

UCC NEWS



February 2018

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



**The 5th Annual
SAME Expo**
(Support Art and Music Education)
Saturday, February 10th
4:00 - 6:00 p.m.
United Church of Christ, Norwich

Student Art Exhibit / Music Performances / Silent Auction

Free will donation to benefit the Arts & Music Departments
of Norwich Central School District.

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

Church Office Hours:
Monday - Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.
Friday 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Telephone: 607-334-3434

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From the Pastor

Dear Friends in Christ,

Someone recently asked me what are, for me personally, the most meaningful verses in Scripture. As it happens a number of years ago when I was the chair of the Susquehanna Association Committee on Authorized Ministry, we asked everyone on that committee that question. We also asked that they explain why they had chosen what they had chosen.

The purpose of doing that exercise was so we could then, distribute it to people who were going through the process of discerning a call to ministry. Indeed, these days we call people seeking standing as authorized ministers *Members in Discernment*. So, what follows is my list and my comments about each one.

“Hear, O Israel: / *Yahweh*, our God, / *Yahweh* alone, is one. / You are to love *Yahweh*, our God / with all your heart, / and with all your soul, / and with all your strength. Let these words / that I command today / be written in your heart.” — Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

Comment: The first job of the individual, the pastor, the church is to listen. Note: in Hebrew there is no command tense; these are not commands and in Hebrew are known as the ten words. In any case, we are invited to “hear” i.e.: to listen. This is very hard to do.

“For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and Christ was buried and was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.” — 1 Corinthians 15:3-5.

Comment: Scholars say this is the earliest writing in the New Testament, a creed which pre-dates Paul who appropriated it. We translate the Greek as “handed on” but it means “traditioned on.” English does not have that verb form. If what we do is “traditioning” Paul is saying what gets passed on is the understanding of an individual. But this is always tempered by a communal understanding. Last, it is often said the key question of the entire New Testament asks “who is Jesus.” Jesus is the Messiah. But the real question, the one

the early church constantly asks is more subtle. “If God is One, how does Jesus fit in?” Hence, the development of and understanding (traditioning?) of the Christian proclamation: God is Triune.

“In the beginning of God’s creating of heaven and the earth—when the earth was unformed and void, wild and waste, with darkness over the surface of the deep, a wind from God, the rushing Spirit of God swept over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. — Genesis 1:1-3 (the Jewish Publication Society Translation, elaborated on by Everett Fox.)

Comment: God and the Spirit of God— present at the creation. Need more be said? And notice how precise this translation is? It is not “In the beginning when God created...” That would say God was not there before the beginning. Hence, “In the beginning of God’s creating of heaven and the earth...”

“In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through the Word; without the Word not one thing came into being. What has come into being in the Word was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the deepest night, and the night has never been able to conquer it.” — John 1:1-5.

Comment: This is the Christmas story as found it in the First Chapter of the Gospel according to the School of John. God is eternally incarnate and Triune. And this acts as an explanation of the Trinity.

“...and one of them, an expert on the law, attempted to trick Jesus with this question. ‘Teacher, which commandment of the Law is the greatest?’ Jesus answered, / ‘You shall love the Most High God / with all your heart / and with all your soul / and with all your mind.’ That is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments the whole *Torah*, the teaching, is based— and the writings of the Prophets as well.” — Matthew 22:35-40.

Comment: Here it is: the prime directives in Scripture. (Yes, there are two prime directives in Scripture, not one!) We spend

way too much time going to Scripture and asking: ‘what does this verse or passage mean?’ Unless you can come to some understanding of how whatever verse you’re looking at fits into the two prime directives— love God and love neighbor— you’re probably reading things into the verse or passage which are not appropriate. And yes, I am saying that all Scripture can be boiled down to loving God and neighbor. Is that too simplistic in its analysis? It might be for some. But isn’t ‘love God and love neighbor and that’s what it’s all about’ the essence of what Jesus says and what God asks?

So, why have I reprinted this since, in one sense, it applies just to people who are discerning a call to ministry? I will rely on what Martin Luther said. We are a priesthood of all believers. Hence, all believers are members of the priesthood called the church. And as such we constantly need to be discerning our call to ministry as individuals and as a community of faith.

So, as I often say, see you in church. Church— that’s where we discern our individual and collective, communal call to ministry each and every day.

In Faith,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joe".

Joe

P.S. What Scripture passage is meaningful to you and why?



