

The Pioneer

'preparing for others to follow'

Newsletter of the Preble Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
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~ November, 2016 ~

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

Dear Friends,

Truly, in my lifetime and through all of the elections I've voted in, I do not recall a national presidential campaign so troubling and ugly. I wish I could say it will be over on November 9th, once all the votes have been counted and a winner declared. I wish I could look forward to some peace and cooperation across the aisle between our two major parties.

Most of all, I wish the political leaders of America had learned something from this angry campaign – learned that the citizens of our country are tired of politics-as-usual and Washington gridlock, and would become willing to respond equitably to our concerns, but I fear it is not to be. Both parties are lining up for more conflict following the election, never mind who is elected. I hope the election isn't close, because I don't want to see pricey challenges and legal adjudications that cost taxpayers more money in support such bipartisan confrontation. I'm tired of all the conflict.



I will vote and I hope you and all your neighbors, friends, and relatives will, too. Our votes count and our situation is *not* hopeless. The tiresome and startling revelations in the lives of the major nominees may shock us – revelations about values, habits, finances, behaviors – and the words the nominees use against each other – these things name the sinful condition of humanity, to tell the truth, and when they are exposed like they have been, we are embarrassed and angry.

These are the sorts of things usually kept under wraps, but not now, not in this election cycle. So we are faced with two major candidates who carry the highest individual negative ratings in recent history, and as we choose our candidate, we seem forced to take sides against one another, too.

These days are too much with us. In the interest of self-care, I've taken to listening to a classical music station in my car rather than my relatively-objective NPR radio station. And I

cleave to an over-riding axiom that I know to be true: God's kingdom and presence is not up for a popular vote. The Kingdom of God is not dualistic, meaning that people are included, not excluded, for their beliefs, skin color, religion, cultures, practices. Further, all of those people – and they are us – are forgiven and living in a state of grace even when they don't know it, so it's not as if these marginalized persons will be able to achieve "entry" once they conform to someone's certain ideas of belonging.

This is grace in its most amazing form, a grace that embraces all people, already, and it is good news for everybody, if we could and would honor this reality. We are not "us versus them," or "in versus out," or "my side is better than your side." These are playground games that hopefully we outgrow as we mature spiritually.

And what does it mean to mature spiritually? Of course, that is the question. We are good people, by and large, and the world is a very complicated place. We want to be safe and to keep our families fed, sheltered, and safe, but many things are out of our control in regard to our hopes and goals. Immediate events and threats may cause us to become defensive or to expect others to defend us, including our government bodies. This is a very real part of our world.

But the other, much more important part to remember in the face of such threat, is that we are called to Christian values such as to "love God and to love one another," and that "all things work together for good for those who love God." Just as Jesus blessed those people who were declared unfit by temple authorities, so we are called to that higher standard: to embrace those who are different from us, for the simple reason that God loves all people. This means we are to seek ways to live together in harmony rather than rejection and conflict.

Election Day is coming on November 8th, and we will know the outcome on November 9th. We face more conflict after the election, 'tis true, as the various people and parties continue to promote their separate visions of truth. Instead, how about trying to learn how to – dare I say it? – compromise with one another.



But for God's people, we face no uncertainty. The vote was in even before time began. God said, "I will be your God, and you will be my people." No barriers, no divisions, no conflict. Simple, all-embracing love and harmony for all.

In faith and love and hope,

Pastor Becky

***A friend is someone who knows your song
and sings it to you when you've forgotten it yourself.***

~Alan Cohen~

All Saints Day

November 1 is All Saints Day, when we in our church remember loved ones who have passed. Originally a Catholic feast day when all saints, known and unknown, are celebrated, the UCC includes it on our church calendar so that each local church may choose its own response.



We will celebrate as we did last year, by writing the names of loved ones on colorful strips of paper and blessing them during worship in October. Our Sunday school kids will fashion the strips into garlands to hang on our Christmas tree.

Planning Ahead....

The holiday seasons are almost upon us, and we have much reason to rejoice. Our church is healthy and faithful, our mission work is generous, and the people in our congregation and community work together for the needs of many. The volunteers who help to make things happen are wonderful. May we rejoice together in the weeks ahead!

The Harvest of Faith ends in October as Stewardship Opportunities begin. We will hear testimony each Sunday from a member or friend of our congregation who wants to witness to the blessings received from this community.

Advent begins the last Sunday in November, and some of you will assist with the weekly lighting of the Advent wreath. The church will be decked out for the holiday on the last Sunday of November; if you'd like to help, stick around after worship on that day.



As usual, we will decorate the tree with gift tags so that we can provide gifts for a needy family in our area.

