

The Pioneer

'Preparing for others to follow'

Preble Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
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...from the Pastor's Pen...

Dear Friends,

Here we go again! That's a habit with our church: we keep going forth, helping each other and others, doing mission work, worshipping together, reaching out, occasionally working through bumps in the road. We persevere, a good way to strengthen our relationships with God and one another. We have a habit of making positive choices that build on our history as a community church in the middle of Preble.

Our Annual Meeting, held on January 28th in the dining room, brought many members and friends together to review accomplishments in 2017 and plan for needs and actions in 2018. We shared a delicious and outstanding dish-to-pass buffet meal – we do that so well! Several folks attended for the first time and gave feedback – it was a friendly experience that gave them some insight into the administration of our church.

We look forward to a faith-filled and active year. With the closing of the Preble Children's Center, we will seek to rent space to other tenants, and also will use one of the smaller rooms to house the Preble Community Food Pantry. Presently, the Food Pantry distributes items in the front foyer, as it has for ten years. Moving will provide safer access for our patrons (no more porch steps), expanded storage for food supplies, and an easier way to deliver and maintain items for the shelves. It's been labor-intensive for the volunteers, and not having to go up and down steps to supply the Pantry will be a great blessing.

Some volunteers have finished their terms of service on committees and boards, and we are all so thankful to you for your commitments to the administrative and mission work of our church. Others have volunteered to fill vacancies, take on new responsibilities, and help in various ways as needed throughout the year ahead. Thank you, also! Our congregation is

is blessed with willing workers in God's church. All are needed: those who agree to a specific term of service and those who jump in for occasional duties, such as emergency meal preparations, painting and cleanup, support for fund raisers, etc. We have room for all who want to serve.

Speaking of serving, we always need volunteers for Sunday service ministries. You don't need to be a deacon or trustee or belong to any other group or committee to help with these needs. Please add your name to the sign up sheets in the Fellowship Room for reading scripture, greeting people, hosting fellowship snacks and beverages, or supplying flowers for our altar. We so much appreciate your involvement!

So, onward and forward faithfully into the next few months of 2018 as we open our doors to the community around us, building relationships, and caring for one another just as God also always cares for us!

In faith and love,
Pastor Becky

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**Call to the Fifty-Fifth Annual Meeting
of the NY Conference of the United Church of Christ**

Syracuse will host the New York Conference Annual Meeting this year
on Friday and Saturday, June 8 and 9.

The meeting opens at 2 pm on Friday and will be in session
until after the closing service of worship on Saturday.

The Crowne Plaza Hotel, 701 E Genesee Street is the venue where clergy, delegates,
and lay persons will gather to hear about
and do the business of the church for the New Year.

This will be a wonderful opportunity for folks to experience this meeting, which is
usually held in "outlier" places – but not this year!
The meeting is coming to our town!

Set the dates aside! More information to come!

Cortland County Council of Churches

Greetings, area church members!

In the spirit of the New year, I am setting out on a new practice of writing to each of you about the programs of the Council of Churches. This will be a brief monthly installment with reflections of recent events and notices about upcoming programs.

We've just had the Epiphany Choir Festival at Grace and Holy Spirit Church. I do hope that you all enjoyed the newly renovated space after the devastating fire in July of 2016.

We had nine wonderful choirs perform, St. Mary's Church, Homer Congregational Church, Homer Methodist Church, Preble Congregational Church, Christ Community Church, United Presbyterian Church, St. Margaret's Church, Grace and Holy Spirit Church, and for the first time ever, Tully United Community Church joined us!

Soon the SUNY Cortland students will be returning for another semester. The new campus initiative, the SUNY Cortland Cupboard, is assisting in-need students with food and living supplies. A recent study revealed that 38% of SUNY Cortland students can report having gone to bed hungry while in college due to food insecurity

As we prepare for Spring, I am interested in hearing from you about an annual springtime event for our community. Whether a lecture series, a march like the Interfaith March for Tolerance held downtown in February 2017, or a musical event, I want to hear your ideas! Please send your thoughts by phone at 607-753-1002 or email at cortlandchurches@gmail.com, or feel free to stop and talk anytime you see me around town!

*In Peace, Rachel
Cortland County Council of Churches*

Mission Moment

For our January mission, we participated in the Souper Bowl of Caring. More than 20 years ago, the Souper Bowl of Caring began with a simple prayer from a single youth group:

Lord, as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us to be mindful of those without even a bowl of soup to eat.

Since that day, more than \$81 million has been raised for local charities across the country through Souper Bowl of Caring. It has become a powerful movement that is transforming the time around the Super Bowl into the nation's largest celebration of giving and serving.

Through this mission, people learn what it's like to make a positive difference in the world as they collect food, raise money, and volunteer to work at charities that provide shelter to the homeless, food to the hungry, and compassion to those in need.

For our part in the Super Bowl of Caring, we collected money throughout January until Super Bowl Sunday to be split three ways between our food pantry, the Homer Methodist Church Food Pantry, and St. Leo's Food Pantry in Tully. We collected \$232 this year, so we will give \$77.33 to each food pantry.

