A LETTER FROM YOUR ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Warm Advent Greetings Dear Congregation!

Advent and Christmas are always such a special, joyful and sacred time here at our church! Advent is a time of preparation and waiting…….waiting upon the Lord, waiting for the birth of God with us, Waiting for a time of peace, love, joy and new life. Waiting for the Light of Christ to shine in the darkness!

I am so grateful that I have the opportunity to spend this last Advent & Christmas together with this beloved congregation as we wait and prepare for the coming of the infant Christ Child!

As for our search and our future, your leaders and I will keep you updated as to the progress the Interim Search Committee is making choosing your new Interim Minister. As we “wait” together, rest assured that Pete & I and the entire staff are ready, willing, excited and able to serve with you in this time of transition.

Your clergy come and they go, but you The Ministers of this congregation remain even as new people join you, as others pass on or move, and as change flows through the community. Remember that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

May the profound Joy & Peace of Christ be upon us as we open our church doors to the wider community and invite them to Journey with us to the blessed manger, the lowly place of birth for The Living God. This year, we encourage you to invite a friend or neighbor! May this congregation continue to shine brightly as a beacon of Light in this community and beyond! The Light Shines in the darkness and the darkness shall not overcome it! Thanks Be to God!

God Bless you now & Always! With Joyful Anticipation,

Yours In the Faith,       Rev. Elaine

Regular Office Hours
Mondays: Closed,
Tue & Wed 9-2,  Thurs 10-2,  Fri 9-1
A message from your Pastoral Associate, Pete Graham

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

On December 25, 1863, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow sat in his Cambridge, MA home listening to the bells of local churches ring out in joyous celebration of Christmas Day. His own life had had little joy in it over the past few years and the happy clanging clashed with his dark mood. As he listened, he began to scratch out the poem that would later be set to music and become the popular Christmas carol "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day."

I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old, familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet  
The words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

There had been very little peace in Longfellow’s world. Two years before, his beloved wife Frances died of injuries she received in a fire. Longfellow himself was so badly burned while trying to save her that he could not attend the funeral. He never got over it. In December of 1862 he wrote in his diary, "A merry Christmas,' say the children, but that is no more for me.” Then in March of 1863, Longfellow’s young son Charles ran away to join the union army and in November was grievously wounded in Virginia. He came home to Cambridge for a lengthy recovery and was in bed downstairs as his father listened to the bells that almost seemed to taunt him.

And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said;  
"For hate is strong,  
And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

As I write this, I’m sitting in the church library on a Thursday morning. The Evergreen Fair is this weekend and there’s a hum of activity around me as preparations continue. Every now and then someone sits to chat for a minute and what I’ve been struck by in these conversations (and in others I’ve had over the last couple of weeks) is just how much we all seem to be carrying around with us right now. There are serious and confusing things happening in the world and many of us are dealing with serious and confusing things in our own private lives. At times like these the ringing of the Christmas bells may strike a discordant note in our hearts and we may even find our own heads bowed by despair. But on that Christmas morning in 1863, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow found his spirits strangely lifted as he listened to the glad tidings of the bells. In the final stanza of his poem, he expresses the hope he began to feel:

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
The Wrong shall fail,  
The Right prevail.  
With peace on earth, good-will to men!”

There are times when our path through this world seems dark and our burden feels too heavy to bear. But at this time of year there is a message ringing out. God is not dead. Despite our troubled spirits we are promised that miracles can happen, will happen, are happening. God is very much alive and moving and ready to break into this world bringing a new peace to earth and goodwill to humankind. We are the bell ringers.

I pray you have a wonderful holiday season and that you find the peace promised by the coming of Jesus.
December Worship Schedule

All of our Sunday services are at 10 AM, and there is nursery care and Sunday School for kids up through the 8th grade. The kids are in church for the first 10 minutes or so, and then they go to their special session. Everyone is invited to join us for coffee hour after the service downstairs in the vestry (or fellowship hall)!

**SUNDAY, DEC 2nd FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT - COMMUNION SUNDAY**
We will celebrate the Sacrament of Communion, and light our first Advent candle! Rev. Elaine S. Gaetani is preaching.

**SUNDAY, DEC 9th SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT – COLLECTION OF GIFTS**
We will light our second Advent candle, and collect gifts for needy children in the area today. Pete Graham will be preaching. There will be our 2019 budget congregational meeting after church.

