

Bristoletter

**Newsletter of the United Church of Bristol
A member congregation of the United Church of Christ**

February-March, 2014

“God is still speaking,”

A Message to Members and Friends of the United Church of Bristol,

We greet you during this period of preparation for the upcoming annual meeting of our congregation, and invite you to join us in looking both back at the year now ended and ahead in anticipation of the New Year unfolding. Our 2013 annual report, now in print, is available for review and reflection before we gather on February 2. A read through the pages of committee reports and summaries of our activities throughout 2013 will suggest that it was a vibrant and vital year as we shared in worship, work, study, outreach, and service as a congregation. Much of what we anticipate in the seasons ahead will build upon our community experience of the past year. Truly, we have much for which to be thankful, much to appreciate, much to embrace and celebrate.

As we look ahead to our new year together, welcoming new leaders, new tasks, new opportunities and unknown challenges, there is one overall concern we lift up for your prayerful consideration, The proposed budget for 2014, carefully prepared by our Stewardship & Finance Committee, modified by the Church Cabinet and now before the congregation for consideration, is a deficit budget. Though we have trimmed anticipated expenses as closely as we feel is responsible, there is still a gap of approximately \$8,000 between the expected costs of maintaining our ministry, our programs, our building, and our outreach on one side of the budget, and the amounts pledged or otherwise expected as income from our fundraisers, interest earnings, and other gifts.

Without increased giving from our members and friends, the modest “cushion” in our operating account reserves would be nearly depleted by year’s end. Clearly, deficit budgets as a pattern are neither responsible nor sustainable. Accordingly, your Cabinet will be working closely with our pastor, Stewardship and Finance Committee, our Deacons, and the Fundraising Committee (which is all of us!) to address this challenge.

We invite your ideas and suggestions, and we especially encourage you to search your hearts and then communicate to Stewardship & Finance Committee any intention to increase your financial support of our vital ministry as the United Church of Bristol. Together, we can continue to proclaim that “God is still speaking....”

Jerry LaRue Fletcher
Treasurer

Lyle Jenks
Moderator

Catherine Joseph
Chair of Deacons

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Worship -- 10:00 am Fellowship Hour -- 11:00 am

to receive Bristoletter by e-mail, contact jschrader@cnbank.com

Those Whom We Hold in Prayer

Paula, Helen, Bill and Joan, Doris, Jim, Pete, Jack, Joshua, Rena, Wendy, Lucinda, Don and Pat, Marie, Ken, Jack, the Metherel family, the people of Syria, and all victims of natural or human disasters.

Music Committee

The Choir has continued to do Special Music this past year. There are some weeks that attendance is low for the Choir and a Hymn is sung by the congregation. I encourage anyone who has a desire to sing Praises to the Lord to help the Choir out. We do our best to make a joyful noise to the Lord and WELCOME anyone on any given Sunday. If you have a favorite hymn please let us know. If you would like to sing with us we welcome you with happy hearts and a warm welcome. Peace and good health in the New Year.

Respectively Submitted.

Mary Dunne. Organist
Rena Faulkner
Ellie Babcock
Jim Hendee

Deacons Report

The congregation started the New Year off with a visit from Pastor Emily Castnor. Her sermon on epiphany was enjoyed by all who attended the first service of the year. We will have the pleasure of three more guest ministers later in the year.

The new directory is finished and is still available in the fellowship hall. Please sign out your copy when you take one.

As we await the arrival of spring, plans for the Lenten soup suppers are being made. Pastor Tim is arranging for us to have speakers again this year. The suppers are scheduled for March 13th, March 27th, and April 10th. All suppers will start at 6pm with the speakers to follow. We encourage everyone to come, bring a friend and spread the word. Ash Wednesday service will be held on March 5th at 7pm. Maundy Thursday will be April 17th with a soup supper at 6pm followed by service.

The Deacon's will be working on our inactive member list and may need help from the congregation for the whereabouts of those we don't know. We hope to find ways of reaching out to the surrounding community in 2014 to bring new members into our church family. We wish everyone a safe and healthy New Year.

