



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



Pastor's Perspective

“Once in a lifetime.”

We all know the phrase, and every once in a while it is literally true. I just returned from such an experience when I met with my two sisters and daughter for the purpose of distributing the ashes of both my parents.

In retirement they lived for about eight years in Bradenton, Florida, when they got tired of being snowbirds. And while there, they fell in love with a certain stretch of beach on Anna Maria Island. As their health began to decline, I had the conversation with them about final wishes. They both wanted to be cremated. And when I asked about what to do with the ashes, they didn't have to think very long. On that stretch of beach they would set up their lawn chairs and watch the sunset. I knew the place well. That is where they wanted to be.

So that's where we all were one day last week at dusk, knee deep in the water, gentle waves, faint breeze, a nearly full moon, the sunset spanning the entire spectrum, and Venus, Mars, and Jupiter all in a row.

In the symbolism of the world's religions, the ocean is a great symbol of the infinite. Buddhists, for example, will give the title “Ocean of Wisdom” to a deeply venerated teacher. Standing on the beach you can ponder the sheer expanse as it extends beyond view. Those waves have broken upon the shore for eons. You get a subliminal feel for the immensity of space and time while standing in those waves lapping upon your feet.

Ashes, water, and sand are physical things. But they point to and remind one of the spiritual, the way earlier two souls left this plane and were subsumed into the infinite light and love of the divine.

So I am grateful. For life, for love, for family, for once in a lifetime experiences. I hope your Thanksgiving was blessed as well.

Merry Christmas from the Staff at First Congregational Church

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



Dick Gormly	12/1	Mel Rhinebeck	1/12
Jack Brink	12/2	Rachel Youmans	1/12
Art Price	12/3	Rev. Janet Abel	1/13
Kurt Kennicutt	12/6	Liana Railsback	1/13
Deena Price	12/9	Brandon Bucker	1/14
Justin Gass	12/10	Daniel Ray	1/14
Barb Thompson	12/11	Robert Cluff	1/20
Evelyn Allen	12/14	Heidi Bowne Roberts	1/21
Renee Guidelli	12/18	Shirley Sullivan	1/23
Nancy Allan-Elliott	12/23	Robert Winans	1/23
Eginhard Dominique	Jean-	Devin O'Neill	1/24
Philippe	12/24	Debbie Van Dusen	1/26
Bruce Doane	1/6	Andrea Bucker	1/27
John Roberts	1/9	James Lewis	1/28
Charles Dearborn	1/10	Conner John Gyllenhammer	
Nate Relyea	1/10		1/30
Chris O'Neill	1/10	Steven Excell	1/30

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

Faith Works

Fifteen of us gathered on Friday Nov. 20 to assemble the Thanksgiving dinners. We decided to get the work done before we ate. That worked out well and the consensus is that we should continue it in the future. Our potluck afterward was very relaxed and a good fellowship time. There will be no Fellowship Evening in December.

• **Hanging O'the Greens**

Continuing our tradition, the church was decorated on the first Sunday of Advent Nov. 29th. The large wreath was placed on the organ pipes, smaller wreaths were placed over the doors either side of the pulpit and wreaths were placed outside on both sides of the main door. The banners were hung, the Christmas tree was set up and candles were placed in the windows on both sides of the sanctuary.

• **A Busy Year**

This completes a year filled with service activity and fellowship. To all our members and friends we extend our wish for a blessed Christmas and the happiest of New Years.

-Bob and Elizabeth Neill

Christmas Tea and Cookie Exchange



Please join us on Tuesday, December 8th, at Noon in our Parlor for our Christmas cookie exchange.

Bring one recipe of your favorite cookies and enjoy a cup of tea as we bring in the Christmas Season.

If you are interested in helping, please call Mary Cuddeback. Thank you.

Holiday Dinner Baskets

On Monday Nov. 23, 26 dinners were delivered to the Southern Tier AIDS Program for distribution to their clients. Four dinners were retained for distribution at the Pastor's discretion. The congregation's response was outstanding. A total of \$806 was contributed. The food we bought at Wegman's totaled \$857. The difference came from Faith Works funds. Congratulations and a big thank you to everyone who contributed. We assisted many in the community who were in need.

We received a thank you note from a neighbor who came to our door needing items for her Thanksgiving dinner. We were able to give her a turkey and fixings for her family to enjoy their Thanksgiving.

Science of Mind

The Metanoia Spiritual Living Group, studying the practices and philosophy of Science of Mind or Religious Science, will continue through the winter at FCC on Tuesday nights at 6:30pm in the Parlor. Lindie Morningstar has agreed to lead the group and offer the gift of continual growth with these studies. Lindie has moved from Colorado to Binghanton recently. In Colorado she was a member of The Mile High Spiritual Center and has been embracing the Science of Mind path for 20+ years. If you have any questions, please contact Lindie at lindie@lindieheasler.com. Ethelyn will be back in May of 2016 to lead the group with Lindie.



From the Office...

