



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



Pastor's Perspective

There's a fascinating scale developed by psychiatrists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe to rate stressful events. Number 1, unsurprisingly, is the death of a spouse. It is a list of 43 events rated from 1 to 100. For example, marital separation is 65, getting fired is 47, new baby in the house is 39. But let me draw your attention to the bottom four items on the list, because they all tend to work together.

Change in eating habits	15
Vacation	13
Major Holiday	12
Minor Violation of Law	11

The subtotal of the top three (above) is 40. What this means is that the Christmas vacation/holiday, with all its joys and burdens, and with its change in eating habits, is equal to something between 3 and 4 speeding tickets.

This, of course, surprises no one. As a recipient of speeding tickets, I can vouch for their stress inducing capacity. And not in the equation is money. Tickets are expensive, and Christmas is more so.

So therefore, take some time for yourself this season. In a serious way, use any number of the spiritual disciplines to ground yourself during what is clearly a stressful time. Find some quiet time in a secluded place to ponder the miracle. Contemplate what incarnation means to you. Meditate upon Mother Mary. Ponder the significance of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Listen to the words of so many of the carols, not relegating them just to background music. (Start with *What Child is This?*) And as we approach this holiday linked to the winter solstice, wonder about light. "The light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

On behalf of all the staff of FCC, we wish you a Merry Christmas, filled with joy and peace.

*Watch the dust grains moving,
In the light near the window,
Their dance is our dance. Rumí*

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



Dick Gormly	12/1	John Roberts	1/9
Jack Brink	12/2	Chris O'Neill	1/10
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	Robert Cluff	1/20
Barb Thompson	12/11	Heidi Bowne Roberts	1/21
Julie Ann Johnson	12/13	Shirley Sullivan	1/23
Evelyn Allen	12/14	Robert Winans	1/23
Renee Guidelli	12/18	Devin O'Neill	1/24
Nancy Allan-Elliott	12/23	Debbie VanDusen	1/26
Eginhard Dominique		Andrea Bucker	1/27
Jean- Philippe	12/24	James Lewis	1/28
Merri Warren	12/25	Conner John Gyllen-	
Bruce Doane	1/6	hammer	1/30

Please call the office if you notice any omissions/errors from the birthday list. Thank you.

New Year's Resolutions (a sonnet)

by Doug Ridley, with permission from
The JoyfulNoiseletter

It's New Year's Day, and I resolve this year to be myself, above all else, complete with my own personality – a feat most monumental at the least. No drear resolves this year, nor ones that speak my fear of other peoples' thoughts of me. I'll greet each day, each other person whom I meet, with me, myself, the me God loves so dear.

From there, resolved, I'll be a better friend to everyone. I'll strive to simplify my life, de-clutter home and mind, defy declining health and strength, and try to end those habits that offend and stress my life. That lists should fill my year; reduce my stress.

Blessings and peace, Bob



From the Office...

Our next Forecaster will be a January publication. I will include your programs, events, reports and any 'save-the-date' reminders for February. *The due date for this publication is December 21st.* Thanks, Leslie

Spiritual Book Group

Our new book which began on 11/30, is "Between the World and Me" by Ta-Nehisi Coates.

Join us on Wednesdays, 12/7, 12/14 and 12/21, at Noon in our Parlor for some great discussions.

NEW TOILETS IN CHURCH!

During the month of November, 9 new toilets were installed in restrooms. Why? To save water. Church water bills have become pretty high (four figures in a quarter). With more folks using the building, the restrooms are getting more use during the week, and toilets use more water than any fixture in the plumbing system. Because the present toilets are old, sometimes they don't shut off after the tank is refilled, wasting additional water.

The old toilets use 5 gallons of water for each flush. The new toilets use 1.2 gallons of water per flush – one quarter the water. That's good for the water plant, good for the sewer plant and good for the church budget.

Bob deVente, Larry Driscoll, and Clare Price did the installation. The trustees have invited folks to donate a toilet. Three have been donated so far. Dedication plaques are optional!

The Binghamton Downtown Singers will be presenting Handel's Messiah for the 34th time. We will again be collaborating with the Binghamton Philharmonic along with soloists under the direction of Marisa Crabb. Therefore, there will be only one very exciting performance on Saturday, Dec. 17th at 7:30 at the Forum on Washington St., Bing. And duly noted there will be changes to what pieces we actually perform as we will be doing the entire 3rd part. Reserved seating starts at \$20. For tickets, call (607) 648-5032 or the Forum box office at (607) 723-3931. Please join us for this special experience.

Jazz Vespers for December 11th will feature the amazing Doug Robinson Trio from Syracuse. After only 2 appearances at Jazz Vespers, Doug is fast becoming a local favorite. The trio features Doug on guitar, bass and vocals along with Eric Aceto on jazz violin and Chad Lieberman on accordion and keyboards. All three of these gentlemen are accomplished musicians and present a wonderful program.

