



The Forecaster - January, 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

End of year lists...I love them. I like seeing the overview of a year and getting a sense for trends. So I look at them all from the various news outlets, and the one below from the Huffington Post, is simply excellent. And while each news story can be viewed as either good or bad news, depending, I feel so heartened by the list below. What a year in the religion biz. Enjoy!

Malala Yousafzai reminded everyone that her convictions around education and peace come from God and Islam. Malala proved again and again that her faith was stronger than the Taliban who attempted to kill her.

Prabhjot Singh, a Columbia Professor attacked near his home in Harlem with shouts of 'Get Osama,' yet his response to his attackers was full of the kind of grace that truly could change the world. *

Anat Hoffman has been seeking gender equality at the Kotel (the Western or Wailing Wall in Jerusalem) for over 25 years. This year the Women of the Wall saw some remarkable gains as the police, who had traditionally arrested them, began instead to protect them. But the fight is far from over. **

Frank Schaefer performed the wedding for his gay son and was put on trail for it in the Methodist Church. Refusing to recant his actions, he was stripped of his credentials, showing sacrifice of his own ministry and career for the principles of love and equality for LGBT people — especially his son.***

Sunday Assembly Founders British comedian Sanderson Jones co-founded The Sunday Assembly, an atheist service held at a converted church, at the beginning of 2013 that sought to have the benefits of church without the God. The movement has already grown with some accusing Jones of starting the first mega-atheist church. ****

Desmond Tutu "I would refuse to go to a homophobic heaven. No, I would say sorry, I mean I would much rather go to the other place." With his strident advocacy for LGBT people and animal rights, along with his role in the life and memory of Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu remains one of the most beloved and relevant religious leaders of our time.

Reza Aslan is the Muslim author of a best selling book about Jesus; that's not really a big event. But his conversation on Fox News, when he defended his right as a non-Christian to write about Jesus, became a major news story and sparked the very good conversation about how and why scholars write about the religions of other people.

Nelson Mandela The story of his life includes the influence — both positively and negatively — of the Church on his own life and the life of South Africa. Even more, the prophetic witness Mandela displayed during both the liberation of South Africa and the subsequent efforts at reconciliation contain religious elements on their own.

(Continued on page 2)





Happy Birthday to those celebrating their special day in January and February:

Marion Schick	1/2		
Bruce Doane	1/6	Jeanne Ellison	2/2
John Roberts	1/9	Linda Excell	2/3
Charles Dearborn	1/10	Collin Miller	2/3
Nate Relyea	1/10	Cindi West-Davidson	2/3
Chris Finch O'Neill	1/10	Gene Seymour	2/5
Mel Rhinebeck	1/12	Dr. Louis Mateya	2/6
Rachel Youmans	1/12	Pastor Art Suggs	2/7
Rev. Janet Abel	1/13	Maggie Clements	2/11
Brandon Bucker	1/14	Toni Rorapaugh	2/12
Paul Griffiths	1/14	Tim Mitchell	2/13
Daniel Ray	1/14	Andrea Schaugency	2/18
Mark Relyea	1/15	Carol Strout	2/18
Robert Cluff	1/20	Lucinda Bucker	2/19
Beverly Hemenway	1/21	Timothy Christian	2/19
Heidi Bowne Roberts	1/21	Darin Lewis	2/22
Shirley Sullivan	1/23	Judy Giblin	2/23
Robert Winans	1/23	Maynard Fahs	2/27
Devin O'Neill	1/24		
Andrea Bucker	1/27		
James Lewis	1/28		
Conner John Gyllenhammer	1/30		
Steven Excell	1/30		

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

CHOW SUNDAY REMINDER

Please mark your calendars for the following CHOW Sunday, February 2nd. These fall on the first Sunday of each month. If anyone can help out with our CHOW Food Pantry, please call Karen at 648-4711. Thank you.

Bible Study



Bible Study- we continue with Aging as a Spiritual Process. Please bring a bag lunch and join us on Wednesdays at Noon in the parlor: 1/8, 1/15, 1/22, 1/29.

