

THE RAPPORTEUR

"Where Faith and Family Come Together"
First Presbyterian Church, Olean, NY
January, 2017

Pastor's Thoughts...

Happy New Year!

Have you made any New Year's resolutions yet; have your broken them? I know how hard it is to keep those well-meaning attempts. Even noble resolutions about deepening our spirituality this year are easier to make than to keep. We can resolve to pray, meditate, read the Bible and use other spiritual resources like books and podcasts, every day but maintaining that resolve is hard.

As I have said several times before, it takes sixty-six days to instill a new habit. It takes significant time to create a new mind set and behavior pattern. I used to think it was less than sixty-six days, but based on the latest research Robin Sharma reports that sixty-six days is the standard for instilling a new practice in our lives.

That is rough when we come to think of New Year's resolutions. We start off well-meaning, but often fizzle out. The simple truth is changing behavior is difficult. It requires constant attention and effort until it becomes a habit. And New Year's resolutions are treated so comically and lightly that there is no shame in failure. I think that is why early in January gyms and fitness facilities are crowded with new people, but most of these folks quickly drift away by President's Day.

Change is difficult and organisms prefer sameness to change. This is true for more than just you and I. One of the things that systems theory teaches us is that families, too, resist change. If the father has been the one to perform some function in the family and he suddenly stops, chances are the mother or someone else will pick up the responsibility to maintain stasis. This can function for better or worse.

Families are not alone in this kind of behavior. Churches as systems seek to maintain the status quo. This is not such a bad thing

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(Pastor's Thoughts continued)

for in an ever-changing world in which we live a semblance of order and sameness is a desirable thing. But this resistance to change can be deadly. It is the reason even a dying church will refuse to change even to save itself.

So if you want to add something to your life or subtract something from your life, start now. If you begin the work on January 1st, you can have a new positive part of your life by March 9th. Nine weeks and three days. This is not easy though it is possible. And if we think of the course of entire lives it is such a small part of our allotted time.

So if one of your resolutions is developing your spiritual life, pick a time and keep this appointment each day. If we can stick to it for a little more than nine weeks, we will be well on the way to a deeper spirituality.

Peace, *Pastor Bruce*

MEF

Many thanks to all who helped to "Deck the Halls" to prepare our sanctuary and Fellowship Hall for Advent and Christmas. We found ourselves humming along to the Christmas music that played in the background, inspiring us to remember why we were working so hard. The final result was beautiful to see.

On December 18th, after the wonderful Christmas program presented by Carol McClellan and the youth, a group of merry carolers had a hearty lunch and set out through the winter weather to take Christmas music to our Friends at Home and others. It was a wonderful success with the recipients being very happy to hear their favorite carols performed by fellow church members. If you haven't participated in this wonderful event, make a note to try it next year. You are sure to get hooked!

By the time you read this, the Christmas Eve service and reception will be happy memories. Many thanks to all who contributed to its success.

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(MEF continued)

Upcoming events:

- January 8 – We will Wreck the Halls as we remove and stow our Christmas decorations for another year. As in putting up the decorations, there are tasks for helpers of all levels of physical ability. A sandwich and beverage lunch will be available.
- January 15 – Martin Luther King service and dinner beginning at 4pm. Casseroles and salads are needed for the dinner.
- January 22 – Annual meeting following Sunday worship. We will have lunch after.

The MEF Committee meets the second Wednesday of most months at 7pm in Fellowship Hall to address issues related to membership and to plan fellowship activities. We strive to keep the activities varied, inexpensive, and most of all, fun. These activities are an important way to draw our congregation together so that our members not only worship together; we also work and play together. All three efforts contribute to keeping us unified. They also help us to get to know fellow church participants on a personal, cooperative level that makes us truly a functioning family, a factor in making our worship more meaningful.

If you would like to be part of this effort, or just want to see why we keep talking about how much fun our meetings are, join us for one or more meetings or join us for a longer term and experience the joy.

Stewardship Committee

Our congregation participated generously in the Peace and Global Witness (formerly Peacemaking) and Christmas Joy offerings. Gifts to the Christmas Joy offering may still be made through January.

The spring offerings will be One Great Hour of Sharing, which is used to address injustice, and the Pentecost Offering, supporting ministries that benefit children at risk. Gifts to these offerings are used locally, nationally and globally.

It is interesting to note that our church regularly receives commendation for participating in all four special offerings. Apparently that is not common.

