

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,



We've started a New Year, and I wonder what is ahead of us. History reveals a *general* pattern, and there's no reason to think 2017 will be significantly different, except for the details. And of course it's the details that make one year stand out from the next – details in our own lives, in our nation, in our world. The arc of progress always moves forward, even when we yearn for a future just like a time in the past that we especially loved, as in “the way things used to be.”

But things change. We learn more about life on earth through discoveries in science, medicine, economics, human psychology, and more; and we learn more about how we humans can develop ways to “live” together peacefully through the experiences of government and politics and good faith...and, yes, more.

We simply don't have the power to prevent change; it's a fact. So it's worth it to learn to participate in the processes that create change, on a small scale or larger. The attitudes and willingness we bring to change are vital to the building of God's peace and harmony in our lives and world.

One of the most popular scripture passages used at certain church ceremonies is Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Here it is, in Eugene Peterson's *The Message, the Bible in Contemporary Language*:

There's an opportune time to do things, a right time for everything on the earth.
A right time for birth and another for death.
A right time to plant and another to reap.

A right time to kill and another to heal.
A right time to destroy and another to construct.
A right time to cry and another to laugh.
A right time to lament and another to cheer.
A right time to make love and another to abstain.
A right time to embrace and another to part.
A right time to search and another to count your losses.
A right time to hold on and another to let go.
A right time to rip out and another to mend.
A right time to shut up and another to speak up.
A right time to love and another to hate.
A right time to wage war and another to make peace.

I always appreciate these verses when people ask for them because they reflect the reality of life. We all, at one time or another, experience these opposites, and yet we continue to bravely go forth through both the difficulties and the joys of life.

In the same way, we welcome a new year without knowing what's ahead even in the next minute, but we do it always with faith that God is present and working with us for the good of all peoples. We *are* God's presence for other people, and how we help, love, and work together reminds us and shows others what it means to be God's people.

May God bless all of us as we step into 2017.

In faith and love, **Pastor Becky**



Gluten-free Holy Communion Wafers

Due to a request for gluten-free wafers to be made available for our monthly celebration of Holy Communion, we will offer the wafers on a separate patin. The wafers have been purchased from Cokesbury and will be stored in the original box, separate from but along with the other communion supplies in the church office.



If you would like to receive these wafers, please let Pastor Becky know so that enough of them will be provided on the special patin. If some remain after each communion service, they will need to be discarded, so we would like to have the right amount for those who prefer them.

Thanks! *The Board of Deacons*



Our congregation wishes to thank Tom Pitman for supplying scaffolding, climbing to the top, changing the bulbs in the recessed lighting in the sanctuary ceiling, and donating his time in memory of his Father, Lloyd Pitman.

This is not a task for the faint hearted. Thank You, Tom, very much appreciated.

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for your Christmas gift! I appreciate it and will use it to replace an aging music system in my home that at one time belonged to my parents.

You know that I love music and I've missed listening during this past holiday season, except on my car radio and in our church, so thank you for this special gift. I will think of you with gratitude as I listen!

With love, Becky

Dear Preble "Family,"

Once again, I was flattered and humbled by your overwhelming generosity in your Christmas bonus.

It is truly gratifying to serve such kind, loving, and generous souls here at Preble. I am a most fortunate man to have this position.

With love, Steve

As the Seasons Turn VI

Georgia Cates 2013

It's a shallow life that doesn't give a person a few scars.

~Garrison Keillor

Epiphany Choir Festival

Again this year, the Chapel Choir gathered with several local churches to bring in the New Year with sacred music on the afternoon of Sunday, January 8. Homer UCC hosted the gathering in its beautifully-decorated sanctuary, and Steve Wilson played the church organ for the service, and, of course, the piano for our choir.

This event is always well-attended because people can't quite get enough of Christmas music, kind of like me! I think eight or nine choirs performed two pieces each, blended with carols sang by the congregation from the Chalice hymn

Following the concert, people gathered for beverages and cookies in the fellowship area. If you haven't yet come to this annual event, please do! It's lovely and fun to share with other area churches.



...and Yet another Thank You...



It takes all of us in one way or another to help with holiday planning. There are so many of you – all of you, really – who made things happen, and everyone is grateful beyond words.

Helping Food Pantry patrons and needy families with food and gifts is always a blessing. Making Christmas cookie baking easier by sharing them with each other in a cookie exchange was great.

Both giver and "giftee" appreciated the flowers and cookies delivered to those who couldn't come to church, and Brenda's Blue Christmas service blessed many people who needed some special quiet and peace during the busy season.

So, thanks to all! You are wonderful people, each and every one of you.

