



The Forecaster - March, 2015

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!*

For most of my life Lent has been my least favorite season of the year. Precisely at the time when Winter loosens its icy grip on my life, I'm supposed to fast, feel penitent, give up something I love, and in general feel sorry for being such a miserable sinner. And in my half hearted, anemic way I would grudgingly obey. I gave up french fries one year and actually lost a few pounds. Another year it was chocolate. But to be honest with you, the whole thing felt sort of medieval and irrelevant.

The word Lent comes from the Old English word *lencten* meaning "springtime." It's unique to the English language: the Latin word for Lent is *Quadragesima* or "fortieth" referring to the number of days in the Lenten fast. The period of time from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday, the day before Easter, actually consists of forty-six days. But during this period there are six Sundays, and those days are not part of the forty-day fast. Sundays don't count, they are a feast day, even during Lent.

So what is the point of Lent? If your theology is deeply penitential (stressing how sorry we humans should feel for our sins), then it could be a time for feeling extra sorry, and the Lenten fast (that chocolate, for example) symbolizes how contrite we sinners are (or should be). But what if your theology isn't penitential? Mine certainly wasn't, so I just sort of went through the motions but without much heart in it. But then I learned something. It had to do with the inner meaning of some of the gospel stories. Not the outer, plain meaning, but the inner symbolism.

Those forty days of Lent are based on the forty day fast of Jesus in the wilderness. He concludes his fast, is then tempted by the Devil, passes the test, and begins his ministry which changes the world. The forty days in the wilderness was a time when he purified his soul such that thereafter nothing could keep him from achieving his goal. Seen archetypally, that time in the wilderness was when he shed the baggage, cleared his mind, and set his intent upon what he was about to do. It had nothing to do with french fries and chocolate, but rather was a spiritual discipline that prepared him – inwardly – to be a person up to the task. Our observance of Lent is a reenactment! It is remembering what we are truly about when the memory of our true being and doing has been forgotten, when the daily distractions have diverted us from our true calling. Therefore doing this annually is rather important.

And so we observe Lent. And toward the end of it we are thrown our biggest temptation, which is to think for one minute that death has any power over us at all. We immerse ourselves in that temptation, dive in at the deep end, and when we come up for air, we realize once again, that it doesn't. We had forgotten, again. But we are reminded on Easter that light and love and life are the only true, permanent realities.

And so a Blessed Lent to you all,

Happy Birthday to those celebrating their special day in March and April



Liz O'Neill	3/1	Catherine Cornelius	3/29
Leanne Lott Morrell	3/3	Heather Excell Proppe	3/29
Evan Brigham	3/4	Thomas Bucker	4/1
Angelo Dadamio	3/4	Alice Pettit	4/4
Laura Mateya	3/5	Timothy O'Neill	4/5
Robin Whalen	3/6	Bob White	4/6
Alexander O'Brien	3/14	Cynthia Jones	4/9
Kay Rhinebeck	3/15	Christopher Kronk	4/9
David Excell	3/19	Karen Holman	4/17
Ethelyn Enos, Sr.	3/22	Taylor Mihok	4/20
William Cluff	3/22	Matthew Christian	4/22
Germaine Smith	3/26	Bill Cuddeback	4/22
Dorothy Doane	3/28	David DeMars	4/26
Lola Schumann	3/29		

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

Christian Education News from Renee

Our Lenten season continues with wonderful stories from the Bible as the children learn more about Jesus and his teachings. We are called to reflect on the beauty of being known deeply through God's promise to Abraham and Sarah (March 1). We are taken on a whirlwind tour through day and night, amongst the stars to the top of the mountain through Psalm 19 (March 8). Then on March 15, we discover what it was like for Jesus in the Wilderness. We contemplate Jeremiah's message of God's love being etched in our hearts on March 22, and we enter into Jerusalem with Jesus during Palm Sunday on March 29. Please feel free to contact me with any questions about the above lessons or Sunday school in general. We look forward to educating, enlightening and inspiring your children to learn about Christ's teachings during this Holy season. Warmly, Renee Guidelli 607-226-2354.

Are you interested in becoming a member of First Congregational Church?

Do you have questions about what is involved? If you would like to learn more, please speak with one of the Pastors, either Janet Abel or Art Suggs.



The Sophia Center for Spirituality invites you to the following:

March 9: Mystic of the Month - St. Brendan the Navigator, 6:30 p.m. Suggested donation \$10.

March 16: Spiritual Sampler - The Luminous Gospels, 6:30pm.

March 21: Thomas Merton Conference featuring Sr. Mary Donald Corcoran, OSB, and Rev. Dr. Arthur Suggs, 9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Suggested donation \$30 (\$20/students). Register online here: http://thesophiacenterforspirituality.org/Upcoming_Events.html

March 22: Taize Prayer Service, 6pm.

March 23: Centering Prayer, 6:30pm.

These programs are held at First Congregational Church (FCC), 30 Main Street, Binghamton, NY.

One Great Hour of Sharing

This month our congregation, along with folks in protestant churches across the country, is holding a special collection for *One Great Hour of Sharing*. This is the biggest special collection during the year and is held during lent. Instead of giving up something, we can contribute to something.

