



We voted on April 6, 2014, to become an Open and Affirming Church of the United Church of Christ. On May 19, 2014, we became the #1192 church in the UCC official listing.

Board of Trustees

Chair:

Don VanSlyke

Vice Chair:

Paula Harrington

Secretary:

Carrie Gumaer

David Barnes

Kevin Cappy

Becky Jones

Andrea Herzog-O'Hara

Eugene Wright

1 vacancy

Board of Deacons

Chair:

Karen Dudgeon

Belinda Burtner

Joanne Cincotta

Chuck Feiszli

Darci Gumaer

Bonnie Haaland (*interim*)

Gary Harrington

Vicki Johnson

Bill Masterson

Kathy McKenna

Bonnie Smith

1 vacancy

Church Staff

Interim Minister:

Rev. Dr. Kathleen Waters

Director of

Christian Education:

vacancy

Youth Fellowship

Coordinator:

Sherri Masterson

Sexton:

Gary Harrington

Church Secretary:

Donna Piotti

Financial Secretary:

Jan Jeffers



Our Mitten Tree was put up on November 29 and will be awaiting your donations of new hats, gloves and mittens which will be donated for holiday gift baskets. Thank you for your continued generosity in support of this mission. Donations will be delivered on Wednesday, December 16.

**children's
program**



Children's Pageant

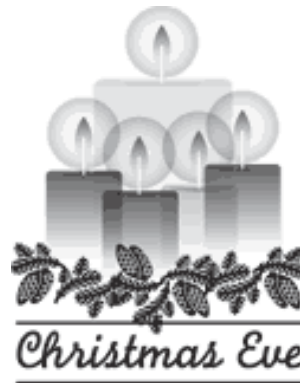
and

Congregation Christmas Party

The youth will present their Christmas program during the 10:30 am service on

December 13. You are invited to celebrate Christmas with our congregation immediately following the Sunday School's annual Christmas Pageant. Please bring a snack to share; drinks are provided by Christian Education Ministry.

**Christmas
Party**



Please join us for a Dish-to-Pass Dinner on Christmas Eve, at 5:30 pm, before our worship service

This year we are continuing an event we began 2 years ago - a Christmas Eve Holiday Dinner. Please bring a dish to pass, whether that be holiday hors d'oeuvres, a special holiday soup, or Grandpa's favorite cookies, and join us at 5:30 pm to share a simple meal amongst friends and church members.

We do hope you'll join us in this Holiday meal.

and our Christmas Eve Service at 7:30 pm

The Service of Lessons and Carols follows an ancient custom of placing music between scripture readings. We conclude the service with a candle lighting custom

Come one, come all, in wonder and joy.



Dear Homer Congregational Family,

On November 17 a number of individuals gathered to hear a presentation from Freeman Palmer, the Associate Conference Minister for the NY Conference of the UCC. Freeman began his presentation pointing us to a text in the Gospel of Luke chapter 10. “Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.’ And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘**And who is my neighbor?**’”

Using the results from MissionInstitute, an online tool helping churches understand their community, we explored together that very question. “Who is our neighbor?” And more specifically, “What implications do we see for the ministry of Homer Congregational Church?” and “What implications do we see for Homer Congregational Church’s Pastoral Search?”

Using the focus area of two zip codes: 13045 (Cortand) and Homer (13077), the following is a summary of our findings. As this faith community gains a greater understanding of our context we can more wisely discern the type of pastor needed to join us in outreach to our community.

Heather A. Walters

Headlines about our neighbors

- little population change expected
- high educational attainment
- somewhat more white than blue collar
- white is largest racial/ethnic group
- poverty very low compared to NY state

What to expect in ten years?

- slight population decrease
- no change in households
- married households will slightly decrease
- single family households will increase (mother >, father <)

What age ranges will increase in ten years?

- before formal schooling 0-4
- retirement opportunities 65+*
- * Largest Increase

Homogenous now and will be in five years

- 93 % White
- 2% African-American black
- 2% Hispanic
- 1% Asian
- 2% other (Pac Island/Native American

Income of study area

- average income in area will increase 11% in five years
- average income will remain below state average in five years

Media preferences

(compared to national average)

Greater than national average

- local TV news*
- print media
- national TV news

*Significantly higher than national average

Media preferences

(compared to national average)

About the same

- social media (facebook, twitter)

Less than national average

- radio
- linked in
- blogs

Our neighbors are inclined to be

- very traditional
- more restrained than indulgent
- somewhat sociable vs. retiring
- more local than global focused

What is really important to our neighbors?

