



On April 6, 2014, the members of Homer Congregational UCC voted to become an Open and Affirming Church of the United Church of Christ. Open and Affirming (ONA) is the UCC's 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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 Rev. Gary T. Smith
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from the Senior Pastor's mind and heart...

Grace and peace to you, dear members and friends of Homer Congregational United Church of Christ!

What if...

When our Deacons met a few months ago, Bonnie Smith and I wore pins that asked the question... *What if...*? It is an invitation, is it not? It is a whispering mind-tease about the future; about what *could* be, if only; a question posed by God's Spirit during this season of Easter. [While the main event of Easter happened on the 21st of April, the season of Easter is celebrated for 50 days, until Pentecost on June 9.]

What if...

Recently, the Rev. Dr. Marsha Williams spoke about life on the other side of Easter. She encouraged us to be bold in our ministry. She advised us to put our faith in God, who leads us. She suggested that in addition to *going* to church, we should consider how we can *BE* the church. It affirms what is happening here. At the last meeting of our Church Council, we heard some of the results of the Deacons' retreat. *What if...* we embarked on a period of discernment and new vision for our church? *What if...* we put some new ideas for ministry on the table?

What if...

...we considered a new initiative for the community? *What if* we dedicated a day to accomplish significant projects within our community – something like “Hammer and Eggs”, but for the community? It happens in other places...called *Hands & Hearts* (ask me about this) or *In as Much* (ask Alex Faulkenbury about this). *What if* we dedicated a day to build or paint or otherwise help those in need within the community of Homer?

...we sought financial support from a wider audience? *What if* we wrote some grant proposals (ask Jim McKenna about this)? *What if* we chose a means of fundraising that reached beyond our walls (have you tasted a Welsh Cookie yet)?

...we demonstrate to the folks in our community that we CAN have respectful conversations, despite our differences?

...more of our kids went to sleep-away summer camps?

What if...

The possibilities are endless. We look to God as we dream dreams and hatch visions for our future ministries. We need your ideas, too! Together, let us be bold in asking *What if...?*

With Joyful Anticipation,
Vicki

Children's Faith Formation

Children's Faith Formation enters its final month before preparing for our year-end celebration on June 9. The month begins with a Teacher/Aide meeting on May 4 from 10 a.m. to noon so we can assess how our current year has been going, and to explore curriculum options for next year. Then in class, our children will continue to celebrate the Easter Season as they learn about: Saul becoming a friend to Jesus named Paul, the 23rd Psalm and God's shepherd-like care for us; God's plan for a new heaven and a new earth; and the beginning of the early Church. All children from kindergarten through 6th grade are welcome to participate! If your child is new, please see Pastor Gary so he can provide you with a Faith Formation registration form.

Youth Group



The older pre-teens and teens from our Youth Group attended this year's Maundy Thursday Service, and then participated in their own retreat experience during the late evening. As part of their retreat, the teens prepared the Good Friday "Way of the Cross", which focused on current issues like fear and violence, bullying, racism, and hate speech; and included prayers written by the teens. Thank you to



Maddie Dermott, Justin Dermott, Jacob Dentes, Elijah Smith, Andrew Patterson, and Jed Swayze for creating a very prayerful experience for our community! In May, the youth will meet on the 5th in Homer for food, faith, and fun; and on the 19th in Preble. We will also go on a hike to see 300 year-old trees (a rarity), and also head to Get Air for some trampoline fun. More details will be sent to Youth Group members by text message. Thank you to Doris Hoffmann for providing food for our May 5th Youth Group!!!

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 6th grade are invited to participate. Although Church Camp is for our younger children, our teen youth will be asked to serve as assistant coaches for our various sports; working with an adult coach; which means they won't miss out on the fun!

Mystics Group

The Mystics Group will resume on Wednesday, May 8, as we begin Nadia Bolz-Weber's book, *Accidental Saints: Finding God in All the Wrong People*. This honest book highlights the many ways God keeps showing up in the least likely of people causing Bolz-Weber to be swept into first-hand encounters with grace. To participate in this book study, you can either get your own copy of the book, or let Pastor Gary know you would like him to order a book for you (\$14 from Amazon). At the conclusion of the book, we will take a break for the summer; returning in September to begin looking at world religions.

