



## The Forecaster—April, 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

Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest whose writings I enjoy very much once said:

*The history of almost every religion begins with one massive misperception; it begins by making a fatal distinction between the sacred and the profane. Low-level religions put all their emphasis on creating sacred places, sacred time, and sacred actions. While I fully appreciate the need for this, it unfortunately leaves the majority of life "un-sacred."*

He then told the story of an Irish missionary to the Maasai people of Kenya trying to explain about the seven sacraments that Catholics observe. The Irish priest explained that a sacrament is a physical event in which people experience grace or the holy. But despite his explanations, the people just seemed to be confused, and as he continued to explain, the confusion turned to disappointment. Finally one of the elders raised his hand and clarified the situation. "We would have thought, Father, that there would be at least seven thousand such moments, not just seven."

I think Br. Rohr raises great questions for our age and our lives:

- Which is holier, our sanctuary or the sidewalk outside with its cigarette butts and other litter?
- Which is more sacred, your time in meditation or prayer, or time doing the dishes?

You get the point. We tend to think that certain places or times are more sacred than others, but we also know in our hearts that it really isn't true. The whole world is infused with God, including the sidewalk. And moments of grace break into our lives not just when we are meditating or praying, but when we're driving, taking out the trash, changing the oil, as well as doing the dishes.

But it gets harder. If there is a linkage between God and Life (as per the Easter sermon, John 14:6, "I am...the life.") is some life more sacred than others? Is an American life more sacred than a Kenyan or Iraqi or Mexican life? Is a human life more sacred than an animal life? Is animal life more sacred than plant life?

I've probably made everyone uncomfortable by now, but such questions, even if we can't answer them, circle around back to the point that Br. Rohr was making. In our spiritual growth, can we increasingly see that the distinction between the sacred and non-sacred is a false one? Or worded another way, can we see divinity infusing all our times, all our paths, all our conversations, all of our lives?

Jesus likened the Kingdom of God to yeast in a lump of dough. I think he might have been saying that divine love finds its way into all parts, the whole lump, even the dark corners of our lives, all of the times and places. In other words, no part of it is "un-sacred." Our task is to learn to see it, become aware of it, and then fully live into it.

Blessed Eastertide to you all,

**Happy Birthday to those celebrating their special day in**



Thomas Buckner	4/1	Becky Lewis	5/12
Alice Pettit	4/4	Lacey Lewis	5/12
Timothy O'Neill	4/5	Jeff Dahlgren	5/15
Bob White	4/6	Katharina Krieger	5/15
Cynthia Jones	4/9	Megan Griffiths Dovin	5/15
Christopher Kronk	4/9	Richard Marderian	5/15
Tricia Larson	4/12	Sharon Rhinebeck Gass	5/16
Karen Holman	4/17	Betty Lou Agard	5/17
Taylor Mihok	4/20	Chuck Mallery	5/17
Matthew Christian	4/22	Lee Stradley	5/23
Bill Cuddeback	4/22	Kyle O'Neill	5/23
David DeMars	4/26	Amy Winans	5/24
Robert Neill	5/3	William Heim	5/27
		Carolyn Blake	5/30

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

**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.



**From the Office...**

Our next Forecaster will be a May publication, so please send me articles, programs, events, and any 'save-the-date' reminders. *The due date for your articles is April 20th.* Thanks, Leslie



**Jazz Vesper**  
*April 10th, at 5pm*

April Jazz Vespers will feature Al Hamme on woodwinds, Gene Cothran on keyboards, Larry Lolli on guitar/bass and Joe Roma on drums—four of the best musicians in the area. Judy will also be singing a couple of tunes with them. Please come April 10th and help us welcome Spring!

**Picture Directory**



Throughout the month of March Clare Price and Bob Neill have been taking pictures for the Church Directory. We are finished taking pictures and now the task is to put them in a form for publication.

It is our hope that the finished product can be available soon.

**Living the Resurrection**

Alleluia, the Lord is risen!  
The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!

These ancient words of greeting have been a byword for Christians for 2,000 years, not just on Easter morning. Easter is with us for 50 days, this year, from March 27 through May 15. It is a glorious season as we emerge like butterflies from a cocoon. Our faith spreads its wings and takes flight in the Spring air of renewed faith in Christ's conquest of death.

