
THE EPISTLE

Volume 24 Issue 1

January 24, 2019

Dear Members & Friends of First Church:

Islam, Judaism, and Christianity are revealed religions, that is, through the relationship between God and God's people as told in the sacred scripture stories, God reveals something about God's nature – the way God treats people and acts in creation. It's as if God sends a message or sign through these sacred stories.



February 2019

For Christians, the sign that God sends is in the life story of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is God's epiphany. Epiphany is a Greek word that means "appearance." During this season, Christians celebrate God's revealing to the world that Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One of God. It is the nature of Christ to be constantly unveiling and revealing himself to us. Sometimes that revelation comes to us in a way that is clear and direct. At other times, we receive only hints, suggestions, or signs that God is near and that God is there for us.

Do you believe in "signs"? Personally, I believe in spiritual signs like the small yellow tulip that blossomed next to my porch a year after my mother's death. My mother's favorite flower was a tulip, and her favorite color was yellow. It made me feel joyful and gave me the sense that she was now in the garden of God's eternal love. I had never planted any tulip bulb beside my porch. Quite probably, it had been buried the previous fall by a squirrel that had tucked it away as a late spring snack. And yet, it was a sign of God's continuing presence and care.

Each Sunday I welcome all people to our church by saying, "No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome in this United Church of Christ. For our God is still speaking; God loves you, and so do we." God continues to speak through our ministry and service to others. It is a sign of God's presence.

I remember the story one woman named Georgia shared with me some years ago. Georgia showed up at Marsha's door early one morning. Marsha was in the last stages of a terminal illness. "The church asked me to stop by and pray with you," explained Georgia. After a few minutes of conversation, Marsha tearfully revealed that she had prayed to God for support and reassurance but said, "I feel alone, as if God has forgotten me." "Marsha," Georgia responded, "I want you to believe that God sent me. Maybe I'm the way God showed up and answered your prayers."

God loves us enough to give us signs that appear in everyday life, signs that show us the way to God. And sometimes, we are that sign.

Yours in Ministry to Our Still-Speaking God,
Pastor Greg Rupright



February Worship Schedule

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS & MESSAGES

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

February 3rd

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany – Holy Communion

Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalm 71:1-6;

1 Corinthians 13:1-13; **Luke 4:21-30**

Intergenerational Message: “The Purpose of A (Sermon) MESSAGE”

February 10th

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany – Scout Sunday

Isaiah 6:1-8, (9-13); Psalm 138;

1 Corinthians 15:1-11; **Luke 5:1-11**

Message: “The Gift of Vocation”

February 17th

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 1;

1 Corinthians 15:12-20; **Luke 6:17-26**

Message: “Blessings and Woes”

February 24th

Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

Genesis 45:3-11, 15; Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40;

1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50; **Luke 6:27-38**

Message: “An Offense to Jesus Christ?”

CHURCH NEWS

COFFEE HOUR

Thank you to everyone who helped in the success of this past year's Sunday Coffee Hours. It adds so much to our social hour.

We need people to sign up to continue this ministry. We need you to add your special touch. You do not need to provide baked goods. You can make it very simple, with just tea and coffee, or more elaborate, whatever you would like.

With appreciation for your help, always...

Thank You!
Hospitality Committee



NEW HYMNAL DEDICATION CAMPAIGN

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.

On January 20, we launched a campaign for everyone to participate in making this great musical improvement happen. Everyone is 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.



There will be a table set up in Fellowship Hall after Sunday services for reviewing the new hymnal and purchasing dedications. We hope to complete this campaign by the end of February, and have our new hymnals in church in time for Easter. Be sure to be a part of this wonderful endeavor!

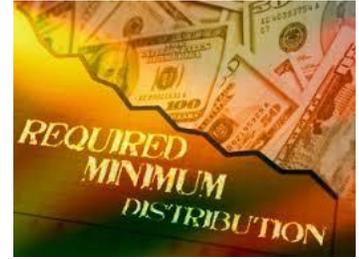
COME CELEBRATE SCOUT SUNDAY

Scout Troop #207 has taken up residence at First Congregational United Church of Christ since 1937. Members and friends of our church are invited to the 9:30 A.M. Worship Service on Scout Sunday, February 10th to show our support of the troop.



DID YOU KNOW...?

Did you know that you are able to direct your Required Minimum Distribution from your IRA to the Church as a Qualified Charitable Donation? If you are over 70 and ½, you can reduce your taxable income by making charitable donations to a qualified charity using all or part of your Required Minimum Distribution, if you cannot itemize on your taxes. The idea is that the donation does not show up as part of your tax liability. For more information, contact a member of the Endowment Committee, Sue Brooks, or your financial advisor.



A SERVICE FOR HEALING & WHOLENESS

There will be a Service for Healing & Wholeness in the Snow Room on Sunday, February 24th, at 10:45 A.M.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

GRIEFSHARE SUPPORT GROUP

The last GriefShare Support Group Meetings are February 7th & 14th.

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 are the co-facilitators for this group.



ALL ARE WELCOME!



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

February 3rd & February 5th (The Wednesday class meets on Tuesday this week)

Read *The Good Book* – Chapter 14: “The Bible and Wealth,” pp. 285-296.