Our next Forecaster will be a January publication, so please send me articles, programs, events, and any 'save-the-date' reminders. The due date for your articles is December 21. Thanks, Leslie



Spiritual Book Group (SBG)

The SBG will only meet in December on Wednesday, December 9th, when we will finish the book Zealot. We have chosen a new book to begin on January 6th, *Why did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road* by Brian McLaren. "When four religious leaders walk across the road, it's not the beginning of a joke. It's the start of one of the most important conversations in today's world. Can you be a committed Christian without having to condemn or convert people of other faiths? Is it possible to affirm other religious traditions without watering down your own?"

All are welcome to join us on Wednesdays at noon in our parlor.

A Special Organ Concert

Please join us in celebrating the completed repair of our Aeolian-Skinner Organ with an organ concert featuring Nancy Wildoner.

Nancy will be playing some of her favorite things from Bach to Pop to Christmas music! Bach's 'Fantasia', chart-topping songs of 2015, and Leroy Anderson's 'Sleigh Ride' to name a few.

This will be held on Sunday, December 6, at 2pm in our Sanctuary. The concert is free and refreshments will follow.

Heart Centered Living

Are you a Spiritual Seeker looking for a group of like-minded individuals where you can share your ideas, thoughts, and gifts for a better world? Join us as we explore current and relevant topics related to healing energy, meditation, health and wellness, global awareness and sustainability. The Heart Centered Living self-development and spirituality classes for December are:

12/7 6:30pm, Energy Exchange \$6 love offering
12/14 6:30pm, Activating power spots to heal the planet, \$6 love offering

Together we can create positive change in ourselves, our community and become a more heart centered world.

The HCL gift shop in Maine has a diverse selection for the holidays. Go to our website at www.heart-centered-living.org or follow Heart Centered Living on Facebook or call Renee at 607-226-2354.

Board of Deacons Summary Report, 11/17/15

- Our Stewardship campaign is in full swing.
- Tim and Chris O'Neil will be cooking and hosting a Thanksgiving dinner for anyone who wishes to sign up, on Sunday, November 22 after worship.
- The church will be decorated for Christmas after worship on November 29th.
- Poinsettias will be arranged on the altar on Saturday, December 19th.
- Nancy Wildoner will perform a concert on our newly-refurbished organ at 2pm on Sunday, December 6th. The Senior Choir will also participate.



The Binghamton Downtown Singers will be presenting Handel's Messiah for the 33rd time. This year we will be collaborating with the Binghamton Philharmonic

along with soloists under the direction of Marissa Crabb. Therefore, there will be only one very exciting performance on Saturday, Dec. 19th, at 7:30pm at the Forum on Washington St., Bing. Reserved seating starts at \$20. For tickets, call (607) 648-5032 or the Forum box office. Please join us for a very special seasonal experience.

Adult Forum

Sunday, December 13th

Are you smarter than the person sitting next to you?

Do you win friends and influence people with the profusion of Bible knowledge and lore you have amassed?

Do you like to be right and WIN?

Well.....this ADULT FORUM is for you!

After Coffee Hour on Sunday, December 13th, the Adult Forum will sponsor a friendly competition to answer Christmas Trivia questions. Teams of randomly gathered churchgoers will attempt to answer substantial yet trivial questions about the Christmas Holiday.

FCC is Now on Facebook!

The church is now on Facebook, so please consider viewing and liking the page....

<https://www.facebook.com/ucbbinghamton>

Trustee's Summary Report

November 17, 2015

October minutes accepted with corrections.
Financial Reports for November were accepted.

Old Business:

- Sentry Alarm: has the work started?
- Background checks: agent waiting for our call.
- Nominating Committee: no luck with those asked to date. Art said he would ask someone.
- Furniture cleaning: quote received for everything but draperies.
- Parking lot signs: quote received; Art will try for others.

New Business:

- Finance Committee needs to meet to put together 2016 Budget.
- Summary of year's activity needed for Annual Meeting.
- Tom in Haiti most of January.
- Church saved substantial monies by changing insurance company through our agent.

Christian Education

Kids, GROW IN GOD'S LOVE and make every SUNDAY a F.U.N.D.A.Y.

FIND out who Jesus is through stories, songs and lessons.

UNDERSTAND how to connect with God through prayer and concentration.

NOURISH your creative imagination with crafts, games and activities.

DEEPEN your relationship with yourself, your family and the world around you.

ACTIVATE the Holy Spirit within you so that you can...

YELL it out to the mountain tops and share it with everyone you meet and wherever you go!

Families, we welcome you to be a part of our worship service on Sundays, 10am, where children are encouraged to participate in the ringing of the bell, passing of the peace, and the first hymnal and then go to Sunday (F.U.N.D.A.Y.) School right after.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at 607-723-8981.

Kindly, Renée Guidelli, Christian Education Director

Christmas Angels

It is time for many of us to again become Christmas angels. With the help of the guidance counselor at the Woodrow Wilson School, the Mission Committee has received wish lists from 5 families (32 people) who could use some Christmas help. On the first Sunday of Advent, November 29, paper angels will be displayed in the front of the sanctuary. Each angel will have gift wishes. There will be two for each person – one for a toy and one for a garment. After worship members and friends may pick one or two angels. We ask that the gifts be returned by Sunday, December 13, (3rd Sunday of Advent) gift wrapped with the paper angel taped to it. If shopping is not your thing, you can make a money donation. The Mission Committee will sort the gifts and deliver them.

