

The Pioneer

'Preparing for others to follow'

Newsletter of the Preble Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
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~ August 2017 ~

...from the Pastor's Pen...

Dear Friends,

Suuuummertime.....and the livin' is easy.....right? Just thinking about what's going on in our country and valley and community, and thinking, too, about some of the hard times we've shared this summer with losses of loved ones. Yet I am also remembering the other side of the circle of life, with births and plantings and growth popping out all over the hills and fields.

Can't see them most of the time, but I'm told of new baby goats and sheep living just up the road, and the Shirleys celebrating the birth of a granddaughter after a wonderful team of boys. Then there are the strawberries, beautiful this year in June, and the corn coming on, and our cows...you know I love our cows...just check the window sill next to my desk. I can't wait for the New York State Fair when I walk through the main gate, turn right, and hoof my way to the Cow Barn, my favorite of favorites. I admit it – I spend several hours there each year, talking with farm hands and admiring their livestock.

Sometimes I need just to kick back and take stock of my blessings, especially in these days of conflict and worry all around the world as countries and leaders try to dominate one another in matters of culture, religion, and life practices and choices of all kinds. I cherish my faith at times like this, because I know that even in the midst of terror, fright, and oppositional politics, God is still working, and I – we – are part of God's plan for peace. All that we do with that aim in mind contributes to the building of a world-wide civilization in which each one of earth's people can claim a place of safety and plenty.

My memory returns often to the iftar dinner I experienced with a group of Interfaith women in June, during the Muslim period of Ramadan. "Iftar" means "breaking the fast," and there, I witnessed gracious and welcoming fellowship as they served typical Middle Eastern

food and ate, talked, and laughed with us as we shared details of our lives. I hope to go again next year, and if you would like to go, too, please let me know.

The iftar is served at dusk, and the faithful are hungry and thirsty by the time they can finally eat on those days. Breakfast is taken before dawn, about 4 am, and of course we guests asked how the women managed during those sixteen hour days without food or water. They answered, "We are used to it," although exceptions are made for children, the elderly, pregnant, and the ill, which still leaves a lot of people "in the same boat."

But when the time of fast is over, all people gather to celebrate, so the iftar meal at dusk is festive and delicious, often with small gifts given to children.

Fasting is a spiritual ritual practiced in many world religions, including Christianity, and it is the spiritual element of the experience that gives it meaning. The women at the iftar dinner conveyed ease and acceptance as they explained their ritual, and each of them expressed feeling that their faith is strengthened through their Ramadan practices.

This special experience made me think about our own rituals, and, of course, Holy Communion, central to our expression of belief in Jesus and his mission. We participate in our rituals and may take them for granted, especially when we fold them into our ordinary lives without much thought or discomfort.

Giving up food and drink for sixteen hours a day over an Islamic month (30 or 31 days like our Gregorian calendar) is no small feat, but it expresses the purpose of Ramadan: to identify with those less fortunate than themselves by feeding the hungry and refraining from food, gossip, fighting, and other specified behaviors during daylight hours. It is a conscious and strenuous practice of a Muslim's faith principles.

What did I learn from the experience? To be much more intentional and strenuous about my own faith practice, including, but not limited to, prayer, communion, Bible study, and charity.

What are your faith practices, and how can they become more meaningful and life-giving for you? It's worth considering as we seek to grow in our love for God and one another.

**In faith and love,
Pastor Becky**

Love is like an electric circuit; it can never flow in just one direction.
In giving it away, you are recharged.

Richard Rohr, Daily Devotional, July 5, 2017

...from Church World Services

And don't forget to do good and share with those in need." - Hebrew 13:16

Dear friends,

Thank you for giving life to the CWS Kits program this year! It's one of our most hands-on programs, so we value the time and care you put into it this year.

Because of congregations like yours, we now have thousands of kits ready to send to our vulnerable neighbors around the world. What an amazing testimony to what we can do when we let our generosity overflow.

Your gift allows CWS to respond quickly to unexpected or ongoing crises, and we want to keep you in the loop on that...so expect a report later this year showing where kits were distributed.

We are so grateful for your work this spring!
Matthew Stevens
Church World Service

Deacon's Greetings

O Lord, thou hast searched me, and know me. Thou knowest my downsitting and my uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. ~ Psalm 139:1-4

Dear friends,

It is the mission of the deacons to facilitate the spiritual needs of our faith community. We ask for your help in this mission. As the psalmist states in the above passage the Lord knows our every thought, our every need.

As a faith community, we rely upon one another to learn and know the needs of our

neighbors and friends. It is this network of caring that mirrors God's love for us.

We ask that you share in this mission by networking and communicating the needs of our community with us. Do you have a neighbor who needs a ride to church? Do you know of someone who would be uplifted by a visit or a caring card?

Do you know someone who has a gift that could be shared with our faith community giving praise to God's blessings? Is there something new you'd like to see as part of our Sunday worship? Is there something the Lord knows of your gifts that you have yet to share?

The second Sunday of each month the deacons gather to reflect upon and plan for the spiritual needs of our faith community. Please contact us if you have any offerings, information, or requests that should be included in our mission planning.