- strong concern for the environment
- very strong desire to broaden horizons
- pursuit of personal growth and development
- low sense of well-being

Our neighbors? Big area headlines

- somewhat non-traditional beliefs about God
- somewhat non-traditional beliefs about Jesus
- mixed about social and moral issues
- significantly more Christian than not
- same % of 'nones' compared to national average

Our neighbor's beliefs about God

Significantly higher than national average

- belief in polytheism
 - uncertainty about whether God exists
- About the same as national average
- belief in nature and spirits of nature
 - God created world but takes no active role in it
 - everyone and everything is God

Denominational affiliation

- Catholic (32%) highest %
- nones (25%)

Larger denominations in area

- United Methodist (5%)
- Baptist (8%)
- non-denominational independent (4%)
- United Church of Christ (2%) – same as national average

Projected religious involvement

- not involved 65% vs. 61% national average
- involved 34% vs. 39% national average
- of those projected to participate 66% are to participate on a weekly basis (about the same as national average.)

'Outsider' reasons for non-involvement

(vs. national average)

- no longer believe
 - demands of raising children
 - was not supportive during crisis*
 - not current/old fashioned
- *biggest reason

'Insider' reasons for non-involvement

(vs. national average)

- unsure about personal beliefs
 - disillusionment with religion
 - don't trust religious leaders
 - strict/inflexible beliefs*
- *largest reason

What concerns our neighbors more (on average vs. national average)?

- depression
- problems with addictions
- conflict resolution/arguing too much
- avoiding homelessness+
- violence in my neighborhood
- day to day financial matters
- domestic violence in my family

What concerns our neighbors less (on average vs. national average)?

- raising a child who is LGBT+
- raising a child as a single parent
- caring for aging parents
- divorce
- struggling with my sexual orientation
- stress/time to relax
- illegal immigration

Preferences for ministries/programs (vs. national average)

Very important

- practical training seminars
- addiction support+

Not as important

- bible or scripture study/prayer groups
- family support and intervention (e.g> parenting, marriage enrichment, counseling)



December 2015
Mission Activities and Fun Events
for 7th thru 12th graders

If you are in the 7th – 12th grade, you're invited to join the Homer Congregational Church Youth Group! We *usually* meet the first and third Sundays of each month. Friends are not only welcome, but *encouraged to join in the fun!!* The events are always listed in the monthly newsletter and weekly church bulletins. By attending regularly and helping with at least one fundraiser, you're invited to go on the end-of-the-year trip.

Sunday, December 6th Help lead worship at the Elizabeth Brewster House

We will meet at church at 1:30 for pizza and then help Pastor Kathleen lead worship from 2:00 to 2:30 at the Elizabeth Brewster House.

Sunday, December 13th Christmas Pageant and Christmas Party

Come watch the talented children of our church as they share the Christmas story with their annual pageant. Following the pageant we will each bring a snack to share and celebrate with the congregation in the Russell Fellowship Room.

Sherri Masterson (345-4875)
 Youth Fellowship Coordinator



Christian Education News
December 2015

Next Christian Education Meeting: The Christian Education Ministry will meet on *Sunday, December 6, at 11:45* in the upstairs classroom.

No Sunday School: There will be no Sunday School classes held on *Sunday, December 27, and Sunday, January 3*. Happy Holidays!

Pageant Practice: The Church School classes will practice their pageant on *Saturday, December 12, at 11:00 am*. We will enjoy a pizza lunch after practice.

Children's Sunday Program update: Tracy Bertram is working with the middle school group, and Carol Costell Corbin is working with the Pre-K/elementary group. Jan Jeffers teaches music and bell-ringing to both groups three weeks a month for the last 15 minutes. Vicki Johnson will also offer music with the children one week a month. Starting in January, we plan to invite members of the congregation in to serve as occasional "guest teachers." Abby Elkins continues to offer great support for the younger groups. And Sherri Masterson will continue this year with the high school group.

A reminder: The Elementary and Middle School groups are moving Sunday School back to 9:15 am.

On Sunday, November 8 we visited the food pantry at 9:30 am and delivered food for Thanksgiving. The previous week we talked with the kids about what makes up a great Thanksgiving feast (and made a great shopping list!) and how we can help those in our community who may not have enough.

On Sunday, November 15 we put together Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes.



