
THE EPISTLE

Volume 23 Issue 11

December 27, 2018

Dear Members & Friends of First Church:

How do you live the “good life” in a world that many times is full of division, confusion, and anxiety? Where do you find hope for the future? Does the Bible offer any realistic hope to people as they seek to live a better life? These are some of the questions that Peter Gomes raises in his chapter, “Bible and the Good Life” from his book, *The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart*.



As we move into a new year, perhaps those are worthy questions to ask ourselves. Gomes thinks that people are drawn to the Bible because in its characters and stories they see mirrors of themselves. States Gomes:

What engages the reader of the Bible is the fact that it is filled with people very much like the reader, people who are confused and confusing, who are less than exemplary, but who nevertheless participate in a developing encounter with God . . . In the sense that Bible stories tell our story, the human story in relationship to the divine, they are true. They are not true because they are in the Bible; they are in the Bible because they are true to the experience of men and women (Gomes, p. 185).

That says to us that when we get discouraged or are in a rut or face what seems to be insurmountable odds, we can turn to scripture and hear the psalmist proclaim: “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? . . . I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!” (Psalm 27:1). And somehow our discouragements, routines, and challenges take on another level of meaning that transcends the predicament of the present moment.

Within a society that no longer wants to engage in dialogue that will promote the common welfare, but instead builds walls of misunderstanding and marginalizes the poor, where can we find hope? It is then that we hear the Apostle Paul, who was imprisoned in Rome, remind us: “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us . . . for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:18, 20-21). Are Paul’s words of hope imprisoned only in the past?

No! These hopeful words lift us up out of our immediate self-concern and propel us into places such as the Salem Nutrition Center or the Perinton Food Shelf where we connect with sisters and brothers who share our life journey. Walls come down! Vastly diverse people talk to one another! The rich find themselves poor in spirit only to discover God in their midst! God gives us hope in the present to create a new future.

(continued on page 2)

Or in the words of Peter Gomes: “Hope therefore is what connects the present to the future; it is the mother of courage, confidence, and endurance. The good life is not that for which one hopes; hope is that which makes the good life possible, and thus the good life is not an objective but a consequence” (Gomes, p. 206).

Paul writes, “For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (Romans 8:24-25).

Hope in God! Help Others! Happy New Year!
Pastor Greg Rupright



SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS & MESSAGES

(bold font indicates key scripture text(s) for the Message)

January 6th

Epiphany Sunday – Holy Communion

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14;

Ephesians 3:1-12; **Matthew 2:1-12**

Intergenerational Message: “How Wise Are You?”

January 13th

The Baptism of Christ Sunday

Isaiah 43:1-7; Psalm 29;

Acts 8:14-17; **Luke 3:15-17, 21-22**

Message: “The Spirited Body of Christ”

January 20th

Second Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36:5-10;

1 Corinthians 12:1-11; **John 2:1-11**

Message: “Signs Pointing the Way”

January 27th

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Psalm 19;

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a; **Luke 4:14-21**

Message: “Now”

CHURCH NEWS



THANK YOU FROM PASTOR GREG

I want to thank all of you for your beautiful Christmas cards and gifts as well as the generous Christmas bonus. It is such a blessing to serve as your pastor and teacher.

With Heartfelt Gratitude,
Pastor Greg

2019 GIVING ENVELOPES

If you requested envelopes, they can be picked up in Fellowship Hall, just outside the church office.



2018 DONATIONS

For you to receive credit on your 2018 taxes, your check must be dated by **December 31, 2018** and must be received in the church office by **January 7, 2019**.

A SERVICE FOR HEALING & WHOLENESS

There will be a Service for Healing & Wholeness in the Snow Room on Sunday, January 27th, at 10:45 A.M.



ALL ARE WELCOME!



BIG NEWS FOR 2020!

After nearly 40 years, First Church is getting new hymnals!

We will soon enjoy singing from *Glory to God*, a wonderful hymnal that contains hundreds more hymns to choose from than our current books, and also includes many more of our favorite hymns and seasonal music.



These beautiful new books will cost only \$20 apiece. In January, we will launch a campaign for everyone to participate in making this great musical improvement happen! Everyone will be offered an opportunity to dedicate the hymnals in memory of loved ones or to any special people of their choice. Beautiful bookplates will be placed in the front of every dedicated hymnal, creating memorials that will last for years and years. Be sure to be a part of this wonderful endeavor!

GRIEF SHARE SUPPORT GROUP

During the Winter of 2019, we will continue to offer a GriefShare Support Group that will be open to both our church members and the general public and will meet at 7:30 P.M. on the following Thursday evenings:



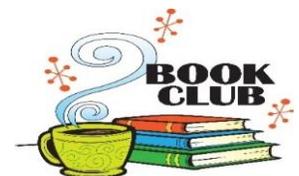
January 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th & 31st;
February 7th.

