



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.

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From your senior pastor's mind and heart...

Grace and peace to you, dear family and friends of Homer Congregational United Church of Christ.

Happy New Year! Between December 1 and January 31, I count no less than three different new years:

1. The first begins this coming Sunday - the new Church year that starts with the season of Advent. We are watching and waiting for the birth of the Christ child.
2. Just past Christmas, what many of us will consider the "real" new year...2019.
3. Finally, here at Homer Congregational, we will review 2018 and accept budgets and nominations for 2019 at our Annual Meeting on January 20, 2019. The new year brings new church leadership for our February meetings.

In each of these new beginnings, we will look back and evaluate how time was spent in the recent past. Was the world made better by our living? Was a life made better through our ministry? Did we do all that we could to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves?

When I think about these transitions, I am particularly grateful for God's grace. No matter where we have botched life...no matter the messes we have made...no matter the places where we could have done better...our God ALWAYS grants us a do-over. God is ever willing to pick us up, brush us off and encourage us to try again.

What will each of us do in these various versions of the new year? As we move forward, perhaps we can...

...pray more, including *listening to God* more. Our Centering Prayer on Tuesdays at 5 might help.

...think more. Small group discussions, Bible studies, Adult Faith Formation – each of these provides us with thoughtful topics that help us to connect our faith with our daily living.

...connect more. As we invest in one another, we build a web of care. When we have needs, our family of faith helps. And God works through us to offer help and hope in the lives of our siblings-in-faith.

...come back to church. If you have been away, know that we miss you and we are eager to share what God has been doing through our shared ministry.

Think about it. Pray about it.

With love and blessings for the year to come,

Pastor Vicki

From your associate pastor for Faith Formation...



“Do you remember the old Heinz Ketchup commercials from the late-1970s? They featured Carly Simon’s song, “Anticipation.” As the ketchup is SLOWLY coming out of the bottle, the song kicks in: “An-tic-i-paa-aaa-tion... an-tic-i-paa-aaa-tion...is making me wait.” At the end, the announcer reminds us of the Heinz motto: “The taste that’s worth the wait.” Advent is a lot like those old commercials. Or at least, it’s meant to be. While society is off and running with Christmas this and Christmas that, we church-going folks are celebrating a different season—Advent. The Advent season focuses on expectation and it serves as an anticipation of remembering Christ’s birth. It means don’t rush into Christmas. Enjoy the moment. Enjoy the anticipation that God is coming; that God always comes to us, because God’s love for us knows no bounds. As a child, I loved to look through the JC Penney and Sears Christmas catalogs. The world of toy possibilities was EXCITING to say the least! For a kid, it certainly was an-tic-i-paa-aaa-tion! That’s what’s so exciting about Advent—waiting for God’s grace to be revealed (because we know it always is revealed and that it is always “worth the wait”). So may this Advent Season be a time of holy longing for you, as you anticipate God once again (and again and again) coming into humanity. May God’s grace and peace be with you!

Pastor Gary (Please feel free to call me with questions or comments, 607-423-6456.)



Children’s Faith Formation

Join us on December 9 at 10:30 a.m. for our annual Christmas Pageant as Chef Samantha and a host of people from the Nativity help create a Christmas Cake, and we learn how God uses ordinary people (just like us) to do amazing things! Practices will be held On Sunday, December 2; Saturday, December 8; and Sunday December 9 all from 9 to 10:15 a.m. On December 16 from 9:30 to 10:15 a.m., Pastor Gary invites Pre-K to 8th graders to a Christmas Party! We’ll have sweet treats, milk and juice, and watch Disney’s “Prep and Landing” together. We hope you will be able to join us! Please note there will not be Faith

Formation classes on December 23 or 30; however, the Nursery will be open. Classes resume on Sunday, January 6.



Our Homer-Preble Congregational Youth Group will meet on Sunday, December 2 in Homer for food, faith, and fun. Then on December 15 we will go caroling; starting at Preble Congregational with hot chocolate and ending with pizza at Homer Congregational. We will also be going to SkyZone in Syracuse on winter break. Watch the Russell Fellowship Hall TV for more details! If you’re not

already part of this great group, then why not join us!



You better watch out. You better not cry. Better not pout. I’m telling you why...Pastors Vicki and Gary are coming to Senior Fellowship. Okay, that didn’t exactly rhyme, but you get the idea! And it’s better than if Santa Claus was coming to town! ‘cause the pastors aren’t making a list, or checking it twice. And we love you whether you’re naughty or nice. So make sure to join us for Senior Fellowship on Tuesday, December 11 from 2 to 4 p.m. Pastors Vicki and Gary will provide the program. Coffee/tea and Christmas cookies will be available for everyone to enjoy. Don’t miss the holiday cheer!