While we could spend those 50 days better engaged than continuously eating chocolate, we could do no better than rejoicing in the love of Christ.

These weeks, we hear about Christ's post-resurrection appearances to the disciples. In them, we need to hear about Christ's appearances to us his living disciples, his living witnesses. We are a vibrant wonderful congregation, with vibrant wonderful ministries. You come into our building seeing the *busyness* of all that is going on, not just on Sundays, but at all kinds of times. Those are *resurrection* times, times of vibrant life we breathe into each other as the body of Christ.

But, as is often remarked, if you want to get something done, give it to a busy person to do it. Our busyness tells us only that we should be busier still, rejoicing in the risen Christ, always looking for new ministries to seek out the Face of Christ in our fellow humans.

Alleluia, the Lord is risen!  
The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Dr. Dov Treiman



### Spiritual Book Group (SBG)

We are reading, *“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.

### Inner Power Group

Our human-spiritual development growth group focuses on topics within the field of holistic psychology such as: eliminating fears, building relationships, mitigating dysfunctional beliefs, identifying and resolving habits, attaining peace, DNA Activations, Reiki, etc. Our sessions include basic theories, interactive discussion, clairvoyant reads, sample relative techniques, Q&A and meditation. Participants generally sense deeper understanding and in many cases, resolution within the corresponding topic. Our sessions are held every Wednesday, in the Eden Room, from 7-9pm. If anyone would like more information about each week’s topic, please register at: zeljka33@me.com.

### From Faith Works

The March meeting was held on Friday the 18th. We enjoyed a potluck dinner to start. Bob and Allyson White organized a group called “The Front Street Players”. They presented a short play which got us to think about Easter. It was well done and stimulated a fine discussion. Our thanks to the Whites and we hope that there might be future efforts from the Front Street Players.

Our April Meeting will be on Friday April 15th starting with a potluck dinner at 6:00PM. This will be our Annual Poetry Night in which we share our favorite poems. Last year we included short prose passages which we found to be appropriate. These meetings are intended to provide a way to get to know each other better which enhances our fellowship.

### Heart Centered Living

Are you a spiritual seeker? As a seeker, HCL is the place to witness and experience your own truth. If you want to make a difference in the world, but don’t know where to start; join us in sharing and examining current and relevant topics such as Healing, Meditation, Health and Wellness, Sustainability and Spirituality. Together we can affect positive change in ourselves, our community, and create a more heart centered world. To learn more contact Renee at 607-226-2354 or go to [www.heart-centered-living.org](http://www.heart-centered-living.org)

### From Christian Education Director, Renee Guidelli

Cakes for the Queen of Heaven  
(A Christian Curriculum in feminist theology)

I recently came across a Christian curriculum in Feminist Theology that I would be very interested in facilitating if there is enough interest. “Cakes for the Queen of Heaven” is a woman honoring adult Religious Education curriculum. It examines pre-Judeo Christian cultures that may have worshiped the female as divine. It examines important elements of today’s women’s lives— personal, interpersonal and societal. It also looks at how our culture has been influenced by Judeo Christian values. How would your life have been different if, when growing up, the divine had been imaged as female? This interactive, fun and powerful series incorporates, song, dance, ritual, performance, and many other various ways to express our divine feminine nature in a safe, sacred space. If interested in learning more, please call Renee at 607-723-8981.



### Joyful Noise Schedule for April

- 04/07/16 – rehearsal at 7:00pm
- 04/14/16 – rehearsal at 7:00pm
- 04/17/16 – Sunday Service practice at 9:00am

## Book-Words

[another new direction for our church!]

**Islam, Science, and the challenge of History**, by Ahmad S. Dallal. *A study of science in Muslim societies and in its larger context, along with an examination of the tensions between science and religion, and science and philosophy, in Muslim society. Includes historical compromises between these schools of thought and the changes that have occurred in them through history.* **297.265 DALL**

**Emissary of Light: a vision of Peace**, by James F. Twyman. *Imagine being caught between two sides in a vicious war, and then discovering, by intuition, a group of people who are meditating for world peace. This is a Wisdom Book embedded in an amazing adventure.* **299.93 TWYM**

**Exploring the Book of Kells**, by George Otto Simms. *A revealing guide to this famous illuminated manuscript, developed by Irish monks in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, pointing to its intricate detail and meaning.* **091 SIMM**