From the Office



Our next Forecaster will be a February publication. Please send me articles, programs, events, and any 'save the date' reminders by 16th. I will also include any early March 'happenings' in the February Forecaster should the Forecaster be delayed through delivery or a late mailing. Please call me if you have any questions. Thanks, Leslie

Martin Luther King Celebration at FCC

After meeting at 6pm at the MLK Promenade, walkers will conclude their march and arrive at FCC at 7pm for service, followed by a reception in Fellowship Hall. All members are invited to join in this important community event.

(Pastor's Perspective continued)

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (50th Anniversary). One of the most relevant religious figures in America over the last year was one lived and preached a half century ago. In observing the 50th anniversary of the 'March on Washington,' Americans remembered his eloquent insistence on justice, while recognizing how far America has come, and how far there is left to go.

Pope Francis was the most talked about person on the internet and was named Time Magazine's person of the year. From his election in March to this date he is the most fascinating and controversial religious figure in the world today, and the fascination -- and controversy -- is only just beginning. *****

*Part of his response to the attack: "Even more important to me than my attackers being caught is that they are taught. My tradition teaches me to value justice and accountability, and it also teaches me love, compassion and understanding." "So today, my response is gratitude. Tomorrow my response will be gratitude, as well. To the nurse, to the elderly man and to the other good Samaritans who came to my aid; to my Harlem community, my Columbia community and my Sikh community; and for my role as husband, father, doctor, American, teacher, advocate and neighbor."

**As you face the wall, the left 1/4 is for Orthodox Rabbits, then the middle half is for men, to the right of which is a hideous and offensive barrier. On the other side of the barrier, out of sight, is the remaining space for women.

***As of this writing, four Methodist ministers are slated for trial. The next one is our neighbor, Rev. Steve Heiss, Pastor of Tabernacle Methodist just a couple blocks from our church. I've asked him to come to our church and tell his story at the appropriate time.

****I have a couple of ongoing conversations with BU professors about atheism. So far everything that they don't believe in I don't believe in either. The conversation and friendship continues. But having an atheist "church" can be so helpful in the conversation.

*****OMG!!! I've never been so hopeful about relations with Catholics. And so many Catholics tell me, anonymously and confidentially of course, that they are thrilled.

What a year!

Blessings upon you all for 2014.

Christian Education
Sunday School



We are excited to begin 2014 with a new curriculum, a C.E. committee, and several new Sunday School Children.

Both on-line curriculums Metro Ministry and Tasty Faith give our staff, volunteers, and even the parents a chance to look at what we are going to be learning from week to week. These curriculums have been created to ensure that our children will have a well-rounded understanding of God's word and be able to apply it wherever they are--in their homes, on the streets, as well as in school. The lessons for the month of January taken from Metro Ministries curriculum is, Building Your Life on Jesus, God Made You for a Reason, The Holy Spirit is Here for You, and Choose to Obey God's word. In addition to this, we will be weaving in Life is a Trip short stories and messages from Tasty Faith such as Your Map, Dead Ends, Just for U-turn and What Gunk is in Your Trunk. We truly look forward to all the new things ahead as we continue to nourish our children's mind, body and spirit together. Please feel free to contact me at 607-226-2354 with any questions, comments or ideas that you may have for our kids.

Heart Centered Living Programs for January

The Heart Centered Group brings open minded people together to explore, share and experience different avenues of spiritual expression which fosters healing ourselves, our community and our planet. Monday night programs run from 6-8. Love offerings are accepted unless otherwise noted or purchase a pass for \$20 to attend 4 programs of your choice and a chance to win a free workshop.

Monday, January 6th-Heart Healing Energy Exchange

Monday, January 13th-Heart Centered Workshop-Creating A Medicine Wheel, \$15

Monday, January 20th-Heart Centered Activity-Sound Healing Experimentation

Monday, January 27th-Heart Centered Movie and Meal-The Messenger-story of Joan of Arc

Saturday, January 25th-Numerology Workshop with Peter

*Being your Higher Self, a 7-week series w/ Renée Guidelli starts again Wednesday, January 15th. Call 607-226-2354, friend us on Facebook or go to www.heart-centered-living.org for more information.



