

The Pioneer

'Preparing for others to follow'

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

Dear Friends,

Lee and Annette Benson, Sue Fast, and I drove to Tarrytown recently to attend the New York Conference Annual Meeting. We had a good time on the four-hour rides back and forth, sharing about our lives and experiences in the UCC and our local church. Once again, I am awed by the many ways you have "grown up together" over the years.



A suburban or urban church is very different from a rural one. In our rural setting, many people have known each other since birth, and their parents knew one another before that. Families tend to be more transient in an urban church. I love to witness your care for one another, growing out of your long relationships.

On another note, some of us may not realize that as members and friends of the Preble Congregational Church UCC, we are members of the Susquehanna Association of the New York Conference. This Conference comprises all of New York State, from Long Island to Buffalo, and within that Conference are nine associations: Black River/St. Lawrence, Essex, Genesee Valley, Hudson Mohawk, Metro, Oneida, Suffolk, Susquehanna, and Western.

Each association relates to the Conference in the same way that the various Conferences across the nation relate to the main UCC Offices in Cleveland, Ohio. We covenant with one another but we may differ in the way we use our resources or practice our faith. The entire United Church of Christ is laterally structured rather than top-down, and therefore all members participate equally in the local churches, led by the pastor who serves as a shepherd of spiritual growth. This structure was revealed recently in my ordination ceremony, when approval for ordination was granted by vote of the members and delegates of our Association.

Annually, delegates and members of the nine associations gather for a business meeting, which is the one Lee, Annette, Sue, and I attended for the Susquehanna Association. To control expenses, the Conference planned to gather over two days for the business meeting, with only one overnight provided this year. Each conference staff person prepared a report (just as we do for our Preble Annual Meeting): Rev. David Gaewski, Conference Minister; Revs. Marsha Williams, Marjorie Purnine, Freeman Palmer, Ryan Henderson, Associate Conference Ministers with varying responsibilities; and other staff members. The 2017 Annual Report is available in my office for anyone who wants to read it.

Two primary accomplishments highlighted the discussions: the formation of new Mission and Vision Statements (see below) for the NY Conference, and the movement toward financial sustainability. The Mission Statement replaces one written a decade ago, and sets forth the vision upon which actions and decisions are measured. Identifying emerging needs, responding to mission and disaster relief need, helping local churches, building ecumenical relationships: these are some of the issues our conference is managing, always grounded in the “faithful response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as guided by the Holy Spirit.”

Of course, these meetings are always a lot of fun, because we get to catch up with friends from across the state, enjoy good food and fellowship, hear excellent keynote speakers, share powerful worship and Holy Communion, and.....wait for it.....shop at the wonderful SERRV store which sells all kinds of items made in third world countries by people who support their families through their handmade crafts. The store ALWAYS merits return visits between segments of the meeting. I bought a beautiful cotton tablecloth, made in India and titled “Elephants in the Room,” for our altar, and you’ll get to see it one of these Sundays in Ordinary Time. You can check out other SERRV items at serrv.org.

The 2018 NY Conference Annual Meeting will be held in Syracuse, and you might like to attend. We won’t need to stay overnight, and as a matter of fact, I’m not sure about the number of days planned for the meeting, anyway. Could be, as further attention is given to expense control, that the meeting will last only one day. In any event, it will be worth it to attend and learn what is happening in our denomination at the state level, which always ends up being relevant to the local church.

Here are the new Mission and Vision Statements for the NY Conference:

*Our Mission: United in Spirit, and inspired by God’s grace, we move forward **boldly** to welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.”*

Our Vision: United in Christ’s love, a just world for all.

**In faith and love,
Pastor Becky**

UCC Daily Devotional

Making an Entrance

Kenneth L. Samuel

"Enter into God's gates with thanksgiving, and into God's courts with praise: Be thankful unto God, and bless God's name." - Psalm 100:4

Recently, I went to court to settle a landlord-tenant dispute. The judge referred the case to arbitration.

I entered the arbitration room armed with details that supported my claim and pretty much convinced that a mutual settlement was not possible. The arbiter entered the room and stated that after reviewing the case, she believed that a mutual settlement could be reached.

"Yeah . . . right!" I thought to myself sarcastically.

