



The Forecaster - December, 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

I'm writing this Pastor's article in place of Art, as his mother and our church member, Helen Suggs, passed away. Our sympathy certainly is with Art, Tracy and the whole family. What a delightful, sweet woman! Her presence certainly will be missed here. At this time of year, I can't help but feel very thankful for having known a good woman like Helen.

During the holidays, we are to be thankful, as we know. This time starts with All Saint's Day, the day following All Hallowed Eve, or Halloween. On this day at church we remember and thank God for all our loved ones who've gone on before us. Then comes Thanksgiving, our national time of thankfulness, centered on the dining room table—laden full with food—and surrounded by family and friends.

And then, of course, comes the huge annual celebration of Christmas, a time where we also give thanks to God for the gifts we receive and give in our lives, and for the divinity in which we live, for all our blessings. We are to give thanks, and yet...in this busy, busy time of year, we sometimes don't feel very thankful.

I preached at the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service at St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church on the Monday before Thanksgiving, and my theme was thankfulness, based on a passage from Deuteronomy 26, which I quote in part,

“You shall take some of the first fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name...A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down to Egypt...then you, together with the Levites, and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.”

Here the people are commanded to give thanks for the bounty of the harvest. In a way we have to be commanded to say thanks, too. Our parents probably all taught us to say “thank you” upon receiving a gift, they reminded us to write that thank you note, and they taught us those other golden words, too--like “please.” We learned, and then our hearts caught up, and now we can give our thanks with all our heart.

That is my holiday wish for us all this year—to be truly thankful and grateful for today, and hopeful for tomorrow. God bless this Christmas and always.

Janet Abel

Happy Birthday to those celebrating their special day in December and January



Dick Gormly	12/1	Paul Griffiths	1/14
Jack Brink	12/2	Daniel Ray	1/14
Valerie Guiles	12/2	Mark Relyea	1/15
Art Price	12/3	Robert Cluff	1/20
Kurt Kennicutt	12/6	Heidi Bowne Roberts	1/21
Deena Price	12/9	Shirley Sullivan	1/23
Justin Gass	12/10	Robert Winans	1/23
Barb Thompson	12/11	Devin O'Neill	1/24
Evelyn Allen	12/14	Andrea Bucker	1/27
Rachel Ditch	12/14	James Lewis	1/28
Renee Guidelli	12/18	Michelle DeMars Frisbee	
Nancy Allan-Elliott	12/23		1/30
Eginhard Dominique		Conner John Gyllenhammer	
Jean-Philippe	12/24		1/30
Janet Reynolds	12/25	Steven Excell	1/30
Bruce Doane	1/6		
John Roberts	1/9		
Charles Dearborn	1/10		
Nate Relyea	1/10		
Chris Finch	1/10		
Mel Rhinebeck	1/12		
Rachel Youmans	1/12		
Rev. Janet Abel	1/13		
Brandon Bucker	1/14		

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



The mission of The Sophia Center for Spirituality, located at FCC, is to serve as a resource for all people and faith communities seeking to deepen their relationship with God. The Sophia Center for Spirituality will hold the following events in December at the First Congregational Church:

- Monday, Dec. 15, 6:30pm, *Advent Reflection, "Holy Darkness, Blessed Light."* Suggested donation, \$10
- *Lunch With the Psalms Scripture Reflection.* (Every Tuesday at 12:15-12:45pm)
- Monday, Dec. 22, 6:30pm, Centering Prayer.
- Saturday, Jan. 10, 10-3pm, Centering Prayer Retreat Day. Suggested donation, \$30
- Monday, Jan. 12, 6:30pm, Mystic of the Month Series: Mechtilde of Magdeburg, presented by Barbara Kane, Suggested donation, \$10.
- Monday, Jan. 19, 6:30pm, Spiritual Sampler - Chanting as a Spiritual Practice, presented by Sr. Lois Barton, CSJ, Suggested donation, \$10.
- Sunday, Jan. 25, 6pm: Taizé
- Monday, Jan. 26, 6:30pm, Centering Prayer (monthly session)



Christmas Caroling

We'll be caroling again at some area nursing homes and some houses on December 21st, meeting here at church at 5pm. Please wear your Christmas hats and bring a willing spirit and instruments if you play!