So what are we sharing? This offering is used to help people around the world in need. Some goes to feed the hungry. The many stories we hear about that are heart breaking. Some is used for disaster relief (after our big flood in 2011, our community was given three \$5,000 grants to help with our recovery projects here in Broome County). Those gifts were at the request of our congregation and came from the OGHs funds. Now is our turn to "give back" as we see the many disasters of floods, fires, ice storms, tornados, and so much more.

This month there will be more information in our bulletins and envelopes for the offering. If you don't get an official envelope, use your own and put One Great Hour of Sharing on it. We are blessed to live in a beautiful and fairly peaceful place. Let us share with so many who are not as fortunate.



Spiritual Book Group

We have been discussing the book *Abraham, the First Historical Biography*, by David Rosenberg. Our plan is to finish the book through March and then choose our next book for April and May very soon. Please join us on Wednesdays, at noon, in our parlor (feel free to bring your lunch).

H.E.A.R.T Centered Living (HCL)

Heart Centered Living is a cooperative of like-minded individuals focused on purposeful living who share from the heart for the heart. Our programs touch on the following areas: H-health and wellness/Healing E-Environment and Earth based practices A-Arts and Entertainment R-Retreats T-Teaching what we are passionate about to other who want to live the H.E.A.R.T. Centered way.

Here is our schedule for March/April:

Monday, March 2-Energy Healing Night with Debbie Matsushima 6-8pm. \$6

Tuesday, March 3-Numerology and raising children w/ Peter @ SUNY Broome 6-8pm.

Friday, March 13-Crafts for the Spirit "Dream Catchers" w/ Peter 5:30-7:30pm. \$15

Wednesday, March 18-Earth Wisdom Class w/ Renee @ SUNY Broome 6-8:30pm.

Monday, March 23-Health and Wellness Program 6-8pm. \$6

Wednesday, March 25-Earth Wisdom Class with Renee @ SUNY Broome 6-8:30pm.

Saturday, March 28-Works of Heart Spring Craft Fair 10-4pm.

Monday, March 30-Working with Pendulums w/ Peter 6-8pm, \$25

Most programs are held at First Congregational Church unless otherwise noted. To learn more, go to www.heart-centered-living.org or follow Heart Centered Living on Facebook. You can also pick up a 2015 HCL Calendar of Events outside the main office in the hallway.

Faith & Fellowship

Our February gathering was attended by about 30 People, including many from the Christian Scientists. After dinner we all enjoyed Jay Mallery's slide presentation on his cross country bicycle trip of last year. It was quite a trip. His pictures were great. Thank you, Jay.

Share Your Gift Night

Following a meal on Friday evening, March 20th, you are invited to share your special gift, talent or interest with others in the church family at the *March Fellowship Night*.

Please consider what it is you enjoy doing that, in ten or less minutes, you could and would share with others. Maybe it's painting or taking pictures, perhaps crocheting or knitting, or singing a song by yourself or with others, how about a dance, or reading something you've written, making soap, cooking a special dish, an impersonation or improvisation . . . it's your special gift. Please talk with Allyson or Bob White after church, or call 687-6294 for more information and to be included in the program on March 20th, at 6pm.

The schedule for the year has been completed. Please save-the-date for April 17th at 6pm, for dinner followed by a talk with Helena Guran on "Volunteering in Honduras."

Super Giveaway

Our annual attempt to provide warm clothing, blankets and sleeping bags to the homeless and needy took place on Super Bowl Sunday February 1st. We had a large amount of material and good help. The turnout seemed to be a bit less than last year. This could have been because there were some competing programs. It was a good effort and many thanks to all who helped in any way.

Soup Suppers

During Lent the Fellowship will facilitate the weekly Soup Suppers before Music and Meditation on Wednesday evenings. We are looking for soup makers and help setting up and cleaning up. Set up is at 5pm; please use the signup sheets in the hallway.



Jazz Vespers

Jazz Vespers on March 8th, at 5pm, will feature the vocal jazz group, *Swing Street Station*. The performers are Jan DeAngelo, Shannon DeAngelo, Alex Mendoza and Tom Federowicz. This vocal ensemble has performed all over the United States and Europe, with local musicians and members of the Tommy Dorsey Band. Their music is lively and swinging and their performance is always smooth and harmonic.

Think Manhattan Transfer.

-Judy Giblin

The Greatest Love

Janet Russo, 2014

Since the age of 20,
I have heard these words:
"Write of your love for Me."

For 30 years I have been asking
"What does this mean?"

Today, I understand.
You are my greatest love; without which,
would I recognize any other?"



CHOW Sunday will be March 1st and April 5th. Our pantry needs are fruit juice, canned fruit, soup, ramen noodles, pasta sauce, pasta, canned meats, canned green beans, peanut butter and potatoes. Thank you.

Easter Plants are ready to be ordered!

By the time you read this, we will have all the details available for ordering your Easter plants - such as the plant offerings and pricing. All the plants will be displayed on Easter Sunday, April 5th.