We will enjoy the first Sunday in December as Music Sunday, when we sing carols and hymns and hear some special pieces. The Kids' Christmas Pageant on December 19th will be followed by a visit from Santa and Snowflake during fellowship time following the service, and Christmas goodies will be enjoyed by all.

Concert in Our Sanctuary

On Tuesday, January 3, 2017, the Preble Congregational Church will host a concert of early music by four unique, professional musicians.

Violists Alex Korolov, Alex Rakov, and Tom Klenck, with harpsichordist Alan Giambattista will perform music by Marin Marais (1656-1728), Jean de Sainte-Colombe (1640-1700), Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) and J. S. Bach (1685-1750).



These accomplished performers (in collaboration with soprano Marion Giambattista) presented a similar event two years ago in the same venue and were received with rave reviews from the many visitors who came to the concert.

The church doors will open at 6:30 p.m., with the concert scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. There is no admission fee for this one-of-a-kind performance, but donations will be gratefully accepted.

Light refreshments will be served following the performance, at which time the performers will be happy to explain any aspects of the music and to give anyone interested a closer look at their instruments.

For further information, call the church office at 607-749-3606 or Stephen Wilson at 607-745-6677.

Preble Church Mission Work

Many thanks to Annette Benson for presenting the Mission Moment each Sunday during worship. Our church gives to many ministries; here are some of them.



OCWM, or Our Church's Wider Mission, distributes local church contributions to support various mission works around the globe. The amount each church gives is based upon the number of its members or upon the amount the church is able to offer. Our donation for 2016 was \$1700.

Special offerings during each church year help to support other ministries, as well, and if a church gives to all of them, it becomes a "5 for 5 Congregation." Our church achieved that designation in 2016 by contributing to OCWM, Neighbors in Need, One Great Hour of Sharing, Christmas Fund, and Strengthen the Church. (See elsewhere in the Pioneer for an article on our current effort: Neighbors in Need.)

The Community Food Pantry opens on the third Thursday of each month. People shop from the shelves in the church foyer and also receive a special bag filled with paper products not available through other food pantries. Our Pantry is independent, which means we don't require proof of need before people are allowed to participate.

The Heifer Project this year involved collecting for trios of rabbits to be given to families in needy areas of the world. We raised \$363 and each trio costs \$60, so we are sending six sets of rabbits!

School bag kits are assembled in March for April pick up each year, but we collect items for the bags throughout the year. Annette lets us know what to donate each month, while Mimi Cornue and Sue Swayze make the bags for this ministry.



We also contribute to other needs during the year, as they are presented. Annette plans ahead for every month of the year, so we will continue to see how we can help others.

Thank you to this wonderful congregation for your contributions to the work of God's church within and outside the sanctuary doors!

Neighbors in Need (NIN)

For several weeks during October and November, we will collect donations for one of the UCC 5-for-5 Missions: Neighbors in Need.

NIN supports the UCC's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness ministries to fund a wide array of local and national justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects.

One-third of the offering supports the UCC's Council for American Indian Ministries. Today there are twenty UCC congregations on reservations and one urban, multi-tribal UCC congregation in Minneapolis supported by this fund.



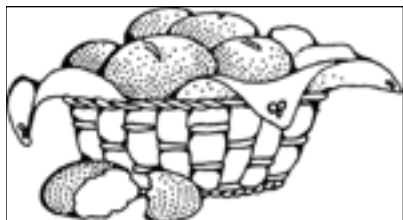
You will hear more about this ministry during the Mission Moment. Pew envelopes will be available for your donations.

Susquehanna Assn Fall Meeting

I haven't had the opportunity until now to say in the Pioneer that the Fall Meeting hosted by our church was well-attended and well-appreciated. As always, volunteers offered wonderful food and fellowship, and lots of it.

Thank you so much for offering such wonderful hospitality and friendship to our Association churches!
~Pastor Becky~

SOUP AND BREAD DINNER



FREE!

ALL ARE WELCOME

NOVEMBER 17TH 4- 6 PM

PREBLE UCC,
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
DINING ROOM



Advent Bible Study Books

This year's Advent study book is "Down to Earth, Devotions of the Season," compiled by Rachel Billips and Mike Slaughter. The book is divided into four weeks with four separate themes: Love, Humility, Lifestyle, and Obedience. Each week includes five devotions which gives you the flexibility to choose your focus for the week.

Here is part of the introduction: *The very meaning of the phrase 'down to earth' calls up a simplicity and ruggedness that challenge our way of living. When the phrase*

is applied to the practices of love, humility, lifestyle, and obedience, suddenly we realize that this Advent could be the time and space where we live differently.