Happy New Year:
Looking Back into our History

*Here is a poem written by a faithful member of our church, long ago. The New Year is a good time to reflect on how far we have come since our early beginnings.
Enjoy!*

The Founding of Preble Church
By Eleanor Ecob Morse

*Lift up the curtain from a hundred years,
how changed the scene upon the screen
appears. Primeval forests life their branches
high, against a glorious September sky.*

*The Iroquois no longer wander there,
wolves seek a distant, more secluded lair.
The sturdy pioneer comes to claim his home;
to found a church beneath the forest dome.*

*No stately walls this primal church uprears,
no tinted glass, no sculptured nave appears;
but human hearts, oppressed with pain and
care, flee to the promises God's children
share.*

*Out from the woodland's aisles they dimly see
faint glimpses of heaven's crystal sea.
Of gates of pearl, and surcease of all toil,
of sin that doth beset us, and the moil
of daily drudgery, and, listening, seem to hear
in bird song, anger chorus, sweet and clear.*

*They knew, these men of old, this little life,
so full of getting, giving, work and strife,
was but the prelude to a larger sphere,
unhampered by the bonds that bind us here.*

*And so with faith sublime they meet and pray,
to lay foundations for a future day.
'Twas in a barn, all rough and unarrayed,
their solemn vows and promises were made.
Did they remember how the infant Savior lay
within a manger, filled with common hay?*

*Oh, was it to their humble souls revealed
the wondrous power that little child should
wield?
And did they get a glimpse of their own act,
the solemn covenant and pact,
what it should mean in coming future days?*

*No palisade that man could raise,
could make such barrier to sham and sin
as words they penned that night, by lantern
dim!*

*Oh, if we could but dimly see and feel
the germs, our oft-times stolid acts reveal!
Down through the century that little meeting
sent a light of safety, blessing, guidance blent.*

*All through the long, long hundred years
that light has tempered sorrow, stilled our
fears.
Enlivened joy, inspired to higher deeds,
enriched and sweetened all our human needs.*

*And now the wilderness has vanished. In its
place are smiling farms, and homes of peace
and grace.
The hills still lift their gracious forms on high,
the valleys nestled at their feet still lie.*

*The lakes, gemmed with lilies, gleam
in shining splendor, the tall trees between.
Not vainly is their beauty lavished there.
not vainly does this incense fill the air.*

*Quick sense to comprehend, quick eye to see
have given its people grace and dignity.
Out from its home, brave men and women fair
give to the world the lessons they learned
there.*

*Sweet singers lift sad hearts in healing song.
Burdens are lifted from the weak, and strong
hands help the struggle of brave souls, in the
flight of progress - sifting wrong from right.*

*Dear Church, a little taper lit from heaven,
within these finite souls, a gracious leaven.
Arise and shine, ye children of the King.
from out their oft-time hidden places bring
the jewels that are yours by Heavenly right.
Be clothed and armored with
the light.*

*Put all His Beauteous garments
on and shine -
a gift from Heaven to earth,
pure and divine.*



September, 1915

Annual Meeting, 1-22-17



The Annual Meeting for the Preble Congregational Church is going to be held on Sunday, January 22, 2017. I would

encourage everyone to attend this dish to pass event. It is a great time of fellowship for all.

All year we have been working on having the committee reports available before we get to the actual council meetings. This has really helped us to become very efficient during meeting time. I would like to remind everyone of the upcoming date for submission of the annual meeting reports. The initial date of January 13 is being amended to now be January 15, 2017. I am hoping that the couple of extra days will help everyone to get the reports submitted to either Sue Swayze or Kadene Limmer. We will be working together to get the annual report compiled and out to everyone by January 20th at the latest. If throughout the year you have been on the email list and have received the council reports then you are all set and will receive this annual report as well. If you have not been receiving reports from me and want to have this one to read ahead of the meeting, (very recommended), then please contact me directly and I will either email or mail you a copy. My phone number is 315-696-6931. There will of course be copies of the report available at the meeting for anyone who would like to have one or is just used to the way it has always been done.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at this ever-lively meeting. There is, as always, a lot of information to cover. I hope that after the meal we will all be prepared to have our ideas for the upcoming year hear and discussed.

~Kadene Limmer, Moderator~

Preble Youth Group

We are pleased to announce that the first meeting of the Preble Youth Group was a hit. Although the group was small, we had a great time talking about what our wants were for the group and deciding on our first event. We would like to waste no time and would like to therefore invite anyone who is interested to join us for candy making sessions on both Saturday January 14, 2017 from 10 to noon, and Monday January 16, 2017 from 6 to 7:30 pm. The youth have a fun and exciting idea in store for the candy they make. I would encourage all who are interested to come and join us. It should be a great event.



~Kadene Limmer~

Christmas Carol Outing

Lots of adults and kids gathered at church after pageant practice on December 17 to carol together in the village of Preble.



