



On April 6, 2014, the members of Homer Congregational Church voted to become an Open and Affirming Church of the United Church of Christ. Open and Affirming (ONA) is the United Church of Christ's (UCC) designation for congregations, campus ministries, and other bodies in the UCC which make a public covenant of welcome into their full life and ministry to persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. Churches also commit to welcoming people of all descriptions.

Board of Trustees

Chair:

Jim McKenna

Vice-Chair:

Paula Harrington

Secretary:

Becky Jones

Kevin Cappy

Chuck Feiszli

Andrea Herzog

Eugene Wright

2 vacancies

Board of Deacons

Chair:

Karen Dudgeon

Vice-Chair:

Bonnie Haaland

Secretary:

Kathy McKenna

Tracy Bertram

Belinda Burtner

Joanne Cincotta

Darci Gumaer

Gary Harrington

Doris Hoffmann

Vicki Johnson

Bill Masterson

Anne Wingard

Church Staff

Interim Minister:

Rev. Dr. Kathleen Waters

Director of

Christian Education:

Rachel Ditch

Sexton:

Gary Harrington

Church Administrator:

Sheila Shea

Call to the



January 22, 2017

(Snow Date January 29, 2017)

The First Religious Society in the Town of Homer and the Homer Congregational Church will hold their Annual Meetings on Sunday, January 22, 2017 for the purpose of:

- Receiving Annual Reports for 2016
- Electing officers and members of boards and committees
- Voting on the FRS Annual Budget for 2017
- Conducting any other business which may be necessary

The meeting will begin at 11:00 AM (after Worship) with a break for a dish-to-pass luncheon. All are welcome and urged to attend. Childcare will be provided. Please note that the worship service will be slightly truncated.

Please note: All committee and board reports are **due by January 9** to the office for compilation, as we are hoping to have the reports completed and distributed by January 15. Thank you for your cooperation.



Stewardship Update

As of Dec. 12th, the following has been pledged towards the 2017 Budget:

\$79,757 - Operations

\$12,608 - Programs & Missions

It's not too late to send/mail in your pledge. Pledge cards are available from the church office and can be brought to any Sunday service or mailed to the church office. Thank you to everyone who has pledged, which helps both the Deacons and Trustees plan out their budgets for 2017. If you have questions on their budgets or pledging, don't hesitate to reach out to a Trustee, Deacon, or any member of the Stewardship Committee.

Blessings,

The Stewardship Committee

Cindy Stout (Chair), Becky Jones, Gary Harrington, Kurt Schmidt, Bill Masterson, and Susan Benedict

Our New Pastor!



After a thorough and prayerful search by the Pastor Search Committee, the **Reverend Vicki Burtson (Johnson)** was overwhelmingly elected last Sunday to serve as the next pastor of the Homer Congregational Church. Praise be to our God! For the last eight years Vicki has been serving as the Executive Director of the Cortland County Council of Churches and Protestant Campus Minister at SUNY Cortland. Prior to that she served in numerous ministry settings and is ideally qualified to lead this congregation into the future. Welcome Pastor Vicki!!!! Copies of her biography are available at each entrance or by clicking the following link: [Vicki Burtson's Bio](#) (or visit <http://bit.ly/pastorvicki>)

Vicki is scheduled to begin on February 1, 2017. Although she will be in the area, Pastor Vicki will be focused on finishing up with her current ministry among the congregations of Cortland County and students at SUNY Cortland. She has many goodbyes, so prayers are welcomed.

Over the next few weeks you will be learning more about Pastor Vicki and the plans for preparing for her arrival. A big thanks to the Pastor Search Committee for their work in conducting their search and bringing forth such a well-suited and qualified candidate. **Pastor Search Committee:** Chuck Feiszli, Tracy Bertram, Dorothy Hopkins, Kathy McKenna, Lori Schmidt, Bev Berry, Miles Dudgeon, and Jim Ulrich.

