

Bristoletter

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

**United Church of Bristol
7177 County Road Two
Bloomfield, NY 14469**

TO:

“God is still speaking”

Paula Dorn
Treasurer

Catherine Joseph
Moderator

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Church School -- during service Worship -- 10:00 am Fellowship Hour -- 11:00 am

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Those Whom We Hold in Prayer

Mary Lynne, Marian, Mary & Jim, Carrie, John's dad, Scott, Jeanette, Wendy, Bonnie, Erin, and all the caregivers. Prayers for Rob who is traveling abroad to Africa. Prayers of safety for Kristen, for Diane and Lance, and for all those who are traveling in the coming weeks. Prayers for all those who are afflicted with addictions. Prayers for the many who are undergoing medical procedures. Heartfelt prayers for the people of Paris, France and for the people of Bamako, Mali, and for a divine hope that there will be a way to prevent further acts of violence. Prayers of compassion for families who struggle to be thankful. Prayers of blessed thanks for the ability to reach out, and to give of ourselves.

Deacons Report

As we move from the Thanksgiving holiday which we hope all enjoyed, the Deacon's gear up for the Christmas season. By now all members of our church should have received a schedule in the mail of all Advent happenings. Please attach it to your fridge and check out what you can attend. Thanks go out to Diane Bassage for the idea and production of this handy reminder. Fall decorations came down and Christmas decorations went up after service on the 22nd. Thank you to all who helped accomplish this. **Please remember to bring a favorite ornament from home on December 6th to decorate the tree.**

The **Christmas carol sing-a-long** is in place and we are requesting donations of cookies to serve to those who attend. Pat Pestle and Sally Ess will put out a sign-up sheet November 29th for those who can help out. Deacons continue birthday visits as well as visits, calls, or cards to those in need. Please let us know of any concerns, we are here to help. We wish everyone a safe and joyful holiday season. **Merry Christmas!**

Altar Flower Committee Report

Christmas Poinsettias!

Sunday Dec. 6th & 13th will be the days to order either a red or pink poinsettia for the Church.

You may also call Diane Bassage @ 657-6609 after 12/1. Cost is \$8.00 - cash or check made payable to Country Corners Nursery [not to UCB].

Many thanks in advance; it is such a special time of year and your poinsettia order truly beautifies the Sanctuary!

Members and friends of the United Church of Bristol-

I've understood for some time now that my relationship with God is much more meaningful and vibrant when I immerse myself in nature - be it a walk in the woods, gazing at the stars, or just digging in the dirt. The simpler the better! It's a constant opportunity to give thanks for the beauty He has created, and continues to create in our lives. All we have to do is take the time to stop and take a look around to drink in the wonder of His creation.

I didn't understand just how intense that relationship could be however, until our recent trip to the Rockies. We'd had a wonderful trip to the Western Slopes, taking in an outdoor concert with 360 degree mountain views, encountering endless tumbling waterfalls and majestic mountain ranges during our hikes, and being blessed with blue skies daily. Winding down, we headed back towards Denver for our flight home, marking the end of our trip. We decided to return by way of Aspen, which had us taking "Independence Pass" up through the Rockies. Up and up we went, winding higher and higher, passing the changing landscapes of pine trees, aspens, rock formations, and meandering creeks. Onwards and upwards to the barren tundra that marks the highest peaks of the Rockies.

At 12,095 feet and straddling the continental divide, there was little visible life, and lots of wind! The stark contrast made the views that much more intense on the descent. As we wound our way back down the other side of Independence Pass, the vast expanses of aspens in their full fall foliage unfolded before us. At every turn another breathtaking view! Intense shades of yellows burst forth, seemingly endless beauty assaulting our visual senses. And then it happened, and so unexpected - I found myself weeping uncontrollably.

I've cried tears of joy, and tears of grief, tears of happiness, and tears of relief, but never before have I wept at the beauty of God's creation. He brought me to my knees in a most unexpected time and place. This is where I need to be, I said silently to myself - not literally here at the top of the Rockies, but here in nature, in communion with God. In that place where all is at peace, where a cleansing of the soul takes place. A place where he lifts us up and fills us up with His grace.

Catherine

Pastor's Letter

Life is a relentless teacher. And I found an unlikely instructor in a weathered old church sign – **OUR** church sign. Our sign has stood as a quiet sentinel for decades, announcing our name, hours of worship, and current pastor. And, as is the case with so many steadfast servants, it has come to need some care and attention. In a fit of naïve ambition, I fired up my electric sander last week thinking I'd give the sign a simple face-lift and a coat of paint before the rude winter winds begin to blow. As we all know, rarely is a project as "simple" as we think. After a few minutes of sanding, and finding wood mysteriously giving way to dust at an alarming rate, it became clear to me that the sign would need a transfusion of lumber in order to have something upon which to put the paint.

As the first exploratory surgery continued...and rot led to more rot...I became increasingly convinced that the sign really didn't look **THAT** bad in the first place. Maybe it could sit tight for another winter and let some other victim...I mean carpenter...give it a try next season.

From a distance, almost anything looks pretty – with enough distance. (One exception: I can't stand **FAR** enough from a mirror in the morning to look pretty!) Prior to my meddling, our beloved church sign wasn't too shabby from, say, 500 feet. But, as with hair-dressers and manicurists, a carpenter with a decent set of glasses sees all manner of blemishes. It comes with getting "up close and personal."