Fellowship Evening

The January meeting will be Friday Jan. 17. We will start with a Potluck dinner at 6pm. Following dinner we will have a discussion and planning session to determine what activities the group would like to do in 2014. Members are urged to bring their dish to pass and come with their good ideas for this coming year. Our objective is to foster fellowship among church members as we seek ways to reach out and serve our neighbors. Our discussion will be followed by a movie "Babette's Feast" about a strict Calvinist community in Jutland which is changed by a French woman who arrives looking for a job, ends up cooking for them and provides a feast that results in the Calvinists being able to experience joy for the first time in their lives.

Super Giveaway

For several years the church has given away warm clothes, and bedding on Super Bowl Sunday. The focus of this effort has been the homeless. Last year we had a large supply of bedding and it was all given away. At the Church Council Meeting in December it was decided to not do it this year because we didn't think we had much material. It turned out that warm clothes and bedding was saved from the Rummage Sale. Then we received a large contribution of clothes. The question will be reconsidered at the January meeting of Council. If Council decides to go ahead, the congregation will be asked to contribute any warm clothing, shoes, and bedding they can and also their time. It takes the work of many hands to do this. It is meaningful work especially this time of year.

BOOK-WORDS!

(another new direction for our church)

Rescuing the Bible from fundamentalism, by John Shelby Spong. *Rev. Spong explains how portions of the Bible came to be written and why they differ from one another, even if they tell the same story. He maintains that when we insist on reading the Bible as the inerrant word of God, we fail to see the depths and shadings of this brilliant work, leading us to miss Jesus' message.* **220.601 SPON**

The Origin of species, and, the Voyage of the Beagle, by Charles Darwin. *Who has not heard of the theory of evolution by means of natural selection? Said to be a very readable treatment of a scientific subject, this is the original text of 1859. The Voyage of the Beagle took place twenty years prior, and led to the conclusions explored in the Origin of Species.* **576.82 DARW**

Puritan portraits, by J. I. Packer. *Rev. Dr. Packer is the acknowledged expert on Puritan theology, and the contents are introductions to works by the authors, who are some of our Puritan ancestors.* **285.9092 PACK**

A Generous orthodoxy, by Brian D. McLaren. *The author explores what divides Christians as well as what we have in common, and looks beyond "us/them" thinking in order to draw us all closer to "we."* **270.83 MCLA**

Frederick Douglass, by William S. McFeely. *Frederick Douglass lived during a most turbulent time in the United States, both before and after slaves in this country were granted freedom. The story of his life is remarkable and inspiring for his achievements, connections, writings, lectures, and heroism.* **973.7092 DOUGLASS M**

Atlantic cousins, by Jack Fructman, Jr. *During the Enlightenment, that period of the 18th century that influences thought even today, Benjamin Franklin shared ideas concerning freedom, democracy, and science, among other topics, with men on both sides of the ocean, in England and France as well as in North America. Here are biographical sketches of about a dozen of these pioneering, thoughtful men.* **973.3092 FRUC**

From the Sophia Center for Spirituality

An Experience of Centering Prayer: January 18th, from 10am to 3pm, at Sophia House in Endicott.

Taize Prayer Service: January 26th, at 6pm, at FCC.

Lunch with the Psalms: Tuesdays at FCC from 12:15 to 12:45pm.

Centering Prayer Group: 1st & 3rd Wednesdays at 6:30pm, at Sophia House in Endicott AND the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 10am, at FCC.

Lectio Divina Group: 1st & 3rd Thursdays at 10am, at Sophia House in Endicott AND the 2nd & 4th Thursdays at 6:30pm at FCC.

For more information or to view our daily blog, visit our website at:

thesophiacenterforspirituality.org
or call 240-6914.



January Jazz Vespers!

Jazz Vespers will be held on January 12th featuring vocalist Cathie Marie, along with Doug Beardsley on keyboards and Larry Lolli on guitar. Judy will also be singing a couple of duets with Cathie Marie. Warm up your January with some great jazz standards. As always, 5pm. See you there!

Annual Meeting

We will hold our Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 26th after worship. We will vote on the 2014 budget and The 2013 Annual Reports.



Board of Trustees Report

December 18, 2013

Minutes from November 19, 2013 were accepted. Some financial topics were brought up and will be discussed with our Treasurer.