**Why Religion matters: the Fate of the Human Spirit in an age of Disbelief**, by Huston Smith. *The "tunnel vision" of "scientism" created by modernism and post-modernism doesn't include religion. But the author maintains that there is light at the end of the tunnel.* **200 SMIT**

**On God: an uncommon Conversation**, by Norman Mailer. *In these probing, moving, amusing dialogues, Mailer is original and unpredictable as he maintains that God needs us as much as we need God.* **211 MAIL**

**Reading the Gospel of John: an introduction**, by Kevin Quast. *An introduction to the Fourth Gospel for the lay reader, in clear language and short chapters.* **226.5 QUAS**

April, 2016

## Binghamton Theater Organ Society Presents ...

Nancy Wildoner Pop Pipes: Show Stoppers, featuring vocalists Randy Messing and Judy Giblin. The program will be held at the Forum Theatre, May 15, 2pm, and feature "Broadway A to (almost) Z."

Ticket information and group rates are available. Call the Box Office at 607-773-1496. Web site is binghamton.TOS.com.

## First Congregational Church, U.C.C., Binghamton Board of Trustees, March 15, 2016

There was no January meeting. Minutes of February meeting approved. Financial reports for February approved.

### Pastor's Report:

Binghamton Regional Sustainability Coalition has approached Art for quarters in our building. Two rooms on the second floor need to be emptied before they can move in. Congregational Conversation concerning Capital Campaign scheduled for April 17.

### Old Business:

Expecting monthly report from Church Administrator later in the year.  
Capital Campaign may begin in June.

### New Business:

Tables purchased for Fellowship Hall.  
Financial advisors to meet with Trustees.

Janet Rik will continue to do landscaping around the church building.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni Rorapaugh  
Trustee Secretary

## The Traveler

At peace with the world  
it comes to me

Not to spoil the waters  
with unnecessary burdens...  
to let go of misery  
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.

Janet Russo

## Our Church Pantry

Presently, we want to supply food for a “quick meal” and some supplies that CHOW and food stamps do not cover. Following is a list of donations we are looking to supply:

Soups	Feminine products
Stews	Toilet paper
Dish soap	Bread (for freezer)
Hand soap	Ramen noodles
Spam	Diapers
PB & J	

Cash is always helpful for that is given out, too.

### F.U.N.DAY SCHOOL UPDATE:

We are so happy to have the children participating in the lighting of the candles now. They are becoming very comfortable in their new roles and truly enjoy helping out during the service and even during fellowship time. We look forward to more creative and helpful ways to engage the children in worship as well as with our church family.

### Congregational Conversation

Please join us Sunday, April 17<sup>th</sup> following worship for a Congregational Conversation. Topics will be announced shortly.

*God is still speaking,*  
**UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**



Doing justice, seeking peace and building community are central to the identity of the United Church of Christ. We invite you to explore the breadth and depth of the UCC's justice work. Join us in building a stronger faith-based movement for peace, justice, equality and inclusivity. Our work is rooted in the teachings of scripture and the policies of our General Synod.

These are difficult and challenging times for our local communities, our country, and the world. Divisive and heated rhetoric dominate the public dialogue, and the power of money is shutting out the voice of the average voter. More and more people are withdrawing from engagement in the political process out of a growing sense of cynicism and mistrust. Now, more than ever, your voice and your efforts are needed.

As people of faith, we can play a unique role in this election cycle by encouraging civil, respectful dialogue that builds community and offers a hope-filled vision of the future for all people.

Join the Our Faith, Our Vote campaign and find out how your congregation can participate in the electoral process through faithful, nonpartisan engagement. Check out our resources and sign up for helpful webinars and opportunities to make a difference in this election season. [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org).



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  
Dr. Dov Treiman - Pastoral Intern  
William Cuddeback - Treasurer  
Curtis Hartwig - Assistant Treasurer  
Arlene Price - Membership Clerk  
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 – Church Administrator  
Sharon Shaddock – Childcare Provider  
Alice Pettit – Treasurer Emerita, Church Hostess  
Martin Rorapaugh- Financial Secretary  
Erick Clasen – Web Master  
Vanessa Warren – Bookkeeper  
Cindi West-Davidson – Custodian  
Toni Rorapaugh - Librarian, Historian



**Return Service Requested**

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United Church of Christ  
30 Main Street  
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