

UCC NEWS

February 2015

An Open and Affirming Church

"A fellowship in Jesus, the Christ showing God's love to all people."

A monthly publication of

United Church of Christ, First Congregational

11 West Main Street, Norwich, NY 13815

The Rev. Mr. Joseph Connolly, Pastor and Teacher



Ash Wednesday Service
February 18th - 7:00 p.m.
at First Baptist Church



Lunchtime Bible Studies
See page 19 for details.

Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00 a.m.
Childcare Provided

Church Office Hours:

Monday - Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Friday 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Telephone: 607-334-3434

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From the Pastor

Dear Friends in Christ,

As my January letter to the church promised, 2015 started off with 2 unique services of worship. I'll talk about the second one first. That was the service of worship on 1/11/2015.

The theme of the service was: the church has left the building. And, indeed, we did. Our regular service of worship was conducted at Chenango Valley Home. We were welcomed by the residents as our congregation, our children and our choir joined in our regular 10:00 a.m. worship but that service was not held in our meeting house. It was held at CVH.

Part of the point of doing the service there is the residents of CVH are a part of the Norwich community. We, in this church, have a 200 year history of being in the community, of going out into the community. So, it seemed like a natural thing for us to do. Please note: when I posted a couple of pictures of the service with an explanation of what we had done at least two other pastors commented that they were going to steal this idea and use it at their churches.

Which brings me to the service on 1/4/2015. As I stated in my January letter, we had a lot planned for that day. We were going to have a soup and bread lunch after the service followed by "un-decorating" the church. In the context of the service we were going to have Communion and a "Blessing of the Stuffed Animals."

Well, I was sitting in the office at about 8:30. Suddenly every light in the office shut off. I walked out of the office and realized every light in the building was out. The emergency lights were all on. There was not one ounce of power anywhere.

I checked the circuit breakers. They were good. I called the police. I asked if anyone else had reported a problem. The officer said, "Nope. You're the only one."

The only thing I could think about was all that planning we had done and the expectations people had about the day— from celebrating Communion, to blessing stuffed animals, to a soup and bread lunch, to un-decorating the church. I could see all that planning going down the tubes if we did not get power back.

I went and got our church sexton, Eric, who lives a block

away from the church. Eric is more knowledgeable than I about electric. Right away he figured out two things.

First, the electric meter was not registering anything, so there was no electric coming into the building. Second, Eric could see a wire dangling from a transformer high on a pole at the back of the building. Hence, we were not the problem. The problem was NYSEG.

So, I called NYSEG on a cell phone— the phones were also out. Have you ever done that— call NYSEG? It's not easy. When I finally got through to a real person, they made no promises about how long it would take but they did say someone would be sent.

This still left the problem— our worship space has no windows. How could we have a service of worship with no lights. We needed to do Communion, bless the stuffed animals, have a soup and bread lunch— crock pots use power— and un-decorating the church. It was now 9:25. We had about 35 minutes to do something.

Someone pointed to our fellowship hall— the Founders' Room— and said, "There's plenty of light there. It's got windows. We can move worship." The tables were already set up for the planned meal. We could gather at those tables.

Someone else said, "The stoves are gas. Let's move the soups to the stove." So, we started moving hymnals and bulletins and Communion elements and soup. Candles came out— we have plenty of candles— and were placed on each table. The service was ready to go by 9:55.

In short order, we had come together as one and changed everything around. We changed how all those big plans would get accomplished. And so, with the natural light from the windows and candles on all the tables, people gathered to worship God.

Now, in the course of celebrating the Sacrament of Communion these words are intoned: "Consecrate, therefore, by Your Holy Spirit, O God, these gifts, and bless us that, as we receive them, we may be united with Christ and one another, and continue to be faithful in all things." When I said that, the lights came back on.