Sharing a holy moment from our celebration of Easter by Pastor Gary:

In the days before Easter, Pastor Vicki, Bonnie Smith, Ingrid Fox, and I became familiar with the animals who appeared during our Children's Moment on Easter Sunday—an owl, a monarch butterfly, a rabbit, and a sheep. It was fun to practice and create a "character" who would be interesting for our children. But it didn't prepare me for the moment our young ones were actually able to engage with the animals. What I noticed was how real these creatures became for the children. Even though each adult was speaking (albeit in a different voice—thank you Mrs. Doubtfire/Professor McGonagall), the children were completely "locked in" to the faces of the animals as if we adults weren't even there! The children wanted the butterfly to land on them. They wanted to snuggle up to the owl. And they hoped for a gentle nudge or kiss from the sheep or rabbit. It's a moment when reality and make-believe merge, and a greater "truth" emerges—in this case, the message that God is always with us, even during the times we feel like we've withdrawn into our chrysalis.

Deacons & Trustees at work in April:

- NY Help Honduras:

The Honduran government granted permission to build a new middle school in the lower mountain villages. Each classroom will cost approximately \$3500 and *NY Help Honduras* now has just over \$1000 towards the first classroom. Motion passed by our Deacons: The Global Connectors Committee recommend sending \$2,500.00 of the Dorothy J Andrews Global Connectors Fund to *NY Help Honduras* toward the first classroom.

- Holy Week visits

Traveling in pairs, the Deacons volunteered to visit ten different homes. During their visits, they delivered a flower for Easter and they celebrated communion.

- Newspaper advertisements

Recognizing that personal invitations are the best means of bringing new people to church, the Deacons declined an opportunity to put additional advertising in the Cortland Standard for our Holy Week and Easter Services. It was decided that the cost (\$192) outweighed the benefits.

- Grants

The Trustees have established a Grants Committee, members being; Evan Faulkenbury, Jim McKenna, Kurt Schmidt and Pastor Gary. They will begin exploring the possibility of finding grants for some of our projects in ministry.

- Use of the Green

The Trustees granted permission for the use of the green on Wednesdays during the summer for the concert series and for a wedding in June. The Trustees intend to review and update our rules for use of the Green.

- Holiday in Homer

Yaman Real Estate has agreed to be a sponsor of Holiday in Homer.

From the Memorial Committee



Gardeners Needed

The Memorial Garden is in need of a spring spruce up and light maintenance throughout the summer. The Memorial Committee is looking for people who would be willing to keep the Memorial Garden beautiful. If you are interested in giving to the church in this way please see Terry Pedersen or Gary Harrington.

Outreach Team News



On April 14th the Outreach Team distributed loaves of bread, made by our congregation, to people living in the mobile home park and the Ellis Pines apartments. It was a gift of kindness that included a card and a personal invitation to come and join us any time at our church. On April 20th, Outreach handed out candy bags and coffee to families at the annual Easter egg hunt on the Green. The bags also included a message about our church and an open invitation to join us anytime. In May, we will be collecting diapers and baby wipes to support CAPCO's annual baby shower in June. Please consider buying a box of diapers (any size) and some baby wipes. Donations will be collected throughout the month in the Russell Fellowship room in a playpen! In addition, it's not too early to be thinking about our Back to School PREP event!! It will take place on August 24th. We will be in need of many sneakers, socks and underwear of all sizes. Thank you for always supporting our outreach efforts and for being so generous with your donations!! The Outreach Team meets the last Sunday of each month at noon after worship. Please join us at any time.



ENDOWMENT FUND

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE: YOUR FRIENDS LEFT A LEGACY AND SO CAN YOU

Our First Religious Society Endowment Fund traces its beginning to a bequest from the estate of Mary Keep in 1889. For many years it was known as "The Permanent Fund". In 1930 the title was changed, and it has been known since then as The First Religious Society Endowment Fund. Those who have left money or property to the fund have been listed on the Elizabeth Baldwin plaque in the Russell Fellowship Room.

