



The Forecaster - June and July, 2014

Official Publication of First Congregational Church, UCC
30 Main Street, Binghamton, New York 13905
The Rev. Dr. Arthur M. Suggs, Pastor



*No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here at First Congregational Church!*

Pastor's Perspective

In 1978, Harold Kushner published *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* and in it he told a story that deeply influenced my thinking over the years. It's about guilt, "the gift that keeps on giving!"

Two elderly women had recently died in his congregation. And it so happened that they lived near each other, so he went to visit both families one afternoon. For one family, they had always taken their mother (the one who died) to Florida for the winter. But she hadn't been well, and they thought the trip would be really hard for her, and perhaps it would be best if she didn't go to Florida this winter. So she stayed in New York, and alas, she died. And the family was so distraught. "If only we had just insisted that she go to Florida, this would have never happened."

Our beloved Rabbi then goes to visit the second family. And similar to the first family, the mother hadn't been well, and she usually went to Florida for the winter, and despite her condition the family thought it best that she go to Florida anyway. And so she went, and shortly after arriving she died. And the family was so distraught. "If only we hadn't insisted that she go to Florida, this would have never happened."

It was this obvious juxtaposition that caught his attention. He realized that Florida had nothing to do with it! And thus as well, there was no need for guilt. Each family was beating themselves up, but really for no reason. There was no crime, no guilt. It was much more the case that the two women had simply died, and the families had not contributed to the deaths by traveling or not traveling.

In his book these two stories then led to a fascinating discussion about guilt.

But now let me (sort of) change the subject. I saw a video not too long ago where the speaker asked a small group of people to list off things that they loved. They did it easily – parents, children, sunsets, ice cream, etc. etc. And it was a long list. He didn't stop them until the group really slowed down. And then he said, "Did any of you notice, not one of you said that you love yourself?" "Yourself" was never mentioned by anyone!

The single best thing you can do for yourself is to forgive. Lack of forgiveness is like a slow-acting poison for human beings. At first, no big deal. Then after prolonged exposure, you get sick, then sicker. Eventually the poison gets you. Forgiveness releases the guilt, either in yourself or in another person.

In the Scriptures we are commanded to love. The first act of love...forgive yourself and forgive others. Let it go. To change the metaphor a bit, Max Lucado once said, "Forgiveness is unlocking the door to set someone free, and realizing you were the prisoner." How much do you love yourself?

Have a great Summer full of blessings, just be careful about going to Florida.

Blessings,

Happy Birthday to those celebrating their special day in June and July:

Warren Resseguie	6/1	Diane Marderian	7/1
Stephanie Cirba	6/5	Miran Brigham	7/4
Arlene Price	6/6	Liza Beautz Turner	7/14
Nancy Wildoner	6/8	Timmie Reynolds Miller	7/15
Jill Andrews	6/10	Bernie Lewis	7/17
Teresa Cluff	6/11	Virginia Kronk	7/19
Michael Christian	6/16	Judy Price	7/19
Brian Thompson	6/19	Sara Beautz	7/19
Barbara Larson	6/24	Robyn Griffiths	7/31
Ruth Prince	6/24		
Jason Stevens	6/24		
Bob Giblin	6/25		
Martin Rorapaugh	6/27		
Allyson White	6/29		



Please inform the office if you notice an omission from our Birthday List.

CHOW SUNDAY REMINDER

Please mark your calendars for the following CHOW Sundays: July 6th and August 3rd. Our CHOW pantry 'needs' list is posted outside the Parlor. If you can volunteer at the FCC Food Pantry desk, please call Karen at 648-4711. Thank you.

Bible Study



Bible Study's last session on the Jewish Commentary on the New Testament will be 6/25. We will resume in September and further details about the book will be forthcoming.

Jazz Vespers



June Jazz Vespers will be on June 8th, 5pm, and will feature Claus Evans and Judy Giblin with Vicky Gordon accompanying. The music will be standards and Broadway numbers. This is the last Jazz Vespers of the season. The 2014-2015 season will begin on October 12th.

