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world
for all
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UCC News

MARCH 2021

CHANGES IN THE NEWSLETTER

In a few months, we will be changing the default delivery of the monthly newsletter to email only. If you have been receiving the newsletter in your email along with a printed one, you will only be getting the emailed version starting in June. You don't have to do anything. If you don't have email - don't worry - we will keep mailing the newsletter as always.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE EMAIL?

You will continue to receive the email through the Post Office as always.

WHAT IF I HAVE EMAIL BUT PREFER A PRINTED COPY?

Just send an email to the [Church Office](#) asking to be put on the printed newsletter mailing list.

WHAT IF I HAVEN'T BEEN GETTING EMAIL COPIES AND WOULD LIKE TO?

Just send an email to the [Church Office](#) asking to be on the newsletter email list.

You can change your mind at any time.

Church Office: office@uccnorwichny.org or 607-334-3434.

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

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

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

One of the benefits of Lent is that it affords us with a time each year to review and strengthen our personal faith practices. Those faith practices that we focus on strengthening can then become part of our ongoing daily life beyond Lent. Here are four faith practices based on our congregation's Core Values.

- **Core Value: Spiritually Alive.** (Based on the first section of the Great Commandment, "Love God with your whole being." Matthew 22:35-38; Mark 12:29-30.) Personal Faith Practice: Devote Yourself to Prayer.
- **Core Value: Making Disciples.** (Based on the Great Commission. "Go and make disciples..." Matthew 28: 19-20.) Personal Faith Practice: Read a Gospel.
- **Core Value: Loving Church Family.** (Based on the Love Commandment. "Love one another." John 13: 34-35.) Personal Faith Practice: Join the #RainbowMondays campaign.
- **Core Value: Neighborhood Engagement.** (Based on the Great Commandment. "Love neighbor as oneself." Matthew 22:39-40; Mark 12:31.) Personal Faith Practice: Give Alms.

Now let's take a deeper look at each of these four personal faith practices.

Devote Yourself to Prayer.

Lent is a great time to strengthen our daily prayer practice. If you already have a prayer practice you follow each day, now is a time to review this, and maybe build on it. If you do not currently pray on a regular basis this might a time to try it. Let go of any guilt or feelings of inadequacy. Acknowledge how your busy life makes it difficult to even consider adding even one more thing. Think of prayer as a daily rest stop, or as a way to bring a few moments of reflection into your day.

First thing in the morning, give your day to God. Sample prayers include: "This I the day the LORD has made; let me rejoice and be glad in God's gift of life." "Be with me and guide me. Help me bring your presence to others." "God, guide me to live in Jesus' Way throughout the day."

When you first begin your workday, pray once again. Prayer for God's presence throughout the day, for God's help in the tasks before you, and the ability to be open to God's call.

Imagine Jesus next to you as you work. Envision his

encouragement, support, and love.

Prayer before difficult conversations. Ask for God's guidance. Ask God to help you center and be present, and to not flee physically or emotionally. Ask to remain open and to really listen.

Give thanks during the day. When you become aware of something you are grateful for, pause for a brief gratitude prayer. If you can't think of anything, give thanks for your senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch. Deep inhale: "Thank you that this to-do item is done." Deep exhale: "Center me for the next step ahead." "Thank you God for helping me listen and truly hear (the other person)."

Ask for God's protection. Lift up prayers for yourself, your family, your friends, your co-workers, and the people you meet. Pray that each person might be kept safe and well during this pandemic. "God bless each of us with wonder and wellness. Protect us from harm. Guide us safely through this day."

Remember that your work is holy. Work gives each of us many opportunities to use the skills and talents God gives to us, to serve others, to be in close relationship with others, and to praise God. As Benedictine monks show us, work is spiritual. Through our work our lives can be whole and holy.

If you practiced these examples throughout the day you might be surprised how much time you can give to prayer. You might not think have 20 minutes, or ten minutes, or even five minutes to pray. Maybe not all at once, but add each moment up and you might find that you have multiple opportunities to pray throughout each day.

Read a Gospel.

During Lent as we walk with Jesus to the cross, we enter more deeply into his life by reading one of the Gospels. As we read and pray about the life of Jesus our hearts and minds are formed and transformed on both a conscious and unconscious level. The Gospel story reaches up to our minds and affects our thoughts and actions. The Gospel story also reaches down to our soul infusing into our very being in ways that transform our hearts.

