

UCC NEWS



April 2016

An Open and Affirming Church
"A fellowship in Jesus, the Christ showing God's love to all people."

A monthly publication of

United Church of Christ, First Congregational

11 West Main Street, Norwich, NY 13815

The Rev. Mr. Joseph Connolly, Pastor and Teacher



**Deadline to apply
is April 15th.**

**Applications are available on the website at
<www.uccnorwichny.org>
or by calling the church office at 334-3434.**

Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00 a.m.
Childcare Provided

Church Office Hours:
Monday - Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Friday 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Telephone: 607-334-3434

E-mail: office@uccnorwichny.org Website: www.uccnorwichny.org



From the Pastor

Dear Friends in Christ,

I have (at least once before) in this missive quoted Martin E. Marty. Much of the information in the observations below about evangelicals is taken from *Sightings*, a blog Marty publishes.

To be clear, Marty has a significant set of credentials and is more than qualified to be writing about the matter here addressed. He is a Lutheran pastor ordained in 1952 who served parishes near Chicago before joining the University of Chicago faculty in 1963. He is a world-famous educator, who specializes in American Church sociology and American Church history. He was also a Senior Editor at the *Christian Century* for decades.

In that *Sightings* blog Marty paraphrased a writing by David Gushee, Vice-President of the American Academy of Religion. Gushee was addressing the fact (illustrated by the current political climate) that it is hard to classify “evangelicals.” Indeed, if you have been following election year goings on, you know the current political climate has brought to light the fact that many voters who claim “evangelical” leanings are all over the map when it comes to their candidate of choice. There is no candidate of choice among them.

Gushee used two terms to broadly describe evangelicals. These descriptions came about in part because evangelicals cannot be lumped into one giant category (not just in terms of politics but for nearly any purpose).

In any case, let me get to the descriptive words Gushee used. The commitment of millions of believers, Gushee observed, seems “wafer-thin” or “half-churched.”

It is likely many of us have heard someone referred to as a “cultural Jew” or a “non-practicing Catholic.” Of course, what these newly coined descriptions are trying to counter is that many political opinion writers and reporters write as if they thought “evangelicals” were knee-jerk partisans who respond only to “the radical right.”

But that is actually quite far from the reality of the conglomerate known as “evangelicals.” Of course, notes Marty, wafer-thin commitment in anything is not a new invention or

pastime. But Gushee's terms are handy devices for dealing with definitions of groups of church folk.

Indeed, in the ordination service used by churches in the United Church of Christ we claim our denomination stands in line with the history of "evangelical Christians." Perhaps more importantly, that service also "...affirms the responsibility of the church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God."

One of my pastors, the Rev. Carol Anderson (who was among the first of the women officially ordained in the Episcopal Church) often spoke about "cultural Christianity." And we do live in a place where the culture which surrounds us claims to be largely Christian.

And perhaps that's the rub: do we live in a place which simply claims to be Christian? Is it likely that many people are simply (as Carol Anderson suggested) cultural Christians? Is it likely that the terms Gushee used to describe evangelicals—"wafer thin" or "half-churched" applies more broadly than we care to admit?

It is a well known statistic that many young people are forgoing church attendance these days. But the members of that demographic are not "irreligious." Studies show they have a deep faith in God.

This brings me back to the words of the ordination service where we affirm "...the responsibility of the church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God." I want to suggest these words are a necessary and vital part of what it means to be church.

Please note: I did not say "be a church." I said "be church." You see, I maintain to be church is a verb, not a noun. A church is active. A church changes. A church moves.

And, indeed, individually each of us is not 'a church.' Even together we are not 'a church.' Rather, together we can "be church."

At the end of many of these reflections I say, "see you in church." And what I mean by that is I'll see you in the church building, in our tradition commonly called "the meeting house."

Our tradition has it right. The building is a meeting house. And in the meeting house, when we are together, we strive to “be church” together. In that meeting house we strive to avoid being “wafer-thin” or “half-churched.”

In Faith,



Joe Connolly

A Pastoral Letter from the Conference Minister

February 22, 2016

“Behold, God is doing a new thing.” Several months ago I wrote a reflection on how we may move from being the “United Church of Christ” to the “Uniting Church of Christ.” I write to you today to share how the Holy Spirit is moving in our midst toward that end.

