

# The Forecaster - January, 2016

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

On Monday, December 21st, at noon, I — along with about forty other clergy (mostly) and concerned Persons— met at Confluence Park for a press conference. It was called by Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell of Temple Concord. The rationale went something like this.

There had been calls in the media and by some of the political frontrunners to ban Muslims from entering the United States. This was in response to ISIS, Al Qaeda, etc. While it certainly seems that Islam is in the midst of an identity crisis, still the notion in America of singling out those of a particular religion for special treatment, either positive or negative, is generally seen as antithetical to who we are as a nation.

So Barbara emailed the members of the Children of Abraham group (of which I'm a member) and suggested that we issue a statement saying this is not what we believe and not what we should do. That statement is published elsewhere in this newsletter. By the time of the press conference there were well over 200 signatures. (Children of Abraham, as the name suggests, is an interfaith dialogue group consisting of Jews, Christians, and Muslims.)

But now here is the part that got to me. I'm going to bare my soul a bit here. I'm the Senior Pastor of what is undoubtedly the most progressive Christian Church in town. Why didn't I take the initiative to contact the Rabbis, Imams, and other Pastors to suggest that we write a response that our culture needs to hear? To be honest, it never dawned on me. But once I got Barbara's email, I thought it was a great idea.

Pondering more relentlessly, why didn't I take the initiative? Well, here is my best guess why. It has to do with who I am. I am a Caucasian, heterosexual, Christian male. I can't relate to the Black Experience, not firsthand, anyway. Ditto with the homosexual (or trans, or bi) experience. Ditto with the experience of women. And ditto with what it must be like to be a Jew and have in the back of my mind the experience of my kin during the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Or what it must be like to be a Muslim in America at this time. Christians have done horrific things in the name of their faith, on par with ISIS and Al Qaeda, but in different centuries. To this day I'm embarrassed by it, so I can only imagine the embarrassment, frustration, and a dozen other feelings Muslims must be having right now.

So why didn't I take the initiative? Probably because I've always been the one in the majority, the one in power, the one who sets the agenda. And had I had some of these other experiences and perspectives, I just might be more sensitive to other views and concerns. So that's going to be my New Year's resolution. I'm going to try to walk in another's shoes and get a feel for it, if only in my mind. And if I can do it in my mind, perhaps I can do it in my heart.

Blessings upon you all,

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

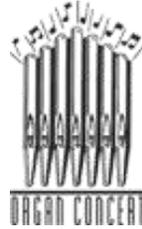


Bruce Doane	1/6	Steven Excell	1/30
John Roberts	1/9	Jeanne Ellison	2/2
Charles Dearborn	1/10	Linda Excell	2/3
Chris O'Neill	1/10	Collin Miller	2/3
Mel Rhinebeck	1/12	Cindi West-Davidson	2/3
Rev. Janet Abel	1/13	Dr. Louis Mateya	2/6
Liana Railsback	1/13	Pastor Art Suggs	2/7
Brandon Bucker	1/14	Bruno Roberts	2/8
Daniel Ray	1/14	Rob Hollander	2/9
Robert Cluff	1/20	Toni Rorapaugh	2/12
Heidi Bowne Roberts	1/21	Markus Krieger	2/13
Shirley Sullivan	1/23	Tim Mitchell	2/13
Robert Winans	1/23	Andrea Schaughency	2/18
Devin O'Neill	1/24	Lucinda Bucker	2/19
Debbie Van Dusen	1/26	Timothy Christian	2/19
Andrea Bucker	1/27	Darin Lewis	2/22
James Lewis	1/28	Judy Giblin	2/23
Conner John Gyllenhammer		Maynard Fahs	2/27
	1/30	Jay Carstrom	2/27

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

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 Pastors Janet Abel or Art Suggs.

**Organ Concert Update**



Nancy Wildoner held a special organ concert on Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, to celebrate the completed repair of our Aeolian-Skinner organ.

We had a great turn out for the concert as Nancy entertained us with many of her favorite works, including both classical pieces and pop tunes.

Following the concert, we had refreshments in our Parlor and enjoyed fellowship time.

Thank you to Nancy for a lovely afternoon filled with music on our newly, improved organ.

*Please call the office if you notice an omission from our listing.*

**Faith Works**

**Fellowship Night -**

Our first meeting of the New Year will be on January 15th, at 6pm. As usual we will start with a potluck dinner followed by our annual planning meeting. We will be looking for your ideas for some interesting programs. Please think of things you are interested in or would like to do. We have had interesting guests and reports on projects and trips you have been involved in. Put on your thinking caps and join us.