From the Office

Our next Forecaster will be a joint August & September publication. Please send me articles, programs, events, and any 'Save the Date' reminders by July 28th for both these months.

Please Note that the Trustees, Deacons and Church Council will not be meeting in July and August. If a special meeting is needed, then board members will be notified.



Youth Development

The class attendance for the month of May was between 9-23 children.

We had great success with our Mother's Day lesson. Each family worked on a vase of flowers for their mom, while the flower that they created represented what was special about them. They can be seen in the hall outside of the Sunday school room.

For June, we will focus on nurturing spirituality in children where lessons will be taken from *I Can Read God's Word*, *Taste Berries for Teens* and *Metro Ministry*. *Taste Berries* is a collection of inspirational stories of encouragement, love, friendship and tough issues. The teens and pre-teens have been responding beautifully to these lessons taken from the *Chicken Soup For the Soul* series. *I Can Read God's Word* has key Bible passages specially paraphrased for early readers. Through these resources, the children will learn how to develop a healthy balance of mind and spirit as they enter young adulthood with higher self-esteem and the ability to respond to life's challenges. This is a good transition into the Sunday school break that will start on June 29th.

The "getting to know you" program continues with Brian Pesto from the Children's Home coming to talk about what he does while also getting a chance to "know" our children better. We are still looking for speakers for Sept, Oct, Nov and Dec. We will have a sign up sheet with the dates and times over the next few weeks.

At our C.E. meeting, we discussed having the children be active participants in the Sunday worship on June 22nd.

A zoo trip is in the works for later in July, probably on a Thursday afternoon. We would love you to join us, so please let us know.

As we end our 2014 Sunday school year, we reflect on all the growth and accomplishments made over the last 8 months, with a steady core of upwards of 20 kids at times. We continue to create a safe, sacred space where children can learn more about themselves, God's word and where they fit in the world. For that we need to take a moment and pat ourselves on the back and not only recognize that we are doing the best we can, but that we are indeed doing what we are meant to be doing. And for that my heart is filled with joy, gratitude and love for all of our efforts combined.

Joyfully,
Renee Guidelli

Heart Centered Living

Explore, share, and experience different avenues of spiritual expression in a safe, sacred space every Monday evening from 6-8pm. Our theme for June's programs is Spirituality and Creativity. For details on the calendar of events, go to www.heart-centered-living.org

Here are our programs for the month of June:

- June 2- Heart Healing Energy Exchange
- June 9- Linking Creativity to Spirituality to tap into your higher power and purpose. A workshop led by Renee Guidelli (\$15)
- June 16- Creating Healing Mandela's (Shared Group activity with Peter Shell)
- June 23- Heart Healthy Dinner and a Heart Centered Movie- *Orbs The Veil is Lifting*
- June 30- HCL field trip

Church Picture Directory

Thank you to those who have taken their picture for the church picture directory! It is a nice collection of faces that are the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ in Binghamton, New York. The pictures are on display in the parlor. Over the summer we hope to put them in a directory format that we can each have. If you haven't been included yet, there is still time. You can send in a picture that we will copy or can arrange for a picture by calling the office. The church is the people, and we do not have a complete picture of the church without YOU. Questions, call Clare Price 238-1662.

The CHOW program provides food each month to the 33,000 residents that live in poverty. Forty percent of those are children. The NYS funding has been reduced to a third of previous years, leaving an even greater need for donations to this program. Each month we bring food on the first Sunday, but your supplies or monetary donations are welcome any time. Our shelves are pretty bare!

Please remember our less fortunate neighbors.



ICE CREAM SOCIAL



Plans are underway for another Ice Cream Social in our church parking lot. The date is Thursday evening, August 28, 2014, a week before school starts. There will be further details in the next Forecaster. What you need to think about now is ...

...School supplies!

An important part of this evening is giving out school supplies. There is a big need for notebooks, pencils, crayons, pens, etc. Last year we gave out over 215 bags of supplies donated by our members. As we get closer to the school year, please watch for the back-to-school sales that you could buy and donate. Your contributions are what put the program over the top! Thanks.