Two years ago the New York Conference was approached by the Collegiate Church (Reformed Church in America) in New York City requesting a conversation on dual affiliation with the UCC. The Collegiate Church is one church with five “campuses” in NYC. Four of these are distinct congregations. This meeting was attended by leaders of the National Setting of the UCC, the New York Conference, and the Metropolitan Association. The Collegiate Churches hold a membership of over 4000 and include one of New York’s iconic churches, Marble Collegiate Church, the former home of Norman Vincent Peale. These conversations have continued over the past two years.

Last September, I was contacted by the Executive Minister of the RCA New York Regional Synod, Reverend Amy Nyland. The Regional Synod is roughly the equivalent of a Conference in the UCC. The New York Regional Synod is comprised

of congregations from Poughkeepsie through Long Island (including the Collegiate Church). The question posed to me was, “Is it possible for a larger number of RCA congregations to dual affiliate, beyond the Collegiate Church?” My response was, “Let’s see where God takes us.” It is important to note that a significant motivation for these RCA churches to reach out to the UCC is on account of our Open and Affirming historic commitment to the LGBTQ communities. As our conversations have unfolded over these past six months, it has become clear that what is taking shape is much more far reaching than any one issue. Reverend Karen Georgia Thompson, the Ecumenical Officer of the UCC has described this as a deeper living into the Formula of Agreement that already exists between our denominations. (Please see the Vision and Goals document for a fuller explanation of our unfolding dialogue on page 6.)

There is reason to believe that there is potential for a considerable number of RCA congregations to seek dual affiliation with the UCC. After discussing many scenarios on how this might take place, we are now exploring the possibility of creating a new, tenth, Association in the New York Conference: Reformed Association. This Association will exist solely for the purpose of dually affiliated RCA/UCC congregations and ministers. Churches with membership in Reformed Association will agree to live according to the faith and order of both denominations. This is a “new wine skin” that has never been done before. The New York Conference Board of Directors and the Executive Committee of the New York Regional Synod have both affirmed moving forward in exploring this possibility.

Beyond the creation of a new Association, there are also possibilities for sharing of Conference and Regional staff. Both Reverend Nyland and I intend to explore holding Dual Standing in each of our denominations. Concerns have been expressed as to whether this will over-tax our already stretched conference staff. We do not foresee any further “search and call” responsibilities for our Associate Conference Ministers. We do see an opportunity, as ministerial partners, to offer wider services to one another. In our conversations, we have been transparent that there are positive financial implications for the New York Conference which has struggled for decades with significant deficits.

Both UCC General Minister and President, John Dorhauer, and UCC Ecumenical Officer, Karen Georgia Thompson, have been fully appraised of each development in these conversations. They are both very supportive of the direction in which we are moving.

As this is potentially a significant development for the New York Conference, I am writing to keep all of the UCC in New York up to date on these conversations. It is quite possible that the Conference Board will recommend an action from this year's Annual Meeting to create a new Association within the New York Conference. This may also necessitate some minor revisions to our Conference By-laws to be brought to the 2017 Annual Meeting.

I ask for your prayers that our ministry together may be pleasing in God's sight and may exemplify a bold witness of the unity of the Church.

Faithfully,
David R Gaewski
Conference Minister
New York Conference, United Church of Christ

Vision and Goals of a New Relationship Between the New York Conference, United Church of Christ and The Regional Synod of New York, Reformed Church in America

Background

The United Church of Christ (UCC) and the Reformed Church in America (RCA) share some common historical roots, many theological values, and a long unfolding relationship. In UCC tradition there is reference to the "four streams" of our ancestry. Two of these streams flow from the Reformation movements of Calvin and Zwingli. The German Reformed church from the Palatinate region as well as The Church of the Prussian Union were both shaped by Reformist theology and practice.

In the early 18th century a large immigration of Reformed Germans entered both New York and Pennsylvania. Those that settled in New York sought a home in the Dutch Reformed Classis of Amsterdam. In 1757 the Classis would become

independent from Amsterdam and result in the birth of the Reformed Church in America.

In 1725 Johan Phillips Boehm, a lay farmer from Falkner Swamp in Pennsylvania was encouraged by his community to seek ministerial authorization through the Amsterdam Classis. Both authorization and financial support was granted to the first establishment of the German Reformed Church in America. In 1746 Michael Schlatter, born in Switzerland and trained in the Netherlands was sent by the Amsterdam Classis to organize the German Reformed churches. In this sense, the Dutch Reformed were the parents of the Pennsylvania German Reformed Church, which would eventually become one of the four founding denominations of the United Church of Christ. Therefore the fraternal relationship between the Reformed Church in America and the United Church of Christ was established nearly 300 years ago.

