

# The Pioneer

## 'Preparing for others to follow'

Preble Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ  
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~ November, 2017 ~

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

Dear Friends,

I don't speak much about my two dogs, Willie and Charley. I've heard that a former pastor of our church "brought her cats to the sermon" quite frequently, and everyone knew how she loved her cats. You can say the same thing about me and my dogs; I love them and they are family. Pet lovers – you especially know what I mean.

Lately, life is getting harder for both of them as they get along in years. Of all the dogs I've loved in my life, none have ever suffered from muscle atrophy, but both of mine no longer can leap up on my bed, climb stairs easily, or even jump up from their typical curled resting positions like they used to. I know the feeling, only my aches are caused by creaky joints. It's just the processes of life, being born, getting old, living life gratefully in between.

My little Rat Terrier, Willie, sleeps on my bed, and when he jumps off in the middle of the night and then wants back up, he scratches his nails on the edge of the bed. I have to get up, pick him up, put him on the bed, climb back in myself, rearrange the blankets for both of us, and drift off again. I try to do all of this without waking up – no lights, just by feel. Most of the time it works, but there are those early, early hours when I can't get back to sleep and my mind begins to whirl on my workaday world. Very tiring.

So, I decided to buy Willie a set of steps.

Nice steps, they are, and you wouldn't believe what a decision it was! Took us a week to sort out what we wanted (yes, I consulted with Willie). Foam, fashion-forward, two-and-three-and-four step models (he wanted the four-step), chic, plain, brightly colored, narrow,

wide, plastic, wooden, heavy, light, collapsible, portable, with legs and without. Some will slip on hardwood, others won't, and they range in price from \$25 to over \$200. Ours cost a mere \$39.95. Easy to install: just flip out the foldable legs and set it up. I did that and it was exactly the right height, with the top step just the perfect distance from the top of the bed.

Okay, I thought, now the hard part...getting Willie to use them. I realized there are several parts to his learning opportunity. First, he needed to stop running away from them and barking at this strange thing in the bedroom. I decided to bribe him with a Pill Pocket, which as you pet owners know, is a delicious way to disguise a rejected pill and get it down your pet's hatch. After several dashes from one side of the room to the other, he finally put one foot on the bottom step, since the Pill Pocket was enticing him from the third step, just out of his reach. One paw by one paw, up he went while I moved the Pocket higher. Finally, he reached success on top of the bed!

Well, he is a quick learner when he wants Pill Pockets. My whole goal, though was for me to stay warm and asleep while he got off and climbed back up by himself in the middle of the night. We practiced upping and downing a few more times, but he never used the steps to get back up on the bed...until last night.

I was sound asleep when I was awakened by a few soft doggy kisses on my cheek, and I realized Willie had climbed the steps – he'd remembered all the lessons he'd been absorbing in our practice sessions, and in the dark bedroom, he traveled up the steps and back to bed again!

Now, you may be wondering, what has all this to do with church. A few things, actually. First, if I know anything about my dogs, I know they offer unconditional love, without reservation. It really feels good. Even when I have disappointed or inadvertently hurt them (like stepping on a tail), they hold no grudges and forgive me immediately.

Second, they like to eat and they wag their tails in gratitude, an excellent way to please their human. Third, they know how to talk without using words. They use their eyes, body language, a few kisses here and there, their tails, and silence. Best communicators ever, a few good lessons for humans!

My dogs teach me so much, and humble me, too. And I've learned that contrary to the old saw that says, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," you certainly can! You just have to have a few Pill Pockets, some patience, a good helping of laughter, and wide open arms to hug them at the top of the bed. Somehow, I just know that this simple little life I live with my dogs is a wonderful metaphor for how to get along with everyone, and how to become a better person, myself.

God blesses us in more ways that we can possibly count, and I am more thankful for these two canine blessings than I can ever say.

**Happy Thanksgiving, Everybody!**

**Pastor Becky**

## UCC Daily Devotional

Um.....by Mary Luti

*“Then Nebuchadnezzar said, ‘Praise the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent an angel and rescued them! They were willing to die before worshiping any god but their God.*

*Therefore I decree that anyone who says anything against their God should be cut into pieces...” ~ Daniel 3:28-29*

Um... Let's see if I have this right.

Three servants of god, whose names are fun to sing, refuse to worship the god of the king, whose name terrorizes lay readers everywhere. So the king throws them into a furnace, expecting they'll burn to a crisp, thus proving they worshiped the wrong God. But they're not even singed, thus proving that their God is better than everybody else's.

The king, who loves a winner, then decrees a gruesome death for badmouthing God, creating, as we say, a chilling effect in the kingdom.

Um...where to begin?

Well, a big yay for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who had the courage of their convictions. Would that more of us refused to count the cost. But a big boo for the idea that getting badly charred while demonstrating your faithfulness is pleasing to God.

Another yay because the king is suitably impressed by God. Now, if he comes to know God truly, maybe he'll do justice. You always hope a few kings will.