Congratulations to Clare Price!

Sometimes such things go unnoticed, but I don't want that to happen this time. At the Annual Meeting of the New York Conference of the UCC, during the Saturday evening banquet, our own Clare Price was honored as a "super-volunteer."

For the last 19 years, Clare has been working with groups in New York providing the energy, intelligence, imagination and love for two very important initiatives. One is disaster preparedness: Clare not only helped with the cleanup after the local floods of 2006, 2011, and Sandy in 2012, but has also been working to help churches and the NY Conf. be prepared for such events. This included the creation of a tool trailer which is taken to sites for clean-up and rebuilding, and the creation of dorm areas to house these workers. One of which is here at FCC and another one at the Rockaway church that was hit hard by Sandy.

The other area in which Clare was honored was in his work toward the covenant relationship we have with the German Protestant Church (EKHN). We experienced this best when Markus Kreiger was here as an associate pastor and, in addition, there have been times when other Germans have visited FCC and dozens of people from areas around NY have visited Germany -- including Tracy and me, Nancy Wildoner, the Prices—all due to the friendship we have with the EKHN church.

Clare didn't do any of this alone, but I'm not convinced at all that any of these wonderful things would have happened without him. And it was great to be sitting at the table with Clare, Arlene and their daughter, Margie, as he received the gratitude of the NY Conference, including a sustained standing ovation! I count it an honor to be his friend and have him part of our church. - Art Suggs

"Sharing our Stories"

Fun and Fellowship

Please join us for good conversation as we get to know each other better. We meet every other Tuesday at Noon in our Parlor. Bring a sandwich if you'd like; we will provide coffee and tea. We look forward to seeing you there. The next two get-togethers will be June 3 and 17. We will discuss if our group will meet in July, so further details will be forthcoming.

- Carole Resseguie and Mary Cuddeback

Are you interested in becoming a member of FCC?

Do you have questions about what is involved? A New Member class will be forming soon. If you would like to learn more, please speak with one of the Pastors, either Janet Abel or Art Suggs.

From The Sophia Center for Spirituality

On June 9th, at 6:30pm, we will meet Hildegard of Bingen, a Christian mystic born at the turn of the first millennium (1098). After taking the summer off, we will resume on the second Monday of each month beginning on September 8th.

BOOK-WORDS!

This I believe. Begun as a CBS radio program, and subsequently published in book form, the original series aired between 1951 and 1956, hosted by Edward R. Murrow. Revived in 2005 on NPR, these essays describe the guiding principles of the contributors' lives. The first collection contains 20 essays from the Murrow series, plus 60 from the NPR series. (A second collection,

This I believe II, contains 75 more essays, and can be found on the shelf at the same call number.) **170.44 THIS**

The Sunflower, by Simon Wiesenthal. In 1943 at Lemberg concentration camp, a dying Nazi soldier seeking forgiveness relates to the author, a Jew, how he systematically murdered 300 Jews, and then asks him to forgive him. Faced with this situation, what would you do? **179.7 WIES**

Care of the soul, by Thomas Moore. "Soul is not a thing but a quality or dimension of experiencing life and ourselves. It has to do with depth, value, relatedness, heart and personal substance." The author counsels readers to accept their humanity, inculcate ritual into everyday life, and increase personal peace and dignity by nurturing the soul. **158.1 MOOR**

Religion in human evolution, by Robert Bellah. Why and under what circumstances did religion as a concept enter the lives of human beings? Examining the cultural histories of China, Israel, India, and Greece, the author details the development and role of our religious infancy. **200.89 BELL**

A Faithful sea. The peoples of the Mediterranean are varied in all aspects of culture, and the three major religions of our world—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—all had their origins in this area. Learn about the people and their world from this unique study of the area. **200.91822 FAIT**

Heaven: our enduring fascination with the afterlife, by Lisa Miller. What is your definition of heaven? Journalist Miller surveys the many concepts of this most perfect place, what we think it is, and how we think we'll get there. **202.3 MILL**

Play Ball!

