

The Pioneer

'Preparing for others to follow'

Preble Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
PO Box 186 1953 Preble Road
Preble, New York 13141

Rev. Rebecca F. West
607-749-3606 (office) 315-456-8746 (cell)
www.preblechurch.com

~ October 2017 ~

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

Dear Friends,

The UCC Daily Devotional in this Pioneer is written by Anthony Robinson, a well-known UCC minister, writer, and retreat leader who specializes in helping churches learn to manage conflict and assess their gifts in order to use them to best advantage for God's work in the world. I've studied a couple of his books in my ministry classes, and heard him speak at a seminar in DeWitt a few years ago. It is well worth taking the time to read his words.

Tony tells us that the size of our churches doesn't matter. Small churches, large churches – we are all essential to God's kingdom on earth. What we do and how we show our faith counts. Our practices of goodness, kindness, love, and acceptance change our world, even when the consequences are invisible to us, as they often are and must be.



Established by faithful believers many decades ago, our church has survived through difficult and interesting times, and we will continue to serve God as a community church. For one thing, family roots date back through generations, giving all members of families a precious sense of heritage and home. Even when local people don't regularly attend church, they often feel as though this is "their" church, and that we will be here for them for baptisms, weddings, funerals, and for other special reasons. People know each other outside church in a community like ours, and these habits help to connect us with each other.

In a world where confusion, need, and chaos are everyday news, the presence of the local church is crucial to our well-being. In the 50's and 60's, belonging to church was a given, and Christian values a touchstone. But times change, and they should, because our world is larger, more diverse, and we are constantly learning more about how to live and love together as God's beloved people. I absolutely believe that God's love for all of us is what God asks us

to practice with each other, and I understand that this mandate is a challenge for us; so much so, in fact, that it's the primary reason we are living among such diversity of peoples and ideas.

I lead worship once monthly at a local assisted living facility, and the experience is a blessing to me. The men and women who regularly attend worship (Wednesday is their Sabbath, by necessity) come to the chapel (a sitting room and den, complete with a working fireplace) with their medical devices and aides, settle in, and listen as well as they can to the words of the sermon. They sing and give as they can. I print large-font bulletins to help them follow the liturgy, and we sing acapella, sometimes starting on the right note, sometimes not.

New visitors to our monthly services wear careful expressions until they feel welcomed into the gathering, and regular attendees take their favorite chairs just as we take favorite pews in our sanctuaries. Some of them want to be acknowledged just because they were able to make it to services on that day. Some want their hands held, some a forehead brushed. They all want to be seen, these folks, each one filled with stories of their lives, stored most often now as memories.

They are essentially no different from us, in their deep need to relate to other people. Age is not a barrier, color of skin is not a barrier, religion and culture are not barriers in this place where they now live. And so it is in the "outside world," too. We are all people of various needs which we cannot satisfy by ourselves. That's the kicker: we can't satisfy our needs all by ourselves, and we have never been asked to do it, either. Jesus said, "Where two or more are gathered, there will I be, also." We are meant for community, and there are no restrictions upon who may join the group.

I pray for love, forgiveness, and joy, for each and every one of us as we go about life in our rural church and beautiful valley. Here, we build connections that count towards the presence of God's kingdom on earth. As I said at the beginning, how we practice goodness, kindness, love, and acceptance has the power to change our world.

**In faith and love,
Pastor Becky**

Thanks to all who "directed and produced" the Party on the Porch and the Community Ice Cream Social as we dedicated the new portico on 9/24.

Once again, our trustees and other volunteers worked together to accomplish a safety and maintenance goal for our historic church building.

This is a place of hospitality, open to all, and we are thankful that safety is assured for visitors, friends, Food Pantry clients, Day Care children, and all who enter our church through the front doors.

Harvest of Faith!

It's Fall, the harvest is near, farmers are preparing for the winter season ahead, corn is eaten, canned, and frozen along with berries for winter fruit pies.

And our 2017 Harvest of Faith fund raiser is close its ending date, too: October 30th. You still have time to make the Harvest!

This is our primary opportunity this year to help our church's operating budget, and we are all thankful for one another's support.

Susquehanna Association News

Your representatives and pastor attended the recent fall Association meeting at the First Congregational Church, UCC, in Walton, NY, on Saturday, September 30. What a drive to Walton! But well worth it – we all agreed the meeting was one of the best ever.

In addition to the fellowship which is always welcome, we covered several items during the business meeting and enjoyed an informative program led by the Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams. She updated us on general Conference activities and led us in small group discussions around the theme of the role of leadership in the Association.

The New York Conference and our Associations, both of which form the structure of church relationships, are looking at possible needs for change. The people at the meeting asked and answered many questions around this topic, and Marsha gathered the info for further use. We will be hearing more as this effort develops around our state.