But boo for thinking you can know God by violence. And double boo for thinking that because you've got religion, you should therefore slaughter people who don't.

So, yay for great old Bible stories. But boo for them, too. Boo and yay because once upon a time you might have read this story and thought it heroic; now you might read it and have your doubts. Yay and boo because it cuts both ways.

Boo and yay because the more you read, the more you think twice. The more you're called to grow.

### Prayer

Um... Holy Spirit, you've made scripture so challenging. Thank you for keeping me reading, re-reading, and thinking twice. Thanks for making me grow. Amen.

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### Global Refugee Crisis

Join a community conversation on Sunday, November 12, 6:30-7:30 pm at Homer Congregational Church, 28 S. Main St, Homer, on the Village Green.

“Uprooted – a Glimpse at the Global Refugee Crisis in Our Community” is the topic, presented by Nicole Watts, founder and Executive Director of Hopeprint ([hopeprint.org](http://hopeprint.org)).

Refugee resettlement is important today because of all the people who are searching for new, productive, and safe lives from other countries in the world. Once these families reach the United States through organizations such as Catholic Charities, they need support and care during the transition to their new lives.

Churches often provide such support, and it's very rewarding to empower resettled families and folks to thrive. This is a win-win ministry for everyone!

Refreshments and fellowship time follows the conversation. If you would like to carpool, please see Pastor Becky.

## Community Thanksgiving Service

Each year, the Cortland County Council of Churches (CCCC) plans an ecumenical, community-wide Thanksgiving service at a local church, and this year, we will host the service on Sunday, November 19th.

Rachel Ditch and Pastor Becky will plan the service with refreshments and fellowship time to follow. More details to come, but it's always a fun time to meet and worship with other folks in our area.

Set aside the date: 11/19, 6-7 pm!

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## Family Counseling Ministry

Our church has been a regular supporter of FCM for several years, and FCM is an extension of our church's mission.

Our support combined with the support of UCC churches in the Susquehanna Association enables FCM to provide spiritually-integrated counseling by qualified professionals to many people who would not otherwise be able to afford it.

This means that if you or others in your family need to talk with a professional therapist, such help is available through FCM.

Many people have received help through this service, both individually and through group consultations for life events and concerns and personal reasons.

You need not be hesitant to talk with these counselors; as you will find that they are professionals and highly trained in their specialties.

While our church may not always have people who currently use this resource, our support allows FCM to provide ministry to others in our communities, near and far.

Also, FCM provides supportive consultation for pastors addressing pastoral care issues that emerge in ministry. These

consultations are available without charge to pastors throughout the year.

You may learn more about FCM on their website, fcmsite.org., and you may also talk about it with Pastor Becky. The professionals who serve in this ministry are New York state licensed pastoral counselors.

Susan Swayze is a board member of FCM.

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## Planning Ahead...

Adult Bible Study, every Tuesday evening, 6:30 in the Riehlman Room. All are welcome.

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month: CE Meeting

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month: Deacons

11/19 Community Thanksgiving Service, Preble Congregational UCC, 6:30-7:30

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## Annual Meeting Business

The Nominating Committee will begin meeting shortly to develop recommendations of people who will serve the church in various capacities in 2018.

If you are interested in serving, or have a recommendation, please see Pastor, who will pass on your request to the committee.

There has been a request for a change in our bylaws, and therefore an ad hoc committee was appointed at the last Church Council meeting to look into the changes.

Do you have recommendations for changes to our bylaws? If so, now is the time to bring it to the committee. Pastor Becky will connect you with the members of the committee.

Thank you always to all who serve the various needs of our church. There is a lot to do!

## Postlude P's and Q's

Evelyn Masters once asked Steve Wilson, our church Music Director, how he felt about the fellowship conversations that used to happen during the postlude.

Steve told her that one of his music professors once explained that the prelude and offertory were played for the congregation, but the postlude only for the musician, because most people got up from their pews to talk with each other during that time.

But the postlude is intended to be the reverent conclusion of a worship service, and so our church began the tradition of remaining in the pews to listen to the music, and then gathering for fellowship after the service.

Of course, you are welcome to leave the sanctuary at this time if you need to, but it will be much appreciated if you will delay conversation until after the music is finished. Thanks!

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## Here's Your Chance...

...to craft or create Christmas ornaments for our church and caroling this season!

We plan to sing carols in the neighborhood again this year and give an ornament to each home along with a card that invites folks to church and provides information about our services and events.

Hopefully, we will have plenty of ornaments to share with our homebound friends, too, who love to receive cards from the congregation and, of course, visits. And the really neat thing is, you and your kids or grandkids can design your own ornaments and decorate them with materials you have on hand.

The CE Committee will provide patterns for anyone who wants them, based on designs for a Jesse Tree and other Christmas symbols. Jesse was the father of King David, and the

designs for this tree are based on Old Testament stories.

Join the fun, and let's see what we can create for this new idea for celebrating the Christmas season.