As you know, the ministry of this congregation goes well beyond our church doors. With your help, we can better serve our community and our Lord.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts... ~ Psalm 139:23

Annual Worship on the Lake

Every year for a very long time, we have come together as a church family to worship God on the lake shore at Greg Gallup's home. Greg erects canopies over his back yard to protect us from rain and too much sun, and we share a special time of fellowship.

This year, we will gather on August 13th at 10:30 am with music, communion, song, and food. Please bring a dish to pass, your children and grandchildren, fishing poles (if you want), and swim suits (for those who want to get into the water). See you there!

UCC Daily Devotional

Savior, by Matt Laney
July 14, 2017

*"For today in the city of David there has been
born for you a savior, who is Christ the Lord."*
Luke 2:11

This "savior" stuff doesn't come naturally to our contemporary, self-reliant, "can-do" culture. We're all for healing the world but less inclined to admit we also need a healer.

We can identify racism, sexism, and xenophobia in our culture and be slow to admit the need to exorcise those demons from ourselves.

Meanwhile, we know dentists cannot put filling in their own teeth, a hairstylist cannot adequately do his own hair, and a surgeon cannot operate on herself. We cannot baptize ourselves or serve ourselves communion, but we still struggle to admit we can only be restored by surrendering to a Presence larger and wiser than ourselves.

I understand the reluctance. Part of me would rather not believe I can improve myself through my own efforts: a spiritual tweak here, a moral upgrade there, instead of admitting I need a total overhaul of heart and mind.

Here's why: if I am healed by my own efforts, there would be limits to what God could ask of me. But if I am healed by the grace of God in Christ, then I belong to Christ and I owe God everything. That's scary until we realize there is nothing more liberating than giving everything to God and nothing more terrifying than being left to our own devices.

Giving up control is frightening until we acknowledge we have never been in control for a day in our lives. Life begins when we turn to our Savior, one day, one moment, at a time.

Prayer: *Help me, Savior God, and just for you today, let me surrender everything to you.*

Sunday School News

What can we do this summer for our kids? We considered Vacation Bible School, but for a variety of reasons, it hasn't come together. So, we brainstormed some ideas for one-time fun times for the kids, their parents, and any other members and friends who might like to join the adventure.

Some ideas include going to a Chiefs' game; getting together for miniature golf, a picnic, and ice cream; sharing an ice cream social on the lawn (maybe we will do this when we dedicate the new porch); visiting various religious houses of worship; making and providing sandwich lunches for the Oxford Inn or other local charities; and other ideas.

Do you have suggestions? Would you like to help in some way (both parents and friends!)? Some of the CE committee members are gathering detail about these various possibilities, and we will let you know the plans!

Coming Up....

August 6 th 11 am	CE meeting
August 6 th	Chautauqua worship on the Homer Green
August 13 th	Worship on the Lake, Greg Gallup's home bring dish-to-pass

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own
understanding.
Proverbs 3:5**

Thanks

Thanks to everyone for the generous outpouring of prayers, cards, and Christian love at the time of my daughter, Jeannette Waffner Steven's death on Christmas Eve, 2016

Huge thanks for the wonderful memorial service and reception on June 24, 2017. Special thanks to Rev. Becky West and Organist Steve Wilson. The Service was lovely and "Danny Boy," sung by Steve, very special.

Also thanks to Cindy Steger and Wayne Swindon for organizing the fantastic reception. Thank you to everyone who furnished food, flowers, and prayers, especially Deacons Pat Twentyman and Mary Podsiedlik.

Thanks again. It was a difficult time and I am not sure I could have made it through without the church family.



Lois Waffner and family

Jon Stevens and family

Dominique Mantella and family

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Dear Pastor Becky,

My family and I want to thank you and the congregation for an afternoon none of us could have imagined. To say it was a blessing doesn't completely describe how we all were affected by the singing, the message, the scriptures, and the story-telling.

I could almost see Dad in the pulpit, holding a hymnal and singing those very hymns. Please pass on our heartfelt appreciation to everyone involved in that blessed, blessed expression of love for our dad.

~ Claudia Rox

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Mission Moment

Our regular mission for March, 2018, is to fill school bags for Church World Services. In 2017, we sent 84 bags!

Elsewhere in this issue you will see a letter from CWS to our church, thanking us for our 2017 contributions.

We start early to collect items for the bags, because this is the time of the year when school supplies go on sale at local businesses as families prepare their children to start school in September.

The supplies needed for the bags are:

Blunt-tipped metal scissors with rounded tips

- 12" Rulers
- Hand-held pencil sharpeners
- Large erasers
- New pencils with erasers (6 per bag)
- Boxes of 24 crayons (only 24)
- 70-count spiral notebooks

We are thankful to have several people in our church who sew our bags together with donated materials; they are bright and fun for the kids to carry.

If you would like to help fill these bags, please bring any of the above items to church from now until March, and give them to Annette Benson. You may also leave them in the church office.