Greetings from your Moderator of the Susquehanna Association

Ever since the fall meeting of the Susquehanna Association of the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ, I have been wanting to write to you. We met in September at our Walton Congregational UCC. Question: What do you know about the churches in our Association? We began our fall meeting by playing “Susquehanna Association Bingo”, and here is what we discovered:

Smallest church - Coventryville

Largest - Ithaca

Northern most – Preble

Southern most - Roscoe

Eastern most – Roscoe

Western most – Hornby

The “meat” of our meeting was asking the question – why do we exist? What are we about? What is God calling us to become? After discussions, small groups reported and some things became clear:

- We want to be in mission together. Stay tuned for how that evolves.
- We want to be in closer fellowship.
- We want and *need* better communication. This letter is a start. Watch for some activity on Facebook, as well.

Each church has delegates who attend our Association Meetings, and part of their role is to report to you. [homework assignment: find out who are your delegates.] Your authorized clergyperson and/or certified lay pastor are credentialed by the Association and thus, are expected to attend the meetings and be aware of the ministry of the Association.

In closing, I want to express thanks to God for the great gift of ministry provided by our Associate Conference Minister the Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams. She led our conversations with her usual efficient, enthusiastic grace. God has richly blessed us through her leadership.

We intend to stay in touch with you. May God’s spirit

continue to lead us – as congregations and as the Susquehanna Association. As we model our lives after Jesus our Christ, may God’s family be enriched because we, collectively, say YES to God’s invitation to discipleship.

Peace, dear brothers and sisters!
 Rev. Vicki Burtson, Moderator
 Susquehanna Association



Austrian Dinner and Cabaret

to benefit the NHS Musical

February 24, 6:00 p.m.

at the NHS Cafeteria

Tickets are \$10 adults, \$5 children under 12.

See Cheri in the church office for tickets.

Menu: Chicken Schnitzel with Buttered Noodles, Cucumber Salad and Braised Red Cabbage, Roll with butter, Crisp Apple Strudel with Vanilla Ice Cream and German Chocolate Cake.

Dinner will be followed by a cabaret of songs about love, hope and freedom performed by the cast.



February 4th - “Souper” Bowl Sunday

Bring in cans of soup for donation to Our Daily Bread Food Pantry.

February 18th - Paper Sunday

Bring in paper products such as paper towels and bathroom tissue, personal care items such as razors, soap, shampoo, feminine products. Disposable diapers of any size are also collected for the First Baptist Church’s monthly diaper give away.

Director of Children and Youth Ministries

Linda L. Oehme






On February 11th, we will begin our Fifth Unit in *The Whole People of God* curriculum entitled, *Giving Way*. What does it mean for something to “give way”? What comes to mind? Perhaps allowing someone or something to go first, such as when we yield or “give (right of) way” to another vehicle when driving. Or maybe when something breaks, such as when a branch bearing our weight gives way. As we spend some time examining our lives and our choices, what do we discover might need to “give way” in order for us to fully live in the way God intends for us?

February 14th marks the beginning of Lent. Lent is 40 days (plus 6 Sundays) long, beginning on Ash Wednesday and ending with Holy Saturday. Forty was a symbolic number for the Hebrews... 40 days it rained to cleanse the Earth in Noah’s time, 40 years wandering in the wilderness in preparation to enter the promised land, 40 days that Moses spent on the top of Mount Sinai while receiving the 10 Commandments, and the 40 days which the wicked city of Nineveh was given to repent.

Lent is a time of confession and absolution. Knowing and experiencing God’s forgiveness allows us to honestly examine our lives. Without that assurance, the task could be overwhelming. It reminds us that the work of Lent is always undertaken in the knowledge that rebirth and resurrection (Easter) will come.

Children’s Church School meets most Sundays at 8:30 a.m. Come and see what it is all about. Adult Church School also meets most Sundays at 8:30 a.m. and an Adult Bible Study meets most Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. We’re never too old to learn and refresh our faith. Come and join us!