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## Preble Children's Center

November 1, 2017

Dear Family and Friends,

*I like to think that November is special for many reasons. It signals (dare I say it) "Holiday Season." It brings family and friends together to be thankful and share love and kindness, and it cements us firmly in the idea, winter is coming.*

*This November at the Preble Children's Center, we will also be counting our blessings. For me, that means thanking all the family and staff who have stood beside me and supported the changes here at the Center for the last three months.*

*Let us start November with love and grace and fellowship, and most of all, thankful for everything we have.*

Sincerely,  
Siobhan

### **Upcoming November Events:**

- **November 3<sup>rd</sup> – Picture Day**
- **November 23/24 – Center closed**
- **The Center will be open on days when the elementary schools in Tully and Homer are not. Please let us know if you need childcare.**

## Christian Ed News

The Christian Ed committee recently met and discussed ways to encourage our children to learn about our church's various missions program and how they can begin to participate by collecting an offering each week.

Over the next few Sundays, they will learn about the current projects supported by our church and decide if they want to contribute to an existing mission or find another opportunity to support.

Once a mission project has been selected, they will collect an offering as part of their regular Sunday School meeting each week.

Stay tuned to hear which project they choose to support and for updates on their progress!

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### I-81 Fundraiser Report for 2017

The sugar and creamer containers are all emptied and washed. The orange plastic goodie containers have been laid to rest. The box with the napkins, teas, funny sugars, tape, signs, spoons, stir sticks, and garbage bags has been organized and made ready for next season.

Thanks to Kadene and Annette for organizing another successful season of Free Coffees on I-81. And thanks to all the people who donated coffee, water, chips, granola bars, grapes, bananas, crackers, Oreos, candy, hot cocoa packets and more

A special thanks to all the homemade goodie makers. There's nothing more welcoming than offering a homemade cookie, sweet roll, muffin, or cupcake to a weary traveler. We could tell that they were very much appreciated.

Thanks to all the ladies who made the 15 mile loop to greet and share fellowship with the

many travelers. They listened to funny stories, comforted the bereaved, gave directions, received many blessings and more from the visiting folks from around the world.

And finally, we can't forget to thank Dick, Nick, and Wes, who faithfully got there early to make coffee and set us up, returning in the afternoon to tear us down.

Thank you to all who helped make this the successful, fun time that it was.

In the four times we did it, \$270815 was collected in total. For our September date, we earmarked our collection for the UCC Hurricane Fund. People were extra generous when they knew our purpose and we gathered \$806.30 that weekend.

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### Memorial Book Kiosk

A children's book kiosk, in memory of newborn Merideth Delia, Jessica and Jeff Delia's granddaughter, has been planted on the church property near the road, to assure access to the books during the winter.

The Cortland Standard featured the "Little Free Library" in a recent edition of the paper, with a photo and an extensive story.

The little structure is beautiful, lavender with handpainted flowers, and anyone can use and take the books for personal use or to share.

Thank you, Delia Family, for this lovely memorial library.

## November Celebrations

**November 3: Sue and Duane Whiteman**

**Anniversary**

**6: Alyssa Swayze**

**7: Helen Burt**

**9: Steve Riehlman**

**11: Andrew Swayze**

**13: David Riehlman**

**14: Lyndsey Miller**

**15: Randy Fitch**

**18: Mary Podsiedlik**

**19: Pat Wilcox**

**21: John and Laurna Henderson**

**Anniversary**

**29: Thomas Twentyman**

### *We Are Thankful for Our Youth*

Usually on Sunday morning our youth come forward for a lesson by Pastor Becky but on October 22<sup>nd</sup> the youth presented a lesson to the congregation. Their lesson was based on the scripture from Matthew 7:24 -27. In the book of Matthew we read about Jesus traveling and telling stories to the people to teach various lessons. Matthew 7: 24 -27 is a story about the “Wise and Foolish Builders”. In preparation for their lesson for the adults the youth built paper houses on rocks and sand. On the houses they wrote words that would help them build their lives on either a firm or weak foundation. These were used as props in their play. Some youth acted as the “builders” while others were in charge of sound effects (metal spoons and pots) for the storm, etc. At the end of their play they sang the song about the story. This song was familiar to many members in the congregation. A good time was had by all!

## **Bless Them Abundantly: A Veteran’s Day Prayer**

**Dear Lord,**

**Today we honor our veterans,  
worthy men and women  
who gave their best  
when they were called upon  
to serve and protect their country.  
We pray that you will bless them, Lord,  
for their unselfish service  
in the continual struggle  
to preserve our freedoms, our safety,  
and our country’s heritage, for all of us.**

**Bless them abundantly  
for the hardships they faced,  
for the sacrifices they made,  
for their many different contributions  
to America’s victories  
over tyranny and oppression.**

**We respect them, we thank them,  
we honor them, we are proud of them,  
and we pray that you will watch over  
these special people  
and bless them with peace and happiness.  
In Jesus’ name we pray; Amen.**

*By Joanna Fuchs*



We wish all of you a  
Happy  
Thanksgiving and a  
blessed  
fall season here in  
our valley.  
See you in church,  
and out and about!