Please see Janet for more information.



Spiritual Book Group

We have a new name for our Wednesday discussion group! We will still meet at Noon most Wednesdays in the Parlor. We will be continuing to discuss Bishop Spong's book "Why Christianity Must Change Or Die," but please note, we will not be meeting the last two weeks of the month—12/24 and 12/31—Christmas and New Year's Eves. For more information, please see Janet.



Enclosed in this Forecaster is the Poinsettia Plant Order Form. Please complete and submit to the office by December 15th or earlier.

Please send me articles, programs, events, and any 'Save the Date' reminders by December 23 for the upcoming January Forecaster. —Leslie

Jazz Vespers

Jazz Vespers for December will feature The Southern Tier Brass Quintet. These five gentlemen (plus one on percussion) are local professional musicians: Chris Weber on trumpet, Jud Spena on trumpet, Nathan Raboy on trombone, Peter Perfetti on horn, Adam Peck on tuba and Joel Smales on percussion. They will be performing Christmas music for the most part and they have some amazing arrangements that will definitely put you in the Christmas Spirit.

Please join us on December 14th at 5pm.



Adult Forums

The Christian Education Committee has coordinated another Adult Forum to be held on Sunday, December 14th, following coffee hour.

For this forum, the theme will be *The Rest of the Christmas Story*. This will be led by Art and Tracy Suggs who will present a set of interesting, yet surprisingly difficult questions concerning the Christmas stories we “know” and love. This will be a light-hearted group participation game that will take place after the coffee hour on Sunday, Dec 14th.

2014 Annual Reports

I need all committee and board reports by Thursday, December 18th. If you haven't been involved in submitting a report before, please stop in the office and I will make you a copy of your committee's 2013 submission.

I appreciate your patience if your Forecaster is delayed during this busy month. Please call me with any questions or concerns.—Leslie

Board of Trustees Minutes, November 19, 2014

Old business:

- New lease agreement to be signed by representatives of all people/groups who rent the building. Still being worked out. Will be ready next month.
- Board is working on generating a list of everyone who uses the church. The agreement will contain a “Hold Harmless” clause.
- Electronic transfers of monies between accounts is being set up. The Bookkeeper will have the ability to look at these transfers, but not instigate them.

New business:

- A financial representative will be asked to come to the December meeting to speak to the Trustees.
- We proceed with background checks of all staff, volunteer or paid, who interface in any way with children. Recommended by our insurance advisors. Discussion followed. Amendment to motion: it will include only paid staff and regular volunteers and Trustees and coordinated by the Personnel Committee.
- Amended motion: We will conduct background checks on all paid staff, regular volunteers and Trustees beginning with 2015 staff.

Correspondence or Usage Applications

- A request for Thursday nights from 7:00 to 9:00. Trustees will follow up. - Judith A. Giblin, Secretary

Faith & Fellowship

Fellowship Night

On Friday, November 21st, about 25 of us gathered for pizza and potluck dessert. We ordered pizza and others brought a dessert to share. Following supper we packed 30 Thanksgiving food baskets. (Reminder that there will be no Fellowship evening in December.)

Thanksgiving Food Baskets

Through the generosity of the congregation we collected \$911 which enabled us to purchase 30 turkeys and dinner fixings to be distributed to our less fortunate neighbors. Twenty-three of these were delivered to the Southern AIDS Program (who handled the distribution) on Monday, November 24th. They extended their sincere thanks and wished us to pass it on to all contributors. Seven of the baskets were kept at church for Art to distribute. This was the biggest effort to date.

Deck the Hall

On Sunday, Nov. 30th (the start of Advent), several members stayed after church to deck the hall for Christmas. This included placing the large wreath over the choir loft, the two wreaths over the doors in the front of the sanctuary, four large banners, two wreaths outside beside the front doors, the Christmas tree, and candles on the window sills. Many thanks to all who stayed to help. We are looking good!