Feeling Blue

Dr. Dov Treiman

We here at FCC are not very strong on the colors of the Church calendar, but as members of Protestantism, some of us maintain some awareness of the seasonal colors: White for Christmas, Green for Epiphany, Purple for Lent, White for Easter, Red for the day of Pentecost, Green for the following days, and cycling around to Advent, the “first” of the Church seasons, a season that is Purple for most Christians, but for Congregationalists gives the option of Purple or Blue. (Feasts of the Virgin Mary are also blue.) Each of these colors has a symbolic meaning and it is interesting that Congregationalists who use seasonal colors are undecided about their symbol for one, but only one season—Advent.

Purple is often for penitence and blue is for rejoicing or preparation. And that is the core of our ambivalence about Advent. The medieval Church was very much into penitence. The Church calendar was *filled* with fast days, penitential days, and penitential seasons, but we are, frankly, a much more *cheerful* church. While many folks get nervous when they hear the boss is coming to town, having that kind of attitude about the coming of Christ, seems hardly appropriate. It is true that Jesus spends many parables telling us about the need for our being in a constant state of preparation for Christ’s coming, but that does not mean it is something to fear. It can and should be something about which to rejoice.

Indeed, in Philipians 4:4, Paul preaches, “Rejoice in the Lord always, again, I say Rejoice.”

And so we do. We have the *option* to repent and we have the *option* to rejoice. Do we err? Of course we do. But God’s Grace is far greater than our sin. If we turn to God, our sin is washed away. Rejoice.

I would like to offer you another association with blue, that of the Virgin Mary whose pregnancy was drawing to a close at the approach of the Incarnation. For many of us, Mary presents an opportunity to remember the sacred feminine aspects of Divine grace. Advent is an opportunity as well, therefore, to focus our thoughts on how we think of God’s Gifts in terms of gender and to realize that God is so far beyond any of the narrow fences where we are so tempted to place the Divine, especially in limited thoughts of gender.

Let us rejoice therefore in all that God offers us, in all that we receive of God, in all that we embrace of God.

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 6 families (27 people) who need Christmas help. We are also giving some assistance to another family. We ask that the gifts be returned by Sunday, December 11, (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 Committee will sort the gifts and deliver them.

This is the 6th year we have “adopted” families at Christmas. Our members have enjoyed the opportunity to help others, and those helped have really appreciated the Christmas gifts!

Faith Works Fellowship

- Thanksgiving Dinner Baskets

The drive to supply Thanksgiving dinners for some of our less fortunate neighbors was quite successful. A total of 31 turkey dinners were assembled. 26 of these were delivered to the Southern Tier AIDS Program for distribution to their clients. They asked to have their gratitude expressed to all our members. 5 of the dinners were distributed by the church staff. Thanks to all who contributed in any way.

- Fellowship Meetings

About 15 attended the November meeting and enjoyed a potluck dinner. The activity was assembly of the 31 dinner baskets which is a fun fellowship time. December is always a very busy time so we will not meet again until January. In January, we usually discuss and plan for the coming year. Mark your calendars for January 20th and think about what activities and programs you would like in 2017. Our Fellowship is what we make it.

Metanoia Spiritual Living Group, which meets on Tuesday nights from 6:45 to 8:30 pm, will continue to meet through and including December 20th.

The group will reconvene the last Tuesday in January, 2017. Required text will be "Living The Science of Mind" by Ernest Holmes. For questions or additional information, please call Ethelyn Enos at 607-727-1068.

Happenings at The Sophia Center for Spirituality

*Tuesdays, 12:15-12:45 p.m.: Lunch With the Psalms
Spend a half hour in reflection of the psalm of the day.

*Saturday, Dec. 10, 10:00 a.m. - noon: *Mother Mary as Universal Symbol* - a mini-retreat with Yvonne Lucia held in the Library of FCC. Whether or not you were raised Catholic, the image of Mary holding the infant Jesus on her lap is recognized throughout the world as an icon of compassionate and unconditional motherly love. As a symbol, Mary mirrors what we are meant to become: Women filled with grace and the God-seed, who birth our divine potential into the world. In this mini-retreat we will spend time exploring the meanings underlying several of the beautiful titles that have been ascribed to Mary in ancient litanies (such as "Gate of Heaven" and "House of Gold"). Participants will create a mixed-media piece incorporating symbols of Mary that have personal meaning. Donation of \$35 (includes all materials) Register by Wed., Dec. 7 by calling (607) 644-0736.

Saturday, Dec. 10 - Sunday, Dec. 11, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.: Contemplative Installation and Labyrinth Walk by Yvonne Lucia, Fellowship Hall of First Congregational Church, 30 Main St., Binghamton, NY.

You are invited to take a time-out from the busyness of the holiday season to view a Contemplative Installation of Yvonne Lucia's contemporary icons of Mary while walking a replica of the Chartres labyrinth. Walking a labyrinth is an ancient way of prayer and meditative movement which invites us to slow down and turn inward. The contemporary icons of Mary surrounding the labyrinth offer the opportunity for deepened reflection and prayer during this holy season of Advent. Free admission.

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.