Of course, it's essential to get close in order to make repairs. Seldom have I worked on a wood-working project from more than 25 feet away. I don't even think that almighty Home Depot sells saws **THAT** long. What's true for wood-working is true for us humans. We can't attend to the needs of one another from a distance. Nor can we appreciate the intricacy with which we are made. The psalmist proclaims that God knows our inward parts, having knitted us together in our mother's womb. (**Psalm 139**). And that's all well and good. But sometimes we need someone "with skin on" to get close enough to offer compassion, kindness and care.

Though I'd **LOVE** to have my teeth cleaned by a dental hygienist who never gets within 10 feet of my mouth...it's just not very practical. I don't care **HOW** many computer screens they pack around the chair. After my initial dismay, I persevered with the church sign project, "re-purposing" some old fascia board from an elderly barn for use in replacing rotted parts of the sign. After backing up 7 steps to move ahead 2, the sign was eventually set for caulk and paint. (I won't say which I used more!) And she now stands with a new look and vastly improved self-esteem.

I don't think it's hard to see the application to life on the human plain. As we draw near, we **WILL** see the rot

and the rust. But we will **ALSO** be in a place to gently touch those places of need and offer care. In so doing, I think we become the hands and heart of Christ. But don't take my word for it – look for a sign! Blessings to you all...

Tim

United Church of Bristol Calendar for December 2015 and January 2016

November 22	Take down Fall decorations and put Christmas decorations up. Missions/Outreach Meeting – 9am
November 29	First Sunday of Advent – HOPE Children’s Annual Holiday Craft Bazaar – 9am Committee budgets due
December 5	Put Christmas tree up in sanctuary
December 6	Second Sunday of Advent - LOVE Christmas tree decorating – bring an ornament Pot Luck and Holy Communion
December 13	Third Sunday of Advent – JOY Birthday cake Sunday Deacons meeting – 9am Cabinet meeting at 11:30am
December 17	Blue Christmas Service - 7pm
December 20	Fourth day of Advent – PEACE Special refreshments and Christmas carols with Bob Green at the organ following service
December 24	Christmas Eve Service - 5pm
December 27	Adult Formation
January 10	Cabinet meeting at 11:30am
January 31	Annual Meeting after service

Happy Birthday in December to:

Don Sanford – 12/6
Carolyn Jenks Odell – 12/7
Ethan T. DiBiase – 12/7
Evelyn Wallace – 12/8
Marie Bennett – 12/9
Joe Stoltz – 12/15
Tom Ensman – 12/17
Carlyn Coe – 12/30

Happy Birthday in January to:

Priscilla Cratsley – 1/2
Jack Fagan – 1/3
Wendy Wheeler – 1/7
Tyler Chappell – 1/8
Kim Bolcarovic – 1/23
Jenna Babcock – 1/24
Nancy Green – 1/28
Peter Fletcher – 1/31
Elizabeth Strasser – 1/3

Liturgist, Greeters, & Fellowship Hour – December 2015 & January 2016

DATE	LITURGIST	GREET & FAREWELL	FELLOWSHIP HOUR
Dec. 6	Paula Dorn	John & Rena Faulkner	>> VanStralen Family <<
Dec. 13	Art Babcock	Joan Hall & LaRue Fletcher	** Jim & Mary Lou Burgess **
Dec. 20	Bob Drayn	Paula Dorn & Deb Footer	Sally Ess & Pat Pestle
Dec. 27	Ellie Babcock	Bob & Dianne Marcellus	Don & Pat Sanford
Jan. 3	Cc Bodnar	Sally Ess & Pat Pestle	>> Priscilla Cratsley & Deb Footer <<
Jan. 10	Sally Ess	Bob & Stephanie Drayn	Babcock Family
Jan. 17	Jan Schrader	Sheila Hudson & Gloria Miles	** Joan Hall & Edie Thomas **
Jan. 24	Linda Ensman	Cc Bodnar & Catherine Joseph	Bob & Dianne Marcellus
Jan. 31 2	Lance Bassage	Richard & Norma Lyons	John & Rena Faulkner
Feb. 7	Karla Babcock	Mary Lynne Parmelee & Jan Schrader	Outreach & Missions Comm. 'Souper Bowl Sunday'

- **“Greeters”**: Please try to remember to have one or both of you be a “fareweller” at the end of the service by the front door to wish those people well who may not be staying with us for fellowship hour. Thank you for adding this new task and making everyone feel welcome all the time at UCB! Your other duties are to be at the door by 9:20, remember to wear your name tag, ask guests to sign our guestbook, hand out the Sunday bulletins and any other hand-outs, count all the attendees and enter the total in the book, take up the collection when called by the Pastor. Headsets are now kept in Pastor’s office and should be returned there after the service.

-**“Fellowship Hour”**: You will need to provide juice for children and non-coffee drinkers. Pick up the cake if it is ****Cake Sunday****, Pat and Sally order it. The cake is picked up at Wegman’s **catering desk**. You pay for it then are reimbursed by the church when you submit the receipt.

** These represent “Birthday Cake Sundays”. If you are new to this, please see Pat or Sally.

>> These are “Pot-luck Sundays”. A light snack for fellowship hour is all that is needed on these Sundays. Please, all are welcome to join in for a pot-luck luncheon after our light refreshment during fellowship.

+Please find your own substitute if you are unable to fulfill your appointed task. THANKS!

+If you would like to be added to this list, please let Pat or Sally know.