Joy Jar & Outreach Update

“Living conditions in Lesotho are at best difficult especially in rural areas where “our” village supports its orphans and “our” sponsors support the education of 45 students at the High School. This past year has been difficult due to summer drought and heavy spring rains – food production has suffered and people are hungry. QMC (Qholaqhoe Mountain Connections) learned a few weeks ago that one of our scholarship students’ only meal was the lunch provided at school each day. Contact with the scholarship program director at the school confirmed that the family had nothing to eat. Our challenge then was what to do about the situation and other similar circumstances. The answer was to establish an emergency food fund at the school for any student in such circumstances to be administered by the assistant principal, our program director. Food will be purchased and delivered; pictures taken and food receipts will be given to QMC.

And at the Village QMC has recently built a building to house 8 orphans who were brought to Likoting Village by 2 grandfathers because they had heard there was food there. Donations in the last few years have allowed QMC to help the grandmothers who started the garden years ago to feed the village’s orphans. Thanks to the generosity of many a large water tank to irrigate the garden is in place, 100 chickens and a building to house them are in place and a Jersey cow and her two heifers are providing nourishment for the orphans. The orphans number more than 100.

Your mission donation will most certainly aid in supporting the needs of the children. I’ll keep you posted!

Again, thank you on behalf of the children - Pic Shade

NOTE: Please continue to bring in mittens and gloves, the folks at Social Services have been delighted to receive our last two bundles!!!

Altar Flower Committee Report

Schedule for the next 3 months:

February - Gloria Miles [229-2322]

March - Fran Staub [229-7306]

April & Easter flowers - Diane Bassage [657-6609]

If you wish to place a memorial arrangement on the altar, please contact the person who is coordinator for that specific Sunday. More info to come about Easter flowers!! It will be here before we know it!! Happy, healthy and safe winter to all!!

2014 Lenten Soup Supper Speaker Series

“Here, There, and Everywhere”

The 2014 Lenten Soup Supper Speaker Series is shaping up to be a fascinating set of presentations that are as diverse as they are engaging:

On Thursday, March 13th, the Rev. Al Keeney will be with us to help get us kick started on living intentionally. Plato is credited with having said: "the unexamined life is not worth living." Lent is a great time to take stock of our lives and get in touch with what makes life worth living!

On Thursday, March 27th, Ray Henry, historian for the Town of Canandaigua, will share his insights into “Barns of Ontario County and Western New York”, drawing upon his extensive research into the history of these local icons of agriculture.

On Thursday, April 10th, Pic Schade will present an update on educational and nutritional efforts with school children in Lesotho, Southern Africa, having just returned from a 2 week visit there. First-hand anecdotes and new photos will abound!

All Soup Suppers are free and open to the public, and will begin at 6 p.m., with presentations starting at approximately 6:30. The evening will wrap up by 7:30 p.m. All are welcome.

GILBERT SCHOLARSHIP TIME AGAIN!

Guidance offices at Bloomfield, Canandaigua, Naples and Honeoye schools will have applications available by 1/27/14 to be picked up by eligible students who wish to apply. The Gilbert Scholarship has been awarding a scholarship since 2008 when this fund was started by Richard and Joyce Gilbert. Eligibility: Any graduating senior living in the Town of Bristol or whose family is a part of the United Church of Bristol can apply. The award will be based on both merit and need with the student accepted at an accredited college. Applications must be received by April 15, 2014. Award will be presented at Graduation ceremonies. Proceeds are paid directly to the college of choice. Any interested student should visit with their Guidance person to obtain the necessary form for completion. Any further questions can be forwarded to Pat Pestle or Dianne Marcellus through the United Church of Bristol.

Pastor's Letter

I was born under the sign of Taurus, not Aquarius. But you wouldn't know it from the stuff I'm reading lately. From Matthew's (very) short story of Jesus' baptism to Jacques Yves Cousteau's Silent World to Jules Verne's 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, I'm hip deep in the world of water. I'd probably do well to curl up in my favorite reading chair with a cup of tea, a life-jacket and a towel!

I suppose we all have occasional "flights of fancy" or "dives of dalliance", and I, for one, find it hard to fathom how our spirits are led into such realms. I once heard that night-time dream imagery involving water is often symbolic of God or the holy. It's an attractive thought. Perhaps my seemingly "random" sampling of literature reflects a desire to go deeper in my relationship with God.