We will again enjoy a summer B-Mets game on Monday evening, June 23. We have box seats in section 5, along the third base line. We don't have to worry about watching for foul tip balls coming at us fast! Tickets are \$9.00 and sorry, no hot dog is included this year. But you can count on the same good fellowship of church members around you. A sign up sheet is in the hall by the parlor. Questions, call Arlene or Clare Price 238-1662.

Elizabeth and Bob Neill express their thanks and deep gratitude for the surprise recognition and party on May 4th. We consider the church to be part of our family and we felt very loved.

Thank you to you all!

Church Council Summary Report

The May 6th meeting had very good attendance.

Reports were received from the boards and committees of the church, and here are some highlights:

Trustees -

- At this time no further action will be taken as regards the repair/replacement of the dishwasher.
- Painting of the sanctuary windows should begin soon.
- Bids have been received for repairs to the organ. Still in discussion with in-house experts on this issue.
- Meetings have been scheduled with the endowment investors to learn the current position of the church's investments.
- The church's insurance company sent a technical consultant to inspect the church to determine if there were any areas which needed upgrading or changes. The inspection indicated only a few areas that need adjustments.

Christian Education-

- The Board of Christian Education Development Committee has been meeting regularly. Plans are underway for a scheduled activity outside of church this summer for the children.
- "Getting to know you" opportunities will be held at various times by the Sunday church school youth to share their works with the congregation.
- High school and college graduates will be recognized during the Youth Day program in June.

Faith Works Fellowship -

- June 23 has been set for the annual Binghamton Mets baseball game and you can reserve your tickets with Clare Price.
- Please remember there is a Pastor's Assistance Fund which is used to help those who approach the church for immediate help; the need is very great.
- The annual church picnic will be held at Elizabeth and Bob Neill's home on July 20.

Mission Committee -

- The annual ice cream social will be on August 28.
- Once again the congregation will be asked to donate school supplies for the school bag give-away.
- The First Congregational Church, UCC was again recognized by the New York Conference as a "Five for Five" participating congregation.

While only a brief summation, this is an indication of the good work being done by your church. For more information on any of these reports, please contact that board or committee.

-Arlene M. Price, Secretary

A Time to Recognize Our Scholars

The Board of Deacons wants to honor the graduates in our church family. If you know of a person graduating from high school or college, please tell the church office or a deacon. On Sunday, June 22, we want to honor them.

Also, scholarships are available to members of our church family. You can get an application from the church office. The awards are only a few hundred dollars, but with the cost of higher education these days, every little bit helps. The completed applications are due to the office by July 1st.



Board of Trustees Summary Report, May 21, 2014

Pastor's report: Pastors Art and Janet will be attending the New York Conference Annual Meeting on May 31-June 1.

Old business: The church windows on the east & south sides of the church will be painted. The contract will include an "FCC Hold Harmless" clause to include "Scope of Work." Re: the side lights in the sanctuary, fixtures are not the problem, wiring is. Clare Price arranged to have the drains rodded out (cleared) at no cost to the church. The crack on the wall in Fellowship Hall does not extend to the exterior. We will be priming and painting the stained area in Fellowship Hall.

More information is required re our dishwashing machine before repair vs. replace can be decided.

Stuart Organ Co. provided estimates for the repair of the organ. Spoke with David Agard regarding the repairs to the organ; he said he would advise doing all of them. He also requested that the organ not be removed and replaced with an electric system. Set up new system for maintenance agreements, church usage, etc. All requests and quotes shall be directed first to the Trustees to include "FCC Hold Harmless" clause.

Responsibilities of the Trustees' Financial Committee:

Review monthly financial report(s) and determine the amount and line item where funds should be withdrawn to pay expenses on a quarterly time frame.

Meetings were held on May 13th & 14th with our financial advisors to review the current holdings.

Determine if FCC financial report(s) can be transferred electronically to the church rather than by mail.

Chapel stained glass windows: It was determined that a thermal retarding glass could be framed to cover the windows. This will protect the stained glass until it is decided whether we will repair or replace it.

