

The Pioneer
'preparing for others to follow'

Newsletter of the Preble Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
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Preble, New York 13141

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~ April 2017 ~

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

Dear Friends,



Writing my ordination paper, attending the Ecclesiastical Council (EC), and submitting to the qualifying examination have come and gone. All these years of study, reading, writing papers, attending classes and seminary summer sessions, going to retreats, convocations, and other required events – that's all behind me, and I am grateful to be approved for ordination.

Ordination is a significant event for someone called to serve God's church, very different from graduation, which is a milestone achieved when completing a course of study. Ordination acknowledges the religious aspect of consecrating a man or woman to ministry. In the UCC, a candidate who is called to a ministry setting and completes the educational requirements may qualify for ordination. Once ordained, the individual may preside at the order of sacraments in any UCC church.

In our denomination, a person who is not ordained but called to serve a local church is annually licensed by the local Association to pastor that church and offer the sacraments. I am licensed as a "Member in Discernment" since coming to Preble, which means that I have been studying for ordination under the supervision of the local Committee on Authorized Ministry while serving our church as its pastor.

Now that my studies are finished, we will establish a date to gather as our church and Association to observe the ordination ceremony. A UCC liturgy outlines the steps to follow, but we will have input, also. The Association Moderator, the Rev. Vicki Burtson, and the chairperson of the Committee on Ministry, Joann Ferguson, will lead the service. I am very much looking forward to it and am humbled by the prospect.

“No, said Gary, “they have no fragrance except for two or three days when the product is spread back onto the fields as fertilizer.” “Let the farmers buy commercial fertilizer!” said a preacher from an inner city church in an area where kids grow up often never even seeing a cow except at the State Fair. And so the conversation went on, two pastors explaining the earthy *facts* of the lagoons, and eight pastors calling out the ick factor as they imagined it must certainly be.

I took note of how forcefully each side debated its position, Gary and I offering facts arising from personal experience, and the others debating their position based upon experience only as *imagined*. And isn't this method typical of debates taking place in other parts of our lives, too, these days? Some folks don't have the facts but present their opinions as though they do, while other people, strong on factual data, can't make their voices heard above the less-than-factual din.

What's that all about? Words – words carry weight, especially when they are delivered forcefully and/or effectively, whether they speak truth or not. We tend to listen to words that support our own positions and resist those that might prove us “wrong.”

There is a big difference between being an agent of truth and an agent who wants to be right at any cost. As Paul said in Ephesians 4, *We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind or doctrine, ...but speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into... Christ.*

It's not easy to choose truth when it sets us against the folks around us, but the incarnate God still calls us to do it. So we take a deep breath and go forth, knowing that Jesus *always walks with us and always supports our efforts to speak truth.*

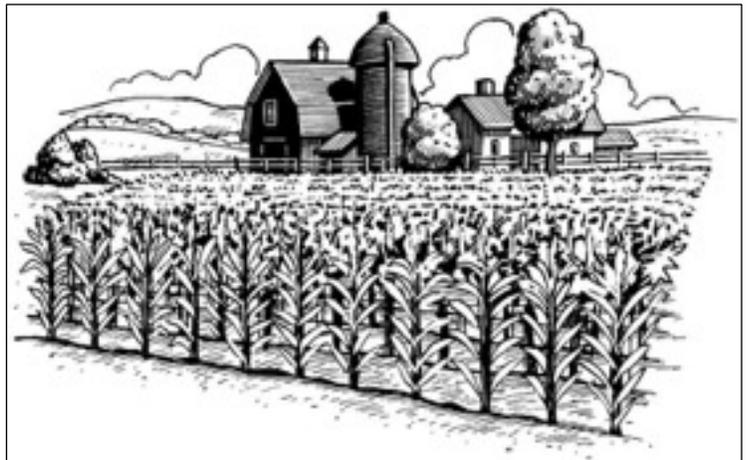
Did I say, “take a deep breath”? Yes, I did, which brings us back to the manure lagoons that line the backside of the fields in our beautiful valley. Notice that the valleys and hills are still lovely, even with the pits, because beauty and blemish exist side by side, often just in the eye of the beholder. Gary and I, amused by the complaints of the other ministers, chuckled at our memory of the jokes we valley folk enjoy during fertilizer-spreading season...the earthy sniffs that we inhale for a few days each spring, knowing that this, too, shall pass.

And we know that the beauty, growth, color, and views of our glorious environment always, always, triumph and overcome!

Who knows, after all these words about farms and manure pits, I might revive my old Pioneer column called “Cow Tales”!

With faith, love, and humor,

Pastor Becky



UCC Daily Devotional



Give Up Trying to Save Yourself *Ron Buford*

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." - Ephesians 2:8

Someone accused me of preaching "cheap grace." He suggested that I somehow made God's grace seem so accessible, so without requirement, that I cheapened God's grace.

