



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.

As I write to you this month, it strikes me that both Disciple Bible Study groups are studying about Moses. Remember how he was, by birth, the son of Hebrew people? In a time when a generation of Hebrew babies was being eliminated, Moses was delivered and became the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He received the best of everything that Egypt could offer, including education. When Moses became an adult, God called him to lead the Israelites away from slavery and into a deeper covenant with God. In the wilderness, a new generation was born. Under Moses' leadership, God's people acquired skills for survival and policies that helped them live together in community. They codified their worship. They sought and were given a new vision, a new pathway.

Soon, our Deacons will be on retreat. They will come away from the busy-ness of life. They will pray. They might write some poetry. Like our ancient role models, they will look to God and to one another for a new pathway. Like those ancient people, we are all looking for God's Way in our lives. We are finding the ways to live together in community. We are seeking a new vision.

Our society seems to have lost the ability to disagree without labeling the other as *enemy*. In these next weeks and months, we invite you to think and pray about finding God's Way – as individuals and as a church. What shall we DO in order to reflect God's love and grace, revealed by Jesus? How can we demonstrate respect even while welcoming everyone? What steps can we take to live with more love than fear? Are we living the priorities expressed by Jesus' Way, and if not, what needs to change? What keeps us relevant within the current society? How, indeed, can we BE the people of God toward one another, within our community, our nation, our world?

It promises to be an exciting chapter in the life of Homer Congregational United Church of Christ. If you have been away, come on home and join us. If you have been in the pews, stay with us and invite others to come. We are in this together.

Who is God calling us to be? Think about it. Pray about it.

With enthusiastic hope,  
*Pastor Vicki*

**From our associate pastor for faith formation...**

When I was young I played a lot of “cops and robbers” and “Star Trek.” I was always one of the “good guys” either pretending to be a police officer, or the captain of my own starship. No matter which one I pretended, I always carried a toy gun or phaser. But that was then. This is now a time of mass shootings; school shootings; police officers murdering young, unarmed black men; and many others using guns to “solve” their problems.

So what do you do when you lead a group of youth who want to go to places like laser tag or paint ball? Do you take them and just let it be? Do you simply refuse to have a church youth group do something like that? Is there another solution? These are the questions I have wrestled with ever since our youth brainstormed fun activity ideas months ago; including the two I mentioned.

Ultimately, we went to laser tag. But not before we had a conversation. It was a conversation about guns, the difference between imaginative fun versus reality, and how terrible it is that human beings use guns to try to solve their problems; ultimately harming or killing others. I explained to them that while I would be comfortable doing laser tag as “pretend fun”, I would not be okay with it devolving into the notion that we are “killing” each other. Nor am I comfortable with a church youth group going to paint ball, because it involves actually hitting other people with projectiles that leave welts and other bruises. I knew the youth and I were on the same page not just by the “Yeah, duh, Pastor Gary” looks on their faces, but also because they repeated the “this is just pretend” mantra as we entered the laser tag arena.

Great, right? On some level. The other part of this story is that I also had a 1-1 conversation with one of our teens, who shared with me the fear of going to school, because of the daily risk of another school shooting; especially when the places that have already suffered this terrible tragedy were largely unknown before the deadly event—just as Homer and Cortland are currently largely unknown. We also talked about our shared gratefulness for our school resource officers, and our hope that our children always remain safe.

My take-away is that we need to continue this conversation; not just with our youth, but among our adults too. It’s a conversation that should include many layers—the feelings of our young people about school safety, the place of guns in our society, how we teach about the value of all human life, and the ways we resolve conflict and reconcile our pain, among many other things.

I know this will not be the last conversation of this kind that I have with our youth. And I also know that if we can always point toward the kind of hope and peace and non-violence that Jesus’ preached and practiced, then we will be steering not only our children, but everyone in our community, in the right direction.

**Children’s Faith Formation**

Our children will begin the month by taking a field trip! Since September, our children have been contributing to our weekly offering as part of the beginning of each class. In order to teach them that their generosity has an impact, during the March 3 class we will be heading to Williams IGA in the village of Homer to purchase various items for the Homer UMC food pantry. We will also deliver them that day. During the remaining Sundays of the month, children will learn about Jesus’ temptation in the desert, how Jesus wants to bring people together, and about God’s promise of abundant life as told to the prophet Isaiah. Classes are open to children in kindergarten through eighth grade, and all are welcome!



Youth Group will meet in Homer on the 17<sup>th</sup> for an “Irish Party” (why not, it’s Saint Patty’s day, lads and lassies!). The we will meet again in Preble on March 31. Looking ahead to April, our youth lead the “Way of the Cross” on The Green on Good Friday, April 19. Each Youth Group gathering includes food, faith, and fun, and all youth in grades 6 to 12 are welcome!