Would you like to participate in the Advent study, either with other people or in your own homes individually? If so, please let Pastor Becky know that you would like a copy of the book. We have a limited supply, and if several people want copies, we need time to order more of them. Advent starts on the last Sunday in November. The price of the book is \$7.

...wise words from 'As the Seasons Turn, V'...

Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.

~Carl Jung~

UCC Daily Devotional

Cheering for Jesus!

Richard L. Floyd, October 4, 2016

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." - Hebrews 13:8

My friend John, an ophthalmologist and former congregant of mine, led several dozen trips to Ecuador on "eye missions."

I went with him on a couple of them. Our team worked together with area churches, and one day he introduced me to a local pastor, who immediately invited me to preach at their Sunday evening service.

But that Sunday afternoon we had torrential rains that filled the streets with over a foot of water. I said to one of their church members, "I suppose the evening service will be cancelled?"

"Oh no, they'll be there!"

And they were. The church was packed. We waded to get there.

My Spanish is pretty much limited to eye testing: "Otro ojo!" So I employed our translator, Ira, to follow me line by line as I preached.

I started out with our differences: "I live in North America, and you live in South America." "My congregation is very old and yours is very young." And so forth.

Finally I said: "But despite our many differences we have something very important in common. We share faith in Jesus Christ, who is 'the same yesterday and today and forever!'"

As I had been speaking, and Ira had been translating, they had been attentive and polite, but now the whole congregation rose to their feet and started clapping and cheering, and it went on for some time.

I was overcome with emotion, because I knew they weren't cheering for me, and they weren't cheering for Ira.

No, they were cheering for Jesus!

Prayer

O God, as we struggle day by day to follow your son, Jesus, give us hearts to cheer for him from time to time, for all he means to us, and all he has done for us.

Community Food Pantry

Our monthly Community Food Pantry is visited by 40-50 patrons, most of whom are "regulars" who appreciate the occasional meals and monthly bags we add to the groceries. Over time, we get to know one another, and these growing friendships bless all of us.



Presently, funds are low in the Food Pantry account, and so we have booked a Free Coffee event at the Preble Rest Stop on Rt 81 for November 4 & 5.

Donations collected at this time for snacks will be given to the Pantry.

You can participate in this mission opportunity by signing up to volunteer or by donating baked goods, bottled water, packaged goodies, small bags of chips, etc., to offer with the coffee. This is a lot of fun and everyone enjoys it, volunteers and patrons alike!

Thanks in advance for your help with this effort. The sign-up sheet is in the Riehlman Room.

Food Pantry Soup Supper

The Food Pantry volunteers will be putting on a free 'soup and bread' dinner, November 17th, 4- 6 PM.



If you would like to help in any way, contact Lou Scott, e-mail; lcscs@hotmail.com, phone 607.749.2250



November Celebrations

November 4: Duane and Sue Whiteman

Anniversary

6: Alyssa Swayze

7: Helen Burt

9: Steve Riehlman

11: Andrew Swayze

12: Charlotte Delaney

13: David Riehlman

15: Randy Fitch

18: Mary Podsiedlik

19: Pat Wilcox

21: John and Laura Henderson

Anniversary

29: Thomas Twentyman

A Thanksgiving Day Prayer

Lord, so often times, as any other day
When we sit down to our meal and pray
We hurry along and make fast the blessing
Thanks, amen. Now please pass the dressing
We're slaves to the olfactory overload
We must rush our prayer before the food gets cold

But Lord, I'd like to take a few minute more
To really give thanks to what I'm thankful for
For my family, my health, a nice soft bed
My friends, my freedom, a roof over my head
I'm thankful right now to be surrounded by those
Whose lives touch me more than they'll ever possibly
know

Thankful Lord, that You've blessed me beyond measure
Thankful that in my heart lives life's greatest treasure
That You, dear Jesus, reside in that place

And I'm ever so grateful for Your unending grace
So please, heavenly Father, bless this food You've
provided

And bless each and every person invited
Amen!



Joy in the Morning

By Joy Niswender

What a bountiful Heavenly Father we have! He bestows so many blessings lavishly upon us – free of charge!

How about those days when incredibly white clouds float across a vivid backdrop of sky... and then there are the gray skies that forewarn of much needed rain. Both are miracles in their own way.

We feel the sun's warmth on our faces and forget to say "Thank You!" to God. We enjoy the fellowship of a cherished friend, and forget that the father of us all put us here to commune with and comfort each other.

We look at a view that is so overwhelming in its beauty that we are at a loss for words with which to adequately say "I love you, Father. Thank you for the wonder of your earth and your goodness to us, your undeserving and erring children."

Psalm 19: "The heavens are telling the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork."

...so very thankful for so very much...