Set aside ten or fifteen minutes each day to slowly read the Jesus Story according to the Gospel account you have chosen. Read a small section or passage each day. Read the passage slowly three times. Pay attention and be mindful as you read.

Write down words or a phrase that speak to you.

Let go of making this a project or a performance. This is not a to do item to complete and check off. This is not a performance for anyone. This is a time with God, a time to listen and reflect with God. What you read each day is what you read. There is no schedule, no deadline, no test. Just take the daily reading one day at a time. If you miss a day or several days, pick up where you left off.

Be patient and open to God. Read slowly. Sometimes you will have insights, and sometimes you won't. God will reach out to you through this reading. Keep reading and listening.

The goal is to read deeply and to listen how the Jesus story is making you his disciple and is deepening your discipleship journey. There is no time schedule. This can begin at any time. If you begin during Lent, don't worry if you aren't finished by the end of Lent. Just keep going, reading one day at a time.

Join the #RainbowMondays campaign.

The Open and Affirming group at UCC Norwich has begun a weekly, online campaign to celebrate LGBTQ+ inclusion by wearing something rainbow every Monday.

Wear something rainbow on Mondays. This can be a rainbow ribbon. It can be a facemask, a hat, or a shirt. Wearing a rainbow symbol shows that you support LGBTQ+ people. You can also hold a rainbow flag or have a rainbow backdrop.

Post a photo of yourself with a rainbow symbol on social media with the #RainbowMondays hashtag. This will increase the chances others will see it. This is especially helpful when so many things are being done remotely. Using the same hashtag helps increase awareness of the campaign.

Email your weekly photo to the church office with a note allowing us to post this on the church website. Once we begin to collect a number of #RainbowMondays photos we can post a collage on our website that makes our Open and Affirming commitment clear and concrete. (This will also be helpful for the church profile.)

Repeat each Monday. This is the sort of thing that grows over time through repetition. Our commitment to building an Inclusive Community is an ongoing process rather than something we check off a to-do list. Our participation each week can help encourage others to join us. Reach out to your family and friends

inviting them to join you.

Our participation in #RainbowMondays is one way we celebrate being an LGBTQ+ Inclusive Church. June is PRIDE Month and we hold a PRIDE Sunday during this time. #RainbowMondays is a way to celebrate PRIDE every week throughout the year.

Give Alms.

UCC Norwich is blessed with a strong endowment that gives us financial stability and allows us to do things many other congregations aren't able to do. Our stewardship however isn't limited to faithful management of the endowment. We each have a personal call to steward our resources. Giving is an act of discipleship.

Unlike at most congregations our giving does not need to support the local church annual budget. Rather our alms can go directly and completely to those in need, or to those funds we designate.

Lent is a time people often give alms to help those in need. Funds that we raise at UCC Norwich go either to the place they are designated for, or to support our involvement in the Norwich community. The Board of Deacons oversees our community giving. Many local people in need are helped each year.

Based on our Core Values, these are four ways we might deepen our discipleship journeys through the Lenten season.

Blessings.

Pastor John.

Maundy Thursday Service Live on Zoom Thursday April 1st at 7:00 p.m.

Contact the Church Office for the Zoom link. 607-334-3434

This will be a service to commemorate Jesus' breaking bread with the disciples at the Last Supper and his mandate to "love one another".

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" ([John 13:34](#)).

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

VIRTUAL LEARNING SUPPORT from The Place is available for Chenango County Middle and High School students from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. at The Place. Featuring: Free program, Comfortable workspace, Nutritious meals and snacks, Wi-Fi, Additional Activities (cooking, crafts, outdoors), and Direct Supervision. Pre-registration is required. www.theplacenorwich.com



United Church of Christ, 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.

Applications will be available from the church office or online at www.uccnorwichny.org

Deadline for applications is April 15.

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES

Linda L. Oehme

We are in the season of Lent and will be through March. Here are some of the things we are working on.

