

THE RAPPORTEUR

"Where Faith and Family Come Together"

First Presbyterian Church, Olean, NY

January, 2017

Pastor's Thoughts...

I feel like there is an impossible task facing our country. How can we build bridges in a world that is so divided? The real hope I have is that I am not alone in this task. There are many people of good will working to do this. In addition it is part of my faith's imperative. As Paul says, "You are the body of Christ and parts of each other." (1 Corinthians 12:27 Common English Bible (CEB)) We are the body of Christ and united in that body.

With so many divisions in our world our witness is needed. Politics, race, class, ethnicity, citizenship, and sexuality often divide us. Instead of treating these differences as part of the beauty of God's world, all too often we use them as reasons to separate, attack and deride. We can all find ways to separate from one another: differences of opinion, or slights, real and imagined, to name a few. Each of these partings diminishes us.

As my father used to say, "It takes all kinds of people to make a world." I am proud to say that there have been and will be events in our community, both church and civic, that seek to build bridges across the divides that separate us.

On January 14th Bethany Lutheran Church hosted a diverse group for lunch and conversation called a Community Meal and Conversation on Equity and Compassion. This event sought to bring together people to spur communication between folks with different ideas. Included in this afternoon was a time for structured conversation that allowed people to voice their own truth and be heard and respected.

The next day we experienced a full house at our church as we hosted the Martin Luther King Celebration. The wonderfully diverse crowd was able to celebrate the life of Dr. King, who challenged us to be our best selves. This was a beautiful event for our community.

By the time you read this, we will have celebrated a service of Christian Unity. At that time we recognized Dan McDowell of First Baptist Church and Della Moore of "The Center" (The African American Center for Cultural Development) as people who have committed significantly to Christian Unity in our Community. We will also recognize the Miriam Center as an organization that has made an important difference in our community.

At the end of February there will be another event to help us cross boundaries and move toward understanding and unity in diversity. The Greater Olean Area Churches will sponsor an African-American Heritage Weekend. This will take place the last weekend in February. I urge you to save Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon for this event. In addition to local participants, my good friend Ronald Register will be coming from the Cleveland area to help lead a discussion and facilitate conversation.

All these events should remind us that we live in a place where respect and unity in diversity are valued by many. Every time we participate in these kinds of events, we witness to God's love in the world. When I think of these events I want to sing with Louie Armstrong or the Ramones the song "Wonderful World". (Speaking of diversity, what two wonderfully different takes on the song.)

In closing I have two thoughts that might go a long way to restoring the civility and respect or world needs. One of my friends put it this way, "In private we need to mind our thoughts and in public mind our words." Or to quote a sign on my wall, "Anyone can put someone down. Heroes lift others up."

On a personal note, my hip replacement surgery was very successful. Thanks for all of your prayers and acts of concern. When I was in Saint Louis for Christmas, I think a nerve in my back got pinched and my foot went numb. This left me with balance issues. So I am still on a cane. I have doctor appointments and tests scheduled. As soon as I know something, I will let you know.

Peace, *Pastor Bruce*

MEF

Your MEF Committee members worked hard during the busy holiday season and on through the month of January.

About 108 people enjoyed the reception after the Christmas Eve service. On January 9th, in spite of weather reducing the number of people available to help take down and pack the Christmas decorations after worship, the task was completed efficiently and the workers relaxed with a well-deserved sandwich lunch. The church always looks wonderful with the holiday decorations and it is hard to see them coming down. Nevertheless, there is something comforting about returning to the more simple, sacred beauty of our sanctuary.

In mid-January, MEF coordinated with the Martin Luther King Service planning committee to provide a dinner following the service. Approximately 230 people from the area attended the service and a large portion of them stayed for dinner. The dinner completed the “coming together” we experienced through the music, prayers and readings of the service.

With hardly a break in their stride, the MEF members planned, prepared and served a lunch following our congregational annual meeting. It was one more opportunity to have some quality fellowship time as we enjoyed a meal together. Good food just seems to help that to happen.

In February, we will twice again use shared food as the vehicle for getting us to slow down and spend time together. The first time will be on the 5th when we will once again have a First Sunday potluck lunch. If they wish to do so, participants may provide a dish for the meal or contribute an item that makes the meal possible. That could include sturdy paper plates, paper bowls or plastic forks, or napkins, a bag of sugar or powdered coffee creamer. If time or other restrictions make these items inappropriate for you, please contribute your presence. This is the real purpose for these lunches.

The second time we will “break bread” together in February will be on the 22nd when we will eat out at Napoli at 6pm.

Our next meeting will be February 8th at 7pm in Fellowship Hall. Join us!