**Super Giveaway -**

Our annual effort to help the homeless in our area will be held on Super Bowl Sunday, February 7th, from 1-2:30pm. We offer warm clothing, bedding, hot soup and sandwiches. Please consider how you can help. We need jackets, coats, pants, shirts, socks, heavy shoes, blankets, and sleeping bags. We also will need folks to make soup, pb&j sandwiches and to help serve. There will be a signup sheet in the usual place.

**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](mailto: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 February publication, so please send me articles, programs, events, and any 'save-the-date' reminders. The due date for your articles is January 21. Thanks, Leslie



### Spiritual Book Group (SBG)

We have chosen a new book to begin on Wednesday, 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?”

Please join us on Wednesdays at noon.

### Releasing 2015 (past) and Embracing 2016 (future)

January is named after Janus, the God of beginnings and transitions; the name has its beginnings in Roman mythology, coming from the Latin word for door (ianua) since January is the door to the year.

Before we can really move forward (future), we need to take the time and take “stock” of 2015 (past). Reflect on what we did and did not do, and make plans to resolve it and release it to God.

We set our New Resolutions, or New Goals, our New Dreams...without ever taking stock or coming to terms with and clearing all the days and months that have gone before us. It is deeply important for us to find the gifts, medicine, lessons, challenges and blessings from the year that has been. (I suggest you take a moment and journal the following questions to create closure for the old year and prepare for the New Year. This is both deeply rewarding and satisfying.)

What beautiful Life Lessons did you learn in 2015? What Life Dreams came true during 2015? What incredible thing did you discover about yourself? What did 2015 lead you to? What did you let go of? And what did you do that made you proud?

For extra juicy credit, on a separate page, draw, write, illustrate or post pictures of everything you are grateful for in your life from 2015.

Let go of all that no longer serves you. Breathe, give thanks, and open up to the beautiful possibilities blossoming before you.

Blessings, Renée Guidelli, Director of Christian Education

### Upcoming Worship Schedule

- Feb 10, Ash Wednesday Service, 7pm.
- Feb 14, Lent I, Communion
- Feb 17, Music and Meditation I
- Feb 21, Lent II
- Feb 24, Music and Meditation II
- Feb 28, Lent III
- March 2, Music and Meditation III
- March 6, Lent IV
- March 9, Music and Meditation IV
- Mar 13, Lent V, Communion
- March 16, Music and Meditation V
- March 20, Palm Sunday
- March 24, Maundy Thursday
- March 27 Easter



### Flowers

Listen you say  
and I hear.

Wildflowers  
coming out in the spring  
sing to you.

Roses, whose petals rejoice  
sit at your altar.

Birds cascade  
and surround me;  
for love has created  
a being of joy.

A being of hope.

A being fulfilled.

- Janet Russo

### FCC is Now on Facebook!

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

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

## Board of Trustee's Summary Report

December 15, 2015

November minutes approved. Financial reports accepted. A bequest to the church by the estate of Barbara Larson will go to Gifts and Memorials.

### **Old Business:**

No action yet on update to Sentry alarms. Problem reported with door prior to Joyful Noise last Sunday.

"Misconduct prevention plan" from the insurance company requires a) building check, b) training, and c) 6-month waiting period for "new people" and assurance of always 2 people in a room with kids.

Parlor and rug cleaning completed 12/4, and suggestion made it be done annually.

Nominating Committee still short one Trustee.

Capital campaign could be postponed.

### **Pastor's Report:**

Executive session to discuss personnel matter, 7:55.

Returned from Executive session at 7:58.

Discussion concerning Sanctuary door lock problem and loose thresholds.

Discussion of recognition of Alice's retirement and changes to be made in the office.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Toni Rorapaugh, Trustee Secretary

## **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, 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.

## Board of Deacons Summary Report,

December 15, 2015

**Pastor's Report** - Art went over the upcoming worship schedule, including Advent and Christmas Eve services. Adjustments have been made to the contracts with three of our staff: Renee Guidelli, Alice Pettit, and Leslie Dahlgren. By unanimous vote we received into membership Deb VanDusen. Art reported also the death of Virginia Canfield, spouse of Gene Canfield, who passed earlier this summer. Marian Simpson's artwork will be hung in the Parlor.

**Associate Pastor's Report** - Janet submitted a written report and shared some highlights. She also went over the Shut-in list. Caroling will take place Sunday, December 20, at 5 pm.

**Intern Report** - Dov made his first hospital visit to Ethy Enos, Sr., and will be officiating the Virginia Canfield funeral.