The Trustees' Corner

Hi Everyone,

The Roast Pork Dinner was a big success, thanks to all who helped with our annual fall event. We made \$1387.07 this year.

The Steeple and Steps contracts have been signed. Over the winter we will be finalizing design and working on the scheduling for next year. Information on the money raised for this project is in this month's newsletter.

The Trustees are working on a five year budget and property projection, so we can better plan for our future. The Trustees, Deacons and Transition Team are working very hard to find out who we are as a church and the community we serve. Pastor Kathleen is working very hard to help us figure this out. Please have patience, ask questions, and lets love one another.

Happy Holidays!!!!

Don VanSlyke, Chair

Finance Update:

October 2015 Society Income:	\$14,687.60
October 2015 Society Expense:	\$17,795.16
January 1, 2015 - October 31, 2015	
Society Net Income (Loss):	\$(10,625.57)

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Herzog-O'Hara, Treasurer

"Love Shines Through"

In December, we will participate in the UCC Christmas Fund. The Christmas Fund is one of the four Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ and provides us with a means to directly assist clergy and lay leaders who have so faithfully and selflessly served and now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs.

This fund enables the Ministerial Assistance program to provide, on behalf of the whole church, Pension supplementation, Health Premium Supplementation, Emergency Grants, and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to individuals and families in need.



Steeple and Steps Campaign

The Endowment Fund:

Steeple & Steps	23,036.32
2014 Rec'd	4,012.00
2015 Rec'd	<u>2,030.00</u>
	29,078.32
Boilers	<u>(27,500.00)</u>
In Checking	1,578.32
Steeple & Steps to 12/31/14	27,048.32
Endowment Yield	<u>2.4%</u>
Interest for 2014	649.16
2014 Steeples & steps with interest	27,697.48
	<u>2,030.00</u>

Steeple & Steps to date (in endowment)	<u>29,727.48</u>
---	-------------------------

Remaining in Checking Account:

12/31/2013 Balance	23,036.32
Rec'd to 8/29/14	2,527.00
Paid 8/29/14	(16,000.00)
Rec'd to 10/2/14	332.00
Paid 10/2/14	(11,500.00)
Rec'd after 10/2/14	<u>1,153.00</u>
12/31/14 Balance	(451.68)
Rec'd to date 2015	<u>2,030.00</u>
Steeple & Steps to date remaining in checking	<u>1,578.32</u>



Transition Team Update

For the last five months the Transition Team has sought to lead a multi faceted congregational study. In September the congregation participated in a survey created by *US Congregational Life Survey*. The results will be explored during a gathering held following the worship service on **December 6**. All are invited to participate.

In October a forum was held to review and celebrate important events, people and experiences that have given HCC its uniqueness. Attention was given to describe the congregation's approach to issues that have united and divided. Feedback from HCC history, conversations and the Survey results will be used to facilitate an overall *Congregational Assessment*. During November a *Community Assessment* was conducted to inform HCC's plan for mission and outreach. Demographic reports were obtained through MissionInstitute, results are presented in the interim pastor's article.

The Transition Team plans to present their **findings to the congregation in January**. While the Team's dedication to this discernment process has been intense, it is understood that the work is not complete and there will continue to be work around the questions: What is God calling us to be and do? Who will lead us into the future? These questions require constant evaluation, adjustments, and a willingness to learn anew the purpose of the church.

Team members: Clay Benedict, Tracy Bertram, Belinda Burtner, Gary Harrington, Laurie Leach, Bonnie Smith, Kathleen Waters and Kenian Ulrich



Ever Thought about Becoming a Stephen Minister?

The Homer Congregational Church will be training the first class of Stephen Ministers beginning in January. Stephen Ministers work alongside our pastor to care, encourage, and provide emotional and spiritual support to people who are going through a difficult time, such as divorce, grief, hospitalization, unemployment, terminal illness, relocation, chronic illness, or loneliness.

If you have gifts for caring, encouragement, and listening, please prayerfully consider whether you might want to be part of this exciting ministry. No, we're not talking about angels or aliens. We're talking about individuals who care about others. The Scriptures describe their service well: "Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering" (Hebrews 13:3). If you or someone you know wants to do more as a Christian caregiver, consider Stephen Ministry. This is our congregation's one-to-one caregiving ministry.