GriefShare is a network of thousands of grief recovery support groups meeting around the world. GriefShare is a faith-centered program with direction and purpose. With GriefShare you will learn how to walk the journey of grief and be supported on the way. It is a support group where people who have lost loved ones and friends can find healing and hope. GriefShare covers various aspects of going through the grieving process over a period of 13 sessions. Pastor Greg Rupright & Diana Smith will be among some of the co-facilitators for this group.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

BOOK CLUB 2018-2019

Below is the complete schedule for the upcoming year. We meet from **1:00-2:30** on the last Monday of the month. (*Note: In May we will meet on the 3rd, not the last, Monday, due to the Memorial Day holiday.)



Date:	Book Title	Author	Presenter
Jan 28	Madison Park: A Place of Hope	Eric L. Motley	Paula Pentoney
Feb 25	Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine	Gail Honeyman	Nancy Keith
Mar 25	Mrs. Lincoln's Dressmaker	Jennifer Chiaverini	Nancy Midgley
Apr 29	The Whole Town's Talking	Fannie Flagg	Jane Graham
May 20*	The Sweetness of Forgetting	Kristin Harmel	Irene Utter
June 24	Planning meeting for 2019-2020		

5 MORNING BIBLE STUDY GROUPS

THE EPISTLE

The 11:00 A.M. Wednesday Morning and Sunday Morning Bible Study groups are continuing to read *The Good Book: Reading the Bible With Mind and Heart* by Peter J. Gomes and studying scripture pertaining to various chapter topics.



Bible Study

January 6th & January 9th

Read *The Good Book* – Chapter 10: “The Bible and Suffering,” pp. 211-230. Please read the following scriptures: Romans 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21 & 12:1-10; Hebrews 11:35-38; 1 Peter 3:17.

January 13th & January 16th

Read *The Good Book* – Chapter 11: “The Bible and Joy,” pp. 231-245. Please read the following scriptures: Genesis 28:10-17; Psalm 98; Psalm 100; 1 Kings 19:1-12; Luke 1:46-55; John 15:10-11.

January 20th & January 23rd

Read *The Good Book* – Chapter 12: “The Bible and Evil,” pp. 246-265.

January 27th & January 30th

Read *The Good Book* – Chapter 13: “The Bible and Temptation,” pp. 246-265. Please read the following scriptures: Genesis 3:1-24; Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:9-14; Luke 4:1-12; Romans 7:14-25; 1 Corinthians 10:12-13; James 4:1-8.

WE MEET IN THE SNOW ROOM & ALL ARE WELCOME!



INTERFAITH BIBLE STUDY

The **Interfaith Bible Study Series** does not meet in January

The topic for **Wednesday, February 6** is “**#MeToo: Treatment of Women**” The speakers will be Rev. Dr. C. Denise Yarbrough, Director of Religious and Spiritual Life, U of R; Associate Professor, Department of Religion and Classics Nora L. Rubel, Jane and Alan Batkin, Professor of Jewish Studies; Chair, Department of Religion & Classics, U of R.

All sessions, including time for Q & A, take place **from 12-1 P.M. at the Louis S. Wolk Jewish Community Center of Greater Rochester, located at 1200 Edgewood Avenue, Rochester, NY.**

ALL ARE WELCOME!

MISSIONS

FOOD BASKETS



FOOD BASKETS

Thank you to everybody who donated items or money to the Christmas food baskets in 2018. We delivered baskets to 5 families; consisting of 6 adults and 5 children. A special thanks to those who delivered the food to the families. Each delivery was valued at about \$112.00. Donated money was used to buy perishable items for the food baskets. The money people donated, in excess of what was needed, was given to the Perinton Food Shelf.

~Board of Missions and Outreach

HILLSIDE TREE

Thank you to everyone who purchased a Christmas gift for a child at Hillside. The tags and the ornaments they were attached to were snapped up quickly, making it an easy project. Hillside is very grateful for our participation again this year



OPEN DOOR MISSION

Thank you to everyone who contributed the dove project. First church sent \$200 to the Open Door Mission for their dove sale.

UPCOMING RAIHN EVENTS:

STRIKE” OUT HOMELESSNESS! To be held on **Sunday, February 10, 2019** at Bowl-a-Roll Lanes on 1560 Jefferson Road. Start recruiting your team of 5-6 bowlers now!!! \$50 minimum donation/fundraising goal per bowler to play; donation includes shoe rental, bowl 2 games, pizza, drink, and t-shirt. Ask friends and family to support RAIHN and pledge!