It is understandable that you may have questions during this time of transition. Please feel free to direct any questions or concerns to Kathleen Waters, Interim Pastor; Jim McKenna, Board of Trustees Chair; or Karen Dudgeon, Board of Deacons Chair.



Thank you!

Dear Friends in Christ at Homer Congregational UCC,
Thank you for your gift to the United Church of Christ. Per your request, your gift will be designated as follows:

\$475.03 for International Emergency -- Hurricane Matthew
\$475.02 for Emergency USA -- Hurricane Matthew

Your support of the United Church of Christ is extremely important to the work we do.

Through it, you partner with us to support programs and services coordinated through the national setting to help local, national, and global communities change lives for the better.

Faithfully,
Mary A. Paxton
Director, Office of Philanthropy and Stewardship



Dear Friends at Homer Congregational Church,

We would like to thank the congregation for their loving support during the passing of Sherri's father, Durwood Goodell. We truly feel blessed and part of a wonderful church family.

Bill and Sherri Masterson



Who Benefits From Stephen Ministry?

Everybody benefits from Stephen Ministry. Those receiving care from our Stephen Ministers benefit because they receive prayer and support throughout the crisis they face. Stephen Ministers benefit through the spiritual growth they experience from being involved in meaningful ministry. Our pastor benefits because caring ministry at the Homer Congregational Church is expanded, and fewer people will slip through the cracks. Most of all *you* benefit from the knowledge that special care is available to you should you need it. In addition, you now have a place where you can refer a friend, neighbor, coworker, relative, or anyone else who is going through a difficult time so that they can receive special care when they need it most. Stephen Ministry helps to make the Homer Congregational Church a much more caring place!

If you would like to receive care, or if you have questions about our Stephen Ministry please contact one of our Stephen Leaders:

Belinda Burtson [\(607\) 756-2454](tel:6077562454) or Bill Masterson [\(607\) 345-4874](tel:6073454874)



Tech Team Developing!

If you are interested in learning more about the sound technology in our sanctuary and possibly helping with the sound on Sunday mornings, please get in touch with Joe Ford at fordjosephd@gmail.com. Help us join the 21st century!



Save the Date!

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Community Meal

We are expanding on our tradition of a **Pancake Supper on Shrove Tuesday** by making this our first community meal of 2017! The Outreach Team and CEM plan to invite the families of Homer Elementary and Intermediate Schools to share the meal and fellowship with our congregation on **Tuesday, Feb. 28 at 6:00 pm**. Plan to attend and welcome our Homer neighbors! Pancake races will still occur! For more information, please contact Bonnie Smith or Carol Costell-Corbin.

The Deacon's Bench



*Every second brings a fresh beginning,
Every hour holds a new promise,
Every night our dreams can bring hope and
Every day is what you choose to make it.*

WORSHIP

Worship service is at 10:30 with music and children's moment followed by refreshments in the Russell Fellowship Room. Holy Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of the month.

MISSIONS

The Homer Nursery School is at capacity. Please welcome Ashely Morrell to the NHS staff. Ashely has been hired as a Teacher's Aide.

The church and some of our members donated sewing machines to the refuge center in Syracuse, where immigrant women are trained to sew and work with textiles. At the end of their sewing course they are gifted with a sewing machine.

We continue our support of the HCC immigrant soccer team with funds from the Global Connectors. They play Monday nights at the J.M. McDonald Center Sports Complex.

With support from the Dorothy Jane Andrews Fund and the sponsorship of the NY State Council of Churches, Rachel Ditch (DCE) will be taking some

of our youth to New York City to participate in the United Nations Youth Leadership Seminar, in February.

TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS

The Deacons are working with the Trustees on reviewing and improving the church's technology. Our Church Administrator, Shelia Shea, has put together an Executive Summary of our current technology inventory and needs.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Pastor Kathleen and the Deacons continue to update the Active Membership Roll. Via letters and personal conversations, we are reconnecting with members and reconfirming membership in the Homer Congregational Church and hope to complete updating the Active Membership Roll during the early part of the New Year. The Deacons continue to work on meeting everyone's needs in the church.