Recently, the Shalem Institute published its annual magazine entitled "Deep and Wide", featuring lavish ocean-scape photography and more than one essay in which water figured prominently. As I perused the issue, two numbers floated into my consciousness from some otherwise long-forgotten science course: 98 and 70. Our bodies consist of 98% water, and the Earth's surface is 70% water. Dry land really is in the minority, which in some strange way vindicates that old high school P.E. requirement that students learn to swim. Seen on a planetary scale, getting well acquainted with water is rather like learning French before heading to Paris. Water is the predominant culture on Earth.

Water is often very beautiful, as evidenced by a host of artists from Ansel Adams to Claude Monet. But water also has its darker side – literally. One aspect of water that challenged even the great Jacques Cousteau was its opacity. Generally speaking, one just can't see very far underwater, even with high-powered illumination. By contrast, on land the human eye can spy a single candle from 30 miles away.

Water, then, may capture one essential quality of spiritual living: as we find ourselves immersed in a domain vastly larger than ourselves, we peer into deep mysteries with extremely limited vision - or as St. Paul put it, "through a glass darkly."

In the life of the Spirit, it's easy to feel that we're "in over our head", which may be one reason why spirituality rarely comes up in casual conversation. Try floating this "conversation-starter" at your next coffee klatch: "What are your thoughts about the concepts of infinite divinity, unconditional love, and eternal life?" Chances are your friends will just clear their throats and pass you a cup of coffee...or...the name of a good therapist.

A part of what makes a community of faith so precious... and so quirky... is that we open ourselves to precisely those sorts of conversations. We hold our noses, close our eyes and take the plunge into deep

places where we can't see - precisely because they are places of such abundant life.

Just as the oceans hold most of the life on planet Earth, the spiritual "abyss" is rife with free-floating blessings like deeper self-understanding, deeper compassion and deeper peace...if we jump in.

Don your nose-plugs if necessary but, by all means, jump in! The water's wonderful!

Tim

Happy Birthday in February to:

Lyle Jenks – 2/7

Karla Babcock – 2/8

Joyce Gilbert – 2/10

Chris Bailey – 2/12

Dale Comfort – 2/12

Colleen Miles – 2/12

David Davenport – 2/14

Pat Sanford – 2/14

Zadoc Fletcher – 2/18

Bob Bolcarovic – 2/21

Walter Babcock – 2/22

James Dunne – 2/23

Fran Staub – 2/25

Edie Thomas – 2/25

Diane Marie Bassage – 2/26

Dianne Marie Case – 2/26

Happy Birthday in March to:

David Hudson – 3/5

James Chappell – 2/7

Bob Drayn, Jr. – 3/10

Alexa Cooley – 3/13

Dianne Marcellus – 3/14

Kaylee Angell – 3/15

Paula Dorn – 3/15

Rena Faulkner – 3/16

Noah Van Stralen – 3/17

Pat Panzarella – 3/17

O'Mallie Angell – 3/22

Jase Chappell – 3/22

Richard Johnson – 3/23

Madeline Cooley – 3/29

United Church of Bristol Calendar for February/March 2014

- February 2** Communion
Soup lunch and cookie sale to benefit Joy Jar
Annual Meeting immediately following worship
- NOTE:** As soon as possible following annual meeting on 2/2, all committees are encouraged to meet to welcome new members and organize for the year, choosing a chairperson and secretary, designating a Bristoletter correspondent.
- February 9** Deacons Meeting @ 9am
Adult Study Group
- February 16** **Cabinet Meeting following worship**
- February 23** **Adult Study Group**
- March 2** Communion
Potluck after worship
- March 9** Deacons Meeting @ 9am
Cabinet Meeting following worship
- March 5** **Ash Wednesday Service @ 7pm**
- March 13** **Lenten Soup Supper Speaker Series – 6pm**
- March 15** **Bristoletter deadline - text to Jan Schrader**
- March 27** **Lenten Soup Supper Speaker Series – 6pm**
- April 10** **Lenten Soup Supper Speaker Series – 6pm**
- April 17** **Maundy Thursday Service – soup supper @ 6pm, service follows**