In the twentieth century, beginning in 1962 (only five years after the United Church of Christ became a denomination) conversations were initiated between the American Lutheran Church, the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church in the U.S., the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ to discuss differences and seek common agreement on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. For the United Church of Christ, this followed the mandate to incarnate the prayer of Jesus Christ, "That They May All Be One." The United Church of Christ was birthed as a denomination "United and Uniting" with the assumption that the union between the Evangelical and Reformed Church with the Congregational Christian Church, would be the first step in an ecumenical movement to unite Christianity. The conversation initiated in 1962 culminated in 1992 when the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ released their report entitled, "A Common Calling: The Witness of Our Reformation Churches in North America Today." This report stated:

"That the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and the United Church of Christ (UCC) declare that they are in full communion with one another. In the specific terms of full communion as they are developed in our study,

this recommendation also requires (1) that they recognize each other as churches in which the Gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered according to the Word of God; (2) that they withdraw any historic condemnation by one side or the other as inappropriate for the faith and life of our churches today; (3) that they continue to recognize each others' Baptism and authorize and encourage the sharing of the Lord's Supper among their members; (4) that they recognize each others' various ministries and make provision for the orderly exchange of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament; (5) that they establish appropriate channels of consultation and decision-making within the existing structures of the churches; (6) that they commit themselves to an ongoing process of theological dialogue in order to clarify further the common understanding of the faith and foster its common expression in evangelism, witness, and service; (7) that they pledge themselves to living together under the Gospel in such a way that the principle of mutual affirmation and admonition becomes the basis of a trusting relationship in which respect and love for the other will have a chance to grow."

For the purpose of transparency, it needs to be added that during the "Formula of Agreement" negotiations, there were reservations expressed by the RCA regarding the theological liberal tendencies of the UCC. Nonetheless, Christian Unity was a common goal that surpassed perceived differences.

Since the time of the Formula of Agreement, RCA and UCC congregations in the New York Metropolitan and Eastern New York areas have regularly reached out to one another to assist in pastoral transitions with RCA ministers serving UCC congregations and vice versa.

In recent years the movement of the New York constituencies of the UCC and RCA *toward one another* has accelerated as we have found common ground not only theologically, but also in regards to social justice issues for which both communions have passion. Not the least of these is the rights and dignity afforded to the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, and Transgendered communities within our churches and in our wider society. Our commonality is not limited to LGBT issues. Recently the Regional Synod of New York and New York Conference executives issued a joint statement condemning violence toward Muslim brothers and sisters in

our society. We have found that a judicatory voice that speaks for our 400+ churches is more efficacious than our respective 140 and 260 congregations.

Vision

The early visions of our predecessors to unite the body of Christ should not be lost on this moment of our history. As Christianity in America continues to be defined by Christian fundamentalism, and as the “taste” for Christianity has been soured for our emerging generations who are passionate for social justice and thirsty for a spiritual life, we find ourselves in a “Kairos” moment. A uniting New York RCA Synod and UCC Conference has a theologically progressive gift to offer both the non-churched as well as those who have become dismayed by a Christian voice that instills fear rather than hope, exclusion rather than inclusion. While we acknowledge and affirm that we don’t all agree on each issue of social justice or theology, we agree that all human beings are created in the image of God and are deserving of dignity and respect and that we stand united as the body of Christ against hatred and prejudice.

A partnership between the New York Conference (UCC) and the Regional Synod of New York (RCA) will be a clear witness that a theologically and socially inclusive message is so relevant that judicatories are willing to lower the fences that separate us in order to join hands as partners of Good News. This is a witness that unity can exist even amidst our diversity. The unity of the Body of Christ is more important than it’s compartmentalization of “traditions”. The faithful witness to God’s love, unmerited grace, and radical hospitality is more important than adherence to polities created during the past several centuries that separate us. As we endeavor to incarnate a faithful, efficacious, and bold proclamation of Gospel, we find this to be a time for new wine skins.