KEEP THE DATE

January 8th The Homer Congregational Church will be hosting the Cortland County Council of Churches Epiphany Choir Festival.

*The Memory Cafe
Third Tuesday of every month,
10:30 am until noon*

The Memory Cafe is located in the old Railroad Station on Central Avenue in Cortland. If you have a family member, or know someone who is caring for a loved one with memory loss, this is a place where you can go to enjoy social activities, get support and just relax. Snacks and coffee are available. For more information, contact Bill Hopkins at william.hopkins@cortland.edu.

Snack & Chat

Karen Dudgeon and Jim McKenna continue to hold Snack & Chats on communion Sundays. Please bring your questions, concerns and joys. Contact Karen at [914-886-2239](tel:914-886-2239) or Jim at [607-345-9863](tel:607-345-9863).



January is often a time of new beginnings. The New Year can reset our efforts in trying new things or bettering ourselves. As much as I am looking to new opportunities with glee, I also wish to hang on to the joy that is December, a month which seemed to simply fly by!

Early November brought the Spaghetti Dinner, which raised \$1400 for Christian Education Ministries and Youth Group programming. Time spent in fellowship (and laughter during the auction) is always time well spent. The end of November brought the Hanging of the Greens and the soup lunch to follow. It always brings me such joy to see the church building transformed into its Christmas best. I enjoyed touching base with some people I hadn't seen in a while over a nice meal, it was a wonderful treat.

December was captured primarily by Advent and in preparing for the Children's Pageant on December 11th. "Live From WHCC" was a variety show which led with our 3rd-6th grade class ringing chimes. Hilarity ensued as the "ABC's of Christmas" brought Angel, Bells, Fun, Gifts, a Manger Bed, and Visitors alive before our very eyes. To close, a singing of "Joy to the World" brought our youngest voices and our oldest together in beautiful, heartfelt singing. Amidst the preparations, we heard stories of Mary's expecting a baby and Jesus being the light, and we explored ways of waiting patiently and excitedly for things which really excite us.

December was a tough month for Sunday School. Attendance has been unpredictable, as is the case with children, and I'm hopeful that the New Year can bring more regularity. We really want to have engaging classes and fun conversations, and we can do that better if everyone participates. More fun and learning is had when we have friends to share with!

We decided not to have Sunday School on December 25th or January 1st, and we're all enjoying a wee bit of quieter time before we gear back up and start again on January 8th!

I pray that we may all find rest in this Holiday time.

Rachel

Submarine Sandwich Sale

ORDER YOURS TODAY!

Order forms will be left in the pews for you!

Subs will be available in the kitchen at 11:45 am after the service on **Super Bowl Sunday**, February 5th, 2017.

Please leave order forms in the church office or call 749 – 2604 and leave a message.

Orders are due by Sunday, January 29th.

Youth Group

January is upon us, and we have some great opportunities for fun and fellowship. Come and bring your friends!

January Youth Group Events

1 – Strike the Greens. Come help take down the Greens from the Sanctuary.

Don't Miss Out! A VERY SPECIAL Youth Fellowship Opportunity is waiting just for you! GAMES! GAMES! GAMES!

15 – Youth Group Gathering happens from 7:00 – 8:00 PM in the basement of Jones Hall.

Come play video games!

**Sunday January 22nd 3-5PM
at the United Presbyterian Church of Cortland
For youth in grades 4-12**

22 – No Youth Group Gathering at 7 PM Come to Game Night at United Presbyterian Church!

A variety of games from strategy and planning games to luck of the draw games. Bring your friends and Kim Hay and Colleen North of United Presbyterian Church will have more than 20 different board games for you to play.

29 – Youth Group Gathering happens from 7:00 – 8:00 PM in the basement of Jones Hall.

A light snack will be provided. Hope to see you all there!

Conversation Theme: How does your faith help you make decisions?