As you can see we have a “Lenten Triad” similar to our Advent Wreath. But unlike the Advent Wreath, where we light the four candles for each of the four Sundays in Advent, we start with all of the candles lit and “extinguish” one for each Sunday in Lent. This shows how many Sundays are left until Easter. The candles consist of 5 purple and 1 pink candle, sitting on a purple triangle. The 3 sides of the triangle stand for the Father (Creator), the Son (Redeemer) and the Holy Spirit (Sanctifier). The white center candle designates Christ just like in the Advent wreath. But you say, “What does this mean?” Everything is changed around...just as Jesus did when He came into the world. JESUS TURNED EVERYTHING UPSIDE-DOWN AND INSIDE OUT!

To Be Continued...Easter Sunday!!!!

LENTEN TRIAD



THE PLACE is offering **FREE** monthly Activity/ Craft Kits for Chenango County youth and families. Kits contain 4-5 projects that children and their family can work on together. (For children ages 4 and up.) Registration is required. Please contact The Place at **336-9696** to register.

MARCH 2021

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

IMPORTANT

DATES:

March 1st-
FIRST DAY OF
WOMEN'S
HISTORY MONTH

March 14th-
DAYLIGHT
SAVINGS

March 17th-
ST. PATRICKS
DAY

March 19th-
DEADLINE FOR
NEWSLETTER
ARTICLES

March 28th-
PALM SUNDAY
WITH SPECIAL
MUSIC

APRIL 1ST-
MAUNDY THURS-
DAY, ZOOM WOR-
SHIP

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

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle	2 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle 7:00 ONA fellowship Group	3 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle 7:00pm Zoom 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 Monthly Meeting	9 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle 7:00 ONA fellowship Group	10 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle 7:00pm Zoom Choir Rehearsal	11 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle	12 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle	13
14 One Great Hour of Sharing 9:00am Sunday School 11:00am Coffee Hour Day Light Savings begins	15 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle	16 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle 7:00 ONA fellowship Group	17 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle 7:00pm Zoom Choir Rehearsal	18 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle 7:00pm Transition Committee	19 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle	20 Set Clocks back an hour tonight!
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 Zoom Choir Rehearsal	25 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle 7:00pm Executive Council	26 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle	27
28 Palm Sunday w/ special music 9:00am Sunday School 11:00am Coffee Hour	29 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle	30 6:30pm Evening Prayer Circle 7:00 ONA fellowship Group 7:15pm Trustee's Monthly Meeting	31 12:00pm Noon Prayer Circle 7:00pm Zoom Choir Rehearsal	1 Maundy Thursday 7:00pm Zoom Worship Service	2 Good Friday	3 Holy Saturday

FOCUS ON FAITHFUL FAMILIES

by Traci Smith

Mary Williams, Board of Deacons Chair

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

Last month, I shared an activity focusing on prayer. This month's activity focuses on Fasting (see page 44-46). Families are encouraged to try mini-variations on the fasting theme. The purpose of a fast is not to give something up just for the sake of austerity or challenge, but rather so we can focus more on God in the absence of that which we are giving up. This is a spiritual exercise designed to help reinforce the idea that giving up or letting go of something, while difficult, can lead to spiritual growth and development.

How To:

1. Decide together, as a family, what activity to fast from such as: technology or screens; or sweets and desserts or dinners "out" .
2. Decide what the family will do instead of the chosen fast and agree to the length of the fast. Will the fast be a shorter period each day, or a longer period such as a whole day? What might you do to bring the family closer together during the fast? Ideas might include reading together, playing a board game, writing notes to extended family members.
3. To get started, gather the family together, review the parameters of the fast, and have a short prayer. *"God, thank you for guiding our family as we made this decision to focus on you and one another by (laying our technology aside for a while/ giving up sweets etc). Please help us on this journey to encourage one another and learn new things. We ask for your Spirit's help in this, Amen."*
4. At the end of the fasting period, find a way to celebrate together such as a family outing, a meal, or making a donation to help others.

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>

ROOTS & WINGS

We will be giving away 500 free Easter baskets. Every basket will come with what you need to make a ham dinner with side dishes.

Call ROOTS & WINGS as soon as possible to order your basket 607-336-7897

Pick up will be March 30th and 31st

MARCH 2021 BIRTHDAYS

1	Liam Hunter	11	Steve Craig
	Cheri Oakley	17	Ed Tucker
6	Chris Mallozzi	21	Elspeth Hunter
7	Rena Hall	25	Ryan Johnson
9	Eric Burgher	28	John Koopman



A MESSAGE FROM THE TRUSTEES

Pete Williams, Chair

I would like to take this opportunity to share some of the safety concerns the Trustees have been addressing, as well as what is in store for us in the upcoming months. The pandemic has changed what we all consider as normal and has affected every person and organization in one way or another.