We stayed right where we were, knowing having the lights on or having the lights off did not matter. What mattered was the Spirit of God was moving among us and it had nothing to

do with NYSEG and nothing to do with lights. We knew the Spirit of God was moving among us because we had acted as one.

And we also knew this: we, the United Church of Christ, First Congregational, are now in our 201st year here in Norwich. But the church is not the building. The church is people. And the people of the church, for all of those 200 plus years, have had the reputation of being involved in the community, involved with people, striving to do the work of the Spirit, the work of God. That is who we are.

Well, you know what I like to say: “See you in church.” But perhaps it should read this way: “When I see you, you are church— we are church!”

In Faith,



Joe Connolly

Helping the Hungry

The mission of Our Daily Bread Food Pantry, housed in the Emmanuel Episcopal Church is to provide milk and nutritious food to families/households whose physical address is Norwich (13815), North Norwich (13814), Plymouth (13832), or South Plymouth (13844) and who meet income guidelines established by the Emergency Food Assistance Program, because feeding those in need is a prime call of the Gospel.

We support Our Daily Bread through donations from the Missions Budget, and through collections, on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month.

February 1st - “Soup”er Bowl Sunday

February 15th - Paper & Personal Care Products Sunday

A Pastoral Letter on Racism: A New Awakening

Published by the Collegium of Officers of the United Church of Christ at the National Level on the Occasion of the Martin Luther King Holiday 2105

As America honors the legacy of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the ideals of equality, service and beloved community that he lived and died for, the Cleveland-based United Church of Christ has released a Pastoral Letter on Racism, with the hope and expectation that it will be read in our 5,100 churches nationwide on Martin Luther King Jr. weekend or to conclude the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Sunday, Jan. 25. With the recent rash of deaths of African Americans at the hands of authorities, the UCC national leaders hope Martin Luther King weekend will be an opportunity for us to both address those issues through our continuing advocacy and hope for change toward King's beloved community.

The United Church of Christ,
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

January 16, 2015

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the United Church of Christ,

As the liturgical season turns to Epiphany and our national calendar turns to Martin Luther King Jr. Day, we are aware of our profound need for a new awakening of understanding about race and racism in our midst. As a church of Jesus, the Christ, we pray that the Holy Spirit will illuminate our hearts and minds and stir us into faithful response to the ongoing manifestation of racism which is evident in tragic and painful ways in our communities.

Born in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement and having deep roots in the 19th century struggle to abolish slavery, the United Church of Christ has a lasting engagement in the struggle for racial justice. The 1991 Pastoral Letter on Contemporary Racism emphasized the Seventeenth General Synod declaration that “racism is a sin and an evil that stands as an affront to the Christian faith.” The 2008 Pastoral Letter

that accompanies Sacred Conversations on Race pointed out, “Racism remains a wound at the heart of our nation that cannot be wished away or treated carelessly.” These writings from our leaders during those years remind us that acknowledging and challenging racism is not new for the United Church of Christ. They also remind us that we are theologically and spiritually compelled to seek the elimination of racism within ourselves, in the church and in society.

The extrajudicial killing of black and brown men and women by authorities is in and of itself reason to cry out against injustice. But the targeted shooting of police officers is also reason to mourn and lament the use of violence. We cannot conflate and equate one kind of tragedy with another or simplify complex realities that cannot be “fixed” overnight. We should not be creating more strife by participating in attempts to make this an “us against them” conflict, nor should we allow ourselves to look away from the harsh realities of this historic moment pretending that racism is not at the core of the injustice.

The roots of the issues go far deeper than we would want to admit. Therefore, it is important to revisit American history in an effort to understand our current reality in an appropriate context. Our history is that of enslavement of people of African descent and the annihilation of the native peoples of the land. It includes decades of state-sanctioned segregation and lynching. These are among the realities that shape our present. Although slavery, genocide against Native Americans, mob-initiated lynching, and segregation have ended, we cannot ignore their lasting impact on present attitudes and behaviors regarding race. Nor can we ignore the disproportionately high rates of incarceration of men and women of color.