Thanks to everyone for your generous help with this mission opportunity

~Annette Benson, Mission Chair

Kindness in words creates confidence.

**Kindness in thinking creates
profoundness.**

Kindness in giving creates love.

Lao-Tzu

Quilt Raffle

Three beautiful quilts made by Sue Swayze and Gail Brennan are the prizes for the raffle underway from now until fall. Get your tickets from any of the trustees or council members, \$5 each or 5 for \$20. Give them away as gifts, too!

See the quilts in the sanctuary. First winner drawn will pick the first quilt, until all three are chosen. These quilts are absolutely lovely!

2017 Chautauqua: August 6

For many years, a Chautauqua has met on the Homer Green and area churches for a week during the summer. Started in 1992, it was modeled after the summer programs held at Lake Chautauqua in Western New York. Our local Chautauqua was instituted by the Cortland County Council of Churches to bring the community together for learning and spiritual connection.

Classes are of general interest for all ages and run across a wide range of topics. Recent subjects have included local history, cooking, nearby attractions, parenting, travel, politics, exercise, architecture, and ecology. One intent of the program is to showcase local experts who can teach us more about their areas of expertise.

A highlight of each year is simply coming together in worship to share time, song, and Word, usually followed by a picnic lunch on the green.

As you can imagine, this event is a huge undertaking, involving many volunteers and planners. In the past couple of years, attendance has changed, and so this year, we won't be having the week of classes as the Board takes time to discuss what the future holds for this community gathering.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: **PREBLE CHURCH WILL BE OPEN** **AUG. 6TH.**

Here is an "official" invitation, from the Rev. Rachel Ditch, Executive Director of the Cortland County Council of Churches:

The Cortland County Council of Churches is excited to announce our 2017 Chautauqua Worship! "Come and be Fed" on Sunday, Aug 6, at 11am as we worship together on the Green in Homer. The Rev. Dr. Aaron Bouwens, Director of Vital Congregations for the Upper New York Conference of the United Methodist Church, will be preaching. Joe Ford will offer music and direct a community choir, so be on the lookout for rehearsal information!

After worship we will have a community picnic. Join us and be fed spiritually and physically on Sunday, August 6th on the Green in Homer at 11am. This promises to be a worship service you won't want to miss!

Trustee Notes

The Porch Project is well underway, as you will have seen by now if you've been able to visit the church. The porch foundations and deck are finished, the sidewalks are being poured, and the steps will soon follow.

The large evergreen shrubs are gone, and the area near the porch will be planned and planted with new landscaping. No more big shrubs grabbing at us as we walk down the new sidewalks!

People who care about our church are donating to help defray the cost of the Porch Project, and we are very thankful. Once the project is complete, we will dedicate the new porch and formally thank all who have contributed.

~ The Board of Trustees

How Is Your Garden Growing?

If you are a gardener you know that this year has been very different from most years. Our weather has been a little unpredictable. We were able to get the seeds in the ground and then we worried if they would survive the rain.

One thing we haven't needed to do was water our gardens much. And OH!! Has that rain made the weeds grow extra tall this year. With lots of loving care from the gardener we hope all of your gardens do well and you have a successful harvest in the fall.

At church we are also awaiting the harvest of our fund raising campaign, *THE HARVEST of FAITH*. In May letters were sent telling how this harvest works. Each month we were to put \$10 dollars in a special *Harvest of Faith* envelope from May through September. These offerings would be "harvested" in October. This was an idea presented to us a few years ago by Jean Stoker as a fundraiser to replace our Chicken and Biscuit Dinner as it was getting harder and harder each year. All the cooking and picking of chicken, peeling of potatoes and squash, breads, biscuits and pies to be made, plus all the other work became too much to handle. We thank all who support us in this "Harvest".

**There will be a worship service on
Sunday, August 6th at Preble
Congregational Church at 10:00.**

Our doors will be open!!

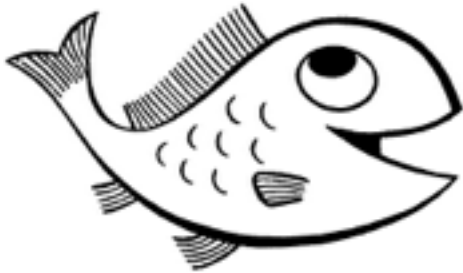
**You may worship with us or join in
the Chautauqua service on the Green
in Homer at 11.**

August Celebrations

August 1: Duke Shirley
2: John Hilts
8: Karen White
11: Rita Patchin
13: Kara White
18: Jane Hill
20: Christopher Swanka
21: Bernie Podsiedlik
23: Wayne Swindon
25: Dick Martin
28: Gail Brennan
31: Dominique Mantella

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Annual Worship on the Lakeshore



Sunday, August 13th, 10:30 am,
Greg Gallup's home on Song Lake
Road

Song! Music! The Word! Communion!

*A delicious dish-to-pass fellowship picnic
follows the service as usual. Want to fish? That's great!
Want to swim? That's great, too!*

Come one, come all,
let's join together as a church community
to worship God on the lake shore.