This is the 5th year our church has "adopted" some needy families at Christmas. Our members have enjoyed the opportunity to help others, and those helped have really appreciated the Christmas gifts!

Health for Haiti

SUNY Broome has a winter study abroad program in Haiti. Started in 2015, students and professionals spend a week in Haiti. This year's program is, "Have a Heart for Haiti." It is a faculty-led, credit-bearing global service learning course. Students provide humanitarian assistance to the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. They explore the dynamics between poverty, education and health care by engaging in service projects. One-third of the people in Haiti are under 14 years of age.

Projects include health clinics, clean water, solar power, sanitary toilets, education and community gardens. The trip is from January 4-13, 2016, and Dr. Thomas Bucker will be joining this trip. He is volunteering his time and skill to provide needed dental care. After the devastating earthquake a few years ago, we collected some money to help folks there. Some was spent to buy a generator for an orphanage. Electric power is very unpredictable there. The Mission Committee still has about \$500 from those gifts. That money will be given to Tom to assist in the purchase of supplies for his dental work there. If you would like to make a contribution, please see Tom or a committee member.

BOOK-WORDS

[another new direction for our church!]

Light Upon Light: a Literary Guide to Prayer for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, by Sarah Arthur. *This book weaves scripture and prayer with poetry and prose into a unique devotional experience for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany.* **242.33 ARTH**

Hidden Meaning in the New Testament: New Light From the Old Greek, by Ronald A. Ward. *Studying the words of the New Testament takes on significance in the Greek language, as opposed to English, which will ever be merely a*

We Hear the Christmas Angels: True Stories of Their Presence, compiled and edited by Evelyn Bence. *Stories of true, if inexplicable, interactions with people and others who seem to appear at just the right moment, seen or unseen, to perform large and small miracles.* **242 WE**

The Light Within Us, by Albert Schweitzer. *Selected from this noted humanitarian's seven major works, here are his most important statements of faith.* **248.4 SCHW**

Daily Light On the Daily Path. *Presented here are morning and evening prayers, based on Scripture.* **242.2 DAIL**

The Abacus and the Cross: the Story of the Pope Who Brought the Light of Science to the Dark Ages, by Nancy Marie Brown. *Papal history is fraught with wars, feuds, and many other forms of violence, but this is one story of how the world was advanced by a Scientist Pope, the foremost intellectual of his day.* **270.3092 BROW**

December at The Sophia Center for Spirituality

Mystic of the Month:

Kahlil Gibran presented by Sr. Lois Barton, CSJ. Kahlil Gibran was a Lebanese-American writer, artist and prophet. Dec. 15 at 6:30 p.m. Suggested donation: \$10

Lunch With the Psalms

Tuesdays (except 12/22) at 12:15-12:45 p.m.

NOTE: There is no Taizé this month.

Mission/Outreach Committee

November 19

In reviewing an abundant amount of mail in the committee's mailbox, we found a request for the Covenant Share offering.

Our church is one of about 300 congregations in New York State that make up the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ. We support the Conference and their work in supporting congregations with a pledge to OCWM (Our Churches Wider Mission). Unlike some denominations, we are not legally required to give to OCWM. The offering is a part of our covenantal relationship with each other. For our size, our congregation gives a good OCWM pledge.

Unfortunately, with a poor economy and falling church membership, OCWM giving has been dropping. To help meet the shortfall in the budget, the New York Conference UCC has asked for a UCC Covenant Share offering. Unlike OCWM that is a congregation pledge, this is an individual gift. If everyone gave a \$10 gift, the shortfall would be filled with extra.

Because we hope to do our share, envelopes will be available the second Sunday in Advent, December 6th. Please give this your prayerful consideration.

Annual Reports

Please send me all your Annual Board and Committee Reports via email by Wednesday, December 30th. If you would like to see last year's submission, please let me know and I can send to you. Thanks—Leslie



Jazz Vespers

Jazz Vespers for December will be held on December 13th, at 5pm. It will feature The Doug Robinson Trio from the Ithaca area, consisting of Doug Robinson, Eric Aceto and Chad Lieberman. These are extremely accomplished musicians who have played individually all over the United States and outside of the states as well.

I look forward to hosting them for their first appearance in this configuration. Please consider joining us.—Judy Giblin

Once Upon a Time

The beautiful shoes seemed to fit
and Cinderella claimed her power.

There is a whisper, "Hear me child."
She thinks, who is this?

Then there came upon her
a familiar feeling...
of grace.

She understands,
this quiet voice
is the one that brings peace.

-Janet Marie Russo 2015

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**



Return Service Requested

**First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
30 Main Street
Binghamton, NY 13905**

BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

PERMIT NO. 52

PAID

U.S. POSTAGE

NON-PROFIT ORG.