**SUNDAY, DEC 16th THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**
CHRISTMAS CAROLING AT 4:30 PM
We will light our third Advent candle today, and Rev. Elaine S. Gaetani will be preaching. Everyone is invited to participate in the Christmas Caroling beginning at 4:30 pm in the vestry.

**SUNDAY, DEC 23rd - FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**
We will gather at 10 AM today to light our fourth Advent candle. Rev. Elaine S. Gaetani is preaching

**SUNDAY, DEC 23rd AT 5PM - CHRISTMAS PAGEANT - COOKIE WALK**
At 5pm we will share our annual Christmas Pageant. We will also be selling holiday cookies after the pageant to benefit our music ministry. Join us for refreshments and fellowship immediately after.

**MONDAY, DEC 24th – CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES**
CHILDREN’S SERVICE AT 5PM - CANDLELIGHT SERVICE AT 7PM
We will have our 5 PM Family service led by Pete Graham, and then have our Candlelight service with choir and bells at 7 PM. Rev. Elaine S. Gaetani will be preaching. Invite a friend or family member to join you!

**SUNDAY, DEC 30th**
We will gather for worship on this New Year’s Eve Day. Rev. Gayle Murphy will be preaching.

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PLEASE INVITE YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS TO JOIN US HERE FOR WORSHIP!
**PRAYERS & CELEBRATIONS**

**Bereavment:** John & Gail Arnold and family upon the death of Gail’s mother, Doris Wojnar.

**New Prayers:** Baby Annika Smith, granddaughter of Nick & Sue Perron who is scheduled for heart surgery on Dec. 11th.

**Continued Prayers:** Cathie Achorn’s sister Linda Polatka; Jeffrey Bramley; Dick & Linda Birch; Anna Gavel; Paul Nauman (son-in-law of Norma Powell); Ron and Nancy Clark’s daughter Melissa Dickinson.

**Beaumont:** Carroll Hoffman

**Kindred Health Care:** Bea Ladner

You can place prayer concerns on the church’s email distribution list at eprayers@uccwestboro.org. To add or renew an ongoing concern, please call the church office 366-2000 or westboroucc@verizon.net

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**SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING – DEC. 9TH**

**Call to a Special Meeting:**

A Special Meeting of The Congregational Church of Westborough will be held on Sunday, December 9, 2018 following worship at 11:30 AM in the vestry. The purpose of the meeting is as follows:

1. To discuss and vote on a budget for 2019.
2. To vote on the disposition of two bequests, namely, from the estate of Alice Hoogasian and that of Don McGlory, per the direction of their wills.
3. To transact such other business as may regularly come before the meeting.

David R. Smith, Church Clerk

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**STEWAYRSHIP**

**Pledge Update:** Thank you to those that have already pledged. While this is a good start, we still have several pledging units that pledged last year that we have not received a pledge from for 2019. To sustain the church that we know and love it is important that everyone participate and get their pledge card in ASAP - every pledge makes a difference. If you haven’t pledged yet please drop off your card at the church or put it in the mail. If you misplaced your pledge card please call the church office and we will get a card out to you. Thank you for your support.

**2019 Contribution Envelopes:** Contribution envelopes will be available for pick-up in the vestry on Sunday, December 16th. All contributions you would like included in your 2018 report must be received in the church office by December 31, 2018. Thank you for your continued financial support of the church.

Regards, Patty Wyner, Asst. Treasurer

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**MUSIC**

**MUSIC CORNER**

The holiday season is upon us, and if there’s one thing that puts me in the holiday spirit it’s music! This December we have beautiful music planned to help us all get that warm and fuzzy feeling inside - please consider joining us. We will be looking to share Bach and Mozart in the weeks leading up to Christmas, and I know you’d love to be a part of that! I am looking for string players who may be interested in playing on December 16th and/or 23rd. If you’re interested, please email me at josephmstillitano@gmail.com

Thanks, Joe

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**COOKIE WALK – DEC. 23rd**

The annual cookie walk fundraiser for the music program will take place immediately following the 5PM Christmas pageant on Sunday, Dec. 23. If you need last minute cookies for your guests, the cookie walk is a great time to stock up. The cookies cost $7 per pound. Anyone willing to bake a couple dozen cookies and donate them to the sale should leave them off before Sunday and put them in the kitchen. Mark if they have nuts. Bring your cookies in a plastic container and please put your name on it. Thank you to all the bakers and the consumers. The Music Committee
MISSIONS

HABITAT NEWS!