I thought for a moment and said, "Thank you. God's grace is so cheap, it's free!"

Many well-meaning religious teachers taught us that there are requirements for God to love us. But Jesus says this is a lie.

It is a lie that fits our human desire to earn and accomplish, for order and control. And while these traits can be good for successful living and moral discipline, they are not requirements to receive God's grace. Jesus called people who teach such things about God, "thieves and robbers."

Receive God's really good news. Hear and accept God's gracious invitation, "Just love me." God says. "Love me with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind.

See how that feels and then share the love that wells up within you with everyone until they feel it, too—no exceptions. Hanging out with me changes everything!"

When I have trouble loving anyone or am looking for excuses to make it right for me to judge others, this only lasts as long as I am not mindful of God's inexhaustible love for me. The two states of mind cannot co-exist in me. How about you?

Prayer

Gracious God, Help me stop trying to save myself. I repeatedly fall in and out of trying. Thank you for loving me no matter what.

Help me grow in mindfulness of your presence, your love, your grace. May the overflow of your presence, love, and grace in me touch others, even those closest to me. Amen.

Deacons' Note

As deacons, we try to bring a spirit of warmth and welcoming to our congregation.

We are not just a board or committee that provides plans, ideas, and refreshments for activities.

At our meetings, we not only do that, but we also look at the needs of individuals in our congregation, whether it be those who are homebound, in need of special prayers, the grieving, and those experiencing illnesses.

We look out for each other. We hope to help everyone feel at home within our church family, promoting a feeling of belonging and community.

~ *Lois Waffner*

Annual Fund Raisers

Elsewhere in this issue, please see the order blank for our Pies on the Porch and Flags on the Porch events.

Additional Pie and Flag sheets will be available on the table at the rear of the sanctuary.

Thank you as always for your support of all of these fund raisers. Your donations are used for mission activities and for the ordinary expenses of the church building.



Preble Congregational United Church of Christ

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Preble, NY 13141

*Pastor Rebecca F. West, 607-456-8746
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May 1, 2017

Dear Friends and Members of Preble Congregational UCC,

Spring has sprung in great style here in our beautiful valley, regular as clockwork. Hills and forest come alive and our farmers begin their planting cycles. Yes, hallelujah! Spring is here again, a time of new energy and life.

Now is the time for our fourth annual Harvest of Faith appeal. Our primary fund raiser received unanimous support from our council, members, and friends, even as we remember the days when we peeled, cut, shredded, baked, mashed, diced, and ate the foods we served for our popular Chicken 'n' Biscuit suppers. We have good memories of those days, and we contemplate them *fondly* even as we relax and choose to "gather" funds in a different way to support our church and its worthy missions.

Your contributions help to further God's work within our church and the Preble community and surrounding areas. No more cooking and baking! We hope, instead, that you will take part in the Harvest of Faith.

From May until September, 2017, you are invited to tuck aside \$10 a month for each of the five inclusive months. Colorful envelopes are provided as a special place to build your harvest. It's like a garden, planted, watered, and tended until the harvest is ready.

Will you work together with us? If we all participate, our harvest will be abundant and joyful, as we will use it for God's great purposes!

Thank you from your Board of Trustees and Church Council.

Kits in Action

Our March Mission was to finish filling the school bags that Mimi Cornue and Sue Swayze made for the Church World Services School Kit program.

We start gathering the pencils, scissors, rulers, erasers, notebooks, pencil sharpeners, and crayon in August when the "Back to School" sales are on. In March we assemble the bags and pack them in boxes for Lee Benson to take to one of the April pickup spots.

We also collect \$2 for each bag we assemble, for processing charges. Any extra money goes into our Children's Fund to be used to help our own kids pay for summer camps.



This year, 84 bags were completed to share with children in need and \$120 was collected to help with the \$168 needed for processing.

These kits will be distributed after floods, hurricanes, and other disasters that happen throughout the world. Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and West Virginia were especially hard hit this year.

3,000 School Kits were distributed to communities affected by Hurricane Matthew, along with 8,236 Emergency Cleanup Buckets, 13,980 Hygiene Kits, and 205 wool blankets.

237,659 total kits and blankets were distributed in 2016 by Church World Service. That number included 31,575 school kits given out in the United States; 2,955 school kits in Nicaragua; 15,000 school kits in Serbia; 6,000 school kits in Sierra Leone; 15,000 school kits in Syria, and 7,200 school kits in Angola.

That is a lot of children impacted by flooding, fires, hurricanes, or in homeless shelters or in migrant families or refugees.

Thanks to all who helped us create 84 school bags. I'm sure you can imagine the smiles on the children's faces when they receive them.

We CAN and do make a difference in this world!

~ Annette Benson

Pastor Becky's Ordination

Finally, the big day is coming!

Finally, the ordination paper was finished, read, tweaked, re-written and submitted, and accepted.