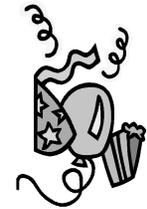
January Birthdays

- 5 ~ Wendy Brand
- 6 ~ Andrea Oakley
- 7 ~ Matthew Brenneman,
Jordan Braymiller
- 9 ~ Sarah Larson,
Doug Price
- 10 ~ Veronica Sturdevant
- 11 ~ Nicholas McConnaughey
- 17 ~ Dylan Oakley
- 21 ~ Michael Jennings,
Sandi Smith
- 27 ~ Ed Bigley
- 28 ~ Glenda Jester,
Lyn Sturdevant
- 31 ~ Paula Cotton,
Renee Ensell

January Anniversaries

- 15 ~ Bruce & Marlene Levine
- 21 ~ Kevin & Linda Kelly

JANUARY CELEBRATIONS



ANNUAL Congregational Meeting

elections, 2017 budget



**Join us for the Annual Meeting that will
take place following Worship
on January 22nd. We will gather for
lunch after the meeting.**

SESSION UPDATE

Actions taken by Session at the December 5, 2016 meeting:

- Noted schedule dates for the beginning of the calendar year:
- Jan. 9 – Session meeting at 7pm., Annual reports due
- Jan. 15 – Annual reports available for congregation
- Jan. 22 – Annual Meeting
- Jan. 29 – Ordination/Installation for Deacons and Elders
- Feb. 13 – Session meeting at 7pm.
- Received three thank-you notes from the Olean Food Pantry for Noisy Cans donations and one from Creekside Chapel Food Pantry for a Burt donation.
- Learned that Austin Locksmithing & Security was called to address a malfunction in the back door.
- Learned that a new boiler pump has been ordered. Sensors will be added to the boiler. Total cost for these items should be under \$1,000.
- Approved gifts from the Burt Fund: \$1,000 to Olean City School District's Clothing for Needy Children Program. \$5,000 to Dan Piccioli who was recently paralyzed. \$5,000 to Kevin Guest House. \$4,000 to Loaves and Fishes, a food pantry at Hillside Wesleyan Church. \$4,000 to the Creekside Chapel food pantry. \$4,000 to Olean Food Pantry. \$3,000 to Portville Food Pantry. \$3,500 to Genesis House. \$3,000 to Harvest Field Café Community Soup Kitchen. \$3,500 to Interfaith Caregivers.
- The Finance Committee is working with Skip Wilday to diversify our portfolio. Currently, about 95% of our endowments are invested in equities.
- Approved the purchase of a new copier for a net cost of \$5,000. The price per page and toner will be cheaper than our current copier for which repair parts are scarce or nonexistent.
- Learned that pay and hourly adjustments for our staff are satisfactory to those involved.

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(Session Update Continued)

- Learned that preparation for the Christmas Pageant is going well.
- Learned that the children have raised \$50 for a Haiti relief project.
- Learned that the Christian Education Committee is sponsoring a collection of much-needed supplies for the Jericho Road Community Health Center in Buffalo. A list of needed items was included in the Pastor's Report in the December Rapportier.
- Heard an update from the MEF Committee. See the MEF report elsewhere in this newsletter.
- Learned that Andrea and MEF are investigating a way to make it easier for an MEF member to put photos on Facebook.
- Learned that two new Session members and one Deacon are needed to fill posts of members whose terms are up. The Nominating Committee is addressing this need. Members of the congregation who are interested in one of these positions are asked to let Andrea know.
- Learned that after failing to find a way to reorganize, OCDC will sell all assets and vacate the building by the end of 2016. Our church is arranging to purchase some items.
- Learned that at a recent Cluster meeting, gift boxes for missions were made.
- From GOAC: Need cookies for Food Pantry. Organizing Christmas Dinner at St. Mary of the Angels. Rev. Lamont Higginbottom has left Trinity Methodist Church. Toys for Tots need volunteers. This area is one of the biggest distributors for Toys for Tots in the nation.
- Scout Sunday will be Feb. 12.
- Next regular meeting will be January 9, 2017 at 7pm.

CE Corner

Happy New Year! I always loved the start of a new year- I love that God gives us a chance to start fresh and make changes, with sins of the past forgiven. I hope that you all have a wonderful and successful year ahead!

Is your New Year's resolution to become more involved with the church, or maybe to find a new way to serve God? Consider joining the Christian Education committee and helping us think of ways to better serve our youth. New members are always welcome!

The students did a phenomenal job on their Christmas Pageant last month! I received many wonderful compliments on the banners that they made. (Check out the church Facebook page if you missed them!) I was very proud about how the boys bravely volunteered to read passage during the presentation. A big thank you goes out to the congregation, Rick and the choir, Alexis Fisk (our Sunday School volunteer), and especially to the Christian Education Committee for their support.

Our Sunday School will be selecting a new service project for the upcoming year during the month of January. Stay tuned for more information. As always, keep saving those bottle receipts- we put that money towards supplies that we need for our stewardship activities. We will also be looking for ideas of fun fellowship activities that we could do together with our church family.

Looking forward to seeing you!

Carol McClellan,
CE Director



Book Club

The book club chose not to meet in December because of the proximity to Christmas.

At the November meeting, books were chosen as follows:

Jan. 23 - [A Man Called Ove](#) by Backman

Feb. 27 - [Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children](#) by Riggs and Bernstein

Mar. 27 - [Small Great Things](#) by Jodi Picoult

The members also mentioned other books they have been reading independently. They have been added to our book list, copies of which are available in the church office in Punkie Sinesiou's mailbox. Help yourself; the list is a wonderful resource for anyone looking for a good book to read.

The club meets on the fourth Monday of most months, as reflected in the dates above, at 6pm at Perkins. We each buy our own dinner to enjoy as we discuss our favorite topic – books!