On Saturday, October 20th, our team (Bonnie and Jeff Ross, Sophie and Jen Keeler, Rich Boucher, and I) returned to Northborough to work on the final two homes. After introductions and safety review we were divided into teams and put right to work. First we did the blue board shuffle, moving 12 foot pieces of blue board from one room to the next. Then we donned our tool belts and started measuring, cutting and hanging blue board. We worked hard all day and were powered by a wonderful lunch provided by Barbara McLean, Lynn Caldwell, Suzanne Arpante, Andrea Ettinger, and Marilyn Lyle. By the end of the day we had completed all of the dry wall needed for the plaster crew to start their work the following week.

Expected completion date for the two homes is February 2019. Thank you to all who have worked on the four homes this year, cooked for the crews, and supported the work of Habitat. We couldn't do it without you! May God bless you. Pam Faustine

MESSAGE FROM THE SHARKEYS

This October Art Sharkey and Mike Lawler went on another mission trip to Puerto Rico. The church in New Hampshire that Linda and Art started going to (UCC in Washington) asked Art to give a talk one Sunday morning. At the back of the Evangel is a copy of Art’s talk. How lucky is the UCC in Washington to have two members with such special gifts?

FAITH FORMATION

THE GREAT PIE CHALLENGE

Our Great Pie Challenge was truly great this year! We were able to donate close to 300 pies this year - both pumpkin and apple pies. Our Great Pie Sale collected $550 which was donated to the Women’s Fellowship for their kitchen renovation project. All of this was done with 100% participation from our amazing congregation! Thank you everyone for your generosity, time and talents.

THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT – DEC 23rd

12 Days of Christmas Pageant
Sunday, Dec. 23rd at 5PM

The theme for this year’s pageant is The 12 Days of Christmas! We will tell the story behind the carol through traditional and contemporary music, dance, theater, scripture and catechism! We also have an inter-generational cast this year...you will not want to miss it!

ALL CHURCH CHRISTMAS PARTY

Join us in the vestry following the Christmas Pageant for refreshments and fellowship and...a few surprises! Everyone is invited. Invite your friends and neighbors to share in the true spirit of Christmas!

MISSION TRIP 2020

Its official we’re headed to Costa Rica! We will be volunteering with the Sea Turtle Project. When volunteering in Costa Rica on the Sea Turtle Conservation project, we will work alongside a local biologist to assist with sea turtle studies, focus on marine-conservation volunteer activities and support sustainable egg protection programs. There are four sea turtle species in Costa Rica - Leatherbacks, Greens, Olive Ridley and Hawksbill. Protecting these spectacular species will be at the heart of all our volunteer work, as we give-back with other international volunteers from around the world. More info to come as our team continues with our Mission Trip 2020 planning.

WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIP

NEXT MEETING – JANUARY 7TH

Fair “Wrap-Up” & Light Supper

Informal meeting to clean up and put away any left-overs from the Fair. We’ll review what worked, what didn’t and what we can do to improve our major fundraiser. Light refreshments will be served.
PARISH LIFE

CHRISTMAS CAROLING
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16TH

Meet in the Vestry @ 4:30PM  
for a Light Supper  
Carolng at 5:00 PM

People of all ages are invited.

Come Christmas Caroling Sunday, Dec. 16th, sponsored by the fun Parish Life Committee. Come to one of the most popular activities. It's a great way to spend time with our youth and the shut in people enjoy our visits. Bring your Santa hat or reindeer antlers and your jingle bells. Then afterwards we have hot chocolate and fellowship. If you have questions call Cathie Achorn at 508-380-8671.

Looking Ahead:

The Famous Pancake Breakfast
Join us Sunday, Jan 27 after church for our annual Pancake Breakfast where you will enjoy pancakes, sausage, bacon, fruit salad, juice, coffee and pastries. For more information, call Cathie Achorn at 508-380-8671.

FLOWER COMMITTEE

The Flower Committee is taking orders for poinsettias to be displayed in the Sanctuary. Please fill out the order form at the back of this Evangel. The form will also be available in the bulletin each Sunday.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

John & Joan Truesdell  
25 Orchard Lane  
Gilsum NH 03448

Judy Kaprelian  
7 Wessonville Village Way  
Westborough, MA 01581

ITEM REQUESTED

One of our members, Mary Donovan, is looking for a second hand electric typewriter. She has been writing short stores and giving them to the church. Until now she has been hand writing them, but can no longer do so. If anyone can help Mary, please call her at 508-366-7724.