Advent with Quinn Caldwell

Quinn G. Caldwell is a father, husband, homesteader and preacher living in rural upstate New York. His most recent book is a series of daily reflections for Advent and Christmas called [All I Really Want: Readings for a Modern Christmas](#). Quinn writes for the *Still-Speaking* devotional group.

We are very glad to share that Rev. Dr. Caldwell has agreed to be with us on several Sundays during Advent. During Adult Faith Formation, we will share the Advent journey provided by his devotional, as follows:

Sunday, Dec. 2	at 9:30	Advent I discussion
	at 10:30	Rev. Caldwell will preach during worship
Sunday, Dec. 9	at 9:30	Advent II discussion
Sunday, Dec. 16	at 9:30	Advent III discussion

Our thanks to the Deacons for providing this marvelous opportunity to learn and grow with one who is so gifted. Be sure to welcome Quinn and his family: Terry (Quinn's husband) and their children Asa and Asher.



Homer Nursery School Notes



The nursery school is collecting non-perishable food stuffs for the month of December to donate to the food pantry next door. There are decorated boxes under the Christmas trees in the classrooms to collect the goods. We will also have our Christmas program and party at the end of the month.

From the Financial Secretary



Please be sure your pledges are paid in full and submitted by Sunday, December 30th so they can be deposited on Monday, December 31st. The books need to be closed for 2018, so statements can be prepared for your tax purposes.

Thanks, Bev Berry, Financial Secretary



Stewardship Update:

As of November 26th, we have received the following pledged amounts:

HCC Local & Wider Missions - \$19,752

FRS Operational & Maintenance - \$76,304

We continue to accept pledges. You may drop them in the offering plates on Sunday or send them to the church office. Together as a church family, we will accomplish a tremendous amount towards furthering God's work in our community and our world.



Outreach Committee News

We will be collecting items for the Migrant Educational Tutorial Services (METS) Christmas Present Project. We will need gifts wrapped, labeled with gift tags and returned to the church by December 9th. Thank you for helping to make a migrant family's Christmas a little brighter. If you were not able to take a gift tag but would like to help a migrant family

during this holiday season, you may buy a gift card to a store such as Walmart, Aldi's or various grocery stores. The cards will be distributed to the migrant families along with the other Christmas gifts. Thank you for your generosity!

Members of our Outreach Team will be attending the Light the Night event, sponsored by Hospice, on December 7th on the Village Green. We plan to hand out coffee and flashlight keychains. Please join us as we support this important community event.

Final Thursday Worship in 2018:

Join us on December 13 for **A Blue Christmas Service**. This special service will help us acknowledge that the holiday may not be joy-filled for every person. We remember that we watch for the birth of One called Immanuel ~ God with Us.



General Information to Note:

Hearing Aides Available

If you are having trouble hearing Sunday services hearing aids are available and can be assigned to you for your personal use. Due to hearing aid maintenance and keeping them sanitary please use only hearing aids assigned to you. Contact Russ Pedersen if you would like a hearing aid assigned to you or if you have any questions.

FAQs about Stephen Ministry

What exactly is Stephen Ministry?

Stephen Ministry is a ministry of our congregation in which trained and supervised lay persons, called Stephen Ministers; provide one-to-one Christian care to individuals facing life challenges or difficulties.

Who is involved?

Stephen Leaders are the people who oversee and direct our Stephen Ministry. They recruit, select, train, organize, and supervise our Stephen Ministers, identify people in need of care, and match them with a Stephen Minister. We have two Stephen Leaders: Belinda Burtson & Bill Masterson.

Stephen Ministers are the caregivers. They have engaged in 50 hours of training in Christian caregiving, including general topics such as listening, feelings, boundaries, assertiveness, and using Christian resources in caregiving. In addition, their training will cover specialized topics such as ministering to the divorced, hospitalized, bereaved, and aging.

Care receivers are the recipients of Stephen Ministers' care. They are people from our church or community who are experiencing divorce, grief, loss of a job, loneliness, hospitalization, terminal illness, or any of a number of other life difficulties. Stephen Ministers usually meet with their care receivers once a week for about an hour for as long as the care receiver will benefit by the relationship.

What do Stephen Ministers do?

Stephen Ministers are caring Christian friends who listen, understand, accept, and pray for and with care receivers who are working through a crisis or a tough time.

Are Stephen Ministers Counselors?

Stephen Ministers are not counselors; they are trained lay caregivers. Their role is to listen and care-not to give advice or counsel. Stephen Ministers are also trained to recognize when a care receiver's need exceeds what they can provide. When that happens they work with care receivers to help them receive the level of care they really need.

What does the Stephen Ministry logo represent?