GRACE THROUGH MUSIC . . . a benefit concert for RAIHN to be held on **Monday, March 4, 2019** at 7 PM at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 25 Westminster Road, Rochester, 14607. This event is being organized by Lara Sipols, RPO member and Nancy Frank, RAIHN Board Vice-Chair. More details to follow soon!

Thank you for supporting RAIHN and our families! Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Jen Canning, MSW

RAIHN Coordinator of Volunteer Services

RAIHN Aftercare Case Manager

585-506-9050; www.raihn.org

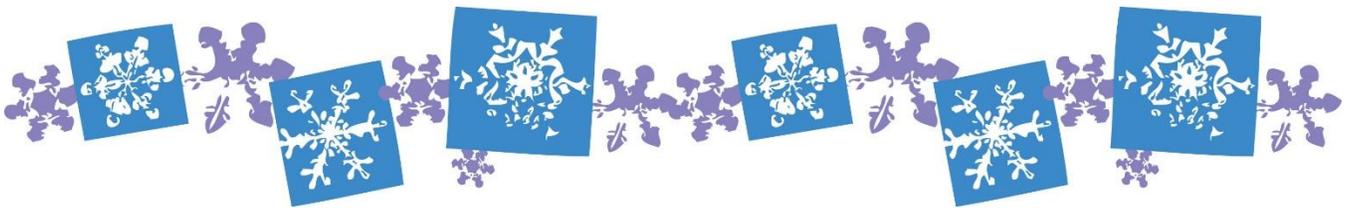
CIRCLE NEWS



MORNING CIRCLE

Morning Circle will meet on January 8 at 10:00 in Fellowship Hall. You are asked to bring a teddy bear or other stuffed animal who might have a story to tell us!

As always new members are welcome--bring a sandwich and remain for lunch, a beverage is provided.



SYMPATHY & CONDOLENCES

The members of First Congregational United Church of Christ, Fairport, NY, extend their heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the following families:

To Dorothy Naetzker whose husband, Donald Naetzker, entered eternal life on December 6, 2018. Rest eternal grant Donald, O God; may light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

Sympathy cards may be mailed to:

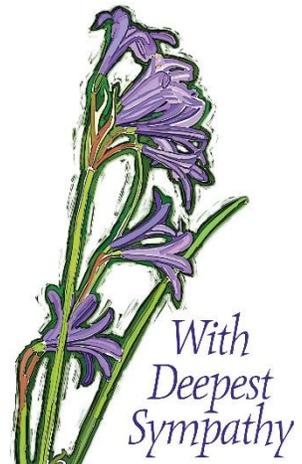
Dorothy Naetzker
205 South Main Street
Fairport, NY 14450

To Nan Notar whose mother, Jeanette Carter, entered eternal life on December 14, 2018. Rest eternal grant Jeanette, O God; may light perpetual shine upon her. Amen.

Sympathy cards may be mailed to:

Nan Notar
19 James Street
Fairport, NY 14450

Stacey Mulley
25 Wheatstone Circle
Fairport, NY 14450



OUR CHURCH FAMILY

THANK YOU

Dear Church Family,

Thanks to all of you for the calls, cards, meals, love and concern for me during my recent surgery.

~Beverly Gray



LIGHT THE NIGHT

Thank you to Dave and Pat Mosher for keeping the steeple lights burning bright during the month of December in memory of loved ones.

Thank you to Bob Zupcak for lighting the night through the month of January in honor the past service of John and Jean Cedarleaf.



REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

Charlotte Jackson, Fairport Baptist Home
Gerry Hammond
Mary Lou Woodhouse



Next "Epistle" Deadline is
(The "Third Thursday")
January 17, 2019



Frequently our church will take photos or videos of members, including children and youth, involved in church related activities. These photos and videos may be used in church-produced publications, on our website or on social media including but not limited to Facebook. If you do not wish to have photos or videos of yourself or your child used, please see Vicki Sherry in the church office to sign an exclusion form.

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Church Service Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

Church Office Hours: 9:00-3:30
Monday through Friday (Monday-Thursday in July and August)

Rev. Gregory J. Rupright, Pastor
Rev. Dr. John N. Cedarleaf, Pastor Emeritus
Administrative Assistant: Vicki Sherry
Church Moderator: Steve Smith
Organist: Beatrice Benedict
Director of Music Ministries: Heather Watras
Business Administrator: Sue Brooks
Wedding Coordinator: Betty Shamblen
Sunday School Teacher: Yaliza Frank



First Congregational United Church of Christ
26 East Church Street
Fairport, NY, 14450