**Please let Rachel know if you plan to attend. Email christianed@homercc.org, call or text (607)221-0882.

Senior Fellowship Club Meeting



Twenty-four members of the Senior Fellowship Club attended their Christmas meeting on Tuesday, December 13th in the RFR. Enhanced by candlelight, the room was aglow with lovely Christmas decorations and lights getting us all in a celebratory mood. Many thanks to Gwen Hayne and Nita Baldwin for all their help in decorating. Our meeting opened with a Christmas prayer and then we shared in the reading of a heartwarming short story by the renowned writer Pearl S. Buck.

We then heard some humorous Christmas jokes which elicited some laughter from our group. Christmas Trivia Questions were next on our agenda where members had to read a sentence and then write down the Christmas Carol being described. This took a bit of time but collectively our seniors did very well. Refreshment time was next and we all enjoyed a wonderful array of Christmas cookies and other cookies contributed by our group. After we all were replete with cookies, coffee, and conversation, we welcomed our special guest, our own Rev. Vicki Burtson who led us delightfully in the singing of favorite Christmas carols. She plays her guitar so effortlessly and always pitches everything in the right key. A special treat was her singing for us a beautiful song entitled "Emmanuel". We deeply appreciate her sharing her time and talent with us.

Our next meeting will be on January 10th and Rachel Ditch will be discussing her trip to India and sharing her slides with us. I wish you all a Merry and Blessed Christmas.

Dottie Kelley



Trustees Corner



Happy New Year, and on behalf of all the Trustees, I'd like to offer you these literary Christmas cookies. It is now January, so they are left over cookies, of course, but they will still taste good. I hope you had a wonderful Christmas season and got lots of great gifts that you will continue to enjoy all year. I know one gift that you got that will bring joy all year is a new pastor. This New Year is bright and full of great potential, and together with our new pastor we will make great things happen. Let's resolve to commit ourselves to use all the gifts that God has given us to make our church what God wants it (and us) to be.

Rev. Vicki is preparing to leave the community she has served for years and begin anew. At the same time, we are preparing to welcome her to a new situation. The Trustees are preparing the Manse. We have removed much of the old material that was left in the Manse and carriage house (garage). The grounds have been manicured and cleaning the inside has begun. Our thanks to all who have helped. It has been about 15 years (and two families) since the walls were painted, and by this time repainting should be under way. Final cleaning should be completed by mid-month, when we will help Rev. Vicki and her wife Belinda move in.

Other Trustees activities include keeping up with personnel issues and supporting out staff. The new railings have been installed in our new front steps! Special thanks to Kevin Cappy for seeing that through to the finish. We continue to do our best to limit spending, while providing for the church's needs. Your offerings are greatly appreciated and make that job much easier. Similarly, your generous pledges for 2017 make our job of planning out the next year easier and more pleasant.

At this time two years ago, we were without a pastor and did not even have substitute clergy for some Sundays – good thing we had the Kurt & Bill show. It was a sad and difficult time, knowing we were faced with a search for a new pastor, but not sure how to start. In February 2015, Rev. Kathleen Waters agreed to come and help us through this transition period. With her guidance and encouragement, we have gone through a very honest introspection period, developed a thorough and honest church profile, developed a vision for the church with a plan of action, and searched and found ourselves a new pastor called to help lead us to that new vision. We owe Pastor Kathleen a great debt for shepherding us through this period. Please say thanks to her the next time you see her. We wish her and her family all the best in their next adventure – could it be as challenging as this was?

May the Spirit of Christmas awaken with you each morning of this year.

Jim McKenna



Dear Homer Congregational Church,

On Sunday, December 4 the Homer Congregational Church participated in a remarkable event, an event that hasn't taken place in over 11 years; the congregation extended a call to the Rev. Vicki Burtson to become your next settled pastor. There is great anticipation and excitement for the new chapter of your life together as pastor and congregation.

Pastor Vicki will begin her service as pastor on February 1 and my last Sunday with you will be January 29. John the Baptist spoke of the joy that comes with preparing for a wedding and the delight of the bridegroom's friend. (John 3:28-29). As with a wedding, much preparation has been done. Through the mission study process you have placed the tenure of your former pastors in perspective; you have decided what is important and worthwhile from the past which you wish to carry into the future; and you have appropriately ventilated feelings and determined to move forward into your future.