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>February 2018</h1>						
				1 4:00 p.m. M. Conant, upstairs	2 9:00 a.m. Newsletter Mailing,	3
4 8:30 a.m. Church School 9:15 a.m. Nursery 10:00 a.m. Communion/Worship <i>Souper Bowl Sunday</i> . See p. 6. 11:00 a.m. Coffee Hour 11:30 a.m. Hand Bells 1:00 p.m. Quilters Super Sew Sunday	5 <i>Church Office Closed</i> 10:00 a.m. Prayer Shawl 4:00 p.m. K. Given, Founder's Rm.	6 1:00 p.m. Quilters, Kitchen 4:00 p.m. M. Conant Lessons 4:00 p.m. Interfaith Council, Chapel	7 11:00 a.m. Conant lessons 2:30 p.m. Humer Lessons 6:00 p.m. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Choir	8 4:00 p.m. M. Conant Lessons 6:00 p.m. Piecemakers	9	10 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. SAME Expo 
11 8:30 a.m. Church School 9:15 a.m. Nursery 10:00 a.m. Worship <i>Paper Products Sunday</i> 11:00 a.m. Coffee Hour 11:30 a.m. Hand Bells 3:00 p.m. SAME Meeting 3:00 p.m. Confirmation	12 4:00 p.m. K. Given, Founder's Rm.	13 <i>Shrove Tuesday</i> 1:00 p.m. Quilters, Kitchen 4:00 p.m. M. Conant Lessons 5:00 p.m. Pancake Supper. See p. 10.	14 <i>Ash Wednesday</i> <i>Valentine's Day</i> 11:00 a.m. Conant lessons 2:30 p.m. Humer Lessons 6:30 p.m. Chenango Change Meeting 7:00 p.m. Ash Wednesday Service. See p. 10.	15 4:00 p.m. M. Conant Lessons 6:00 p.m. Alzheimer's Support Group	16	17 Baby Shower, Founders' Rm.
18 8:30 a.m. Church School 9:15 a.m. Nursery 10:00 a.m. Worship 11:00 a.m. Coffee Hour 11:30 a.m. Hand Bells 3:00 p.m. Pastor Joe at Chenango Valley Home	19 President's Day <i>Church Office Closed</i> 10:00 a.m. Prayer Shawl 4:00 p.m. K. Given, Founder's Rm.	20 9:00 a.m. Head Start Policy Council 1:00 p.m. Quilters, Kitchen 4:00 p.m. M. Conant Lessons	21 8:00 a.m. - Parenting Class, Founders' Rm. 11:00 a.m. Conant lessons 12:00 p.m. Lenten Discussion at BSUMC. See p. 11. 2:30 p.m. Humer Lessons 6:00 p.m. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Choir	22 8:00 a.m. Parenting Class, Founders' Rm. 4:00 p.m. M. Conant Lessons	23 	24 6:00 p.m. Austrian Dinner Fundraiser. See p. 6.
25 8:30 a.m. Church School 9:15 a.m. Nursery 10:00 a.m. Worship 11:00 a.m. Coffee Hour 11:30 a.m. Hand Bells 4:00 p.m. Deacon's Meeting 6:00 p.m. Executive Council	26 4:00 p.m. K. Given 	27 1:00 p.m. Quilters, Kitchen 4:00 p.m. M. Conant Lessons	28 8:00 a.m. - Parenting Class, Founders' Rm. 11:00 a.m. Conant lessons 12:00 p.m. Lenten Discussion at BSUMC. See p. 11. 2:30 p.m. Humer Lessons 6:00 p.m. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Choir	1 8:00 a.m. Parenting Class, Founders' Rm. 4:00 p.m. M. Conant Lessons	2 	3

From the Transition Committee

Linda Oehme, Chair

The Transition Committee met Reverend Doctor Marsha Williams on January 8, 2018. We discussed the process of saying farewell to our beloved Pastor and beginning a new journey to find our next Pastor. Our committee is eager to meet the challenge. This is not a quick process... many phases will need to be explored. Patience will be needed to keep going forward. The programs within our church must continue to grow. This is the time we all need to band together. This committee will keep the congregation informed as we strive to celebrate Joe's years of service and to discern what our future as a church may look like in the coming years. We ask for your prayers and support while we prayerfully work towards what God has in store for us.



Ash Wednesday
Ecumenical Service
February 14th - 7:00 p.m.
 Emmanuel Episcopal Church
 Preacher: Pastor Joe



Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
Tuesday February 13th
5:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Christ Lutheran Church.
*pancakes, sausage, real maple syrup,
 homemade applesauce and beverage.*
 \$7.50 for adults \$4 for children 5-10 years old
 under 5 free.
 Live Music - Take Out available

Wednesdays in Lent

Called to Community:

Discussions on What it Means to be the Church Today

- What does it mean to be the Church?
- What should the Church be doing with our call to justice and love?
- What does it mean to be the Body of Christ?
- What is the Church becoming?

Join Rev. Rachel Ann Morse, pastor at Broad Street United Methodist Church, in wrestling with these questions in a series of 60-minute discussions. We'll watch short films with smart folks like Walter Brueggemann, Brian Zahn, Rachel Held Evans, NT Wright, Richard Rohr, Hannah Terry and Malcom Guite. Together we'll share and explore our thoughts and deepen our understanding of what it means to be the church today.