If you think you might be interested, talk with one of our Stephen Ministry Leaders: Belinda Burtner (607)-756-2454 and Bill Masterson (607)-345-4874. If you would like more information about this exciting opportunity, Belinda and Bill will be hosting a brief meeting for prospective Stephen Ministers after worship on Sunday, December 6th in the Board Room. A light lunch will be served.

The Deacons' Bench

Advent is my favorite time of the year in the church. I remember as a child, arriving to church on a Sunday close to Thanksgiving and seeing the wreath at the front and experiencing the thrill that the "Christmas" is here.

Today, it's different. Now that I have children, I understand and appreciate that long walk toward when a child is born. That quiet time of preparing and trying to see the future.

The term, Advent, is an anglicized version of the Latin word adventus, meaning "coming". While this year's season of Advent is about to arrive, this year, I am thinking of advent in a different way. I see how far we have come in the last year, about how this time is perhaps our church's season of advent. How it is our season of coming, or perhaps becoming.

We are becoming God's people, even in our disagreements and differing perspectives. We are searching for who we are now. We are not the same people who were in our church a year ago. Certainly not the people of the church 10 years ago, and definitely not the people of the church 60 years ago.

We become God's people each and every time we show up, for worship, for the Spaghetti Dinner, for the hanging of the greens or the Transition Team sessions.

We are not the same people that we were. We are a church who looks to the future God and we listen for who calls us to serve, the people of today. May God help us to continue to hear and answer God's call.

Amen.

Respectfully Submitted,
Karen Dudgeon Chair,
Board of Deacons



Senior Fellowship Club

**Next meeting
December 8 at 2:00**

The beautiful orange, crimson, gold, and amber colors of fall dominated the RFR as the Senior Fellowship Club met for its Thanksgiving meeting on Tuesday, November 10th. We heard a prayer honoring all our veterans who have given their best to preserve our freedoms, our safety and our country's heritage and observed a minute of silence on their behalf.

We then shared some readings giving us all some food for thought. One was a real eye opener on some interesting math. When politicians use the word "billion" when considering spending YOUR TAX MONEY, PAY ATTENTION. An advertising agency did a good job of putting that figure into some perspective. For example: 1) A billion seconds ago it was 1959, 2) A billion minutes ago, Jesus was alive, and 3) A billion hours ago our ancestors were living in the stone age.

We enjoyed a delicious dessert called "Pumpkin Crunch Cake" provided by Rachel Rood, Gwen Hayne and Shirley Osterhoudt. Many thanks to our bakers and also to Pat Signor and Dottie Green who lent their talents to decorating the room.

We then welcomed our special guest Kathy Hammond from NY Connects, a part of the Office of the Aging. She provided us with expert information on how NY Connects can link people in need to special services and supports. Finding the right services and supports can be very confusing. Kathy mentioned that NY Connects is a trusted place that gives you information about available options, whether you are paying for services yourself, through insurance, or are eligible for a government program. Kathy answered our many questions and also provided each of us with an Information and Assistance Service Directory. Many thanks to Kathy Hammond for a most enlightening presentation.

Our next meeting will take place on December 8th. Plans are still in progress and information will be forthcoming. Mark your calendars.

Dottie

Christmas Flowers Donor Form



Every year for Christmas, we decorate the Sanctuary with Poinsettias. The flowers are dedicated in memory or honor of whomever you wish, and they will be on display in the Sanctuary from December 20th through Christmas Eve. Your donation will be acknowledged in the December 20th and 24th worship bulletins.

All home-bound Church members will receive a Poinsettia plant to enjoy during the Advent Season.

Each Poinsettia plant costs \$12 (6 1/2" pot with 4 blooms) • Colors available are: red, white, or marble (white/pink)

I will buy _____ Poinsettias Red _____ White _____ Marble _____ @ \$12 each \$ _____

I wish to contribute to the General Flower Fund \$ _____

I will pick up my plant _____ or I will donate my plant _____ Total enclosed \$ _____

Contribute "in memory" or "in honor" of: (circle one)

The donor(s) name in the bulletin should be:

Return this form and your donation to the office **by Monday, December 14th**
Plants may be picked up after the 7:30 pm service on December 24th

From the Financial Secretary



Just a reminder that December 31, 2015 is the closing date for all donations, pledges, gifts, etc. that will be credited to the Financial Year 2015. I'll be making the last deposit at noon on that Thursday, December 31, 2015. Thanks!
Jan Jeffers

The Annual Meeting will be held in January, date to be announced later. Please remember that the Annual Reports are due in early



January to the office for compilation. If your committee has finished meeting for the year, you may submit your Annual Report to the office at any time. Thank you.