During this process you have also established a realistic image of your congregation, viewing yourselves as a separate entity from former pastors' personality and style; you have developed a broad vision for your future and are establishing goals and objectives to make that vision become a reality. In addition, you have expanded your communication and the method of making decisions. Conflicts continue to occur, but they do so with a commitment to open discussion and resolution. You are ready to work together for the continued witness of God's presence through this community of faith.

As I prepare to depart I do so with a great deal of joy and satisfaction that your preparatory work has been done well. I also leave with some sadness as I will be leaving people who not long ago were strangers but now have become friends. I will always be appreciative for your love and support to my family during the birth of my grandson, Austin. I will also cherish the opportunity to learn of the wonderful village of Homer with its unique heritage and traditions.

As I write I am uncertain where I will serve next, but trust that the God who brought us together will provide in the future. Prayers appreciated.

With thanks I conclude with a passage from the letter to the church at Philippi: *"I thank God for you every time I think of you; and every time I pray for you all, I pray with joy because of the way in which you have helped me in the work of the gospel from the very first day until now."* (The Apostle Paul to the Church at Philippi Philippians 1:2-3.)

May God richly bless you all.

Kathleen A. Waters

The Rev. Dr. Kathleen Waters

Pastor Kathleen's time in the office varies each week, but she is available to visit those with special needs or to meet for any other reason. Please feel free to contact her via email: pastor@homercc.org or via her cell phone: (315) 380-0744.

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Deacon Worship Leaders:

Jan. 1 – Bill Masterson
 Jan. 8 – Darci Gumaer
 Jan. 15 – Belinda Burtner
 Jan. 22 – Joanne Cincotta
 Jan. 29 – Gary Harrington

Trustee Verifier

January 1 @ 10:30 am

Ushers & Greeters –
 Liturgist –
 Acolytes –
 Flowers –
 Nursery – Philip Zollweg
 Coffee Hour – Gumaer Family

January 8 @ 10:30 am

Ushers & Greeters –
 Liturgist –
 Acolytes –
 Flowers –
 Nursery – Mark Bertram
 Coffee Hour – Ulrich Family

January 15 @ 10:30 am

Ushers & Greeters –
 Liturgist –
 Acolytes –
 Flowers –
 Nursery – Sherri Masterson
 Coffee Hour – Bertram Family

January 22 @ 7:30 pm

Ushers & Greeters –
 Liturgist –
 Acolytes –
 Flowers –
 Nursery – Jenelle Pedersen
 Coffee Hour – Annual Meeting Dish to Pass

January 29 @ 10:30 am

Ushers & Greeters –
 Liturgist –
 Acolytes –
 Flowers –
 Nursery – Michelle Dermott
 Coffee Hour – Carol Costell-Corbin



- 1 Jacob Dentes
- 2 Bonnie Haaland, Nathaniel Ulrich
- 3 Donald Lawson
- 5 Barbara Wright
- 6 Kathleen Dentes
- 9 Robert Gray, Edith Alexander
- 12 Gloria Lawson
- 16 Elaine Olson, Lorraine Place
- 18 Sherri Masterson
- 20 Tracy Bertram
- 24 Marie Rumsey
- 25 Doris Brohard, Derek Renninger,
Janice Wheeler

From the Treasurer:

Operating Revenues at 11/30/16 -
 \$202,654, 93.5% of budget
 Operating Expenses at 11/30/16 -
 \$216,486, 99.9% of budget

Email Contacts:

Office: office@homercc.org
 Pastor: pastor@homercc.org
 Financial Secretary: finsect@homercc.org
 Treasurer: treasurer@homercc.org
 DCE: christianed@homercc.org

Find us online!

HCC website - homercc.com
 Digital calendar - homercc.com/calendar
 Follow Homer Congregational Church on [Facebook!](#)
 To receive our mid-week email, Weekday Words,
 please email the office: office@homercc.org