



**JOIN US  
for an**



Service at 6:30pm  
on Wednesday February 17, 2021  
via Zoom  
A link will be sent out from the  
Church office.

A monthly publication of  
**United Church of Christ, First Congregational**

11 West Main St. Norwich NY 13815 607-334-3434

[www.uccnorwichny.org](http://www.uccnorwichny.org)

Rev. John Steitz, Interim Pastor

facebook

**CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: CLOSED**

Please Call and leave a message - 607-334-3434.

**Worship Service** - weekly worship video available on our website.

## PASTOR'S LETTER

As part of the Church Profile process the Transition Committee recently developed a Core Values statement. The Executive Council approved the Core Values statement on November 12, 2020.

There are four Core Values, each rooted in the Gospel. Each Core Value is expressed through three actions for a total of twelve Core Value Actions. These Core Values are:

- **Spiritually Alive.** Based on the love God with all your being section of the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:35-38; Mark 29-30). We love God in and through our Worship, Music, and Prayer.
- **Making Disciples.** Based on the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). We share the teachings of Jesus with Children and Families, with Youth, and with Adults.
- **Loving Church Family.** Based on the Love Commandment (John 13:34-35). We love one another through being an Inclusive Community, connecting in Fellowship, and Caring for one another.
- **Neighborhood Engagement.** Based on the love neighbor as yourself section of the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:39-40; Mark 12:31).

Although we have committees that express different aspects of these Core Values it would be a mistake to see a committee or group as being solely responsible for any Core Value or Core Value Action. To do this might create silos and turf, and risks losing the holistic character of the Core Values and the way they reinforce, complement and energize each other. The Core Values are interwoven and in a mutual relationship with each other much the same way that the Gospels from which they are based are interwoven and in mutual relation together as a whole.

**Spiritually Alive.** Our spiritual aliveness is grounded in God's love for us, and in our love for God. We express this love in Worship, Music, and Prayer. Worship here is understood as a collective experience that happens when we gather, in person or online. Worship can also take place within a family, or small group of friends, gathered at home. We express loving God through Music during our Worship. To sing in worship is often

compared to praying twice. A hymnal can be used as a prayer book. Prayer happens both collectively and individually. Our daily Prayer Circle provides opportunity for group prayer. Prayer books and guides can help us pray. Prayer is often simple – a brief word of gratitude in the morning, a short reflective thank you at bedtime, a grace before a meal.

**Making Disciples.** We share the teaching of Jesus in both formal and informal ways. On the formal side, our Sunday School teaches children about the Christian faith, and our Open and Affirming group reaches out to and affirms youth. We also offer Biblical and faith-based study opportunities for adults. Informally we seek to model being Jesus' disciples and embody Jesus' Way of Love and teaching in our daily lives. It has been said that faith is more often caught than taught. The way we as adults model being Jesus' disciples is a powerful implicit curriculum for children and youth. Children watch and learn from the way we act and the way we treat others. If, for example, we are teaching about Jesus' command to love one another, but acting in ways go counter to this, our actions will carry greater weight than our words.

**Loving Church Family.** We live into Jesus' love commandment through our actions that build an Inclusive Community, connect together in Fellowship, and share love and compassion as we Care for each other. Again, we have formal ways to do this, though our commitment to being an LGBTQ+ welcoming and affirming church, through our weekly coffee hour (now on Zoom), and our Care Partners. We also do this in a multitude of small, informal ways. For example, calling someone, sending them a card, and generally encouraging each other. The pandemic makes some ways that used to be quite simple and easy much harder, but no less important. As you read this think of one person in the church to reach out to. Reach out to them now. You can pick up reading the newsletter later.

**Neighborhood Engagement.** We love our neighbors through our Community Involvement, Solidarity with the marginalized, and through our Stewardship of the resources we have been given. We do this in a contextual manner. We are in a specific community context, at a specific time in history, facing a set of challenges before us at this moment. Things that might have worked before might not work now, and areas of past focus

might not be what is called for at this time. This is an emerging area of our life together in Christ.

Taken together these four Core Values are a guide for us to be a faithful community. We love God, make disciples, love one another, and love our neighbor.

Pastor John.

### **Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango, Inc.**

The COVID Rent Relief Extension Program will provide eligible households with a one-time rental subsidy that will be sent directly to the household's landlord. Applicants will not need to repay this assistance. The Covid Rent Relief Extension Program is not first come, first served. Applications will be accepted throughout the application period. HCR will prioritize eligible households with the "greatest economic and social need."