Goals

Our first goal is unity. We will strive to unite our voices and our praxis of faith. We will endeavor to be good stewards of the resources granted us by the reduction of redundancy when the sharing of resources can accomplish the same tasks. We will live in to a new way of being church in the twenty-first century. We will be attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

We will be the body of Christ together.

We propose a new Association of the New York Conference: Reformed Association. This is a first step, but it is not the end objective. We dream of a time when the churches of the UCC and those of the RCA will grow closer and closer in accomplishing our tasks of ministry and in communicating a bold Christian witness. We dream of a time when not only will RCA congregations be dually affiliated with the UCC, but also UCC congregations will be dually affiliated with the RCA. We dream of a twenty-first century, post-modern partnership that embraces more than one “right way” of being church. We will live into multiple polities, recognizing that churches do not exist to fit into a structure, but rather structures exist to empower churches to most fully live the Good News and proclaim it. We will commit to be regularly engaged in prayerful evaluation of how we are living into this vision and accomplishing these goals.

When the Classis of Amsterdam reached out to help establish the German Reformed Church in Pennsylvania, they did not do so with the goal of creating a separation of Christ’s Church. Their goal was to build up the realm of Christ. This should serve as our own guiding objective, or as our Disciples of Christ brethren say, “our polar star”.

David R Gaewski
Conference Minister
New York Conference
United Church of Christ

Amy Nyland
Executive Minister
Regional Synod of New York
Reformed Church in America

**Congratulations to our Pastor and Teacher
the Reverend Mr. Joseph Connolly
on the 15th Anniversary of his Ordination
April 1, 2001.**



Historian Notes

by Patricia Evans, Church Historian

Rev. Donald Esslinger 1968-1978 - Part 2

The Esslinger family was very talented with their musical abilities. Don and Denis played the trombone, and Doris and Denise the piano. Doris was a teacher's aide in the English Department at the Norwich Senior High School, on the School Superintendent's Parents' Council. She also was a teacher for six years in the Wednesday Night Ecumenical Youth Program.








Dennis, while here and in 10th grade, was a member of the Senior High Marching Band, the soccer team, Ski Club, and Student Council, youth representative from our church to the New York Conference, and a member of the Senior Choir, the Senior High Youth Group and the Gentle Revolution. He was also an Eagle Scout. Denis would go on to become the President of the PPL Corporation, an energy and utility holding company in Allentown, PA.

Denise while here in 8th grade and was a member of the Junior High Marching Band and choir. She was in the Junior High Sunday School class, helped as a Nursery worker and Sunday school helper. She was also a 4H member and had a job at the Perry Brown Library.

Denise did graduate education at Lancaster Theology Seminary in Lancaster, PA, receiving her MDiv in 1991. She then received her DMin in preaching in 2009

On October 5, 1995, Denise was ordained and installed as minister of the Foster Memorial United Church of Christ, Springfield, Mass. She had served the congregation as Minister of Education for the past year. The Reverend Dr. Denise Esslinger later became the pastor of Gilead Congregational United Church of Christ in Hebron, CT. She became its first female pastor in the churches 250 year history.

After leaving Norwich the family settled in Bethlehem PA. Rev. Esslinger became the pastor of Bethany United Church of