WORDS OF APPRECIATION

Dear Members and Friends,

Thanks to your generosity, we were able to deliver to St. Luke's $550 in grocery cards for the Thanksgiving Interfaith program!!! St. Luke’s Outreach Team has put together 120 baskets of Thanksgiving dinner items for needy families in Westborough, and each family will receive a gift card in order to purchase a turkey.

Thanks to everyone who donated!

Elaine Moore

To Congregational Church Members,

On behalf of our clients and our volunteer members, we thank you for your generous offering of $600. Your kindness will ensure a family in need is receiving a generous array of foods each week.

With Sincere Thanks, again, Donna Kittredge
GROCERY CARD SALES

2018 Goal: $8,000  YTD Sales: $ 6,073.25

Don’t stop eating now! It will take a huge effort by all of us in order to meet our commitment of $8,000.00 to the operation budget. Less than that and our budget will face a line item deficit. Bring your checkbook to Church and always have a grocery gift card in your pocket for even the quick stops. Together, all things are possible, even this challenge! We need all of our regular supporters as well as lots of new ones buying cards. So eat healthy, shop locally, and always have a grocery card in your pocket. Thanks. Stop by our table after worship on Sundays for more information or contact one of us and we will deliver them to you. Karen Hutchinson at 508.870.1782 or millarhutch@aol.com or Nancy Quimby at 774.249.4431 or nquimby11@gmail.com or Sally Petersen at sbpetersen4@gmail.com and 366.5169

POINSETTIAS

The Flower Committee is taking orders for poinsettias. We are doing things different this year and will be delivering the flowers to the octogenarians and shut-ins the week before Christmas. Send your order and check (made out to “The Congregational Church of Westborough” noting Flower Committee on memo section) to the church office BY MONDAY, DECEMBER 17TH.

#________ of plants at $10 each. __________ total

Plants are given (please note which) in memory of or in honor of: (Please print clearly)

FOR:

___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________

FROM:

___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________

PCC of MA

The Pastoral Counseling Centers of MA, with a main office at 7 Church Street, Westborough have a long history of providing counseling to all persons seeking healing, wholeness and renewal. We work with individuals, couples and families offering a holistic approach that focuses on all aspects of a person’s life. We also offer several support groups including care-giving, divorce and mid-life groups. To inquire further, please call Mary Taber at #508-366-4000.