Christmas Tea at Pumpelly Estate

On Friday, December 12th, at 4:30pm, we will be going to Owego for a delightful high tea at the Pumpelly Estate. If you would like to join us, please call for your reservation at 687-0510 (\$30). You have to sign up as soon as possible since this sells out quickly. Pumpelly is a lovely old house in Owego and we get a tour of the house after enjoying a high tea. *We'll be meeting in the church parking lot at 3:45pm in order to drive to Owego together.* For more information please see Janet or Mary Cuddeback.

Joyful Noise Schedule



For December:

December 4, rehearse at 7pm
December 11, no rehearsal
December 18, rehearse at 7pm
December 21, service
(rehearsal at 9am.)

For January:

January 8, rehearse at 7pm
January 15, rehearse at 7pm
January 18, service,
(rehearsal at 9am)



The Binghamton Downtown Singers will be presenting Handel's Messiah on December 19th and 20th at 8pm, under the direction of Marisa Crabb with orchestra and soloists. The performances will be in the Helen

Foley Theater at Binghamton High School located at 31 Main St. Binghamton. General admission tickets are \$10, or reserved seats at \$15 can be purchased by calling 607-648-5032, or through the website:

Messiah_tickets@stny.rr.com.

Deb Miller will also have tickets available or you can purchase them at the door.

A select number of Downtown Singers will be participating in a portion of the Binghamton Philharmonic's production of "Home For the Holidays" on Saturday, December 13th at 8pm. We will be singing five festive holiday pieces featuring baritone, Jake Gardner on Vaughn Williams's "Fantasia on Christmas Carols". Tickets will be available through the Forum box office. Call 778-1369.

YOU ARE INVITED . . .

To the launch of "Sweet Vines and Bitter Fruit," Bob White's latest book, on Sunday afternoon, December 7th, between 2-5pm, at the Endicott Visitor Center, 300 Lincoln Avenue in Endicott at the corner of Park Street.

The second in a trilogy of Ben and Francesca adventures, "Sweet Vines and Bitter Fruit" is a cozy mystery set in the preeminent grape-growing and wine-producing, Barossa Valley of South Australia. Instead of an author reading, there will be hourly dramatic presentations of the first chapter by Friends of Bob.



Board of Deacons Report, November 18, 2014

Chairperson's Report- 83 were present at our First Night Concert by Nancy Wildoner. All the staff reviews have been completed.

Pastor's Report- Rev. Suggs reviewed the upcoming worship schedule, highlighting several upcoming events, especially Advent and Christmas Eve (7pm). Art has had four additional speaking engagements beyond Sunday preaching, all of which have now concluded.

Associate Pastor's Report- Janet distributed her written report, which contained the details of her visitation, teaching, worship leadership and preaching, and assistance with Christian Education duties. Janet attended a conference on death and dying at Stella Maris (which will sadly soon be closing for financial reasons!) She was the guest preacher at the Community Thanksgiving Service held at St. Patrick's RC Church. We are now on the list for the Sacred Sites Open House, which will be May 17. Christmas Caroling is scheduled for Dec. 21.

Christian Education Report- Renee supplied a report on the Sunday School, updating the Deacons on the status of the lessons and other aspects of the Sunday School. Details about the Sunday School, Adult Forums, etc. can be found in their CE minutes.

Church Council Report- Bernie highlighted several things from that meeting (details found in their minutes) noting that the following projects are ongoing: Multimedia upgrade for the Sanctuary, Organ repair and its funding, the Advent Angel Cards, Thanksgiving Baskets (30), and the Stewardship Mailing. Thank you to Deb Miller, Dorothy Gardner, and Tom Bucker for being the Stewardship speakers this year.

Music- Thank you to Maureen Helms for her leadership of Joyful Noise, which for the first time in many years featured Rob and Sean Hollander on guitar and drum, and Dubbie and David Agard on violin. Thank you to all...beautiful music!