Office Closing Policy

Our church building is used not only by our members and staff, but also by several other groups, and this usage has increased in recent years. And this has created a bit of confusion when there is a heavy snowfall—namely, is the building open or not, and how do we communicate this to everyone. Therefore, we have the following policy: our Church Office will be closed on days when Binghamton High School is closed. If there is a delay called for BHS, the office will be open, but chances are we will be late opening, too.

If inclement weather hits later in the day and the BHS has early dismissal, then the church will also close early.

Additionally Sunday Worship Service will be cancelled only if there is a State of Emergency declared in our area. If memory serves, this has happened maybe three times in the last 25 years.

All other groups who use the church building are to make their cancellation decisions independently.

First Congregational Church, Trustees Summary November 15, 2016

Financial reports for October were unanimously approved as presented.

Church Administrator's Report

*Motion passed to cancel Sam's Club credit cards. Will retain membership cards.

*Motion passed to purchase new Canon copier.

*Update on room requests and assignments, stewardship mailing, rug cleaning, bathroom fixture installation, keying changes, computer support.

Pastor's Report

*Rachel Ditch, baptized here several years ago, to be ordained at Homer U.C.C. on December 4.

*Three or four new members expected soon.

*Deacons, Trustees, and Council to form committee to determine fellowship events in 2017, as per recent Congregational Conversation.

Old Business

Agreed to change in Crandall Fund wording to broaden application and discussed security system updates.

New Business

Decided not to purchase microwave for upstairs kitchen; discussed need for new Trustees in 2017.

Meeting adjourned with prayer at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Toni Rorapaugh

You Are The Gift

Dearest God,

May we choose to be good stewards of our
spiritual home—Our Church.

As we look to the horizon...

Let us sail this ship together.

Enjoying Our Trip

Trusting In You.

Loving Life

and

Loving Each Other.

Joyously!...

Doing what is ours to do!

And so it is.

Amen-n-Amen

Merry Christmas-n-Happy New Year

Mother Ethy and Julie Ann Johnson

(Book Words Continued from page 4)

“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**

Board of Deacons Summary, November 15, 2016

Chairperson's Report: Clare, reporting for Membership Clerk Arlene Price, noted there has been a net loss of 8 members so far this year: 7 new members, 3 moved away, 3 deaths, and 9 removed by action of the Annual Meeting. Despite the loss, Art reported that there are yet to join 3 new members, and that our rolls are very “clean” at this point.

Pastor's Report: Art went over the upcoming worship schedule, highlighting the upcoming Stewardship talks, the beginning of Advent and the Hanging ‘O the Greens on 11/27, and the preaching schedule for 12/24 – 1/1.

*New Members include Amber & Candy Brown, and Ruth Teuchler.

*The Susquehanna Association will be holding an Ecclesiastical Council on 12/4 at 3:00 pm in Homer NY for the proposed ordination of Rachel Ditch.

*For Thanksgiving, we have pledged 30 turkeys with all the usual sides, up from 25 last year.

*Clare Price and Deb VanDusen volunteered to organize the Fellowship activities for 2017.

*Discussion about the length of the announcements and prayer requests during the worship service, no action taken.

Pastor's Report, Janet: Spiritual book group has “Between the World and Me” by Ta-Nehisi Coates. Report of her visitation for the month.

Deacon Advisor Report, Dov :Dov spoke further about replacing the RSV pew bibles with the NRSV. Council has recommended a delay on this proposal until after the turn of the year. No action taken.

*Proposal to offer a Healing Service with anointing periodically beginning in 2017. A sample liturgy was provided. This was approved.

Mission Committee: Clare reported on the Neighbor's in Need offering. So far six families from the Woodrow Wilson School will receive Christmas Gifts.

*MSP to formally thank Julie Ann Johnson, Janet Rick, and Russell Farms for their decorating of our altar area for the Autumn.

Christian Education Committee: From the written report by Tracy Suggs, classes are going well with the new curriculum, Clare has prepared the CE proposed 2017 budget, and the children will coordinate with Art for the lighting of the Advent Candles during worship.

(Continued on page 6)

(Deacons Continued from page 5)

Old Business: The Boy Scouts of America are holding a Ten Commandments Hike held on 11/26, Clare will speak to the group about the commandment to not bear false witness.

*There were approx. 125 in attendance at the 75th Anniversary of the Broome County Council of Churches service on 11/13, and then approx. 150 in attendance at the 20th Anniversary of Jazz Vespers held later that evening. THANK YOU to Judy Giblin and Al Hamm for organizing that service!

The next meeting will be December 20, 2016.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Dr. Arthur M. Suggs

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
- Dr. Dov Treiman - Assistant to the Pastors
- Leslie Dahlgren – Church Administrator
- William Cuddeback - Treasurer
- Curtis Hartwig - Assistant Treasurer
- Arlene Price - Membership Clerk
- Nancy Wildoner – Organist & Choir Director
- Maureen Helms – Director of Joyful Noise
- Judy Giblin – Director of Jazz Vespers
- 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



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