The arbiter then proceeded to guide the discussion along the lines of what common interests the landlord and the tenant shared. Both of us tried to focus the discussion on the details that supported our opposing arguments, but the arbiter kept bringing us back to the interests we had in common.

Three hours later, to my surprise, we signed a mutually agreed upon settlement.

I entered the arbitration room with anger and doubt. The arbiter entered the arbitration room with hopeful expectation. Thankfully, the hope she brought into the room overcame the doubt I brought into the room.

What we bring with us to the issues of life sets the tone for what we will receive.

The anger or the openness we bring to relationship issues sets the tone for how that relationship will develop.

The cooperation or the competition we bring with us to the work environment sets the context in which we do our jobs.

The thankfulness or the cantankerousness we bring with us to church is a large determinant of what we will receive from the worship experience.

It's difficult to enter a situation and find fulfillment, if within ourselves we've already exited before we even enter.

Prayer

Lord, help us to enter every life issue with hope... And let that hope be the arbiter of our days. Amen.

Many thanks to everyone who helped make my ordination ceremony so special!

A lot of planning and ideas combined to create worship, bulletins, music, food, reception, flowers, parking, sign, yard, and landscaping appearances, and a myriad of other details.

Thanks to all who helped with the service itself, including our Director of Music, Steve Wilson.

Thanks to those who helped set up and take down the Red Room for the reception.

Thank to Sue Swayze, for designing and creating the red quilted stole which was placed around my neck at the moment of ordination. I wore it again on Pentecost Sunday.

After fourteen years of study, I am glad that my paper-writing days are over, but I'm a life-long learner and look forward to other classes and learning opportunities.

One more time: Thanks!

Trustee Projects



As you will have noticed, the porch project is underway, and before long, we will have a stable, handsome, restored front porch consistent in appearance to the original, and expected to last safely for several more decades into the future.

Some of the landscaping will need to be fixed or changed once the project is finished, and that's a good thing, because the large bushes crowded the sidewalk, creating a hazard for people using the walkway.

To assist with the high cost of this project, a \$25,000 fund-raising appeal is underway, and a letter will be sent to members, friends, and the local community.

Also, the beautiful sanctuary chandelier is now finished! The glass-etched globe is hanging once again, thanks to the high-level work (literally) of Tom Pitman, and we have an extra bowl which the globesmith used for practice and then donated to us upon completion of the main one. This one is carefully stored against a future need. May we not need it anytime soon!



All of our Trustees work hard to care for the church building, and we thank them for their commitment and dedication to this ministry.

A Blast from the Past

As long as we are talking about the church building, here is an edited article from the Cortland County Historical Society 1958 Sesquicentennial Book, which is being updated.

The first church of Preble vicinity was organized August 26, 1804, and was called the First Congregational Society of Tully. The organizational meeting took place in the barn

of Elijah Mason, and subsequent services were held irregularly in his home, with preaching by traveling missionaries. The original charter membership consisted of 22 men.

In 1811, the church was received into the Onondaga Presbytery, which settled the Rev. Matthew Harrison as the first permanent preacher. He served until 1822.

The first meeting house was used in the fall of 1815, built on the land owned by Elijah Mason. In 1831, a new and larger building was built on the site of the original church, but moved to Preble in 1859. This is the building in which present members worship.



A Methodist church was organized in Preble Center in 1814, and between 1915 and 1918, the two churches voted to join forces and become a Community Church. The idea was rejected but a later plan was accepted and on Dec. 1, 1946, members began worshipping together under the name of the United Church of Preble, with the Rev. Martius Foster serving as pastor.

The church legally became the Preble Congregational Church on March 7, 1954, served by two regular pastors and an interim. On June 5, 1955, the Rev. Theodore Kohinke became the settled pastor, and he is still serving this church.

There is a membership of 176 active persons, an active Women's Society, an adult group, a young adult group, and an active group of young people who meet twice monthly. The church school has an average attendance of 100.

The church building was redecorated (inside) in the closing months of 1957, with some alterations and repairs made at that time.

.....and here we are, now, going forth with the care and management of our beloved church building, and our story continues...

Thinking about Spiritual Direction?