New Business- The Deacons will recommend to the congregation at the Annual Meeting that wine be offered in addition to grape juice for communion. Thank you to Bernie Lewis and Elizabeth Neill for the creation of "sacred sacks" that will protect our new Intinction Communion Ware made by Irene Lawson.

Christian Education

November started with the creation of shields and a focus on God being our strength that through him and with him we can do all things, followed by lessons on the theme of being thankful and what it means to give from the heart of God. We learned songs and stories of grace and giving thanks and even had a chance to help with the Thanksgiving celebration. For the month of December we will be lighting the candles in the sanctuary. In December our lessons' focus will be on Love, Joy, Peace and Hope as we anticipate the celebration of the birth of Christ. Just a friendly reminder that the student's artwork and projects in the halls and in the classrooms are always available for your viewing pleasure. Wishing everyone a very joyful and peaceful Christmas season. - Renee Guidelli

Last Month's First Friday at FCC

First Friday at First Congregational Church, November 4, 2014 was a huge success. Our organist Nancy Wildoner shared her wonderful talent with a fantastic organ concert. The music consisted of many recognizable tunes from the past and present. Photographer Bill Wandling displayed some of his images to a sequence of music played by Nancy. Feet were tapping, hands were clapping, and heads nodding to the beat of the songs. Two Rivers Photography Club added to the festive evening with more than 25 images adorning the main hallway. Many of the images are for sale, if interested. At the conclusion of the concert, folks were encouraged to share some refreshments sponsored by members of the church and Two Rivers Photography Club. It was a wonderful evening enjoyed by everyone. Stay tuned....Nancy is willing to perform another concert in the future.

Heaven's Treasure

A reminder that we have a nice selection of Christmas cards & napkins. Enjoy holiday shopping as you have a nice cup of tea. -Mary

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.

CHOW Sundays will be December 7th and January 4th. Our pantry needs are listed in the hallway.

Heart Centered Living

The Works of Heart Holiday Craft fair brought in \$80 for the Christmas Tree Angel program, and half a barrel of food for our pantry. There were 125 people that came in to the craft fair and around 30+ people that were already inside as vendors and HCL volunteers. It was a very successful event and we are planning another one in the spring.

Our schedule for December is as follows:

- Monday, December 1st-Heart Centered Healing Energy
- Monday, December 8th-Sacred Geometry with Peter Shell
- Monday, December 15th-Native American Craft Making
- Monday, December 22nd-HCL Trade Blanket and Christmas Celebration
- Monday December 29th- HCL End of the Year Review

All programs run from 6-8pm and are held at First Congregational Church. For details, go to www.heart-centered-living.org, follow us on facebook or pick up a schedule outside the main office in the hall way.

The Traveler

At peace with the world
it comes to me

Not to spoil the waters
with unnecessary burdens
to let go of misery
keep good company
and have fun, laughing fun

God is good, go to the castle within
and just sit there for awhile

Relax your body, breathe in his love
close your eyes and let things be

It's awesome.

by Janet Marie Russo 2010

The Knitting Circle

The year has gone quickly with many items made by the Knitting Circle. Enough scarves were made to fit everyone in the Children's home! Afghans were delivered to the Veterans and to the Hospital with a special group given to the children's floor. Habitat for Humanity chose many items for their November fundraiser. A special "thank you" goes to all of the needle crafters for their beautiful work.

Stewardship Reminder

November was the month we held our Annual Stewardship Drive. Members and friends have been asked to pledge the amount of financial support they expect to give to the support of God's work at the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ in Binghamton, New York. Most pledges were presented at the worship service on November 23. If you have not had opportunity to make a pledge, it is not too late. While you may plan to make a regular offering with or without the pledge, it is a great help in developing the church financial plan for 2015 when pledges are made.

It can also be a help to you at income tax time to have a statement from church on how much tax deductible offering you made in the past year. The pledge card can be put in the offering plate or mailed to the church office. Thank you!

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
Maureen Helms – Director of Joyful Noise
Judy Giblin – Director of Jazz Vespers
Leslie Dahlgren – Office Manager
Sharon 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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