February Birthdays

5 ~ Craig Polson,
Alexus Fisk

9 ~ Ruth Baum,
Brian Randon

14 ~ Dana Jennings

18 ~ Dixie Grabow

22 ~ Kay Shults,
Marie Petrick

25 ~ Delaney Kalsman

27 ~ Mary Wilday

28 ~ Chris Norton

February Anniversaries

No Anniversaries

FEBRUARY CELEBRATIONS





Ash
Wednesday

*Join us at 7pm on March 1st for an
Ash Wednesday Service in the Chapel.
A coffee hour will follow in Fellowship Hall.
All are welcome!*

SESSION UPDATE

Actions taken by Session during the January 9, 2017 meeting:

- Approved a request to transfer Anna Armstrong's membership to Summerville Presbyterian Church.
- Approved to allow Tony Evans to conduct the wedding of Lisa McCullough in Sept. 2017.
- Learned that items and money for the Souper Bowl of Caring will be collected through February 5.
- Learned that Bruce will moderate a meeting of the Franklinville Presbyterian Church on 2/12/17 to discuss the possibility of closing.
- Received a letter from Presbyterian Senior Care of Western New York detailing administrative changes.
- Duffield Camp and Retreat Center requested an end-of-year gift.
- Heard from Presbytery that per capita this year is \$31, or a total of \$5084 for our church.
- Presbytery suggested a minimum of 10% of our per capita for a mission pledge.
- Thank-you notes were received from the Olean Food Pantry for our recent Noisy Cans collections.
- Thank-you notes were received from Cattaraugus Region Community Foundation (Santa Claus Lane), Creekside Chapel Food Pantry, Portville Community Food Pantry, Interfaith Caregivers, and Genesis House for Burt donations.
- Learned that a new boiler pump (\$1450) was ordered.
- Learned that Don will do the shoveling on Sunday mornings for the rest of the winter.
- Learned that the heating zone to the chapel was repaired before Christmas service.
- Learned that there is a door that needs repair.
- The doors between the sanctuary and the vestibule will be kept unlocked.
- The doors under the sink in the kitchenette will be removed for winter so the pipes won't freeze.

(Session Update Continued)

- Presbytery amount in the budget for 2017 was adjusted to \$6000 and the budget was approved.
- Learned that Mark McGonnell and Sandi Smith have agreed to serve on the Burt Committee for three-year terms.
- Accepted a plan by Skip Wilday for diversifying our investments.
- Learned that Betsy Bathurst is no longer director of OCDC.
- Learned that some members of the OCDC Board are interested in appealing the suspension. If successful, they would like to resume renting our facility.
- Learned that Interfaith Caregivers is interested in renting a room from the church for their office.
- Received \$30,000 from the Toth Estate. 10% will go to Benevolences. The remainder will go to the Storage Fund on the General Operating line.
- Learned that the Heifer Project was very successful. Total donation: \$3530
- The children's Christmas Pageant was wonderful and well received.
- Next meeting will be Monday, 2/13/17 at 7pm in the conference room.



*Martin Luther King
Service*

CE Corner

In Sunday School, we have been studying stories of Jesus' early life and early ministry as found in the gospel of Matthew. We will also study Paul's letter to the Corinthians in the coming weeks. We will learn how God calls us all to do work for Him, and how He gives each of us special gifts to do the work He requires of us, whether we know it or not.

At the annual meeting in January, the Christian Education Committee report was presented. Our goals for 2017 are as follows:

- Assist church in outreach activities to encourage more families to join.
- Students will learn about the church traditions important to this congregation's weekly worship (church seasons, colors, advent wreath, communion, Lord's Prayer, etc.) during class time, and participate with the congregation during traditional worship activities.
- Instead of focusing on monthly youth events, we will focus on involving the youth in congregational events, as in a family. The congregation will be invited to participate in our events as well.
- Work with the congregation to support service foci of the church as a whole.

We are excited to move into 2017 with our church family, and see these goals become a reality! We also welcome new voices and faces on the Christian Education committee- we hope you can join us!

Our Sunday School will be selecting a new service project for the upcoming year. We will be working with our congregation in support of Jericho Road, a charitable organization based in Buffalo. We will examine the many branches of service work that Jericho Road does, and pick one on which to focus our support. We are excited about doing God's work with our church family!

Hope you will join us! See you on Sunday!

Carol McClellan, CE Director



Book Club

The book club continues to meet on the fourth Monday of most months. We meet at 6pm at Perkins, the most recent being January 23rd when we met to discuss A Man Called Ove by Fredrik Backman. It is an oddball book about an oddball man with a gruff exterior and a warm heart that takes a while to show itself.

Our February meeting will be the 27th. When we meet at Perkins, we will each order our own dinner to enjoy while we discuss Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children by Ransom Riggs. In it, a sixteen-year-old boy in Florida goes with his father to an island off the coast of Wales to attempt to fulfill his beloved grandfather's last wish. The grandfather, originally from Poland, claimed to have escaped the Nazi regime, having been sent to the island by his parents. He told his grandson fantastical stories about where he lived on the island, in a home populated with children with exceptional abilities and managed by a bird that smoked a pipe.

Does this sound like fun? If so, come to one or more of our meetings. You may join the club or just check us out. We love company and would be happy to have new members.

Stewardship Committee

In December, the Stewardship Committee managed the Christmas Joy Offering, one of four Special Offerings sponsored by our national organization each year. To date, \$1093 has been received.

Anniversary Fun



Annual Meeting