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
April 2016						
					1 April Fool's Day	2 10:00 a.m. Choir Voice Lessons, upstairs
3 8:30 a.m. Church School 9:15 a.m. Nursery 10:00 a.m. Worship/Communion <i>Food Sunday. See p. 15.</i> 11:00 a.m. Coffee Hour	4 12:00 p.m. M. Conant, upstairs 7:30 p.m. Monday Evening Musical Club Concert. See p. 17.	5 6:00 p.m. AA Meeting, upstairs 6:30 p.m. TNT Quilters, Kitchen 6:30 p.m. Deacons Meeting	6 6:00 p.m. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Choir	7 12:00 p.m. M. Conant, upstairs	8	9 
10 8:30 a.m. Church School 9:15 a.m. Nursery 10:00 a.m. Worship 11:00 a.m. Coffee Hour 11:15 a.m. Bell Choir	11 10:00 a.m. Prayer Shawl, Chapel 12:00 p.m. M. Conant, upstairs 7:00 p.m. Trustees Meeting	12 6:00 p.m. AA Meeting, upstairs 6:30 p.m. TNT Quilters, Kitchen	13 6:00 p.m. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Choir	14 10:00 a.m. Authorized Ministers Mtg., Preble 12:00 p.m. M. Conant, upstairs 6:00 p.m. Piecemakers, Founders' Rm.	15 Deadline to submit Scholarship Applications. See cover.	16
17 8:30 a.m. Church School 9:15 a.m. Nursery 10:00 a.m. Worship <i>Paper Sunday. See p. 15.</i> 11:00 a.m. Coffee Hour 11:15 a.m. Bell Choir 3:00 p.m. Pastor Joe at Chenango Valley Home	18 12:00 p.m. M. Conant, upstairs 	19 VBS Meeting today. Time TBA 9:00 a.m. Head Start Policy Council 10:30 a.m. Susquehanna Supervisory Meeting 6:00 p.m. AA Meeting, upstairs 6:30 p.m. TNT Quilters, kitchen	20 6:00 p.m. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Democratic Committee, Founders' Rm. 7:00 p.m. Choir 	21 11:00 a.m. Food Pantry Meeting 12:00 p.m. M. Conant, upstairs 6:00 p.m. Alzheimers' Support Group	22 9:00 a.m. Rummage Sale, Broad St. UMC	23 9:00 a.m. Rummage Sale, Broad St. UMC 9:00 a.m. Susquehanna Assoc. Spring Meeting. See p. 18. 2:00 p.m. Burke Party, Founders' Rm. 6:00 p.m. Passover Seder. See p. 16.
24 8:30 a.m. Church School 9:15 a.m. Nursery 10:00 a.m. Worship 11:00 a.m. Coffee Hour 11:15 a.m. Bell Choir 3:00 p.m. Choir Voice Lessons, upstairs	25 10:00 a.m. Prayer Shawl, Chapel 12:00 p.m. M. Conant, upstairs	26 6:00 p.m. AA Meeting, upstairs 6:00 p.m. TNT Quilters, Kitchen	27 6:00 p.m. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Choir	28 12:00 p.m. M. Conant, upstairs	29 9:00 a.m. Collate May Newsletter 4:00 p.m. 4-H, Founders' Rm.	30
UCCNY Women's Conference April 28-30						

Christ, 600 W. Market St., Bethlehem, PA in 1968.

June 1984 he was elected moderator of the United Church of Christ's Penn Northeast Conference's annual meeting. (Penn Northeast Conference had 176 churches and 62,000 members in northeastern Pennsylvania.)

He resided over the annual meeting and chaired the conferences board of director and executive committee during his one year term. Some of his duties included carrying out the directives of the board of directors and executive committee. He was also active with the Hunger Action Program (which helps each UCC church establish a committee that feeds the hungry in the church and the community), the mission partnership with the Evangelical and Reformed Church of Honduras, the Youth and Young Adult Priority Program and the New Initiative in Church Development Program.

Don also served as a member of the Penn Northeast board of directors, the executive committee and as chairman of the planning committee for the annual meeting. He was also the president of the Greater Bethlehem Council of Churches in 1981-82.

Don and Doris are currently living in Bethlehem, PA.

From Our Daily Bread

It appears that spring is just around the corner, or maybe it is here. I hope that winter is not going to surprise us. Thank you for your support of Our Daily Bread Food Pantry. We are still seeing a great need for food in the Norwich area. Any **canned items** are appreciated, particularly **fruit and vegetables**. **Peanut butter** is always in demand, as is **soup**. **Cereal** is also a popular item. Perhaps as some of the gardeners amongst you plan for planting, you would plant some extra to be shared with the pantry. As always, monetary contributions are appreciated. Thanks.

Barb and Gary
Volunteer Coordinators
Our Daily Bread Food Pantry

Food Sunday - April 3

Bring in food items for donation to Our Daily Bread Food Pantry. (See previous page for needed items.) A basket for donations will be in front of the communion table.

Paper Products & Diaper Sunday - April 17

Bring in paper products and personal care items for donation to Our Daily Bread Food Pantry. Or bring in diapers for donation to First Baptist Church for their Fourth Saturday Diaper Project held April 23rd.

Director of Children and Youth Ministries

Linda L. Oehme

March was interesting since Palm Sunday and Easter fell in it. Still lots of illness and no snow caused many absences.

During the month of April and the season of Easter, we will be hearing some new stories about the life of Jesus in the enhanced I Wonder book from the Children and Worship Program. These are the stories help explain how Jesus treated people and how Jesus brought them to God. Come and check it out.

