

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,

I looked all over the internet for black and white Christian New Year clip art, and of the hundreds of New Year possibilities, I'd say less than 2% are religious in theme. So I settled on a weather icon, instead – very appropriate for the winter weather in our beautiful valley!

But isn't it interesting, so few religious clips as we segue into another year? And of course, the other challenge is that we've needed to use black and white clips because printing in color was impossible with our now-retired printer/copier. The trustees recognized that we needed to replace the copier, so we have leased a new printer with upgraded features, including color printing. We are in the process of learning how to use its many attributes.

Many thanks to Sue and Wes Swayze, who have used the other printer since 2007, keeping it going, unjamming jams, pulling out papers the machine tried to eat, stocking reams of paper from Staples, organizing and printing big projects like monthly *Pioneers*, Annual Reports, minutes for this and that meeting, and the like.

Over the years they would print the fronts and then flip them manually to print the backs, and then take the stacks home to collate and assemble into packets to be mailed or otherwise distributed. I did some figuring – I've been here for six and a half years, or 78 months. Sending out 200 issues a month (our normal run) = 15,600 issues to collate on the kitchen table. If each issue averages 6 pages (back and front), they have printed and handled 93,600 pages and counting!

And that's just for the *Pioneer* during my tenure. Adding Annual Reports and other needs to the printing list increases the total. Our new printer will eliminate many of these repetitive tasks.

We don't make a practice of toting up all the recurrent tasks we do for our church, of course, but appreciating one another is so important. Our church, like most, serves God's people mainly through loving and dedicated volunteer effort given freely by members and friends. But it is kind of interesting to see what that effort has produced with regards to the use of the copier!

Our 2018 Annual Meeting is coming up at the end of this month. We will gather again in the Dining Room to share a delicious dish-to-pass meal, review our church finances and activities through 2017, elect new officers and members of committees and boards, consider our goals for 2018, and discuss fundraisers that are especially important now that the Preble Children's Center has closed.

We will also vote on some important considerations and take steps towards revising our by-laws to reflect our current needs. All of this activity supports our growth together as members of God's church and our beloved Preble community and surrounding areas. With a faith-filled future in mind, may 2018 be one of our – and your – best years ever, filled with God's blessings, presence, and strength.

Thanks to everyone who helps to create this living and loving community!

In faith and love,

Pastor Becky

Preble Children's Center

The Preble Children's Center closed its doors for the last time on December 29, 2017, after almost 45 years in operation. Many factors led to this closure, but the deciding reason was financial. Homer and Tully schools initiated Pre-K programs in September 2017 and the Center saw a loss of over half of their enrollment. The Children's Center was always a mission for the Church and many members of the congregations had their children and grandchildren attend over the years.

As the saying goes, "When one door closes, a window opens," and the trustees are already working on ideas to use the space. Adding a kitchen upstairs and expanding the Food Pantry are a few ideas that have been suggested. The loss of the Center also means a loss of rental income for the Church. This new challenge has the Trustees looking into new ways to generate income.

The Church would like to thank the board members of the Children's Center: Eric Madden, Crystal Meder, Andrea Troski, and especially Business Manager, Kay Chase, for seeing this difficult process through to the end. ~ Linda Underwood, Chair/Trustees ~

January Celebrations

January 7th: Lois Waffner
9th: Cynthia Steger
10th: Ken Miller
11th: Matthew Ellis
16th: Rebecca West
19th: Jill Masters
20th: William Winslow
21st: Richard Simister
25th: Stacy Griswold
26th: Margaret Shirley
28th: Andy Fox
29th: Timothy Shirley

I would like to thank Cheryl Whiteman and Cathy Scott for the ornaments they made for us to distribute when we went caroling before Christmas. What a surprise I had one day when I opened a package from the state of Washington and found beautiful handmade ornaments that Cheryl had made. Soon after I arrived at church one day to find another assortment that Cathy Scott had made. We were able to combine these with some the Sunday School students had made. It was a joy to be able to share these as we caroled.

Thank you again Cheryl and Cathy

Thank You

We would like to thank our church family for the generous gift certificate you gave us at Christmas time to The Elm Street Café.

Sue & Wes

A Very Special Thank You

On the first Sunday in January we celebrated a very special occasion. Steve Wilson, our organist and choir director has been with us for twenty-five years. Coming to Preble, when Rev. Linda Gard was our pastor, Steve has been a major part of our worship service over the years. He has encouraged many of us to join the choir even though we didn't think we could sing well enough. Music is an important part of our worship each Sunday and Steve has aided us in our music mission.

On January 7th of this year Steve directed the choir in singing, "Come Follow Me" which was the very first anthem he directed the choir in on that first Sunday twenty-five years ago.

Thanks, Steve Wilson!

On Sunday, January 7th, Steve offered some news during our Sharing of Joys and Praise: he has been with our church as our Choir and Music Director for – wait for it –

twenty-five years!

Since I'm in the mood for statistics this month, here goes: given that I might be off a little, Steve, over his time with us, and considering our two-month recess each year, has led the Chapel Choir in 1000 Sunday anthems. And, at 3 hymns per Sunday x twelve months, he's played 3,600 times for our congregation, not including special services and events.

Steve has seen pastors, friends, and members come and go during this time, but he has continued to play for us and is a beloved person in this church community. We know him well, and we appreciate his many talents, dedication, and musical sensibilities.

You will enjoy reading his Annual Report this year. He gives us a perspective on all of the music that he has offered for our worship and gatherings.

Thank you, Steve!

Dear Preble "Family,"

Once again, I was flattered and humbled by your overwhelming generosity in your Christmas bonus.

It is truly gratifying to serve such kind, loving, and generous souls here at Preble. I am a most fortunate man to have this position.

With love,

Steve

Epiphany Choir Festival

Again this year, the Chapel Choir gathered with several local churches to celebrate the Christian holidays with carols and sacred music on the afternoon of January 7th. This event is sponsored by the Cortland County Council of Churches under the direction of the Rev. Rachel Ditch.

We sang in the newly-refurbished sanctuary of Grace and Holy Spirit Episcopal Church in Cortland, hosted by the Very Rev. Peter Williams. The significant fire damage experienced in mid-2016 has been repaired and the beautiful sanctuary was filled to capacity, with overflow areas in use, too.

A time of fellowship with cookies and beverages followed the service. This event is always well-attended because people can't quite get enough of Christmas music. Many local choirs from all denominations performed two pieces, each, accompanied at times by the congregation.

If you haven't yet come to this annual event, don't miss it next January! It's a wonderful event to share with our entire community.

Thank You from Pastor Becky

Dear Friends and members of our church,

Thank you, once more, for your Christmas gift. You are all so special, each one of you, and I appreciate all that you are and all that you do for God's church.

Our church is made up of men and women and kids who share their spiritual journeys, and we travel together through our joys and conflicts. What better place to share human situations than within our own church family. I am thankful to be part of you!

With love, **Pastor Becky**

Attention Members and friends: the

Annual Preble Congregational Meeting

will be held on

Sunday, January 28, immediately following worship.

We will gather in the Dining Room to share a dish-to-pass luncheon, consider 2017 board and committee reports, elect officers and volunteers, and project plans and needs for 2018.

We look forward to our time together for this important gathering!