Finally, the Ecclesiastical Council happened, and I was approved for ordination.

And finally the Committee on Authorized Ministry set a date: May 21st, 2:30 pm, here at our church.

Everyone is invited!
Everyone please plan to come!

I am very excited to have finished my ministry studies and to be celebrating this milestone in my life and the life of our church with all of you.

Our church is exactly the best place for this gathering!

Date and Time: May 21, 2:30 pm.
Lite reception in our dining room will follow the ceremony, with snacks, beverages, favorite desserts, and time for conversation and fellowship.

My kids will be here with their spouse, and my very special cousin Linda and her husband, Russ, will visit from Maryland.

Visitors from Fairmount Community Church UCC will also come...and many others.

Can't wait! See you there, I hope!

Pastor Becky

“Every Stitch is a Hug”



It was April 10th, and two people we have come to know and love in our congregation, Mimi and Bob Cornue, were crossing the parking lot at Loretto with three large bags filled with “sunshine.”

Mimi had come to Loretto, with a camera crew waiting for her to capture the delivery of her 200th quilt. She literally brings bags filled with **sunshine**.

If you had been present, you would have seen the faces of those living at Loretto “light up.” They had the opportunity to pick their favorite color. I loved watching as one woman took a purple one and squeezed it to her chest and said “I love purple.” Then I had given one to another resident, but when Mimi pulled out a pink quilt she saw it and announced “Brenda, can I please have that one?”

What a way to make a day. What a way to say, “I see you.” What a way to say “every stitch is a hug” which is the tag on each quilt Mimi makes.

Mimi is literally an “earth angel.” Her gifts of love in hand-making these quilts, is like sunshine, it brightens the days of those living at Loretto. We all have had people that have impacted our lives in amazing ways, and Mimi is one of those people, sharing her talent to be that ray of sunshine for others

Her every stitch is a hug message, memorable and unexpected act of kindness that will go on every time they pull that quilt over their legs or around their shoulders.



Mimi is a blessing who comes with a spirit of love that is just as contagious as the desire to have one of her quilts. Thank you, Mimi, you are a reminder of what **one person can accomplish, one stitch at a time**.

Coming Up in May

May 7, Fourth Sunday of Easter. We serve Holy Communion to all who wish to receive
Gluten free wafers are available.

May 14, Fifth Sunday of Easter.
We will celebrate Mothers on this Sunday.

May 21, Sixth Sunday of Easter.
Pastor Becky’s ordination ceremony, 3 pm.
All are invited.

May 28, Seventh and last Sunday of Easter



On Memorial Day, May 29th, our church will offer the prayer at the boulder in the village just before the parade begins.

Flags will be displayed on our front lawn, and pies can be picked up from the porch or yard, if the porch repair project is underway.

Let us celebrate the special day together with our community friends!

Digital Copy of Pioneer?

Are you interested in receiving your copy of the monthly Pioneer via email rather than snail mail? If so, please let Pastor Becky know.

The church still has to mail a certain number of paper copies to receive the best mailing rate, but the advantage to you is that you’d receive the newsletter faster and you’d see it in full living color!

FYI, Brenda wrote the lovely article on this page about Mimi Cornue!

Pies on the Porch



The Famous Preble Bakers are at it again! This time they will be making homemade fruit pies for Memorial Day. Fill out an order form below and get a ten-inch mouth-watering, juicy, homemade fruit pie for only \$12.

The pies will be available for pickup on Memorial Day, May 29th, on the front porch of the Preble Congregational UCC Church from 11:30 - 1 PM.

Choose from luscious apple, cherry, blueberry, mixed berry, or strawberry-rhubarb.

Flags on the Front Lawn



Order a 6" x 9" flag in honor of or in memory of a person(s) important to you for \$5 per flag. A ribbon with the name of that person will be attached to the flag and the flag will then be displayed on the front lawn of the Preble Congregational UCC Church from Memorial Day to June 5th.

You may pick up your flag on Memorial Day or leave it to be displayed for the week. Fill out an order form below with the name(s) to be displayed on the ribbon.

All orders must be returned by May 20th!

Please make checks payable to Preble Congregational Church UCC

PO Box 186, Preble, NY 13141

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Pies on the Porch

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Choice and # of Pie(s): apple _____, blueberry _____,
cherry _____, mixed berry _____. Strawberry-rhubarb _____

Number of pies x \$12 = \$ _____

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Flags on the Front Lawn

Your name: _____ Phone: _____

Name(s) on flag(s) _____

Number of flags _____ x \$5 _____ = \$ _____



Sunday Morning Worship, 10 am.
Sunday school for kids and youth.
Fellowship Time after worship.

Wherever you may be on your life's
journey, you are welcome here!

We offer Holy Communion on the first Sunday of each month,
and all may share the table, no restrictions.

Mother's Day is May 14th. We will honor our mothers!