**New Business** - The slate from the Nominating Committee is nearly complete. Will be reported when complete. Bernie will do the Annual Report. Janet will do the financial portion for the Deacon's Report. The Deacons went over the list of potential persons to add to the Conditional List. Rob spoke of a 2016 goal of raising the church's profile in the community.

Concluding thought/quote shared by Rob: *"We don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory."* Howard Zinn

## Adult Forum

We had a lot of fun at December's Adult Forum with teams answering Christmas trivia questions. Thanks to all who participated.

Stay tuned for information on February's Adult Forum. Details will be provided in upcoming bulletins and the February Forecaster.

# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## BOOK-WORDS

*[another new direction for our church!]*

**Why Science Does Not Disprove God**, by Amir D. Aczel. *Lately a number of books about science have tried to convince us that everything in the universe can be explained without the need for a Creator. However, the author names a number of phenomena that science has not revealed to us, including the answer to the question, Why?* **215 ACZE**

**The Future of God: A Practical Approach to Spirituality for our Times**, by Deepak Chopra. *Spirituality, says the author, should be thought of as reliable knowledge of a higher reality, and he outlines a path to God that transforms unbelief into the first step of awakening.* **211 CHOP**

**Lost Gospel Q: The Original Sayings of Jesus**. "Q" stands for "quelle, which means "source" in German. For the past 150 years historians and theologians have been digging through the many layers of the New Testament to uncover the original Gospel. Edited by Marcus Borg, with an introduction by Thomas Moore. **226 LOST**

**Will the Circle be Unbroken? Reflections on Death, Rebirth, and Hunger for a Faith**, by Studs Terkel. *An important oral history by famed author Terkel, that explored with wisdom and compassion, the issues of mortality and the possibility of life after death.* **128.5 TERK**

**Small Victories: Spotting Improbable Moments of Grace**, by Anne Lamott. *The author writes of forgiveness, restoration, and transformation, and about turning toward love, in essays profound, hilarious, and honest.* **248 LAMO**

**Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism**, by Mark Stoll. *Read about the connection between our own church history, the New England believers, and movements such as national parks and public conservation efforts.* **261.8 STOL**

## Mission/Outreach Committee

This year our church "adopted" five needy families (32 people) from Woodrow Wilson School on Prospect Street in Binghamton. Students from the neighborhood around our church building attend that school. Members of our congregation shared between 80 and 100 gifts (we lost count) and some cash to give kids and their parents a little happier Christmas.

Last year all the gifts were delivered to the school. This year two families picked up the gifts at school and we delivered gifts to three homes. In all we had ten 55-gallon trash bags full of gifts. On behalf of all the lucky families, A BIG THANK YOU!

In addition to all the gifts, our congregation came through with a generous Christmas Offering to the United Church of Christ. That offering supports the "Veterans of the Cross" program. This money helps retired clergy and church workers who many times have little or no pension for retirement. The fund is also available for emergencies that church workers may have. So on behalf of the Mission Committee, thank you for caring for others. As Jesus told us, "When you do it unto one of the least of these, you do it unto me."

## Joyful Noise

We will be rehearsing on Thursdays, January 7th and January 14th at 7pm. We will also warm up at 9am prior to our 10am service on January 17th.

## Annual Meeting

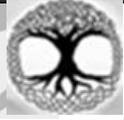
We will hold our Annual Meeting on Sunday, January, 31st, following worship. We will have a luncheon in our Fellowship Hall with the meeting held afterwards.

The reports will be available on the 24th for your review. Thanks—Leslie



## Jazz Vespers

The performers for January Jazz Vespers on the 10th, at 5pm, will be the Southern Tier Brass Quintet. They've been with us before and their harmonies, musical sense of humor and professional sound were very well-received.



## The Sophia Center for Spirituality

The Sophia Center for Spirituality will offer the following programs in January:

Tues., Jan. 12 at 6:30 p.m.: Mystic of the Month ~ Meister Eckhart presented by Rev. Dr. Arthur Suggs. Suggested donation \$10.

Sun., Jan 24 at 6:00 p.m.: Taizé service

Mon., Jan. 25 at 6:30 p.m.: Centering Prayer monthly practice.

We also offer Lunch With the Psalms every Tuesday from 12:15-12:45 p.m.

### How To Contact Us:

Mon –Thurs, 9:00-3:00 pm,  
(607)723-8981

[fcc@binghamtonwireless.com](mailto:fcc@binghamtonwireless.com)

Web: [www.uccbinghamton.org](http://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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