In addition, we discussed a raise in our per-capita allotments, with the decision that any such raise will take place in 2019.

Everyone who is interested is always invited to attend these meetings. They are open to all and it's always fun to catch up with other folks and churches in our Associations.

Hurricane Relief

When the call arrived for help from the New York Conference churches for all the victims of 2017 Hurricanes Harvey (Texas), Irma (Gulf Coast) and Maria (Puerto Rico and other islands), our church responded.

After adding the last Route 81 Fund Raiser to the donations given by our congregation, we will send a check for more than \$2000 to the UCC effort.

Thank you for your generosity, love, and compassion for all the victims. This effort will be ongoing in many ways because of the immense devastations caused by these huge storms. Hygiene and cleanup kits will be needed for the foreseeable future, and drop off points have been designated. Please see Pastor Becky if you would like to know the locations.

Disaster Preparedness

For several years, the Associations of the New York Conference have been developing immediate response plans for local and regional disasters.

Trailers outfitted with tools and items needed for emergency responders are available and have been utilized in our valleys primarily for flood events.

People who wish to volunteer for this effort are welcomed, of course. Please check with Pastor Becky for more information about this critical ministry.

Final Porch Project Report

Our new porch has been dedicated, the planting and mulching of the blue holly and spirea shrubs is done, and the grass is growing on the newly-reseeded lawn. After two long years, our front porch project is finally finished!

A big thank you to all who helped and contributed to this project, especially to our structural engineer, Dr. Wayne Amato, and our contractor, Todd Warner of Morgan Hill Construction.

Our fund raising efforts realized \$22,861.32 through the generosity of many donors, while the entire project cost \$38,000.

Donations included amounts given to this project in memory of and in honor of the following people:

In Memory of:

Morris and Meta Baldwin
Frank and Dorothy Carl
Calvin Currie
Estella Currie
Everett and Betty Griswold
Peter Jeffers
Adelbert and June Knapp
Jean Martin
Dale Morgan
Steve Morgan
Edward J. West
Robert Frank
Bill and Jo Frank
Ryan Ricigliano
Jeannette Stevens
Max Stoker
Stewart and Jean Strong
Karen Swindon
Steve Underwood
William Underwood

In Honor of:

Millie Briggs
Joy Niswender
Linda Underwood
Rev. Rebecca West

Preble Children's Center Thank You

We've been working with the director and staff in the Day Care to support them as we can in their work with area children. The new Executive Director is Siobhan Kelly, and she sends the following note to us, which will be posted on the bulletin board:

Dear Preble Congregational Church Family,

Thank you for your generous donations of school supplies to the Preble Children's Center.

The paper products and crayons and bears and chalk and jump ropes and dry erase markers will make our daily life so much easier and more fun. It sets such a lovely precedent when we all work together.

Thank you so much for showing and sharing your generosity.

Siobhan Kelly

We are glad to help as we can, and we support day care's work with the kids – nothing more important than those kids!

Jazz Worship, 10-29

On Sunday, October 29, our congregation will worship with Homer UCC in a service featuring jazz music!

We are working out the details with Steve Wilson, Joe Ford (Homer's music director), Rev. Vicki Burtson (Homer's pastor), Sheila Shea (member of Homer UCC and an experienced professional jazz vocalist, and Rev. Becky West.

Come one, come all, for a great worship with one of our sister churches!

Our Church's Wider Mission

"We are one church - a united and uniting church. United in Christ, a just world for all."

From time to time, people ask about "OCWM," which is the name the UCC gives to congregational gifts that support wider UCC ministries in Associations, Conferences, and in the national and global church.

The UCC emphasizes God's continuing testament in the world and the extravagant welcome to all peoples in our churches.

Changing lives is possible, proven, and the ideal way to make it happen is when various UCC settings work together.

The love and power of one congregation is multiplied when it is joined with others. Our gifts to OCWM help the UCC spread God's love to more people in more places than we would be able to do alone. A portion of our operating budget is designated annually for our church's support of OCWM.

Here are some of the programs supported by OCWM:

- UCC Youth camps, events, scholarship;
- UCC Clergy continuing education, clergy gatherings, scholarships, resources;
- New UCC church development, pastoral support, leadership training;
- UCC National and Global missionaries, disaster recovery, justice advocacy.

OCWM is divided into "Basic Support" and "Special Offerings." There are five separate funds, and churches are designated as "5 for 5" if they contribute to all five.

Our church is a 5 for 5 congregation.

Here are the five divisions:

Basic Support is the gift churches designate from their annual budget, and it is split to support ministries of the Associations, Conferences, and the national UCC.

Neighbors in Need is justice-related and helps UCC churches across the US who are developing justice ministries.