For more information and how to apply, visit <https://hcr.ny.gov/rrp>

## **CORE VALUES**

**Submitted by the Transition Committee  
Adopted by the Executive Council on 11/12/20**

**SPIRITUALLY ALIVE.** (Based on the Great Commandment.)

Matthew 22:35-38: and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment."

Mark 12: 29-30: Jesus answered, "The first is, Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."

- We love God with our whole being through Worship.
- We are inspired by the Holy Spirit to express loving God through Music.
- We seek to love God more fully through Prayer and Spiritual Practices.

**MAKING DISCIPLES.** (Based on the Great Commission.)

Matthew 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

- We educate Children and Families about the love and teachings of Jesus.
- We encourage Youth to develop and practice their faith as followers of Jesus.
- We empower Adults to embody the teachings of Jesus in their daily lives.

**LOVING CHURCH FAMILY.** (Based on the Love Commandment.)

John 13:34-35: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

- We celebrate diversity and love as we build an Inclusive Community.
- We love and nurture each other as we connect in Fellowship.
- We share Christ's love and compassion by Caring for one another.

**NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT.** (Based on the Great Commandment.)

Matthew 22:39-40: "And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Mark 12:31: "The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

- We love our neighbors as ourselves by helping those in need through Community Involvement.
- We love our neighbors as ourselves by reaching out in Solidarity to the marginalized.
- We love our neighbors as ourselves by sharing our resources through Stewardship.

## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 Betty Yeahl	17 Jason Yantz
6 Rose Laughlin	22 Norma Kinney
9 Matthew Craig	24 Linda Oehme
11 Joshua Miller	25 Irene Sobers
16 Audrey Aitken	28 Gwendolyn Breese



## ANNIVERSARY

2/4/19 John Brereton and Cynthia Maynerd

### CONTACT TRACER INFORMATION

If a New York Contact Tracer calls, your caller ID will look like this.....

“NYS Contact Tracing” (518-387-9993).

**BE SURE TO PICK UP THE PHONE-** A contact tracer will:

**NEVER** ask for your Social Security number

**NEVER** ask for any private financial information

**NEVER** ask for credit card information

**NEVER** send you a link without proper authentication procedures

## TRANSITION COMMITTEE

Linda Oehme, Chair

At the January 7 meeting, the Transition Team decided to forge ahead in developing our Local Church Profile. We meet twice a month and have divided our team into 3 subcommittees compiling the information for specific sections of the Local Profile. We are ready to diligently move forward on our “Stepping Stones Journey”.

Continue to pray for discernment to be able to listen to God as he calls us and our next settled pastor together. Please be patient and understanding. Pray often!!! Stay well and safe!

## FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES

Linda L. Oehme

This new year is going so quickly. It seems like I just wrote January's newsletter and now I'm composing the one for February. Time flies when you are having fun!

We began our new unit 4, entitled 'Called by God' and are exploring ways in which people are called by God, regardless of age, color, or gender. Everybody and anybody can be called by God! This is a truly short unit since we will be ending it on February 14th. We will be starting Unit 5 on February 17th, Ash Wednesday and will continue through April 2nd, Good Friday. We will be 'Experiencing Lent' in this unusual time we live in.

Lent is a time of preparation for the celebration of Easter. Lent is 40 days (and six Sundays) from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday. Our English word "Lent" is derived from the word "lengthen" because, in the Northern Hemisphere, Lent takes place as days lengthen in Spring.

Easter Day is the most important day of the church year. The resurrection is the focal point of the Christian faith, like a keystone supporting an arch. Without it, everything crumbles. Easter is not just one day but a season extending for 50 days to Pentecost. Easter is the oldest festival of the church year. (Christmas wasn't celebrated until the fourth century.)

During Lent this year, we will mainly focus on the gospel readings. As we move through the readings, we are confronted by the reality that is at the heart of the Christian story--Jesus' experience of going through death to life and rebirth. The basis for the logo is Jesus' image of the dying and birthing seed. In the logo, we see the oak tree's organic stages of birth, growth, death, and rebirth, all taking place within a circle that represents God's never-ending presence and love. Lent grows out of the Season after Epiphany, during which we celebrated the beginning and growth of Jesus' ministry. We see this in the sapling, the growing tree and the mature tree. However, during Lent, Jesus' ministry is ended, chopped down, as the tree in the logo has been. But in the sorrow and pain Jesus' death is also the recognition and assurance of forgiveness and resurrection--the acorn.