In 2002 the Elizabeth Baldwin Society was formed to recognize those who have made gifts to the fund or have indicated to us that our church is included in their estate planning. Not all of the Elizabeth Baldwin Society Members live here or are actively involved in our church but have retained ties to our community. All have a common desire to assure the continued mission and work of our church.

Making a gift to help our church and people you will never know in coming generations is the highest form of philanthropy. Benjamin Franklin probably said it best, in his will, when he wrote, "I wish to be useful even after my death". We encourage you to be like Ben!

Any member of your Endowment Committee would be happy to visit with you regarding the fund, or to discuss estate planning as it relates to the Homer Congregational Church. The current members are Carl Applegate, Anna McConnell, Lee Benson, Chuck Feiszli, Mark Bertram and Bonnie Haaland.

Worship in May

Lori Schmidt is the Deacon of the Month.
Andrea Herzog is our Trustee Verifier.

Sunday, May 5

Communion Sunday

John 21:9-19 provides the disciples with a third encounter of the risen Christ. As we celebrate communion, we will be assisted by Deacons Bill Masterson, Joanne Cincotta, and Lori Schmidt.

Ushers/Greeters ~ Joanne Cincotta, Jenelle Pedersen, Russ & Terry Pedersen

Nursery volunteer ~ Sue Benedict

Coffee Hour ~ Carl & Connie Applegate

Flowers ~ Jack Carr in tribute and thanksgiving for his brother Jerry

Sunday, May 12

Mother's Day

Psalm 23 provides a blueprint for care and nurture in our lives. Under the direction of Joe Ford, the men of our congregation will offer special music for this special day.

Ushers/Greeters ~ Evan & Alex Faulkenbury, Gary & Paula Harrington

Nursery volunteer ~ Sue Urban

Coffee Hour ~ The Trustees

Flowers ~ Anne Barnes in honor of Dave Barnes' birthday

Sunday, May 19

John 13:31-35 contains the commandment from Jesus. We are to love one another.

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

Nursery ~ Jenelle Pedersen

Coffee Hour ~ Joanne Cincotta

Flowers ~ Bry Meyka in loving memory of her late husband, Gary Toller

Sunday, May 26

Memorial Day

John 14:23-29 recounts how Jesus assured the disciples that, even in his absence, God's peace will remain.

Ushers/Greeters ~ Nancy Stockholm, Cindy Stout, Bonnie & Elijah Smith

Nursery volunteer ~ Mark or Tracy Bertram

Coffee Hour ~ Pat Bucholtz

Flowers ~ Anne Wingard in memory of her mother, Marjorie Frasier

Upcoming Events and General Information to Note:

Monday, May 13

The launch of Evan Faulkenbury's book: *Poll Power: The Voter Education Project and the Movement for the Ballot in the American South*. The book explains the roll the Voter Education Project (VEP) played in Southern elections. You can purchase the book on Amazon.com.

Saturday, June 1

Relay for Life

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
8:00 a.m.

Holiday in Homer

Our **Fun Run** is the kick-off event for Holiday in Homer. Will you walk or run? For more information, see Carol Costell Corbin or Jeff & Sam Penoyer.



- 1 Logan Schmidt
- 2 Belinda Burtson, Leslie Smith, Sharon Wainman
- 3 Phillip Rumsey
- 4 Nancy Richards
- 7 Bill Masterson
- 11 Carol DeShane
- 16 Lori Schmidt, Leslie Wright
- 20 Sylvia Hammond
- 22 Bill Hopkins
- 23 Andrew Leach
- 24 Luke Bertram, Alexander Bertram
- 26 Mary Reif
- 29 Matthew Pelowski, Arthur Allen, Elizabeth Allen

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

From the Treasurer:

- Operating Revenues at 3/31/19 - \$52,020, 20.4% of budget
- Operating Expenses at 3/31/19 - \$56,556, 22.2% 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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