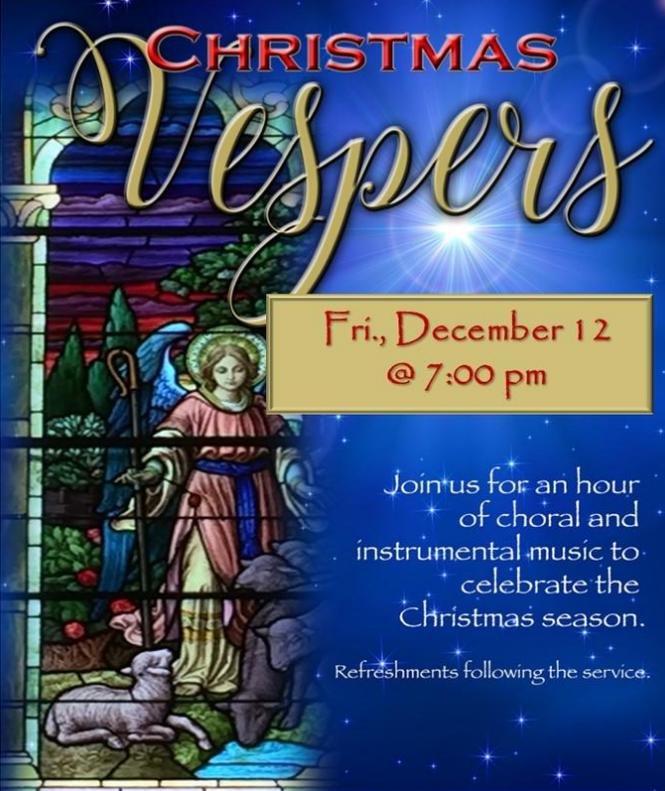


Please consider joining us again this season for our Annual Christmas Cantata, presented by the Pioneer Community Chorus and Performers. This year we will be doing "Night of the Father's Love" by Pepper Choplin.

**Sunday, December 14, 3 pm**  
**Arcade United Church of Christ**  
297 Main St., Arcade, NY 14009

**Free! All are welcome!**

**St. Peter's United Church of Christ**  
presents  
**A CHRISTMAS CONCERT**  
featuring  
**Strike The Rock**  
directed by Mark Kasprzak  
**December 14, 2025**  
**7:00 p.m.**  
Free Admission  
**1475 Orchard Park Road, West Seneca**



**CHRISTMAS**  
*Vespers*

**Fri., December 12  
@ 7:00 pm**

Join us for an hour of choral and instrumental music to celebrate the Christmas season.  
Refreshments following the service.

**EBENEZER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
630 Main Street, West Seneca NY  
LOOK FOR US ON FACEBOOK



**SAVE THE DATE**

**THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2026**



**ANNUAL FUNDRAISER**

*Sips, Suds and Sweets*

**Cloverbank Country Club, Hamburg, NY**

**New Location!**

Cloverbank Country Club  
5324 Rogers Rd, Hamburg, NY 14075  
Click link below for directions:  
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/a6Gd5DM3EfvauUaV9>

**Country Breakfast**

Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, 8 am-12 pm  
Buffet Breakfast includes  
All-You-Can-Eat: pancakes, scrambled eggs, sausage, homefries, and biscuits & gravy  
**\*\*Gluten Free Pancakes Available\*\***

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

Handicap Accessible



*Sips, Suds and Sweets*

April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
to benefit



**BASKETS AND SILENT AUCTION DONATIONS NEEDED**  
**CALL 716.508.2121**

**Deadline March 16th**

Your help is requested for the Senior Wishes annual fundraiser on Thursday, April 16, 2026. Donations needed by Monday, March 16, 2026. Thank you in advance!



*“One year in the spring with much sunshine, I spotted this poor soul (maybe Frosty?) hanging in there! Now THIS is the definition of PERSEVERANCE!!! Don’t you think?? I do!!!”*



Betty Lamb

## The Christmas Fund Offering

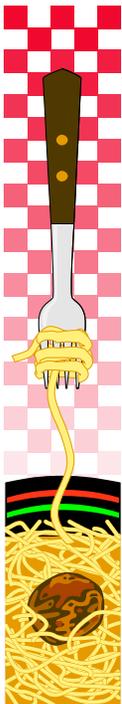
“...WHEN THEY SAW THE **STAR**, THEY WERE FILLED WITH **JOY**...”  
MATTHEW 2:10

**Donate to The Christmas Fund**

Your care and compassion will make a tangible difference in the lives of our ministers, church workers, and their families in need.

Donate Online Here!

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST | www.christmasfund.org | The Pension Boards United Church of Christ, Inc.



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

**SPAGHETTI DINNER**

**Sunday, February 15, 2026  
11:30 am-4:30 pm or to sold out**

Dine-in / Take-out or Drive-Thru

Includes: Spaghetti, meatballs, salad,  
bread & butter & dessert

**\$ 16.00 / person**

**Pre-Sale Tickets: Call Michelle at  
716-549-2115**

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you!

Click here to donate or scan the QR code above:  
[donate](#)



### Have You Seen the WNY Area Churches in Covenant Facebook Page?

When you are scrolling around Facebook, be sure to check out the WNY Area Churches in Covenant page!

Stay up-to-date on upcoming events, links for registrations to various meetings, live-streamed services and much more! Simply click the link below to go directly to the Facebook page now! Then “like” the page to receive notifications in the future!

<https://www.facebook.com/WNYACIC>

\*\*\*\*\*

*In the Vineyard* asks the question:  
**“What does your church building need more of?”**

*From Jay May, Arcade UCC*

“I think it would be great to hear infants/toddlers babbling away during church services. In that way, you would know that we were growing the church the correct way.”

*From John Cady, Arcade UCC*

“Young families.”

\*\*\*\*\*

*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@gmail.com](mailto:inthevineyardeditor@gmail.com). Thank you!*



### 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.

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](mailto:inthevineyardeditor@gmail.com)  
  
Thank you in advance!



**New York Area Churches in Covenant (WNYACIC)**

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

**Send newsletter items to:**

[inthevineyardeditor@gmail.com](mailto: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 Spring issue in by January 14, 2026.\*\*\***