Pastor's Report:

- Art Suggs extended an invitation to Temple Israel for the use of FCC's facilities due to the recent collapse of a roof on one of their buildings. They were very appreciative, but seem to be okay for now.
- Three new members will be received at worship service on December 22. They are Bob Conklin, Dorothy Gardner and Marion Schick.
- Art shared his appreciation for the fine work accomplished by David Agard and Dan Reissig on the newly adopted church Constitution and By-Laws. With the Board's blessing, he would like to pass them on to David Gaewski, Conference Minister of the United Church of Christ, to serve as a template for any interested congregations.

Old Business:

- Chimney – Inspector approved the work completed on the chimney. He recommended repair work should be undertaken on the west wall of the sanctuary during the next five years.
- Window painting – Pete still trying to locate a painter for this work. Will definitely need a lift to complete the project. Estimate was discussed.
- Molding and photographs of all pastors of First Congregation Church have been hung in the library.

New Business:

- A very satisfactory employee review was conducted with Leslie, Church Office Manager. Increasing health insurance costs were discussed. Pastor Art reminded the Board to keep Leslie informed of scheduling of events, costs for facilities rental, and any other receipts the office is expected to handle.
- Judy has requested assistance with suggestions for nominees for Board of Trustees.
- Need for a clear understanding of key access for various individuals and groups. The chairman of the Board of Trustees should be contacted by the church office when a request is made for a key. Leslie brought this to the Board's attention.
- After the beginning of the year, the church needs to purchase a scanner and computer for the church office. The current office computer will be available for use by Renee Guidelli.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm with the reciting of The Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Arlene M. Price, Acting Secretary

Board of Deacons Report

December 17, 2013

Chairperson's Report – Mary Cuddeback and Dolores Megyesi are the two nominated Deacons for 2014. Mary will fill one year and another member will be nominated to fill the 2015 and 2016 years. There will be 7 Deacons for the 2014 year – Bernie, Ethy, Jim, Suzanne, Deb, Mary, Dolores. Pastor reviews were completed and successful. Janet's contract has been revised and signed for 2014.

Pastor's Report was submitted by Art and read by Ethy. The worship schedule through Easter was distributed. Three new members will be received on 12/22/13 – Dorothy Gardner, Marion Schick and Bob Conklin. Appreciation for the work and acceptance of the new Constitution and By Laws was expressed. Sophia Center Taize service is on 12/22.

Associate Pastor's Report – Janet has distributed cookies to shut-ins, as well as visited many of our members. Caroling is 12/22/13 and 3 nursing homes will be visited.

Christian Education – Renee submitted a report on the improved health conditions of Tianna and shared that Dayana had been in a car accident. The average attendance is 20, with 6 families represented. The Sunday singing of "Lean On Me" went very well. Thanks to Tracy and the new CE Committee, and JN! New curriculum has been ordered.

Music Report – Ethy explained that Maureen and Judy will coordinate music on JN Sundays. There will be smaller ensembles and solos for the preludes, anthems and postludes. Hymns will be played, mostly, by Maureen.

Council – Children helped with putting labels in the hymnals. Faithworks put out 25 Thanksgiving dinners, expense of \$600 was offset by \$400 in contributions. There will not be a Giveaway this January, however people can bring warm clothes to be distributed by CHOW. Mission for the Angels and fruit baskets for the CE Children and their families is underway.

Old Business — We will deliver a bouquet and card to Janet Reynolds, celebrating her 90th birthday! Letters for removal of past members have been recommended and the names of these members were read. Kim clarified that there aren't any names from last year's Annual Meeting to be removed. Deacons have arranged the distribution of Poinsettias to the shut-ins. Janet volunteered to extend our concerns and help to Temple Israel as they endured damage to their building and roof.

New Business – Poinsettias are displayed. 50 plants were ordered and 11 shut-ins will receive donated plants.

CONGRATULATIONS to FCC members who took part in the selling of BOGO Books! You raised over \$400 for First Congregational Church and helped your Local Humane Society! There are more sales coming in for 2014!! What a beautiful way to keep our church and community missions healthy and wealthy for the New Year!
 Love to All, Catherine and Ethy

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 Shadduck – Childcare Provider
Alice Pettit – Treasurer
Erick Clasen – Web Master
Vanessa Warren– Bookkeeper
Cindi West-Davidson – Custodian
Toni Rorapaugh—Librarian

Thank you for a job well done to all the Committee and Board members whose terms are expiring at the end of the month.



Return Service Requested

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