Epiphany reminds us that a new understanding is possible because God has come to us in human form and dwells among us. Like the Magi who traveled from a distance, we, too, need to find our way to understanding. Our paths might need to be on roads less traveled so that we are able to arrive at a truly new place when it comes to gaining insight into the depth of systemic racism. Getting to that new place of understanding will take time, courage and continued commitment on the part of all. Then and only then can true healing and reconciliation happen.

Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound...

Let us not speak of reconciliation without speaking of how we can repair the breach and how we can restore the loss...

These words are from a litany prepared by Dr. Yolanda Pierce in response to recent events in Ferguson, Missouri, and elsewhere. As people of faith, following that Star to Bethlehem, we are called to lament and abide in humility with those who mourn, rage, and pour out their pain and grief from all communities.

We lament and abide with the communities of Aiyana Jones in Detroit, Michigan; Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York; Yvette Smith in Bastrop, Texas; Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri; Kathryn Johnson in Atlanta, Georgia; Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio— those who died at the hands of authorities. We lament and abide with the communities of slain police officers Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu in New York. We lament the reality that Black and Latino police officers on their off-duty time are susceptible to the same over-policing and discrimination that communities of color suffer. We seek healing, too, but recognize that wounds not fully cleansed will not heal properly.

Efforts to hold individual police officers and police departments accountable must not be misconstrued to be anti-police. Law enforcement officers have every right to expect respect from community members when they are performing their jobs with integrity and accountability. However, communities, and especially communities that have a long experience of racial injustice at the hands of police and within the justice system, have every right to expect government to hold law enforcement and public safety departments accountable for their actions when individual officers abuse the power entrusted to them and when there is clear evidence of racial bias and profiling.

Accountability and responsibility do not simply rest with the police. As members of the Christian faith, as residents in our communities, as law enforcement officers or family

members of law enforcement officers, as elected officials, as clergy and lay leaders, as mothers and fathers of those who might be at risk, and as individuals seeking to be guided by the Good News that all of us are created in God's holy image, we, too, must confess that we fall short of who we are called to be as followers of Christ. We also confess as a denomination that is majority white in membership that we have not lived up to our commitments to be an anti-racist church and an intercultural, multiracial church to the extent that God has called us to be. On matters of race and racism we have lapsed into complacency in part because racism seems intractable. It won't go away. Or because we want to believe that we are living in a "post-racial era." If we are able to embrace this confession as our own, our calling as Jesus' disciples then inspires and even compels us to be accountable and responsible in pursuit of the end of racism, however long it takes.

It is important to understand that the racism we face today, while daunting and seemingly intractable, is not the racism Americans of all races faced decades ago. Today, we are more keenly aware that racism is more than an individual sin and it involves more than a private injury. Our understanding of racism as more than a black/white issue has deepened and now we are able to see that racism is also institutional and systemic. We have been re-awakened to the disturbing differences in perception among us about how law enforcement functions in our various communities. Thus the need for white Americans to continue work on understanding how institutional and systemic racism benefits them has been heightened.

The role of younger Americans from all our diverse communities in leading protests in cities throughout the country and developing new initiatives for creating justice within our communities is a powerful testimony to the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement, while at the same time offering constructive challenges to those who led the movement in the 1960s. We are proud of the clergy and lay leaders within the United Church of Christ who are actively engaged today in these efforts to establish "justice within the gates" of their communities. It is important that we understand them and the protest they lead as a living continuum of a historic effort to transform American society from being a racially stratified

and divided society to a community firmly grounded in racial equality. Indeed, these young Americans are a sign of hope.