Rev Elaine S. Gaetani,
Pastor of Spiritual Development
revelaineg@aol.com

Wendy Reardon, Director of Children’s
and Youth Ministry
wendysreardon@yahoo.com

Joseph Stillitano Interim, Minister of
Music
Josephmstillitano@gmail.com

Sue Menzel, Handbell Director
westcongmusic@gmail.com

Pete Graham, Pastoral Associate
Petegrahamiam@icloud.com

Church Office Phone 508/366-2000

General Church email
WestboroUCC@Verizon.net

Church web site
www.UCCwestboro.org
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<td><strong>Church Office Hours</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday Closed&lt;br&gt;Tuesday - Thursday 9am-2pm&lt;br&gt;Friday 9am-1pm</td>
<td><strong>BSA &amp; GSA – Scouts</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>PPRC - Pastor Parish Relations Committee</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>TPC - Teaching Parish Committee</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>PCC – Pastoral Counseling Center</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>FOC – Financial Oversight</strong></td>
<td><strong>Called To Care/Kerygma</strong>&lt;br&gt;9:30 Called To Care/Kerygma</td>
<td><strong>Staff Meeting</strong>&lt;br&gt;10:30 Staff Meeting</td>
<td><strong>Worship Planning</strong>&lt;br&gt;3:30 Worship Planning</td>
<td><strong>GSA/Vestry</strong>&lt;br&gt;4:30 GSA/Vestry</td>
<td><strong>9am 3pm</strong>&lt;br&gt;63rd Evergreen Fair &amp; Luncheon</td>
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<td>2 <strong>ADVENT I</strong> COMMUNION&lt;br&gt;10- Worship &amp; Faith Formation&lt;br&gt;2:30 GSA/Vestry&lt;br&gt;6:30 Women’s Fellowship Yankee Swap</td>
<td>3 <strong>CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED</strong>&lt;br&gt;4 <strong>10- Whitney Place Service</strong>&lt;br&gt;5:30 GSA/Vestry&lt;br&gt;3:30 AA/Nursery</td>
<td>5 <strong>Called To Care/Kerygma</strong>&lt;br&gt;6 <strong>Staff Meeting</strong>&lt;br&gt;5:30 Beaumont Service&lt;br&gt;11:15 Willow’s Communion&lt;br&gt;7:30 &quot;The Well&quot;/Chapel</td>
<td>6 <strong>Worship Planning</strong>&lt;br&gt;7:30 GSA/Vestry&lt;br&gt;4:30 GSA/Vestry&lt;br&gt;7:30 AA/Nursery&lt;br&gt;7:30 Troop Comm/Kerygma</td>
<td>7 <strong>Flower Comm. decorates Sanctuary for Advent</strong>&lt;br&gt;8 <strong>Westborough Women’s Club Holiday House Tour &amp; Reception/Vestry (1-4)</strong>&lt;br&gt;3:30- Vestry in use</td>
<td>8-9 <strong>8:3 Westborough Women’s Club Holiday House Tour &amp; Reception/Vestry (1-4)</strong></td>
<td>9am Flower Comm. decorates Sanctuary for Advent</td>
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<td>9 <strong>ADVENT II</strong>&lt;br&gt;10- Worship &amp; Faith Formation&lt;br&gt;11:30 Special Congregational Meeting&lt;br&gt;5:30 GSA/Vestry&lt;br&gt;7:30 Troop Comm/Kerygma</td>
<td>10 <strong>CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED</strong>&lt;br&gt;11 <strong>Trustees/Kerygma</strong>&lt;br&gt;9am PCC Board/Kerygma&lt;br&gt;7:30 AA/Nursery</td>
<td>11 <strong>Trustees/Kerygma</strong>&lt;br&gt;12 <strong>&quot;The Well&quot;/Chapel</strong>&lt;br&gt;7:30 &quot;The Well&quot;/Chapel&lt;br&gt;9am Playgroup/Nursery&lt;br&gt;7:30 AA/Nursery</td>
<td>12 <strong>GSA/Vestry</strong>&lt;br&gt;13 <strong>Worship Planning</strong>&lt;br&gt;3:30 Worship Planning&lt;br&gt;4:30 GSA/Vestry&lt;br&gt;7:30 &quot;The Well&quot;/Chapel</td>
<td>13 <strong>Flower Committee decorates Sanctuary</strong>&lt;br&gt;14 <strong>9am Noon Pageant Rehearsal/Sanctuary &amp; Kerygma</strong></td>
<td>15 <strong>9am-noon Pageant Rehearsal/Sanctuary &amp; Kerygma</strong></td>
<td>16 <strong>ADVENT III</strong>&lt;br&gt;10- Worship &amp; Faith Formation&lt;br&gt;11:30 TPC/Kerygma Room&lt;br&gt;2:30 GSA/Vestry&lt;br&gt;<strong>4:30 Parish Life Caroling/Vestry</strong>&lt;br&gt;6:30 GSA/Kerygma</td>
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Art’s Talk about his background and his mission trips over the years

My friend Mike from Westboro MA and I returned a week ago Saturday from a service trip to Puerto Rico, where we were part of a group of 26 volunteers who came from CO, TX, OH, FL, LA and WI to work on hurricane recovery projects in the mountain region of Cayey. We were split into 4 crews and our crew of 6 installed corrugated metal roofing panels on 1 house and then worked as part of a larger group who built a new house in 6 days while demolishing what remained of the old house. We were housed in a minor league baseball stadium for the week with the luxuries of air conditioning, air mattresses, cold showers with meager water pressure, breakfast and dinner provided. We rented a car for our transportation.

This service trip was my 16th since 2006. Half my trips have been adult trips traveling to New Orleans, Haiti and now Puerto Rico following hurricanes and earthquakes. The other half were during a time when I was the leader of a high school youth group at our former church, the Congregational Church of Westboro MA. All the high school trips and most of the adult trips were coordinated by Group Mission Trips of CO. Group started about 30 years ago in response to damage done by severe flooding near Loveland CO.

Each summer we would take a group of teenagers and other adult chaperones for a summer week of fixing up housing for single parent, elderly and handicapped residents. We visited WV and PA twice, OH, NY, NJ and Ontario, Canada. The projects were mostly scraping and painting inside/outside; some handicapped ramp installations. The trips had a bible scripture theme and included evening programs usually in the high school where we were based for the week. We were part of a larger group of up to 400 youth and adults. The communities we visited were similar in that the main employer, usually a manufacturing plant or mill, had closed years ago and now the biggest employers were the city, state, Walmart and fast food restaurants.