January has been a wonderful month of sharing God's love with those in need.

...from Billy Collins...

"We must always look at things from the point of view of eternity."

...from Mary Oliver...

*"My work is loving the world.
Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird –
Each equal seekers of sweetness."*

PREBLE COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY STARTING 10 YEARS

In March, 2018, the Preble Community Food Pantry will begin its 10th year. The first pantry was held March 19, 2009 and served approximately 150 people that year. By our estimate, in the nine years we have been open, we have served more than 3,600 customers at the pantry.

The pantry has changed throughout the years. When we first started, it was open the first and third Thursday of the month. We have offered free selection with no limits, two bag limit and pre-filled bags. Our first customers came primarily from the neighborhood, but now we have customers from surrounding areas too.

We rely solely on donations. In addition to nonperishable food, we also receive donations of baked goods from Tops Market, produce and eggs from Glad Times farm and others, knit hats and mittens, a sign, toys, warm coats, dog food, afghans, a quilt, baby food, school supplies, laundry soap, shampoo, milk, recipes and frozen pizzas. We have received donations in memory of people, in lieu of secret Santa exchanges, from raffles, proceeds from a play and even from our customers.

Since 2016, two volunteers and one customer started tomato, pepper and bean plants from seed. Once the plants blossom, they are available for customers to take home for fresh produce.

The pantry has hosted free meals including a ham dinner, Thanksgiving dinner, soup and bread dinners, spaghetti dinners and summer hot dog picnics. These meals are attended not only by our customers but also members of the congregation and the community and are a good time for building fellowship.

At Thanksgiving and Christmas we give a "meal in a sack" in festive holiday bags. This idea grew out of an idea of June Knapp's when she prepared "Knapp sacks" which included a meal for four people.

The pantry is entirely volunteer run. Our volunteers prepare an inventory, shop, stock shelves, set up the overflow, pick up donations, prepare bags, prepare information flyers of other pantries and work on pantry day. Some of our volunteers have attended workshops and visited other pantries for information and ideas.

The pantry could not happen without the contributions and goodwill of our community, surrounding communities and the congregation. It people to see a local, immediate and direct result of their donations. It brings joy not only to our customers but also to all who are involved.

Altar Flower Chart

With the coming of the New Year, it's time to fill in a new flower schedule for the altar each week.

If you have a special week you would like reserve to decorate the altar in memory of or in honor of someone or something, please see Annette or fill in the flower chart located on the bulletin board beside the refreshment table in the Riehlman Room.

Remember – it doesn't have to be flowers. We have brought rocks and vegetables and fruit and even canned goods at various times, representing mission outreach opportunities. Scarves, figurines, seasonal colors – all are welcome as we worship God together.

Lee Benson taught a flower arranging class last year to several people in our church who have contributed altar flowers. As you can see, creativity is welcome!!

Pennies for People

What Is It?

Pennies for People is an outreach project of the United Church of Christ Women. The program has been able to provide meaningful financial assistance to organizations that provide services for people in need.

When Did It Start?

The program was started in May 1988 at the Annual Conference of UCC NY Women. This new program of giving was started as an outgrowth of the old "Cent Societies" which flourished during the early 1830s and 1840s. Coins were collected and carefully recorded and surprisingly large amounts were raised to support missionaries.

How Much Has Been Raised?

Over \$211,670.82 has been raised since 1988 by the nine Associations of Women in New York State.

Who Administers the Funds?

Funds are administered by the UCC NY Women's Executive Board, along with an appointed administrator.

Who Decides What Groups Will Be Considered?

Any church which sends money for the project may nominate a worthy group to receive funds. These nominations are submitted to the nine Women's Associations for review by December 31st. The Association's Executive Boards make the selections. Preferences should be given to groups which do not receive large government funding. No group will receive funds two years in succession.

Diversity Project

If you would like to be part of the group who want to create diversity symbols, pictures, and scenes for our church, please see Lou Scott, Wes Swayze, or Becky West. This idea was presented during the Annual Meeting and given an enthusiastic go-ahead by members and friends.

We want to consider ways that we can show visitors that the doors of our church and hearts are open to everyone, wherever they may be on life's journey. Anyone interested is welcome!

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February Celebrations

February	2:	Daniel Hilts
	4:	Kevin Baldwin
	7:	Blaise Knapp
	8:	Don Wright
		Carolyn Riley
		Dale Aeschbacher
	9:	Jennifer Hilts
	11:	Bil Fitch
	13:	Chris and Karen White
		Anniversary
	14:	Joy Niswender
		Nancy Simister
	16:	Todd Shirley
	17:	Annette Benson
	19:	Anne Henderson
		Paula Steger
	21:	Isabel Webb
	28:	Scott Cook

The Season of Lent



The Holy Season of Lent
this year begins on
Ash Wednesday,
February 14th.

Come, worship with us
during the forty days of
Lent –

You are welcome, wherever you
may be on your life's journey!

Come and See!