Eradicating racism will happen only as we take action to produce conditions that will allow for the fullness of life for those who have suffered its destructive impact, as we work to reorient institutions that perpetuate racist practices, and as we dismantle systems that coalesce to produce racial injustice. We believe that the United Church in all of its settings can and must engage this kind of action as an act of faith and faithfulness to God. To that end we invite you as sisters and brothers in Christ to prayerfully consider these actions and others that emerge out of your particular thought and context:

- Engage in initiating local church partnerships that bring churches of different racial, ethnic, class, linguistic and cultural backgrounds together to engage in relationship building, racism awareness learning, advocacy, and mission.
- Initiate or continue engagement in Sacred Conversations on Race.
- Form partnerships to launch and promote literacy initiatives in communities throughout the nation as a necessary means of empowerment in the struggle against racial injustice.
- Work with other local churches and ecumenical partners to intentionally engage police agencies in constructive dialogue focused on developing appropriate and just policing in communities of color.
- Form intentional partnerships with other secular and religious organizations that share a commitment to working to eliminate racism, such as the YWCA, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the NAACP, the Samuel Proctor Conference and other emerging organizations.

In the 2015 season of Epiphany and beyond, may the Spirit of God embolden us to recognize and resist the evolving virus of racism in our social body, encourage us through our hope in Jesus, the Christ, to repair the breach, and embrace us all as we move into the brave spaces of interracial church relationships, more just communities, and active engagement

to put an end to the evil of racism.

Let not our inaction be an affront to God. Let our actions be a sign of the healing love of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

The Rev. Geoffrey A. Black
General Minister and President

The Rev. M. Linda Jaramillo
Executive Minister, Justice and Witness Ministries

The Rev. J. Bennett Guess
Executive Minister, Local Church Ministries

The Rev. James Moos
Executive Minister, Wider Church Ministries

The Rev. Elizabeth Leung
Minister for Racial Justice

Art & Music Expo

Sunday, February 8th

4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

United Church of Christ



The S.A.M.E organization extends an invitation to their fourth annual Art and Music Expo on Sunday February 8 from 4:00-6:00 p.m. SAME is an art and music advocacy group made up of art and music educators, community members and parents. Our goal is to support art and music education in our public schools.

The event will feature art work and musical performances from students in grades K-12. Refreshments will be served. A Silent Auction consisting of artwork and services donated by NCSD Art and Music Educators and private Educators will benefit Norwich High School Art and Music Senior Award Recipients. The event is free and open to the public. Goodwill donations are always welcomed. Contact Betsy Mahannah 334-5505 for more information.

Revised Common Lectionary

You may be aware that the readings used at services of worship in most Mainline Protestant churches and in Roman Catholic Churches are from the list of assigned readings known as The New Revised Common Lectionary. In our Congregational tradition, while pastors are encouraged to use the assigned readings, it's not mandatory. This is published in the hope that some may use these readings in their personal prayer and devotional time.