February 21, 28, March 7, 14, 21, 28

12:00 - 1:00 p.m. in the lounge at Broad Street UMC.

(If you can't make every discussion, that's okay!)

For more information contact BSUMC at 334-2895.



Do We Have Your E-Mail?

The church database program comes with a useful feature which allows us to e-mail groups of parishioners (choir, members, non-members) from within the program. Hence, if you do have an e-mail address, but we do not have that e-mail address on file, you should either e-mail Cheri Willard, Parish Coordinator at <office@uccnorwichny.org> or go to the church web site <www.uccnorwichny.org> and e-mail us through the "Contact Us" form at the bottom of the page.

Letters

Dear Friends,

Thanks to all of you for the blessing of your generosity. Your gift provides support for Lancaster Seminary's mission "to educate and nurture leaders to join God's redemptive and liberating work so that all creation may flourish." We seek to bring a gifted and dedicated faculty, committed and called students, and supporting churches, organizations and friends into a vibrant community of faith. The support you provide with your prayers and your gifts opens the doors for our students' education, opens their minds to learning, and opens their hearts to serving.

In Christ,

Rev. Dr. Carolyne Call

Executive Director of Development and Communications

Dear Missions Committee,

Thank you for, again, your help with our Christmas Food Box ministry. We appreciate your continued support which enables us to help so many families have an easier Christmas. We helped 220 plus families this year. Thank you again.

Linda Gregory for Outreach

Broad Street United Methodist Church

Dear Pastor Joe,

On behalf of the Chenango United Way, we would like to extend our gratitude for the very generous donation [from the Vine & Fig Tree Dinner] for our 2018 Campaign. This generosity and community support of donations like this help the Chenango United Way provide funding to our Community Partner Programs, which in turn improves the quality of life for our family, friends and neighbors in times of need.

Please accept our sincere gratitude for your generosity.

Elizabeth Monaco

Executive Director and Chief Professional Officer

Chenango United Way

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.

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany - February 4

Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-11, 20c; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23;
Mark 1:29-39

Transfiguration Sunday - February 11

2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9

Ash Wednesday - February 14

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12;
Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

First Sunday in Lent - February 18

Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

Second Sunday in Lent - February 25

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25;
Mark 8:31-38 or Mark 9:2-9



Visitors to Our Church in January

Shannon Richards, Norwich
Anita Humer, Sherburne



UCC, First Congregational, Norwich, NY has a long history of gifts bequeathed by former members and memorial gifts given by family and friends. To recognize and honor our past and encourage growth in our future, our scholarship program is supported by some recent generous gifts. Scholarship amounts vary up to \$1,000.

General Information

- The successful candidates will be chosen by the Memorial Gifts Scholarship Committee.
- Scholarships can be used for post-secondary undergraduate education.
- Preference will be given to UCC members, UCC employees, and the children/grandchildren of UCC members and UCC employees.
- Awards for graduating seniors will be presented at the Dollars for Scholars Presentation.
- The awards will be made on character, service, scholarship and financial considerations. Some awards have additional criteria as noted.

Scholarships for Applicants who are Covenant Members of UCC, First Congregational Norwich:

Memorial Gifts Scholarship (number of scholarships varies)
Alexander and Alice Neill Scholarship (1 scholarship)

Scholarships for All Applicants

Donald Tracy Scholarships (4 scholarships)
Theodore Dolgos Scholarships (2 scholarships)
Theron and Margaret Hust Scholarship (1 scholarship)

Applications will be available from the church office or online at <www.uccnorwichny.org> after February 1.

Deadline for applications is April 15.

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 Melissa and Steve Emmons for the death of Melissa's grandmother, Marie H. Burnside on 1/12/18.



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).

FEBRUARY

1 Betty Yeah!	16 Audrey Aitken
4 Bonnie Connolly	17 Jason Yantz
6 Rose Laughlin	22 Norma Kinney
Ron Musson	24 Linda Oehme
9 Matthew Craig	25 Irene Sobers
11 Joshua Miller	28 Gwendolyn Breese

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STANDARD A
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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Pastor and Teacher: **The Rev. Mr. Joseph Connolly**
Moderator: **Robert Oehme**
Director of Children/Youth Ministries: **Linda Oehme**
Director of Music Ministries: **Mary Williams**
Financial Secretary: **Donna Wood-Craig**
Parish Coordinator: **Cheri Willard**
Counselor, Family Counseling Ministry: **Joanne Ferguson**