The Stephen Ministry logo consists of a cross and circle together with a broken person and a whole person. The broken person behind the cross symbolizes the brokenness in our lives due to our sin and imperfections. The whole person stands in front of the cross because it is only through the cross of Jesus that we are made whole. The circle symbolizes both the wholeness we receive through Christ and God's unending love for us.

Our Stephen Leaders are:

Belinda Burtson 607-756-2454 & Bill Masterson 607-345-4874

Turn the page of your calendar to January:

Special Note:

Due to the holidays, look for your January Newsletter by January 8.

Epiphany Choir Festival

Our choir will participate in the Epiphany Choir Festival on **Sunday, January 6 at 3 PM**. All the choirs from area churches will offer two anthems from their holiday music. This is a marvelous gift of music that also helps the Council of Churches fund their ministry, especially for the students on campus.

Annual Meeting Date

Mark your calendars for the Annual Meetings of the First Religious Society of Homer and the Homer Congregational United Church of Christ: **Sunday, January 20**. Snow date is Sunday, January 27. We are in this together, so it will be important for you to attend as we finalize our plans for ministry in 2019.

AS WE PREPARE, COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP PLEASE NOTE: Reports are due in the office by **January 6**. We need to format, copy and collate in time to hand the booklets out on January 13.



Canned vegetables,
Tomato Soup,
Pudding, Jell-O,
Canned Pasta,
Chunky Soup,
Pasta,
Rice Sides,
Manwich (or womanich)

Cereal,
Mac & Cheese,
Canned Fruits,
Baked Beans,
Pork & Beans,
Tuna,
Canned Beans,
Chicken Noodle Soup

Worship in December

Gary Harrington is the Deacon of the Month.
Bonnie Haaland is our Trustee Verifier.

Sunday, December 2 Quinn Caldwell Preaching Communion Sunday

Scripture: Luke 21:26-31

As we celebrate communion, we will be assisted by Deacons Tracy Bertram, Gary Harrington, Bonnie Smith and Jim Ulrich.

Ushers/Greeters ~ Terry & Jan Bertram, Lee & Terre Dennis

Nursery volunteer ~ Jenelle Pedersen

Coffee Hour ~ Rachel Rood

Sunday, December 9 Children's Pageant

Join us for a memorable presentation of the Christmas story.

Ushers/Greeters ~ Tracy & Mark Bertram, Shelly Hilts & Maureen Tarry-Hilts

Coffee Hour ~ Faith Formation

Flowers ~ Jack Carr in memory of his parents

Sunday, December 16 Choir Sunday

A Festival of Lessons and Carols by Hal Hopson

Joseph Ford, conducting

James Shultes, piano

Ushers/Greeters ~ Carl & Connie Applegate, Alex, Evan and Clara Faulkenbury

Nursery volunteer ~ Terry Pedersen

Coffee Hour ~ Gumaer Family

Flowers are given by the Gumaer Family in memory of Larry Gumaer

Sunday, December 23

Scripture: Luke 1:39-56

Sermon: Magnify

Ushers/Greeters ~ Bill & Sherri Masterson, Jim & Kathy McKenna

Nursery volunteer ~ Sue Urban

Monday, December 24 Christmas Eve

7:00 pm service

A service of Lessons and Carols, special music and candle light.

Ushers/Greeters ~ The Dentes Family

Join us for a very special coffee hour, hosted by the Harringtons.

11:00 pm service

A service of Lessons and Carols, special music and candle light.

Ushers/Greeters ~ The Deacons

Our bell will ring in the arrival of Christmas Day!

Sunday, December 30 The Sunday after Christmas

Our college students will lead worship. Evan Ulrich has agreed to preach!

Join us for a casual service as the Christmas tidings continue.

Sunday, January 6 Epiphany

2019 begins with Communion and a sermon titled "Ah-HA!". Terry Pedersen is Deacon of the Month, and communion will be served by Evan Faulkenbury, Darci Gumaer, Doris Hoffmann and Terry Pedersen.

its the most
DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS
 wonderful time of the year

- 3 Dottie Kelley, Tyler Hilts
- 5 Nicholas Cinquanti
- 7 Tasker Dennis
- 8 Rachel Rood
- 9 William Allen
- 14 Rachel Ditch
- 15 Alison Miller
- 18 Terry Pedersen
- 23 Jennifer VanSlyke
- 28 Cathy Renninger
- 29 Erin Leach
- 30 Laura Cinquanti
- 31 Elise Schmidt

Do let us know any birthdays that were missed. Thanks!

From the Treasurer:

- Operating Revenues at 10/31/18 - \$183,052, 75.1% of budget (budget overage due to use of capital reserve not originally budgeted)
- Operating Expenses at 10/31/18 - \$185,053, 75.9% of budget

Email Contacts:

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Associate Pastor: associatepastor@homercc.org

Financial Secretary: finsect@homercc.org

Treasurer: treasurer@homercc.org

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