After completing two years of Horizons Training at the Spiritual Renewal Center in Syracuse and becoming certified as a Spiritual Director, I “companion” a few folks once a month for an hour as they walk their spiritual journeys to grow closer to God.

The term “direction” is somewhat of a misnomer because it implies that the director provides oversight and supervision. Not so. Spiritual Direction is a sacred and peaceful space for someone to talk about how God is working in their life – or not. You choose your own pathway during the meetings and explore your journey with your director.

In our communion with God, prayer is important, and people usually ask lots of questions about prayer. The meetings are a good place to explore your own answers.

Personally, I’ve worked with my current director once a month since 2008, and others before that. It’s a time for me to share and experience growth in my own spiritual journey, and I depend upon it and recommend it to anyone. There is no judging, no tests, no right or wrong way to grow with God....there is just YOUR way, and that’s what you get to talk about, at your own pace and time.

If you are interested in finding out more information about this practice, or trying it out for yourself, let me know.

Pastor Becky

A Clip from “As the Seasons Turn...”

by Georgia Cates, 2013

There are many people living in the midst of unattractive circumstances, amid hardship, toil, and disease, whose daily life breathes out most gently, music that blesses others about them.

~J. F. Miller~

Looking Ahead



Some of the dates are not settled yet, but here’s what will be happening during the summer months:

June:

- ~ Graduation Sunday with Loren House’s “Parable of the Umpires”
- ~ Graduation Sunday, when we celebrate our graduates whether or not they can join us for worship
- ~ 6/15, Food Pantry outside because of porch construction
- ~ 6/16,17, Rte. 81 Fundraiser
- ~ 6/18, Father’s Day
- ~ 6/24, Memorial Service for Jeannette Waffner



July:

- ~ 7/5, Church Council meeting
- ~ 7/21,22, Rte. 81 Fundraiser

August:

- ~ 8/6, Chautauqua with ecumenical Worship on the Green in Homer
- ~ 8/13, Worship on the Lake at Greg Gallup’s home



Chapel Choir Notes

The traditional season for regular Sunday choir anthems will end in June, but the music goes on, as always. The choir resumes in September, and in the meantime, we will enjoy various special musical offerings during the summer.

Do you have some ideas for summertime music? Duets, solos, instrumental offerings? Will a talented family member or friend visit you during the summer who might like to sing for us at church? Let Pastor Becky or Steve know and we can do it!



June Celebrations:

- June 1: Jean Stoker
4: Trudy Masters
Lawrence and Loretta Nye
(Anniversary)
7: Nick and Gail Brennan
(Anniversary)
9: Lou and Cathy Scott
(Anniversary)
11: Samantha Scott-Beebee
12: Lee and Annette Benson
(Anniversary)
19: Chris and Kevin Masters
28: Marilyn Stoker
Cassandra Scott
Peter and Patty Knapp
(Anniversary)
29: Wes and Sue Swayze
(Anniversary)

Song Lyrics to Think About

Recently I had the opportunity to attend a concert at the Landmark Theater with a group of senior citizens from the Tully-Fabius area. I had no idea who Daniel O'Donnell was but I was soon to find out and enjoyed every minute of his music. He sang several inspirational songs but the words of one kept coming back to me. I would like to share them.

Footsteps walking with me
Footsteps I cannot see
But every move I make
And every step I take
I know they're there with me

They walk with me all the way
Beside me day by day
Through good and bad
Through happy and sad
Those footsteps won't go away
I'll never walk in life alone
There'll always be someone there
I know He won't let me down
He's with me everywhere
The special things in life I've done
Have been through Him and His love
I've been blessed in so many ways
Footsteps walking with me
Footsteps I cannot see
But every move I make
And every step I take
I know they're there with me
They walk with me all the way
Beside me day by day
Through good and bad
Through happy and sad
Those footsteps won't go away
I think that my life's been planned
By the one who's guiding me
When I'm led by the hand
Of someone I can't see
I'm not always sure where to go
That's when I follow his lead
I know that the pathway that He shows
Will help me to succeed

Footsteps walking with me
Footsteps I cannot see
But every move I make
And every step I take
I know they're there with me
They walk with me all the way
Beside me day by day

Thank you for allowing me to share this with you.
Sue Swayze