If you are out of town and would like to place an order, we can do that over the phone (607-723-8981) or via email at fcc@binghamtonwireless.com.

For our members who live locally, order forms will be included in our Sunday Bulletins, and in our office.

BOOK-WORDS!

Jesus, his life and teachings, edited by Joseph Girzone. *The author recounts the chronicle of Jesus' life, according to the Biblical accounts in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Girzone retired from the active Catholic priesthood in 1981 and now resides near Albany, NY. 232.901 JESU*

Templar revelation: secret guardians of the true identity of Christ, by Lynn Picknett. *A roundup of the "usual suspects," such as John the Baptist, the Knights Templar, Freemasonry, and Mary Magdalene, in a DaVinci-Code-like exposé of early Christianity. Reviews vary widely. See what you think. 271.7913 PICK*

Holy blood, holy Grail, by Michael Baigent, Henry Lincoln, and Richard Leigh. *The first of the books researching early church documents regarding the life of Christ and the intertwining of certain groups protecting or hiding the identity of the Holy Grail. As with the title above, some reviewers found the "evidence" thin; others called it a good read for its entertainment value. As with all such books, draw your own conclusions.*

944 BAIG

Hidden Jesus, by Donald Spoto. *A newly-minted biography of the Savior, based not only on Biblical accounts, but also on Biblical scholarship. 239.901 SPOT*

Jesus lived in India : his unknown life before and after the crucifixion, by Holgen Kersten. *Another fascinating theory about those missing 30 years in the Biblical account of Jesus' life. And again, reviews vary widely regarding the scholarship of the unfolding theory. 232.901 KIRS*

Wherever you go, there you are: mindfulness meditation in daily life, by Jon Kabat-Zinn. *This is the book that introduced meditation to our Western culture. It covers methods of finding spiritual contentment and revealing your own hidden spiritual treasures. 155.9 KABA*

Board of Deacons Summary Report

Feb 24, 2015

Deacons met on February 24 and the following items were covered in the meeting:

1. Election of officers:
Treasurer - Janet Abel
Secretary - Art Suggs
Vice Chair - Rob Hollander
Chairperson - Bernie Lewis
2. Wednesday Soup and meditation sessions are set for the rest of Lent.
3. Janet Reynolds passed away February 23, 2015. Final arrangements are pending.
4. We will be choosing another florist to handle the flowers, plants, etc. for FCC, since MacClennons closed December 31, 2014.
5. Palms are being ordered for Palm Sunday.
6. Information regarding Easter plant ordering will be coming soon. Order forms will be available in the bulletin.
7. There will be an Easter 'sunrise' Service as usual in Recreation Park, at 8AM. Light breakfast at FCC will follow.
8. Maundy Thursday (April 2) service plans are being finalized.
9. March 8 is the next scheduled communion. This will be a formal set up to include both wine and grape juice. Wine will be red, the grape juice will be white.

Music and Meditation Programs

Our Lenten Music and Meditation programs will begin this Wednesday, February 25th with meditation with Renee Guidelli. All our Soup Suppers begin at 6pm, with service to follow at 6:45pm.

Our schedules for the remaining Soup Suppers are:

Wednesday, March 4th - Meditation with Pastor Art and music with Amy Christian.

Wednesday, March 11th - Meditation with Rev. Barry Downing and music with Rob Hollander and Art Price.

Wednesday, March 18th - Meditation and music with Sr. Lois Barton.

Wednesday, March 25th - Meditation with Rev. Bob White and music with Judy Giblin and Maureen Helms.

Maundy Thursday Communion Service will be held on April 2nd at 7pm.

Board of Trustees Summary Report

February 17, 2015

Board members reiterated the resolution they agreed to at a brief meeting on January 25, 2015 to elect officers: Tom Bucker, Chair; Toni Rorapaugh, Secretary.

Resolution #1: The minutes of the previous regular meeting were accepted.

Financials were discussed. Our bookkeeper assures us reports will be monthly.

Resolution #2: The financial reports were accepted as discussed.

Old Business:

Board discussed actions to be taken on bids for organ repair, prevention of storm water overflows inside the building, replacement of flood light on east side of building, snow removal, and insurance company recommendations.

New Business:

Resolution #3: The Trustees have reviewed the performance of our investment company over a period of five years, and we have full faith and confidence in their financial strategy. We agree that our mix of investment/securities satisfies our responsibilities regarding church funding needs.

Resolution #4: Trustees authorize the purchase of 10 rectangular and 2 round tables to replace old wooden tables in Fellowship Hall.

Resolution #5: There shall be no spending from any accounts outside the budget without prior approval of the Board of Trustees.

Resolution #6: The term "interest" shall be expanded to include regular interest as well as appreciation as posted in the Annual Report.

Discussed the monthly deposit of a standard amount into church accounts to more effectively cover expenses.

There was no correspondence and no applications.

Respectfully submitted.

Toni Rorapaugh
Secretary

Adult Forum

Save-the-Date for Sunday, March 8th following worship, as Nick Ponterio, from The Red Cross, joins us to discuss Disaster Preparedness.



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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