I started what I call “my journey of service trips” when I was 52. Some background on myself, I’m from New York City and was raised Catholic, had 9 years with the nuns and 4 years with the brothers and received a fabulous education. My father died unexpectedly when I was in college at 19 and I ended up walking away from church membership and participation for about 10 years. I came up to Boston in the early 1980s to get my MBA at Boston College. In the space of a few months in 1984, Lin and I bought a house, got married, I graduated from BC, my mother passed away and we joined the Congregational Church. Lin had wanted to go back to church, so I told her to do what she enjoys and does well – go shop, for a church. She sat in the Congregational Church next to a woman who was chewing gum during the service, turned out to be the minister’s spouse. That started our spiritual journey of 34 years there.

One of the greatest things I found about the church in Westboro is that we were able to actively participate in the life of the church to the extent of our faith needs and heart desires. Lin and I were very active in our 3 children’s lives and that included leadership roles in church and also scouting. So I became the high school youth leader for 8 years when our oldest son, Max, was a high school freshman until our youngest, daughter Dani, was a high school senior, with Jake, our other son in between. I got to spend a lot of time with my own kids and another benefit was that I got to know their friends really well.

I had 3 adult mission trips during my tenure with the youth group. 2 trips to New Orleans following Katrina and my first of 5 trips to Haiti following the 2010 earthquake. I gained dry wall experience in New Orleans; did painting, carpentry and electrical work in Haiti, had my first roofing project in Puerto Rico; I was able to hone my management and logistic skills coordinating and leading the youth group trips.
People often comment to me that they would like to go on such a trip but feel they do not have the necessary mechanical skillsets such as trades and tools usage.

Having the hard skills such as electrical, plumbing, HVAC, carpentry, roofing is a bonus but never a requirement. I am a hammer, screwdriver, plier type of handy. The 4th tool in my tool box is my cell phone so I can call someone else for assistance. The power of the crew is not the skillsets of any 1 individual but the collection of hard and soft skills that are found in a group. Funny story in Puerto Rico is that our residents did not speak English. We discovered that the youngest member of our group, a shy person named Wyatt, 18 years old, spoke Spanish. He became our translator. He also had roofing experience from previous international trips so he provided valuable guidance to the old folks, like me, on the crew with knowledge of how to install a metal roof in the rain. The soft skills of open-mindedness, flexibility, patience, sense of humor are more important than the hard skillsets. Most importantly: being able to positively contribute to the completion of the project and success of the crew.

My experiences have continually provided me with Life Perspective – on my worst day, I have a great life, certainly better than the residents I serve. Also after spending time with residents who have meager possessions, do I really need all the material possessions I own? This led me to do some serious downsizing, recycling and repurposing of my possessions. Our kids are not allowed to get me birthday or holiday gifts; instead I ask them to donate their time for community service as my gift.

It is a difficult adjustment for me the week I return from these trips – seeing the plentitude around me in the stores, the simple things we take for granted such as having dependable electricity, paved roads, guardrails, able to pull up and pump gas on my own without have someone with a shotgun near the pumps; able to walk in and out of hardware stores without being frisked or wanded, working traffic lights at intersections. If I were much much younger, I often think I could live in Haiti; all my worldly possessions in a backpack, dress the same every day in tee shirt, shorts, sandals, ride my motorcycle, helmet optional.

Lastly I firmly believe that every person who lives in the US, especially white people, should spend a week in a 3rd world country like Haiti, be the minority for the week (“Blanco”). I’m convinced that the end result would be greater tolerance and respect for each other; higher appreciation for freedoms and life standards we have in US.

So what is next for me? Pretty confident I will return to Puerto Rico in 2019, maybe twice (spring and fall trips). Cuba is on my radar screen for a future journey as well. If you are interested in joining me, let me know and I will keep you updated on my planning process.

Haiti, Earthquake in 2010; trips in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017
Maria hurricane, Puerto Rico in 2017; trip in 2018
SHYG trips: Reading PA 2006; Oak Hill WV; Elmira NY; Youngstown OH; Keansburg NJ; Clendenin WV; Harbor Creek (Erie) PA; Cornwall, Ontario, Canada