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany - February 1

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Psalm 111

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Mark 1:21-28

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany - February 8

Isaiah 40:21-31

Psalm 147:1-11, 20c

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Mark 1:29-39

Transfiguration Sunday - February 15

2 Kings 2:1-12

Psalm 50:1-6 2

Corinthians 4:3-6

Mark 9:2-9

Ash Wednesday - February 18

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12

Psalm 51:1-17

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

First Sunday in Lent - February 22

Genesis 9:8-17

Psalm 25:1-10

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1:9-15

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>February 2015</h1>						
1 8:30 a.m. Church School 9:15 a.m. Nursery 10:00 a.m. Worship/Communion <i>Souper Bowl Sunday</i> - See p. 4. 11:00 a.m. Birthday Coffee Hour 1:00 p.m. Piecemakers, Founders' rm. 3:00 p.m. Ordination at East Side UCC Binghamton	2 <i>Groundhog Day</i> 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens	3 9:30 a.m. Susquehanna Clergy Meeting 3:00 p.m. The Place 6:00 p.m. AA Meeting 6:30 p.m TNT Quilters	4 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens 4:00 p.m. A. Humer, Founders' Rm. 6:00 p.m. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Choir	5 3:00 p.m. The Place	6 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens	7 12:00 p.m. SAME Setup, Mayflower, Founders' Rms.
8 8:30 a.m. Church School 9:15 a.m. Nursery 10:00 a.m. Worship 11:00 a.m. Coffee Hour 3:00 p.m. Chenango Valley Home 4:00 p.m. SAME Expo. See p. 10.	9 3:00 p.m The Place Teens 6:00 p.m. Prayer Shawl Ministry	10 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens 6:00 p.m. AA Meeting 6:30 p.m TNT Quilters 7:00 p.m. Film Series	11 10:00 a.m. Committee on Authorized Ministry, Homer 2:00 p.m. A. Humer, Founders' Rm. 2:00 p.m. General Ministry Team, Homer 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens 6:00 p.m Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Choir	12 12:00 p.m. Committee on Authorized Ministry, Binghamton 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens 6:00 p.m. Piecemakers	13 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens	14 <i>St. Valentine's Day</i>
15 8:30 a.m. Church School 9:15 a.m. Nursery 10:00 a.m. Worship <i>Paper Sunday</i> - See p. 4. 11:00 a.m. Coffee Hour	16 Presidents Day <i>Church Office Closed</i> 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens	17 9:00 a.m. Head Start Policy Council 3:00 p.m The Place Teens 6:00 p.m. AA Meeting 6:30 p.m .TNT Quilters	18 <i>Ash Wednesday</i> 2:00 p.m. A. Humer, Founders' Rm. 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens 6:00 p.m. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Ecumenical Service at FBC. See cover.	19 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens 6:00 p.m .Alzheimer's Support Group 7:00 p.m Trustees Meeting	20 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens	21
22 8:30 a.m. Church School 9:15 a.m. Nursery 10:00 a.m. Worship 11:00 a.m. Coffee Hour	23 3:00 p.m The Place Teens 6:00 p.m. Prayer Shawl Ministry	24 11:00 a.m. Food Pantry 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens 6:00 p.m. AA Meeting 6:00 p.m TNT Quilters	25 12:00 p.m. Bible Study at Episcopal Church. 2:00 p.m. A. Humer, Founders' Rm. 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens 6:00 p.m Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Choir	26 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens	27 3:00 p.m. The Place Teens	28 9:30 a.m. Home Bureau, Founders' Rm. 2:00 p.m .C. Willard, Founders' Rm.



Historian Notes

by Patricia Evans, Church Historian

Rev. Lawrence L. Durgin's - continued from last month

Resignation April 20, 1952

“This is a somber moment. I had not expected it to come so soon. In many ways I wish it could be postponed. I ask you, the members of the First Congregational Church of Norwich to accept my resignation as your minister and teacher effective on July 6.

“On that day I expect to assume my duties as minister of the Central Congregational Church, Providence, RI succeeding to the position of Dr. Arthur Bradford, who on July 1 retires from a brilliant 34 year pastorate.

“It is ironic that you must share the responsibility for my leaving after so brief a time. Yet it is true, for the record which the Providence committee has mistaken for mine is actually yours. It is you who have come to share heavily because you have learned to care deeply and thus make your church, statistically and profoundly, one of the great missionary churches of the world. It is you who have stood fearlessly for truth and justice in a national atmosphere for suspicion and hysteria. It is you who have put into practice the conviction that the church of Christ universal is far more important than any single church or denomination including your own. Furthermore, one of the reasons I received consideration was that I was happy in my present work and anxious to remain in it. This is to your credit and not to mine.