# FEBRUARY 2021

## Black History Month

**Our Weekly Worship Service is available to view beginning on Saturdays.**

**Go to our website: [www.uccnorwichny.org](http://www.uccnorwichny.org) and click on the Worship Services tab.**

### HELPING "HELPING HANDS"

Helping Hands is a group of volunteers helping to bring hope to the community. On the third Thursday of each month from 6:30- 7:30 pm, HH will be at the YMCA community room passing out donated food and other goods for FREE! All are welcome to receive!

The Board of Deacons have been purchasing and donating items for several months but would like to make it easy for you to participate without having to shop and drop off donations yourself. You can make a check out to the church and designate it for the Helping Hands fund. (You can mail or use the mail slot on the front door of the church). Deacon member Joan Griffith will then be able to use the total donations received each month to purchase items and deliver them for donation to Helping Hands for their giveaway night. Any amount is helpful –a \$10 donation will fill an entire bag with personal care items for someone.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 <i>Black history month starts</i> 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle	2 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle 7:00 ONA fellowship Group	3 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	4 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle 7:00pm Transition Committee	5 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle	6
7 9:00am Sunday School 11:00am Coffee Hour	8 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle 6:00pm Deacon's Meeting (monthly)	9 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle 7:00 ONA fellowship Group	10 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	11 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle	12 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle	13
14 <i>Valentine's Day</i> 9:00am Sunday School 11:00am Coffee Hour	15 <i>President's Day</i> 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle	16 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle 7:00 ONA fellowship Group	17 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	18 6:30pm Helping Hands Distribution 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle 7:00pm Transition Committee	19 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle	20
21 9:00am Sunday School 11:00am Coffee Hour	22 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle 6:30pm Music Committee	23 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle 7:00 ONA fellowship Group	24 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	25 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle	26 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle	27
28 9:00am Sunday School 11:00am Coffee Hour						



## **FOCUS ON FAITHFUL FAMILIES** **by Traci Smith**

Mary Williams, Board of Deacons Chair

Families of the Sunday School class will be receiving the book Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home by Traci Smith. As was mentioned last month, the book is set up in parts: Traditions, Ceremonies, and Spiritual Practices. The book is full of 50+ easy-to-implement, meaningful ideas for transforming a family's everyday activities into sacred moments. It is our hope that this book will help our church family discover and develop new spiritual practices at home. If you would like to receive a copy of this book, please contact the church office.

Here is timely activity for use during Lent (pp. 41-43): "Three Pillars of Lent"

Three Pillars of Lent as outlined in this book are Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving.

This activity focuses on prayer and invites families in prayer to focus on a different word each day (excluding Sundays).

1. At the beginning of Lent (February 21, 2021), make a list of 40 words that your family will use to anchor your prayer practice. Use the 40 words listed below, or think of your own.
2. At the start of the day (except Sundays during Lent), take a look at the day's word. Make sure everyone knows what the word is and commits to thinking about the word throughout the day.
3. At the end of the day, gather for prayer time as a family. Review the word and discuss it in one of the following ways:
4. Draw a picture that represents the word.
5. Share a photo you took of something that represents the word.
6. Share what the word means to you, or how it affected you throughout the day.
7. Share how the word might be connected to the Lenten journey.

## FAITHFUL FAMILIES CONTINUED

Close by thanking God for the word and looking forward to the next day's challenge.

If you don't want to come up with your own words, here are 40 you can use:

Hope	Water	Despair	Refection
Strength	Peace	Weakness	Remember
Light	Witness	Fire	Eat
Fear	Noise	Walk	Shadow
Love	Desert	Crawl	Want
Freedom	Kindness	Run	Mercy
Peace	Friends	Purple	Justice
Quiet	Strangers	Cross	Lonely
Dark	Heaven	Grace	Silence
Cold	Wait	Gift	Resurrection



### COVID-19 Vaccine Transportation

Please contact Getthere if you, a loved one, or a client living in Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego, or Tioga counties are unable to get to a COVID-19 vaccination site.

Our Call Center can be reached at (855) 373-4040 Monday - Friday from 7am until 7pm. A Mobility and Transportation Advocate will help schedule a safe, secure ride.

No referral is needed.

## MUSIC NOTES

Mary Williams, Director of Music Ministries

After a busy Advent and Christmas season, the church musicians are taking a short rest! We heard from many that you enjoyed the Cantata (“Were You there On That Christmas Night”) and have noticed that the virtual performance has received nearly 250 views on YouTube. (That is more people than we could comfortably fit in the Nave!).