**Senior Fellowship**

After an unexpected snow day in February, Senior Fellowship returns in March with Dorothy Hopkins leading us in making an origami box. Please bring with you a 3 inch by 3 inch photo or illustration that will be part of your origami creation. This is sure to be a great “hands on” experience so we hope you will join us on Tuesday, March 12 from 2-4 p.m. in the Russell Fellowship Hall. For those of you who might be interested in learning how to ring bells, don’t worry! Jan Jeffers has agreed to guide us in September as we make some music! Thank you to both Dorothy and Jan for sharing your talents with us!



*Homer Nursery School Notes*



**Thank you to everyone who donated items to the nursery school.** The students are beyond excited to have new items to play with each other.

We are now accepting applications for the 2019 - 2020 school year. If you know of anyone who is interested, please have them call Lisa Clark at 607-749-6753.

We currently have 20 students enrolled in school.

Respectfully, Lisa Clark



**2019 CHURCH CAMP**



Kids LOVE sports and learn important, life-long skills and values by participating in them! This year, Homer Congregational Church will host **Church Camp: A Sport for Everyone!** from **5:30-7:30 p.m., Wednesday, August 14 to Friday August 16.** Each evening we will learn the skills of a particular sport from people who coach/play the sport, and the Bible-based values

these sports exemplify. There will be music, as well as concession stand type foods! On Sunday, August 18, during worship, we will celebrate what the children have experienced through their week of Church Camp. All children from kindergarten to 6<sup>th</sup> grade are invited to participate.

## The Trustees Corner



Members of the Board of Trustees met for their February meeting, welcoming our new members Brian Cornwell and Kurt Schmidt. Jim McKenna (Chair), Paula Harrington (vice-Chair), and Bonnie Haaland (Secretary) were re-elected as the Trustees officers.

The board discussed numerous issues including:

- painting and insulating the Manse,
- planned church repairs,
- review of our insurance policy, and
- upgrades to the sanctuary audio system.
- finances, an external audit, and fundraising.

Any and all ideas and assistance for fundraising are welcome; see any board member.

Thank you for your continued support of our boards, committees, and clergy. Together we will continue to enhance our church's good works. Jesus is with us and guides us all to help the church and our community flourish. Spring is just around the corner, so be alert for "God Sightings". May your spirit continue to be bright as the days lengthen. Contact me or any of the Trustees, if you notice any problems with the church or if you have questions about our activities or needs.

*God's Peace be with you! ∞ Jim McKenna, Chair*

## Outreach Committee News



The Outreach Team will be collecting a free will offering on **Sunday, March 3** and at the Shrove Tuesday dinner on March 5 to support the Small Comforts Foundation. **Small Comforts** is a local, non-profit "working quietly to help meet the 'small comfort' needs of the disabled and chronically ill who live on a limited budget in Tompkins and Cortland Counties." They aim to raise the morale and quality of life of the chronically ill living at home, in an assisted living facility, or in hospice.

Some examples of items or services they have provided include: air purifiers or air conditioners for those living with lung cancer or COPD; recliners for patients who require constant leg elevation; hospital bed sheets; incontinence garments; and bus fare to enable patients to travel for treatment.

The Outreach Team strives to meet the needs of our community, show support and care for all people, and offer hope. Small Comforts' mission aligns well to ours, and we would like to support them. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

*Carol Costell Corbin and the Outreach Team*

## Upcoming Events and General Information to Note:

### Weekly Communion during Lent:

**Beginning on Wednesday, March 13**, you are invited to join Pastor Vicki and Belinda for early breakfast and communion at the manse. Coffee and light breakfast will be ready at 7 AM. As we gather around the table, Pastor Vicki will offer a brief liturgy with communion. So that you can be off to work in plenty of time, we will be done by 7:30. Here is a chance to ADD a discipline, as you gather with other people of faith for an early faith-based start to your Wednesdays during Lent. The manse is at 14 N Main Street, right across from the Sherman House.

### Interested in becoming a member of Homer Congregational UCC?

New members will be received on **Sunday, April 14 – Palm Sunday**. If you are interested in joining, please let Pastor Vicki know. We will have a brief *New Member Class* early in April to prepare for the day you join our church.