“In my first annual report, almost five years ago, I stated we had performed joint acts of faith. You took an untried and untested lad, having faith that under God you could transform him into a minister. I, in turn, assumed responsibility for a church which was eager to become a life-giving, transforming power, having the faith that it would become great to the glory of God. My faith has been justified to full measure. Now we

must make two new acts of faith. It is my faith that we, in this church, have now passed through the wilderness and are ready to cross over into the most fruitful and creative years of this church's history. As long as the church will continue in the guidance and in the power of the Holy Spirit, I know this faith will be justified. On your part, it is only by faith that you can send me forth. It is not at all evident that I am ready for this new responsibility. I beseech your blessings and your prayers.

“When July comes some will say that we are separated, but there is no parting of the ways. In our different places and in our respective ways we shall continue sharing and praying and working to become channels for the overpowering grace of God. Yes, as long as life shall last, you and I shall continue together working to the glory of God and of His son, Jesus Christ; to whom with the Holy Spirit be all blessing and honor, and glory and power, world without end. Amen.”

Rev. Lawrence L. Durgin was installed as the new minister of the Central Congregational Church of Providence, RI at the service attended by some 800 church and educational leaders and members of the congregation.

He then serves the Broadway United Church as their eighth pastor for twenty years from 1960 to 1980. Upon his arrival the church was dealing with a very large bill to repair the building in the range of \$500,000. It was proposed and the vote won to sell its building and use the money for mission. The move occurred in 1969, with the Broadway church sharing space with the nearby Church of St. Paul the Apostle, a Catholic church.

The Broadway church then became involved in developing affordable housing in the neighborhood that was previously named Hell's Kitchen. They were successful in development of middle and low income apartment buildings.

During this period of Rev. Durgin's tenure the church changes its name from “Broadway Congregational Church” to “Broadway United Church of Christ” to reflect the 1957 merger of the Congregational Church with the Evangelical & Reformed Church.

The congregation changed their location several times, twelve years at St Paul's church then moving further up the west side to Rutgers Presbyterian Church for three years, then to St. Michael's Episcopal. Rev. Durgin left the church in

1980, and it eventually formed a relationship with the Advent Lutheran Church at 93rd and Broadway, investing in the renovation and repair of the Advent church in March 2000.

Rev. Durgin's years have been characterized by deep commitments to diverse concerns. Some of which were race relations, housing, ecumenism, prisoners' families and the Farm Worker's Union, among others. In 1963 a busload of Broadway members joined the March on Washington. Two of the first women to be ordained served as assistant ministers, Rev. Sharon Ringe and the Rev. Sharon Solt.

Dr. Durgin resigned from the Broadway pastorate in 1979 to become the vice president of development for Tougaloo College in Mississippi. His ministry there resulted in a professorship named in his honor: the Lawrence Durgin Professor of Literature.

"The Rev. Lawrence L. Durgin, died [in 1981] at Hines General Hospital in Jackson, Miss., after a long illness. He was 63 years old and lived in Tougaloo. Mr. Durgin combined his ministerial calling with an activist role in urban and social issues.

"Among his special interests was penal reform, and he organized bus transportation to enable families of inmates to visit relatives in prisons throughout New York State. In another area, he helped rally a coalition of Jews and Christians in support of the effort by the United Farm Workers to get collective-bargaining rights."

On learning of Mr. Durgin's death, the Rev. Dr. Avery D. Post, president of the United Church of Christ, said: "Larry Durgin was one of the most dedicated leaders of the urban church of the past quarter-century. He was equally dedicated to racial equality. He made of Broadway United Church of Christ a center for the improvement of the neighborhoods of central Manhattan. His deep commitment to prisoners and their families was an inspiring response to the teaching of Jesus: 'When I was in prison, you visited me.'"

Mr. Durgin was one of the founders of the Clinton Housing Association, which spurred efforts to improve housing and living conditions on the West Side of Manhattan. He was also an architect of the former Association for Christian Mission, an ecumenical organization founded in 1968 to mount a drive against poverty and other social problems in New York City.

Mr. Durgin served in many denominational and ecumenical posts. He was a member of the board of directors of the United Church's board for homeland ministries, past president of the Manhattan division of the Protestant Council of Churches of the City of New York, and, in 1970-71, moderator of the Metropolitan Association of the United Church of Christ.