To highlight February as Black History Month, the choir and handbell choir will be recording hymns and anthems from African American traditions such as:

“There is a Balm in Gilead “ (African American Spiritual), “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” (Gospel hymn by Thomas Dorsey) and “Lift Every Voice and Sing” (words and music by brothers James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson) which is sometimes referred to as the “Black national anthem”.

We hear that folks are really enjoying the performances by the Handbell Choir. The ringers are enjoying the experience as well; it is wonderful to be making music together in person! The group is preparing selections to be featured during Lent.

There is always room for individuals to join our music ministries. Contact the church office if you are interested in singing or ringing!



### **An announcement from the Music Committee:**

Meena Conant, Music Committee Chair

Music Scholarships are available at any time. Music education is so important and UCC wants to help! Officially in 2021, there are funds available for just this purpose. Please contact the office, now, for an application! [office@uccnorwichny.org](mailto:office@uccnorwichny.org)

## PRAYER CONCERNS

Let us keep in our prayers the following concerns:

- ◆ families, 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.
- ◆ the Transition Team

### NEW POSITION AVAILABLE

The Trustees are seeking church members or others associated with our church who may be interested in performing bookkeeping work for our Church. This role includes making the weekly payments of salary and bills and may expand to include further functions related to our church finances, depending upon the skills and experience of the candidate selected.

All work will be performed under the supervision of our Treasurer and Parish Coordinator. It will be part time employment, with a maximum commitment of roughly 2-4 hours per week anticipated, at \$20 per hour. Hours are flexible although the ability to commit to some regular workday time will be helpful, for banking and other purposes, and a consistent schedule will be preferred. Background in accounting or bookkeeping is highly preferred, and ability to learn and use the Church computer programs is necessary.

Applications may be sent by email to the Trustees by submission to the Parish Coordinator, or by regular mail to the Church, addressed to the Trustees. Deadline for applications is March 23rd, and the position is expected to commence in mid- April.

## THANK YOU NOTES:

Dear Friends,

As 2020 draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on the journey that this year has taken all of us on.

While our program continues to operate throughout the year, we worked hard to remain resilient and flexible in order to support the everchanging needs of the children and families of our community during this pandemic. Many of our neighbors are continually having hardships such as job loss and the inability to put food on their tables. Working parents are faced with childcare issues as well as their school aged children that have to adapt to new virtual and hybrid learning. These concerns will continue to weigh heavily on us in the new year. With your help, The Place has been able to continue to meet the needs of these families. With that help, you have provided the programs for youth and families, by connecting the community members to needed resources, and by collaborating with other community based organizations to cultivate positive change in our community.

The financial support from the community helps make these achievements possible. Without the contributions from our donors, our friends and neighbors would continue to struggle. Thank you for your continued support.

Warmest regards,

The Place



Dear Friends,

Thank you for your generous donation to Family Planning of South Central New York. With help like yours more individuals are able to access quality, affordable reproductive health care and education. Your support is so important to our most important people— those we serve each and everyday. Your commitment means the world to us, and we couldn't do it with out you.

With Gratitude,

Family Planning

Dear United Church of Christ,

On behalf of Hospice & Palliative Care of Chenango County, I would like to thank you for your generous donation.

With the support of people like you, our organization has been caring for our community since 1991. As the demand for our services continues to grow, your contribution enables us to provide quality care, comfort, support and relief to terminally ill patients and their families in Chenango County, regardless of the ability to pay.

Your generosity does not go unnoticed, and reflects the true "Neighbors caring for neighbors" spirit of Hospice Care. We appreciate you and your families. Stay healthy and safe.

Thank you,

Hospice & Palliative Care of Chenango County



Dear United Church of Christ,

Thank you for your generous donation to NY/HELP Honduras. It is most appreciated

Thank you again,

NY/HELP Honduras



Dear Missions Committee,

On behalf of everyone involved with The Impact Project, we would like to thank you for your donation. Since 2004 we have provided assistance to 122 homeowners with the help of 4021 volunteers. Your generosity will help us continue serving in the name of Christ through major home repairs for elderly, handicapped, and low income home owners. Thank you again for your support. We appreciate your partnering with us to serve the Lord.

Sincerely,

The Impact Project Board of Directors

United Church of Christ  
First Congregational  
11 West Main Street  
Norwich, NY 13815-1612

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

Ministers: **All the People**  
Interim Pastor: **Rev. John Steitz**  
Moderator: **Jamie Maholchic**  
Director of Children/Youth Ministries: **Linda Oehme**  
Parish Coordinator: **Cheri Oakley**  
Office Assistant: **Jennifer Mallozzi**  
Family Counseling: **Joanne Ferguson**