Also we are preparing to host our 2nd Annual Community Vacation Bible School entitled Surf Shack. "Catch the Wave of God's Amazing Love." If you would be able to help with this endeavor, please contact Linda Oehme or Jen Mallozzi. Adults and teens are welcome to help. The organizational meeting will be April 19. Watch for the details in the bulletin.

Remember, Church School is not just for kids. There are Sunday adult classes meeting in the Chapel and Bible Study most Wednesday evenings led by Pastor Joe. **We are all** never too young or old to learn and explore our faith in new and exciting ways. This is an open invitation for anyone who would like to join us. See you on Sunday.

<p>Passover Seder Led by Rabbi Rafael Goldstein Saturday, April 23, 2016 at 6 PM (Second Night) Norwich Jewish Center - 72 South Broad Street \$30 per person - \$15 ages 12 & under Ages 5 and under free RSVP by April 18 Make check payable to Norwich Jewish Center and send to: Shelley Werner, 7307 Butternut Lane, Hamilton NY 13346</p>

Holy Land Alternative Tour

sponsored by the New York Conference, UCC

August 8-18, 2016

Many first-century realities that shaped Jesus' life and ministry continue to shape the lives of Palestinians and Israelis. In addition to exploring the holy stones – the historic places and sites that have defined the three monotheistic faiths – pilgrims will engage the Living Stones: Jews, Muslims and Christians living in the land.

Led by experienced hosts Jeff & Janet Wright and a professional guide, explore the holy sites of Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Nazareth; visit the divided city of Hebron; hike in the Judean wilderness; commune along the shore of the Sea of Galilee; harvest olive trees at Tent of Nations. Visit Global Ministry partners at Sabeel, B'Tselem, Kairos Palestine, Rawdat el Zahur School, East Jerusalem YW and YMCAs, the Quaker Meeting in Ramallah and more.

Special attention is paid to the safety of pilgrims by our tour host, Siraj Center (www.sirajcenter.org), located outside of Bethlehem and leaders in responsible touring. Cost for the land package (participants make their own flight arrangements) is \$2,065 (double occupancy and based on twenty participants). You can find a copy of the itinerary and more information by emailing Jeff Wright (wright@frii.com)

Revised Common Lectionary

You may be aware that the readings used at services of worship in most Mainline Protestant churches and in Roman Catholic Churches are from the list of assigned readings known as The New Revised Common Lectionary. In our Congregational tradition, while pastors are encouraged to use the assigned readings, it's not mandatory. This is published in the hope that some may use these readings in their personal prayer and devotional time.

Second Sunday of Easter - April 3

Acts 5:27-32; Psalm 118:14-29
or Psalm 150 ; Revelation 1:4-8; John 20:19-31

Third Sunday of Easter - April 10

Acts 9:1-6, (7-20); Psalm 30; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19

Fourth Sunday of Easter - April 17

Acts 9:36-43; Psalm 23; Revelation 7:9-17; John 10:22-30

Fifth Sunday of Easter - April 24, 2016

Acts 11:1-18; Psalm 148; Revelation 21:1-6; John 13:31-35

Thank You Letter

Dearest Friends at UCC,

We cannot thank you enough for opening your doors to us.
It means so much that we can count on your support.

SAME (Support Art and Music Education).

Monday Evening Musical Club presents

An Evening of

Instrumental Folk Music

Monday, April 4, 7:30 p.m.

United Church of Christ, Norwich

Free and open to the public.

A free will offering to benefit Music Scholarships for Chenango Co. students.

The Susquehanna Association of the UCC New York Conference

March, 2016

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Grace and peace to you.

You are not alone! One of the gifts of our denomination is the fact that we have family beyond the walls of our individual churches. The members of Homer Congregational Church (where I am a member) have “kin” in Corning and Walton and Preble and beyond. That is to say, the 28 UCC churches within the Susquehanna Association are a family of faith. Rich and poor, urban and rural, gay and straight – indeed a rainbow of diversity – we share faith in the One who, in his final days prayed, “...that they all may be one.”

As the moderator of this Association, I write with a special invitation for every person in every pew. Our Association’s leadership (General Ministry Team) has decided to expand the circle of our Spring meeting on Saturday, April 23 in order to invite *everyone* to join in a sacred conversation on race. We believe that our God is calling us to intentionally talk together about the issues that face our society, our communities and our churches.