He had been a member of the board of trustees of Tougaloo College, a predominantly black, church-affiliated liberal arts college, for 25 years before he became vice president for development in June 1980.

The Rev. Lawrence L. Durgin and his wife are buried at the Springfield Friends Meeting House Cemetery, High Point, Guilford County, NC.



Director of Children and Youth Ministries

by Linda L. Oehme

During the month of February, we will be exploring new and some familiar parables in the *Children and Worship Program*. "Parables are precious, like gold" and so they come wrapped up like gold presents. These are the stories that Jesus told to get the people thinking about the Dominion of God. Come and check it out.

Remember, Church School is not just for kids. There are Sunday adult classes meeting in the Chapel and Bible Study most Wednesday evenings led by Pastor Joe. WE'RE never too young or old to learn and explore our faith in new and exciting ways. This is an open invitation for anyone who would like to join us. See you on Sunday.

Look in the Mail Box

Dear Friends,

We send our sincere thanks for your generous gifts to Hope House Orphanage in Ndola, Zambia, Africa. We are pleased to report that the ongoing efforts on behalf of the many children at Hope House Orphanage as well as the Hope Fellowship School are truly blessed by God and the lives of these little ones are being radically changed as they daily receive food, clothing, education and spiritual training.

In Christ's Service,

Barbara E. Hust, President

Dear UCC,

Thanks so much for your support of NY/HELP Honduras. Your generous gift to support NY/HELP's mission to the communities around La Laguna, Honduras is most appreciated. Muchas gracias!

NY/HELP Honduras

Dear UCC,

My son and I would like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the wonderful playpen/crib. He really enjoys the crib! Once again thank you so much.

[Name withheld to preserve privacy]

(An adorable photo of the baby enjoying the crib was included with this note.)

Dear Missions Committee,

I just received your generous donation to Vick Pathfinder Ministries. On behalf of Vick Pathfinder I thank you very much. The ministry of outdoor Christian education is an important and meaningful one. Your donation will help us to continue to provide this ministry. I look forward to sharing more about our ministry with you as the Summer 2015 camping season draws nearer. I will make sure that there are camp brochures to you as soon as I have some. I also look forward to exploring other ways in which we can engage in a

mutually beneficial relationship. I am excited about sharing with your missions committee in more detail some of our needs and some other ways in which you can help. Our CEO, Rev. Dr. John Buskey has also made himself available to provide you with further information about our ministry. I can also recommend Rev. Buskey as an excellent presence in your pulpit on a Sunday morning.

Thank you again!

Rev. David J. Spiegel, Sr.




Lent Lunchtime Bible Studies

**Wednesdays, 12:00 noon
Lectionary Based
Bring a bag lunch.**

Feb. 24	Emmanuel Episcopal Church
March 4	First Baptist Church
March 11	Broad St. U.M. Church
March 18	Christ Lutheran Church
March 25	United Church of Christ
April 1	TBA



UCC, First Congregational, Norwich, NY has a long history of gifts bequeathed by former members and memorial gifts given by family and friends. To recognize and honor our past and encourage growth in our future, our scholarship program is supported by some recent generous gifts. Scholarship amounts vary up to \$1,000.

Scholarships for Graduating Seniors who are Covenant Members of UCC Norwich:

Memorial Gifts Scholarship (number of scholarships varies)

Alexander and Alice Neill Scholarship (1 scholarship)

Scholarships for All Applicants Pursuing Post-secondary Undergraduate Education

Donald Tracy Scholarships (4 scholarships)

Theodore Dolgos Scholarships (2 scholarships)

Theron and Margaret Hust Scholarship (1 scholarship)

Applications will be available from the church office or online at <www.uccnorwichny.org> after February 1.

Deadline for applications, including 3 letters of reference, is April 15.