One Great Hour of Sharing supports emergency and disaster relief, refugee ministries, and human development projects in the US and across the globe.

Strengthen the Church helps to fund new and renewing churches, young adult ministries, and leadership formation.

The Christmas Fund provides assistance for clergy families in need and administers pension supplements to low-income, retired church workers.

We are blessed in our church with Annette Benson as our Mission chair. She knows how our church's contributions support the larger mission of the UCC, and faithfully gives us the opportunity to share our support. We are grateful for her passion for this ministry.

Be the church. Protect the Environment. Care for the Poor. Forgive often. **Reject Racism.** **Fight for the Powerless. Share earthly and spiritual resources.** Embrace Diversity. Love God. **Enjoy this life.**

Many Thanks...

...to all who helped celebrate World Communion Sunday, with breads, spreads, presence, and decorating the altar table with the bounty of our blessings.

We pray for those in our world who are hungry and suffering, and we offer our help in all the ways God asks of us.

UCC Daily Devotional

Tony Robinson, UCC Minister, speaker, teacher, writer.
www.anthonyrobinson.com

Another Way

**“You don’t have much strength, I know that; you
used what you had to keep my Word.
You didn’t deny me when times were tough”**
Revelation 3:8 (The Message)

I started my ministry in small, rural churches. I did my pastoral work standing in dairy barns and over coffee at kitchen tables. I even wrote my seminary master’s thesis on small churches and their strengths and challenges.

Many of our churches have gotten smaller. Even our larger churches aren’t all that big compared to mega-churches.

But there’s no relationship between church size and faithfulness. And besides, we have it on good authority that what the world counts grand and glorious may not be so to God; and what the world counts unimportant and insignificant may, in God’s eyes, be precious and extraordinary.

Writing to one of the seven small churches in his care, Philadelphia, John of Patmos said, “You don’t have much strength, I know that.” And yet...

Small churches, small projects, small communities, too, from most perspectives, don’t have a great deal of power or importance. And yet...and yet. The first century church of Philadelphia kept God’s Word, persevered when times were tough.

We live in a time and place that is fairly drunk on bigness, on money, power, and celebrity.

Bombast trumps the quiet voice of conscience – or so it seems. “More of Everything,” the slogan of a major retailer, could be our culture’s credo.

Scripture reminds us that God sees things very differently, that small can be beautiful, that ordinary things can be extraordinary, that those the world calls “losers” may be great, and that a small community of faith can be so faithful that its name is not only written in Scripture, but in heaven.

Prayer

God, help us to persevere when times are tough, to keep your Word when the world has gone crazy. Amen.

A Blessing for Troubled Times

*As you stand at the edge of your future,
wondering how in the world
you will make it safely across...*

*May you feel God’s presence guiding you,
like an angel going before you;
like a pillar of cloud behind you,
lighting up the darkness,
on the outside ... or the inside.*

*May you stretch out your hand
in that place of need,
like Moses before the Red Sea,
reaching to God
with the clear acknowledgement
that your power is not enough,
and that God’s power is.*

*May all that seems against you
be diminished
as you rely more and more on
the God who sustains you.*

*May you walk safely into all that lies ahead,
knowing that God accompanies you.*

*May you allow your soul to sense
that God is here to save you,
not just at the end of life but right now.*

*And may you find your faith strengthened,
for your ministries and for all that life holds.*

From Lectionary Liturgy, September 17, 2017

What are you doing on
November 5th ?
4:00 to 6:00 PM

COME JOIN THE FUN!!

YUMMY SNACKS!!

GAMES

HAY WAGON RIDE

This event is for the whole family.
Join us at Preble Congregational Church for
an afternoon of fellowship.

If you have any questions you may call Pat
Twentyman.

October Celebrations

October 3: Darleen Lieber
Adam Stevens
9: Michelle Landcastle
12: Dan Podsiedlik
Melanie Cook
13: Karsyn Lieber
Renee Gates
14: Pat Twentyman
15: Bob and Darleen Lieber
Anniversary
John Henderson
23: Brenda McCutcheon
24: Ben Limmer
29: Nick Brennan
Regan Gilfilian
30: Robert Fox

"In the garden, Autumn is, indeed the crowning glory of the year,
bringing us the fruition of months of thought
and care and toil. And at no season, save perhaps in Daffodil time, do we
get such superb colour effects as from August to November."
- Rose G. Kingsley, *The Autumn Garden*



Join with us for a Jazz
Worship
on Sunday,
October 29!

More details to come, but we know this much: we will gather with Homer Congregational UCC at their church or ours, and enjoy worshipping together along with jazz rather than traditional church music.

Much joy and blessing ahead, as we come together for fellowship, worship, and praise!