Seeking a Child Care Coordinator

This is a part-time position, approximately 3-4 hours per week with presence required on Sunday mornings and during other events as requested. Normal duties are performed in the church facility. To apply, send resume to Resumes@homercc.org. Job description available on our web site at www.homercc.com. For more information, contact Karen Dudgeon at dudgeonk@gmail.com or call the church 607-749-2604.



Youth Group would like to thank the congregation for their generous support of the Spaghetti Dinner and Bake Sale!! With the donations from the Bake Sale and food items leftover from the Spaghetti Dinner, we were able to fulfill the wish list of the family in the YWCA's Bridges for Kids program!!

2015 December Worship

Miss a Sunday and want to review the bulletin? You can find weekly bulletins at our website: <http://www.homercc.com/resources/>. Share with a friend. At Homer Congregational Church we believe that children of all ages have a place in worship and in the life of the church. A children's bulletin and other supplies are available each Sunday morning.

Sunday, December 6
2nd Sunday in Advent

10:30 am

Second Sunday
of Advent



On this Sunday **Holy Communion** will be celebrated, we will light the Advent Candle of Peace. When God's people are in distress, messengers of hope come to remind of God's steadfast love. John the Baptizer is a messenger pointing to the future – a future of hope.

Scripture: Malachi 3:1-4 and Luke 3:1-6

Sunday, December 13
3rd Sunday in Advent

10:30 am

Third Sunday
of Advent



We will light the Advent Candle of Joy and hear anew the Christmas story through our children. The **Christmas Pageant** "Were You There?" will be filled with wiggles, giggles and enthusiasm. You won't want to miss this.

Scripture: Zephaniah 3:14-20;
Luke 3:7-18

Sunday, December 20
4th Sunday in Advent

10:30 am

Fourth Sunday
of Advent



On the fourth Sunday of Advent we light the Advent candle of love and participate in **special choir music**. In addition, we will learn of the message of God's presence to Mary as evidence that God is steadfastly present with us.

Scripture: Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:26-38, 46b-55

Thursday, Christmas Eve, December 24
Candlelight Service **7:30 pm**

The Service of Lessons and Carols follows an ancient custom of placing music between scripture readings. We conclude the service with a candle lighting custom



Sunday, December 27 **10:30 am**
1st Sunday of Christmas

Join us for a gentle service of music and scripture that will also include musical gifts by members of the congregation.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 18-20, 26;
Psalm 148; Luke 2:41-52

WORSHIP SCHEDULE for December

Deacon Worship Leader:

Vicki Johnson

Trustee Verifier:

December 6 @ 10:30 am

Acolytes – John Gumaer, Kenian Ulrich
Flowers –
Nursery – Sue Urban, Marissa Urban
Coffee Hour – David and Anne Barnes

December 13 @ 10:30 am

*Children's Christmas Pageant and
All-church Christmas Party*

Acolytes – none
Flowers –
Nursery – Ingrid Fox, Abby Elkins
Coffee Hour – Christian Education Ministry

December 20 @ 10:30 am

Acolytes – Maddy Dermott, Justin Dermott
Flowers – Poinsettias from the congregation
Nursery – Susan Benedict, John Gumaer
Coffee Hour – Kelly Settineri

December 27 @ 10:30 am

Acolytes – Caoimhe Dudgeon, Sophia Wright
Flowers –
Nursery – Kelly Settineri, Molly Ulrich
Coffee Hour – Joanne Cincotta



December Birthdays

3 Dottie Kelley
5 Nicholas Cinquanti
7 Tasker Dennis
8 Rachel Rood
9 William Allen
10 Donald Root
14 Tina Helgren
15 David Benedict, Alison Miller
18 Terry Pedersen
21 Nathan Krause
28 Cathy Renninger
29 Erin Leach
30 Laura Cinquanti
31 Elise Schmidt

Gifted to Care

Spiritual gifts are gifts to give away. God gives them to us, and we use them to serve others. How are you using your gifts right now? Are you looking for a new way to use them? If your spiritual gifts include one or more of the following— faith, mercy, teaching the faith, encouragement, or listening—consider Stephen Ministry, our congregation's one-to-one caregiving ministry. This may be just what you've been looking for! Contact *Bill Masterson* (345-4874) or *Belinda Burtner* (756-2454) to learn more about this ministry.