Air Handling and Filtration: Air Temp is the company who manages the maintenance of our air handling system. Based on their assessment of our system's capability, we have installed new MERV 11 rated filters in the air handler which circulates air within the worship space. The MERV rating is an efficiency rating for the filters: the higher the number the finer the filter and the smaller the particles that will be captured. Additionally, we have installed a pair of GPS Plasma Ionizers within the air handler which eliminate virus-carrying spores from the airstream. By adding these two features, we feel we have significantly improved the air quality as much as possible within the capabilities of our air handling system. In addition to these improvements we have recently authorized the purchase of an electrostatic disinfectant sprayer for treatment of all hard surfaces. This device allows a person to disinfect all surfaces without the need for manual wiping of surfaces. This process will electrically charge the particles that will cling to and disinfect all surfaces. You may have seen clips on the news of people with commercial units spraying public areas like train stations, airports and restaurants. Our unit does the same thing but is hand-held for ease of use in our smaller space.

Technology: a Wi-Fi booster has been installed, allowing a broader range of the signal, especially in the Nave. We have also replaced the obsolete phone system and handsets, bringing us up to current standards with this technology. Along with the improved internet service that was completed last year, our data management and digital access has been greatly improved to support church activities, including remote access, virtual meetings and expanded use of digital documents. As more and more of the business activities are being handled on-line and digitally, versus in person and paper copies, this will make these activities less of a hassle. Additional work is underway for new laptops for the staff with the proper level of capability for the expected work and activities. The installation of the software for these units should be completed in the near future.

Building Security: We have been discussing the topic of building security and have included money in this year's budget to address this. The full scope of the project needs to be fully defined, but generally, we are looking to keep the building locked and secure at all times. A sub-committee will be formed to discuss and solidify a recommendation for the system. We anticipate additional cameras positioned at the front and back door with a monitoring station to allow individuals to be "buzzed" in. A plan will be developed to allow church members and staff who routinely enter the building to have an entry fob. We will share more on the details as this project comes together.

Financial Reporting: In addition, although not related to building safety, we are in the process of restructuring some duties of the Treasurer and Office Assistant to create a more manageable workload. We hope to have everything in place by the late Spring.

I am truly looking forward to a time where we can return to in-person worship and enjoy the fellowship of our Church family.

FISH FRY FRIDAY

New York Pizzeria

During Lent, all profit from sales of fish fries will be donated to Holy Family School!

To Order Call: 607-847-6188

TRANSITION COMMITTEE

Linda Oehme, Chair

Presently, we have nothing different to report since we continue to organize and develop "Our Local Profile". We ask for your prayers to discern the information and for God's continued guidance.

MUSIC NOTES

Mary Williams, Director of Music Ministries

Do you remember our Pre-Pandemic Palm Sunday traditions from years past? For about 20 years or so, the congregations of UCC, First Baptist Church and Broad Street Methodist Church had come together to bless the palms, and, with a pony leading the procession, travel down Broad Street carrying the cross. The event culminated in a combined Palm/Passion worship service. Sadly, since 2020, the pandemic has prevented us from doing this. This tradition began with a collaboration between myself and my college friend, Michael Moren. (We sang together in the Ithaca College Choir more than 35 years ago. We came up with a plan to combine our church choirs for a special anthem. The rest of the service and procession grew from there.

This year, our two choirs will honor that tradition, by joining together to bring our congregations three special virtual anthems for Palm Sunday and Easter. We are meeting Wednesday evenings via ZOOM to learn our music. The anthems will feature organ, piano, bells, brass and percussion. It will surely be a joyful noise!

Monday Evening Music Club

Presents:

MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS

Virtual Concert

March 1st at 7:00 p.m.

www.facebook.com/mondayeveningmusicclub

Paypal: memcscholarship@gmail.com

Mail a check: MEMC c/o Dianne Lewis,
PO Box 895, Oxford, NY 13830

All donations fund scholarships for local music students.

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.

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

United Church of Christ
First Congregational
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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**