### 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.

### Dates to Note:

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Saturday, April 6 | <b>5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of being an Open and Affirming Church!</b><br>Watch for information about how we will celebrate!   |
| Sunday, April 21  | <b>Easter Sunday!</b><br>Who will you bring to church that day?  |
| Saturday, June 1  | <b>Relay for Life</b><br>This year the event will begin at 4 PM. We intend to support this event. If you are a cancer fighter and/or survivor, we hope you will join with others from our congregation and take a lap holding our church's banner.         |
| Saturday, July 20 | <b>Holiday in Homer</b><br>Vendor packets are out. Plans are being made.<br>Information about our <b>Fun Run</b> (it begins at 8) is being included in the Elks' Run goodie bags.<br>Make plans now to join in all the fun and to help where you are able! |
| August 13-15      | <b>HCC's Church Camp</b><br>We know you are signing the kids up for various camps during March. We hope you will reserve the dates so that your kids can join in the fun.  |

## Worship in March

Tracy Bertram is the Deacon of the Month.

Jim McKenna is our Trustee Verifier.

**Ah-Ha!** The season of Epiphany ends on March 3 by traveling to a mountaintop where Jesus is transformed before his disciples very eyes. In these last moments of the season we remember how it started with a star, a manger and a baby. The child was God's own – the fulfillment of God's promise to stay with us, even when the journey got difficult (i.e. going through fire or flood). The kid grew up and did miraculous things, including changing water into wine and healing people in both mind and body. Preaching in his home Synagogue, Jesus said that he had come to set people free from poverty and oppression. According to Luke, Jesus even blessed the poor while offering scorn for those who have more than enough, yet refuse to share. God's Way is revealed to the world by that star-lit child who, like Moses, went up a mountain and encountered God. These stories of our faith-heritage demonstrate that encountering God changes us forever.

And so begins **Lent**. On **Ash Wednesday**, we will reflect on our connections with God and with each other. The ashes remind us that we are part of the beginnings of creation. God brought molecules and atoms together, tiny particles of dust that became earth, water, stars and humanity. Last August we witnessed tiny caterpillars transform to chrysalis and then to monarch butterflies. It was a transformation that will bring meaning as we travel the road toward Holy Week. Finally, during the season of Lent, people often give something up. Our congregation will give up some spoken words as we practice lengthening silent prayer during worship. Come and learn a new song by Daniel Nahmod:

When I pray I feel my heart go deeper into my God.  
Right here, right now, right where I am I pray.

### Sunday, March 3

### Communion Sunday

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

Ushers/Greeters ~ Mark Bertram, Kathleen Dentes, Gary Harrington, Anne Wingard  
Nursery volunteer ~ Darci Gumaer Coffee Hour ~ Kathy Alvord

### Sunday, March 10

Nursery volunteer ~ Kathy or Jim McKenna Coffee Hour ~ HCC Choir  
Flowers ~ Joanne Cincotta in loving memory of her mother, Theresa Gay

### Sunday, March 17

Nursery volunteer ~ Jenelle Pedersen Coffee Hour ~ Jen & Don VanSlyke  
Flowers ~ Anne Wingard in memory of her Irish mother, Marjorie Frasier

### Sunday, March 24

Nursery volunteer ~ Joanne Cincotta Coffee Hour ~ Andrea Herzog

### Sunday, March 31

### Fifth Sunday

Nursery volunteer ~ Coffee Hour ~ Gumaer family  
Flowers ~ Jan Jeffers in honor of Amanda's birthday.





1 Isabel Coon  
 5 Phyllis Adams, Carl Applegate, Anne Wingard  
 10 Kelly McKenna  
 11 Terre Dennis  
 13 Stanley Nilsson  
 18 Janice Bacon  
 21 Kelly Settineri, Carrie Gumaer  
 22 James McKenna  
 23 Hannah Agate  
 25 Douglas Adams, Pat Buchholz  
 27 Gail Benedict  
 29 Stephen Hoffmann, David Hoffmann  
 31 Mary Lansdowne

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

**From the Treasurer:**

- Operating Revenues at 1/31/19 - \$14,294, 5.6% of budget
- Operating Expenses at 1/31/19 - \$18,399, 7.2.% of budget

**Email Contacts:**

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Financial Secretary: [finsect@homercc.org](mailto:finsect@homercc.org)

Treasurer: [treasurer@homercc.org](mailto:treasurer@homercc.org)

**Find us online!**

HCC website - [homercc.com](http://homercc.com)

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To receive our electronic communications send your email address to : [office@homercc.org](mailto:office@homercc.org)

Spirituality is recognizing and celebrating  
that we are all inextricably connected to each other  
by a power greater than all of us,  
and that our connection to that power  
and to one another  
is grounded in love and compassion.  
Practicing spirituality brings a sense of  
perspective, meaning, and purpose  
to our lives.

from Brené Brown's  
*The Gifts of Imperfection*