Sentry Alarm provided a maintenance check on the system.

Trustees decided to add a unit to current system.

New business:

On April 23rd, a technical consultant with our insurance carrier did a walk-through the church to offer any suggestions about liability issues.

We have requested a review of FCC financial records to close the 2013 year from our accountant.

A company was called to investigate and repair a roof leak and water damage. No Correspondence or Usage Applications.

Board of Deacons Report, May 20, 2014

Chairperson's Comments - Attendance averaged 78 over the last month. The Deacons discussed the recent changes to the order of worship, and considered some of the positives and negatives of them.

Pastor's Report - Art reviewed the upcoming worship schedule with emphasis on June with the end of the school year activities. New member(s) will be received on June 15. Two new groups are now meeting at FCC, both on Thursday evenings: The *Three Jewels Zen Group* led by Michael O'Sullivan and the *Conversations with God Group* led by Dave Peters. Music for the Sunday Services for the summer was discussed and will be scheduled shortly. Art met with a BU student for advice on enhancing the relationship of the church with the BU students, and will follow up on the ideas generated.

Associate Pastor's Report - Janet distributed her written report containing the details of her visitation, teaching, worship leadership and preaching, and assistance with Christian Education duties. The NYC trip is set for June 21 to the Cloisters. Janet attended the Spring Association Meeting that focused on church transition. She will be attending the Annual Meeting of the NY Conference in June. She will participate in the Pride Palooza this Spring. We also went over the list of those to visit or are home-bound.

Christian Education Report - Renee supplied a report on the Sunday School and the status of the lessons and other aspects of the Sunday School. The Report contained information on ways to increase the interaction between the children and the adults, and a volunteer opportunity with a BU student to help with the Sunday School.

Other Business - One additional conditional letter has been returned. The Deacons reviewed the purchasing and distribution of Easter flowers. Dorothy Gardner will be guest preacher for June 1. Rummage Sale scheduled for October 18, with some initial planning done.

New Business - We will be recognizing new graduates on Sunday, May 25. Monies are now available for academic awards, and the committee will conclude their work by July. The application form was reviewed and several changes made. We will be decorating the altar with garden flowers beginning June 15 and a sign-up sheet will be posted. Decorating with garden flowers will continue till Labor Day. People are encouraged to participate in this. "Telling Our Stories" has met twice so far and is going well. Suggested (and approved) that we recognize birthdays on the first Sunday of the month during Coffee Hour with a birthday cake provided and will begin on August 3.

Church Picnic

Our annual picnic will be Sunday, July 20 at the Neills. They are located off Route 434 at 2 Normandy Court. Everyone should bring a dish to pass and church will provide meat to barbeque. More details forthcoming, but please save the date!

Mark Your Calendars!

- The trip to NY is 6/21, leaving from the church parking lot at 7 AM to carpool to The Cloisters. We will stop on the way back for a meal. Cost of tickets- \$25.00; \$17.00 for seniors.
- The church will have a table at the Pride Palooza- 6/14, starting at Noon, downtown on Court Street.
- Rally Day will be on September 14, 2014. Come and join us for the start of another great church year! As is tradition, wear your red apparel and our group picture will be taken outside near the bell.

How To Contact Us:

**Mon –Thurs, 9:00-3:00 pm,
(607)723-8981
fcc@binghamtonwireless.com
Web: www.uccbinghamton.org**

**The Rev. Dr. Arthur M. Suggs – Senior Pastor
The Rev. Janet Abel – Associate Pastor
Renee Guidelli – Director of Christian Education
Nancy Wildoner – Organist & Choir Director
Ethelyn Enos – Director of Joyful Noise
Judy Giblin – Director of Jazz Vespers
Leslie Dahlgren – Office Manager
Brooke Shaddock – Childcare Provider
Alice Pettit – Treasurer
Chuck Mallery—Financial Secretary
Erick Clasen – Web Master
Vanessa Warren– Bookkeeper
Cindi West-Davidson – Custodian
Toni Rorapaugh—Librarian**



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