I am pleased to announce that the Rev. Dominique Atchison will guide our dialogue through Bible study and multi-media engagement. Together, we can explore the pertinent questions:

Why do we need to talk about race?

How do we engage ourselves and our congregations in ways that are both sacred and productive?

Rev. Atchison has served within our Conference and beyond, including her work with the Connecticut Conference as the coordinator of Sacred Conversations on Race.

As we look to the season of hope, embodied by the resurrection story, please join your extended family of the Susquehanna Association:

Saturday, April 23 from 9 – 4

Homer Congregational Church

Cost: just \$8 per person (Talk to Pastor Joe about cost.)

(includes coffee breaks & lunch)

This is the first time, in recent history, that we have invited not only our clergy and delegates, but everyone who is part of your church family. Please consider this opportunity to network with other people of faith and to address the ways that we can better live into God's gift of diversity in our churches and communities.

I look forward to greeting you on April 23.

Shalom!

Rev. Vicki Johnson, Moderator



Visitors Since the Last Newsletter

Melissa Burnside
 Carla Chase, Norwich
 Jane and Philip Clement,
 Norwich
 Marjorie Close
 Joel Coons
 Mary and Tom Davis
 Robin DeBrita
 Della and Herman W.
 Erickson, Norwich
 Herman A. Erickson
 Sharon Fleming
 Leanne Frayer
 Rich and Sharon Griffin
 Nancy Hale
 Barb and Gib Harringotn
 Alex Hazard
 Carol Hollings
 Polly Hopson
 Anita Humer

Al and Marilyn Kochersperger
 Buffy Mayo, Wilbrahanm, MA
 Tricia, Shawn, Taylor, Jady
 Munson, Norwich
 Margaret and Richard Newell
 Michael Polizzi, Norwich, NY
 Mary Jo Rankin
 Erma Runion
 Debra Sherman, Norwich
 Barbara Shudon
 Colton, Deliliah, Jack, Micah,
 Nicole Spiegel
 David and Martha Spiegel
 Wendy Stanton, Oneonta
 Sandy Trifaro
 Deborah Trythall
 Debbie Wheeler
 Ava McMahan and Tina Musson
 McMachon, Ithaca
 Stephen Rogoff, Oxford

An Online Article from the Church at the National Level

UCC Shares Open Invitation to Dorhauer Installation in Three-city Service ~ *Three Locations. Three Preachers at Each Service. An Extravagant Welcome to All Who Would like to Attend.* ~ Written by Anthony Moujaes

The Rev. John C. Dorhauer will be formally installed as the United Church of Christ's ninth general minister and president during a three-city worship service in mid-April. The three events, scheduled on April 15 in New York City, April 16 in Chicago and April 17 in Seattle, will include a trio of UCC pastors and leaders who have been invited to offer three brief "vision statements" at each worship location.

But as organizers point out, these three services are not just about the installation of one person; rather they are planned as a pivotal moment for the future and mission of the denomination. That's why everyone in the wider church is welcome to attend any of the three events or watch the proceedings online.

Installation planners also point out that the church is not centered in Cleveland where the national setting is located. "We are called to serve the wider setting," Dorhauer said. "Having this in three cities represents something symbolic—that we are all in this together—and allows us to open this amazing moment up to more people."

Since his election, Dorhauer has often shared his belief that the Holy Spirit envisions a future in which the UCC matters. To help illuminate that vision, instead of a single sermon, nine preachers have been invited to offer vision statements that articulate their vision of what the Holy Spirit is calling us to. It also represents an opportunity to hear different voices, with nine different answers to the important question about what lies on the horizon for the UCC denomination.

"One of the things about the Installation I am most excited about is this: instead of one preacher, we have nine voices sharing with us their vision of what a renewed and vital mission for the United Church of Christ looks like," Dorhauer

said. “Each of them sees something different. We will leave this experience with a variety of voices having lifted up for us an inspiring, hopeful, and challenging vision. That has me very excited.”

The Riverside Church in Manhattan, New York City, Trinity United Church of Christ on Chicago’s South Side, and Plymouth Church United Church of Christ in downtown Seattle are the host congregations on April 15, 16 and 17. All three services will feature music by Mark A. Miller, the minister of music at Christ Church (a UCC and American Baptist Church) in Summit, N.J., who was commissioned for the occasion.

