

# **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**

**“God is still speaking”**

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Moderator

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### Those Whom We Hold in Prayer

Rena, Ellie, Marie, Ellie F., Elaine, Ginny, Mary and Jim, Wendy, Denise, Gloria, Ryan, Cc, Faye.  
Those suffering from natural disasters, all those who are grieving, all those with severe medical diseases, those who are traveling, our leaders, our military, police, and fire fighters.

#### **Prayers of Thanksgiving for:**

Safe travels, baptisms, weddings, family gatherings and visits by loved ones.

The support of our church family and the privilege of being the hands, heart and face of Christ.

### Joy Jar & Outreach Update

Many thanks to Linda Ensman who again this year coordinated the **Angel Tree Project**, an outreach program that provides Christmas gifts to children with an incarcerated parent. It is an incredible sight to see the collection of gifts as they are readied to be delivered. Gifts that bring joy to a child...gifts freely given in love. Generous donations to our Joy Jar throughout the months of November and December were passed along to the **United Church of Bristol's food cupboard**.

These monies help fill the Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets that are shared with folks in the community.

Our congregation continues to give generously to the 5 United Church of Christ offerings. These include, "**Our Church's Wider Mission**", "**Neighbors in Need**", "**Strengthen the Church**", "**One Great Hour of Sharing**", and "**The Christmas Fund**". This Christmas Eve's offering supported the Christmas Fund, a fund which assists retired ministers who are facing financial and medical hardships.

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, Super Bowl Sunday, the community is invited to a **Souper Bowl of Caring** social hour immediately following worship. There will be plenty of homemade soup and snacks. We encourage everyone to stay at least for a brief nibble! Perhaps you'd rather take a container of hot soup or tasty snacks home to be enjoyed during the big game. We'll have containers on hand for easy transport! The Joy Jar and any donations given during the social hour will benefit the Salem Nutrition Center of Rochester.

The Outreach/Missions committee wishes to thank everyone for supporting these many worthy causes.

### Deacons Report

Deacon's hope everyone is staying warm and healthy in this really cold weather. To most of us older folk, this is a perfectly normal old fashioned winter. You know, the ones where it used to snow for six months and we had snow drifts over our heads. It's ok, tho', spring will come.

The Deacons along with our Pastor are starting to think about Ash Wednesday, Easter and the Lenten soup suppers. Ideas are being tossed around for the speaker series. We are also taking time to review our duties and what we would like to accomplish this year. We continue our calls, visits and sending cards to those in need of our prayers and thoughts; along with our birthday visits. If anyone is in need of or would like a visit please contact any one of us, we are here to serve you.

We would like to welcome new Deacon Larue Fletcher, joining us in February.

Blessings and good health to all.

### Altar Flower Committee Report

If you wish to place a memorial arrangement on the altar January - March; please contact me & I will coordinate with the chair for that month.

#### **Think Spring and Easter Altar Flowers!**

Diane Bassage - 657-6609

Art Cratsley Gloria Miles Fran Staub

### Christian Education Update

Please join us at **9am on Easter Sunday [April 1]** for our annual **Easter Egg Hunt** with resurrection rolls event. Children are invited to participate in an egg hunt and also the telling of the story – a marshmallow represents the body of Jesus, dipped in anointing oil and spices [melted butter and cinnamon sugar] then wrapped in a crescent roll [the tomb]. The marshmallow melts as the roll is baked – Jesus has risen!

### Prayer of Encouragement

A prayer to say when you feel discouraged. It will rekindle your faith and give you courage.

Thank you for this New Year,

For all the potential it holds.

Come and kindle in us a mighty flame

So that in our time, many will see the Wonders of God

And live forever to praise Your glorious name.

Amen

## **Pastor's Letter**

My one complaint about celebrating Christmas at the beginning of winter is that it's done and gone just when we really **NEED** it! If I had more self-discipline, I'd make a point of hiding my Christmas candy somewhere so obscure that I wouldn't find it until February. But I'm too good a sleuth. Candy can run but it can't hide - not in **my** house!

So, as we head into the horse-latitudes of winter, when even the interminable month of March is weeks away, I'm finding the need to bring spice and panache into my life. One way is to go heavy on the seasoning in my next batch of crock-pot chili. Or splash a bit of sriracha onto my mashed potatoes. That'll make me sit up and take notice!