We piled into a few cars, parked at the Dilea home, and walked around the block, stopping at homes along the way. We sang for Town Supervisor Jim Doring and his mother, and Charlotte and Steve Morgan, among many others.

The weather was incredible for our adventure and we were grateful, but afterwards we still enjoyed hot cocoa, coffee, and Christmas cookies, and laughs in the Riehlman Room at church, thanks to Sue Swayze.

We had a great time and look forward to doing it again next year. This was a suggestion made by the kids during our 11/20 CE Meeting. Thanks, kids, for such a good idea!

UCC Daily Devotional

“Deposed”

Tony Robinson, a UCC minister, speaker, teacher, and writer. His newest book is Called to Lead: Paul's Letters to Timothy for a New Day

"He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty." - Luke 1: 51 - 53

After Mary learns that she is to give birth to the Holy One of God, she breaks into song. But it's not quite the song you might expect. More battle cry than lullaby, it is a song about false powers toppled, the lowly raised up, and a world remade.

There are two possibilities here. One is that Mary has her lines wrong. She was supposed to be appearing in "Miracle on 34th Street," but somehow she picked up the script for "Exodus."

The other possibility is that we have Christmas wrong.

That second possibility would explain a few things. Like why a young girl, an "unwed mother," is center stage, while the guy whose job title is "king" goes ballistic and orders a hit on a toddler. Or why this birth takes place in an animal shelter and not the best birthing room in town. Or why all the big time experts haven't a clue, while three strangers with stars in their eyes are on course.

God, this God, is in the business of turning things upside down.

If we are right to interpret this message on the big screen of society and social justice (and we are), it belongs also on the small screen of your soul-health and mine.

The upside-down-thing begins at home, with

you, with me. Because there's a way in which our original sin is setting ourselves up as little kings and judges, imagining we are God. Bad news/ Good news: we have been deposed from our self-made thrones, brought down from the high ground where we judge others while assuring ourselves of our perfect virtue.

God has "scattered the proud in their inmost thoughts . . . and has lifted up the humble."

Prayer

"Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us this day."

Volunteer of the Year

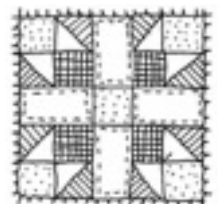
Gail Brennan has been named the 2016 Volunteer of the year for the McMahon/Ryan Child Advocacy Center in Syracuse, NY.

Gail made 119 quilts and 19 blankets for the children who are served by this agency, and her work continues.

McMahon/Ryan advocates provide support to abused children and their families as they negotiate the various systems involved with the investigation, prosecution, and follow-up required in abuse cases. It is a sad fact that one in ten children in the United States suffer childhood abuse.

The Center supports healing by coordinating services under one roof, and is comfortable, child-friendly, and physically and psychologically safe for children and the caregivers who are responsible for them.

Thank you, Gail, for your commitment and service to this worthy cause. Your church is very proud of you!



Thank You!!!!

Thank you to my church family for your generous Christmas gift. The gift certificate to my favorite quilt shop, *A Kaleidoscope of Quilts*, will definitely be put to good use as I continue my hobby of quilt making. It is both a joy and a challenge to select just the right fabric combinations and see them combine to make a new quilting project. Thank you so much.

Sue Swayze

from Christian Education Committee:

Our youth were very busy during the month of December. Early in the month they made Christmas cards to be sent to some of our church members. Soon after it was time to prepare for our annual Christmas program. They eagerly decided what roles they would like to play. This year's program included a live baby, Duke Shirley, as Baby Jesus. We also had some volunteers from the congregation who participated as shepherds and wise men. Everyone worked hard to make it a success. On Saturday evening the youth gathered after practice to go out and sing Christmas carols in the community. The youth were joined by several adults and all were led in singing by Steve Wilson. Although the weather was wet and cold everyone enjoyed

singing and seeing the smiling faces of those they visited. Following caroling everyone returned to church for hot cocoa and cookies to warm up. A fun time was had by all.

GREAT JOB KIDS!!!



January Celebrations

- January 7: Lois Waffner
8: Bill Withers
9: Cindy Steger
10: Ken Miller
15: Liam Fox
16: Matthew Ellis
Rebecca West
19: Jill Masters
20: William Winslow
26: Margaret Shirley
29: Timothy Shirley

Many of you have not yet submitted your birthdays to us. We only need the month and day. Please help us complete our birthday calendar so no one is missed. You may give this information to Becky, Sue Swayze or Annette Benson.

Coming up on January 22 after worship!

Bring a dish to pass and lots of enthusiasm as we reflect on 2016 and look forward to 2017!