Each service will welcome ecumenical and interfaith guests from communion churches— including the Rev. Sharon Watkins, general minister and president of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)— and other Protestant denominations in the United States.

“An extravagant welcome and invitation has been extended to our ecumenical and interfaith partners to join us, to which we have had a very positive response,” said Cheryl Joseph Williams, UCC chief strategic officer. “Some of our ecumenical partners will have active participant roles in the installation weekend, and all have been invited to bring greetings within the context of the services.”

The Rev. Sue Blain, UCC curator for worship and liturgical arts, is part of the installation service planning team. She explained that worship is being planned as part of a “progressive installation,” with each event meant to compliment the others.

“It emerged out of conversations that John had with members of the UCC Board, and he sought from them wisdom on how to do this installation — how to conceive it and engage lots of people. Out of that conversation, this idea of a progressive service emerged,” Blain said. “We will begin the celebration with greetings and welcoming guests at each location, covenanting and laying on of hands in New York and Chicago. We’ll bring in communion offerings in New York with bread, and in Chicago with juice. In Seattle, we will bring the process to a formal conclusion, where people can partake in communion.”

“Rather than envisioning three separate services in three

locations, imagine that this weekend lifts up a single three-part continuing installation service celebrated in three regional locations across the country, a service that begins in New York, continues in Chicago, and culminates in Seattle,” said Williams. “This is symbolic of a belief in God’s continuing testament and affords a fresh invitation for the UCC to celebrate and live out a united and uniting UCC — a people of possibility.”

Each service is based on the UCC Book of Worship, but there are some aspects of the events that have been expanded to include people in attendance so they also can commit to a new moment within the life of the church.

“When people lay their hands on John and on each other, it forms a large circle,” Blain said. “In that moment we are asking people to pray not just for John, but for all of us gathered.”

All three services will be streamed live on the UCC website.

“It’s a symbolic value suggesting that we are now a part of a technological world,” Dorhauer said, “and we will use those gifts to broaden our impact; and practically making this moment something we can all own and participate in.”

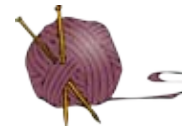
Prayer Shawl Ministry Change

by Bonnie Connolly

After much thought and consideration, the UCC Prayer Shawl/ Knitting group has decided to change our meeting time to during the day. We have been talking about this for awhile and after a few daytime trial meetings we have decided that we prefer meeting during the daytime.

The new meeting time is every other Monday at 10:00 a.m., still at the UCC church.

**The next scheduled meeting is Monday,
April 11 at 10:00 a.m. in the Chapel
Everyone is welcome.**



If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at 334-2729 or <unchurch2@frontiernet.net>. Thank you.

Prayer Concerns

Let us keep in our prayers the following concerns:

- * families-those families that may be going through particularly difficult times, families seeking God's guidance;
- * those who are moving because of their work, those looking for work, and those looking for meaning in their work.
- * those who are ill, who are recovering from illness or surgery, or who anticipate going to the hospital.
- * those who grieve over the death of someone they love.
- * our church, that it might be faithful to its calling, our pastor, all staff members and committees.
- * peace in the world.
- * gay, lesbian and bisexual and transgendered persons, and all those who feel isolated and alone.

OUR PRAYERS AND SYMPATHY to our Parish Coordinator, **Cheri Willard** and her family for the loss of her father, **Gary Myers**, who died on February 29, 2016.



*Happy
Birthday*

These are the birthdays of members and friends of our church family. If you know someone on the list who's having a birthday, feel free to send that person a card. Even if you don't know anyone on the list, feel free to send any celebrant a card. More importantly, strive to hold each of these people up in prayer on the anniversary of their birth. Please call the church office with additions or corrections (334-3434).

April

14	Allyson Morehead	23	Ericka Tyler
15	Dawn Hagenbuch	30	Neil Conant
16	Richie Bonney		Kristin Dutcher Miller

UCC NEWS

United Church of Christ
First Congregational
11 West Main Street
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DATED MATERIAL: Please Deliver Promptly.
This issue mailed 04/01/2016.

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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Moderator: **Steve Craig**
Director of Music Ministries: **Mary Williams**
Director of Children's & Youth Ministries: **Linda Oehme**
Parish Coordinator: **Cheri Willard**
Counselor, Family Counseling Ministry:
Joanne Lanfear