From the Deacons

by Linda Oehme

On January 4, we had our second Soup and Bread Sunday. It should go down in the history books as one of the most memorable gatherings our Church has had. First of all, the soups and such were delicious and the fellowship was superb.

Now for the “fun stuff”: the power went off just before all the crock pots started to arrive. No power, no electric, no lights, no windows in the Nave, no worship!!!! What a test!!!

So some of us concentrated on the Worship and some of us the Meal; both groups came up with a plan. Worship was moved to the Founders’ Room and the gas stoves were lit up and soups were heated on the stoves. Thankfully, the room was set for the meal and with candles and an extra card table, communion was also set. Of course, it wasn’t a regular service! No, we also had the Blessings of the Animals. **NO PROBLEM.** We did it! And it was very memorable.

The soups were heated and about half through the service, the electric came on. We scrambled to get the crock pots on and stuff out as quietly as we could. The service was finished just as all the soups were ready. We can do anything with God on our side.

And God said, “It was good.” And it was.

Let’s do it again...Okay, how about March 22? See you there!



Prayer Concerns

Let us keep in our prayers the following concerns:

- * families-those families that may be going through particularly difficult times, families seeking God's guidance;
- * those who are moving because of their work, those looking for work, and those looking for meaning in their work.
- * those who are ill, who are recovering from illness or surgery, or who anticipate going to the hospital.
- * those who grieve over the death of someone they love.
- * our church, that it might be faithful to its calling, our pastor, all staff members and committees.
- * peace in the world.
- * gay, lesbian and bisexual persons, and all those who feel isolated and alone.

Our Prayers and Sympathy to:

Irene Sobers for the loss of her husband **Robert Sobers** on December 10, 2014.



Danielle House

The church sexton, Eric Burgher, is currently undergoing radiation therapy for a non-malignant, but very large tumor at Lourdes Hospital in Binghamton. He goes down Mondays and returns Fridays. During the week he stays at Danielle House across the street from Lourdes. There is no charge for this.

It would be good for members of the church and the church to offer support to this ministry just to show our appreciation for what they are doing for Eric. If you wish to make a donation there are two ways to do so. One is to write a check to the U.C.C. with ***Danielle House*** on the memo line and allow the church to forward that donation anonymously. Another is to send a check directly to Danielle House (160 Riverside Drive, 13905). However, if you do that we ask you write ***UCC supporting Eric Burgher*** in the memo line. Thank you.

Bulletins from Other Churches

Joe and Bonnie Connolly - Ecclesiastical Council,
Binghamton East Side Congregational UCC, January 4,
2015.



Visitors to Our Church in January

Ruth and Ed Tucker, Norwich



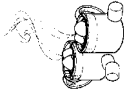
HAPPY  *February*
BIRTHDAY!

These are the birthdays of members and friends of our church family. If you know someone on the list who's having a birthday, feel free to send that person a card. Even if you don't know anyone on the list, feel free to send any celebrant a card. More importantly, strive to hold each of these people up in prayer on the anniversary of their birth. Please call the church office with additions or corrections (334-3434).

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Betty Yeahl | 16 Audrey Aitken |
| 4 Bonnie Connolly | 22 Norma Kinney |
| 6 Rose Laughlin | 24 Linda Oehme |
| Ron Musson | 25 Irene Sobers |
| 9 Matthew Craig | 28 Gwendolyn Breese |
| 11 Joshua Miller | |

UCC NEWS

United Church of Christ
First Congregational
11 West Main Street
Norwich, NY 13815-1612



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Ministers: **All the People**
Pastor and Teacher: **The Rev. Mr. Joseph Connolly**
Moderator: **Janet Johnson**
Director of Music Ministries: **Mary Williams**
Director of Youth Ministries: **Linda Oehme**
Parish Coordinator: **Cheri Willard**
Counselor, Family Counseling Ministry:
Joanne Lanfear