And that's all fine and good, but we seem to need more than a culinary cure for the winter blahs. It's just a theory, but I wonder if that's how the Super Bowl made its way into February. It wasn't always thus, you know. Back in the days of old, when the game was played outside, with less padding and less money, the Super Bowl was scheduled hot on the heels of New Year's. That made for a long winter!

Mercifully, the Big Day has migrated - call it "Super Bowl creep" - sliding into its current position, solidly within the month of February. The only drawback is that game day sometimes conflicts with Groundhog Day, but we know who wins **that** contest!

Believe it or not, there is a point to all my grid-iron gabbing: I want to suggest that deep within the Christian faith is the promise of joy and delight even during the long, cold stretches of life when even Hallmark has little to offer.

One thing Jesus did a lot with people was eat. I don't think this is coincidental. He offered "life and life more abundant", and affirmed the gift of life God has given each of us. It's no surprise, then, that he engaged in perhaps the most life-affirming behavior known to humanity: eating. So, a few of us up on the hill recently took a page from Jesus' (cook) book, and decided that mid-winter is a capital time to be affirming the life that sometimes seems so buried under the snow. We threw a dart at the calendar, completely indifferent to any holiday "excuse", and chose to gather in the Social Hall in order to turn up the heat, fire up the stove and cook up some grub.

Some of us would rather not "cook for one." Others may want to pick up some hints. Still others like the idea of a good, nutritious meal untouched by a microwave! Whatever the motivation, the result is a conspiracy to gather in the complete absence of any "special occasion" - instead, deciding to gather and thereby **make** it special. We take seriously that "whenever 2 or 3 are gathered", Jesus is there as well - **AND**...it's more fun!

Jesus didn't wait for a special occasion to pull folks together. Of course, in his day, there was no Christmas, Easter, Memorial Day, or National Pet Rock Day (September 3<sup>rd</sup>). So I guess he had to make do with a largely vacant calendar! And he did! He not only repeatedly broke bread with friends, but he urged us to keep **on** breaking bread until he comes back - hopefully with more bread!

Too often, lives of faith seem to be characterized by a grim mixture of suffering and sacrifice - sort of like getting a root canal at the tax office. If that's the case, then we do well to steer far and clear from anything remotely "Christian." Happily, that's not the nature of the faith - not as I see it. Yes, we have our struggles. We face our blizzards, storms and 6 month cloud-cover - literally and spiritually. But we need not let the hard stuff have the last word. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." And a bit later, he added "Oh and by the way, **eternal** life!"

I invite us all to embrace that life...and one another...as we stir the pots of joy and friendship, come snow or sun. And if you see the lights on up in the church kitchen, come on in and pull up a chair!

Blessings to all... Tim

## United Church of Bristol Calendar for February and March 2018

<b>January 28</b>	<b>Annual Meeting</b> after service
<b>February 4</b>	<b>Communion</b> <b>"Souper Bowl" Fellowship with a free will offering going to Salem Nutrition Center</b>
<b>February 14</b>	<b>Ash Wednesday Service 5-6pm</b>
<b>February 18</b>	<b>Birthday Cake Sunday</b>
<b>March 4</b>	<b>Pot Luck</b>
<b>March 18</b>	<b>Birthday Cake Sunday</b>
<b>April 1</b>	<b>Annual Easter Egg Hunt with Resurrection Rolls Event – 9:00 am</b>

### **Happy Birthday in February to:**

Lyle Jenks	2/7
Karla Babcock	2/8
Joyce Gilbert	2/10
Colleen Miles	2/12
Pat Sanford	2/14
Zadoc Fletcher	2/18
Bob Bolcarovic	2/21
James Dunne	2/23
Fran Staub	2/25
Eddie Thomas	2/25
Diane Marie Bassage	2/26
Dianne Marie Case	2/26

### **Happy Birthday in March to:**

David Hudson	3/5
James Chappell	3/7
Bob Drayn, Jr.	3/10
Alexa Cooley	3/13
Dianne Marcellus	3/14
Kaylee Angell	3/15
Paula Clark	3/15
Rena Faulkner	3/16
Noah Van Stralen	3/17
O'Mallie Angell	3/22
Jase Chappell	3/22
Richard Johnson	3/23
Amanda Sanford	3/23
Madeline Cooley	3/29
Kathy Mastin	3/27