Please read the following scriptures: Deuteronomy 8:18; 1 Chronicles 29:12; Psalm 37:16; Psalm 49:5-6; Psalm 52:1, 5-7; Psalm 73:3-17; Psalm 112:1, 3; Ecclesiastes 10:19; Luke 19:1-10; Luke 23:50-56; Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-50; Luke 18:18-30; Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-27; Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 1:53; 1 Timothy 6:9-10; James 5:1-3.

February 10th & February 13th

Read *The Good Book* – Chapter 14: “The Bible and Wealth,” pp. 296-311.

Please read the following scriptures: Genesis 14:17-20; Genesis 28:18-22; Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21; Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 6:24-25; Luke 12:20-31; Luke 16:1-8; Luke 16:19-31; Luke 19:12-27; Luke 21:1-4; 2 Corinthians 9:7-8.

February 17th & February 20th

Read *The Good Book* – Chapter 15: “The Bible and Science,” pp. 312-326.

Please read the following scriptures: Job 38:2, 4; Job 42:2-4; Psalm 8; Psalm 19;

February 24th & February 27th

Read *The Good Book* – Chapter 16: “The Bible and Mystery,” pp. 327-347.

Please read the following scriptures: 2 Chronicles 6:1; Job 11:7-8; Ecclesiastes 3:11; Isaiah 43:16, 18-19; Matthew 11:25; I Corinthians 4:2; 1 Timothy 3:16.

WE MEET IN THE SNOW ROOM & ALL ARE WELCOME!



INTERFAITH BIBLE STUDY

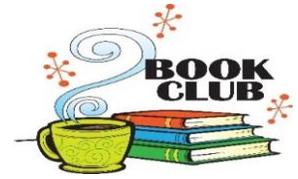
The topic for **Wednesday, February 6** is “#MeToo: Treatment of Women” The speakers will be Rev. Dr. C. Denise Yarbrough, Director of Religious and Spiritual Life, U of R; Associate Professor, Department of Religion and Classics Nora L. Rubel, Jane and Alan Batkin, Professor of Jewish Studies; Chair,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

The session, 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!

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
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		

CIRCLE NEWS



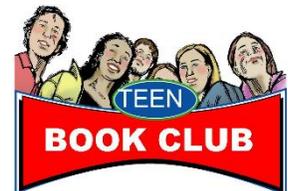
MORNING CIRCLE

Morning Circle will meet at 10 AM on Tuesday, February 12. Jean Whitney will speak to us about the history and architecture of our church building. As always visitors are welcome. If you wish, bring a sandwich and remain for lunch.

Youth News

TEEN BOOK CLUB

There will be a Teen Book Club Session on Saturday, February 9th from 6:00-7:30 P.M. at Mt. Rise United Church of Christ, located at 2 Mountain Rise, Fairport, NY. The book that will be discussed is *Heart of a Samurai* by Margi Preus. This book club is open to all teens at Mt. Rise UCC & First Congregational UCC.



Teens are invited to get together, relax, discuss a book with a relevant theme, EAT SOME PIZZA, HAVE SOME FUN, and maybe get to know a little more about each other.

MISSIONS

A RAIHN Christmas Story by Jim Franzen

Our church had been a part of the RAIHN network for a few years. We currently are a support church to Mary Magdalene in East Rochester. This means that about once every three months we provide an evening meal on Friday, overnight coverage and breakfast for homeless families staying at Mary Magdalene for a week. This past December 21st was our turn to do this. Michele Bowersox and I signed up to provide the overnight coverage. There were four families with five adults and eight children that week.



I have done the overnight coverage a number of times over the past few years. Sondra and I were planning on providing our usual breakfast on Saturday morning. This consists of bacon and eggs usually just served on paper plates. However, Thursday morning I got an email from Pat May stating that a former RAIHN client was planning on providing breakfast that Saturday. I was somewhat surprised because Saturday morning the clients usually like to sleep in since the bus picks them up at 6:30 weekday mornings to return them to the RAIHN facility in the city for showers and breakfast. On Saturday the bus comes at 10:00. It was my experience that Saturday breakfast was not a high priority and the clients would straggle in about 8:45 to 9:30 for something to eat. I had somewhat low expectations for breakfast and was concerned that the woman preparing breakfast would be disappointed.

At 6:30 on Saturday morning Joan and her two daughters showed up with four or five Wegman's bags of food and one other large plastic bag. Joan had been a client of RAIHN when they first opened their doors back in 2004. She told me she had used RAIHN services three times, twice for domestic situations and one for a fire. Her two daughters were about 18-20 years old.

She told me that she did not need any help and proceeded to take over the kitchen. By 8:30 the cooking was finished. She laid out a buffet spread that consisted of ham, sausages, bacon, scrambled eggs, pancakes, grits, oatmeal, a fruit salad and four types of juices. Michele and I were stunned. We got out the real plates and silverware. This was quite a feast.

The word and the smells had spread back to the area where the families were sleeping and shortly they all came out. Two families had become friends and grabbed one big round table. Everyone filled their plates and were enjoying an amazing breakfast. I can tell you that the grits were amazing.



I was standing next to Joan when a little five year old Hispanic girl with beautiful curly hair came out, saw the pancakes and started jumping up and down saying, "I love pancakes." Joan looked at me and said, "that makes all this worthwhile."

But Joan wasn't finished yet. That big plastic bag that I mentioned earlier was filled with presents for all the kids. They were not just small presents from the Dollar Store; these were really nice presents. The kids and parents were all so happy.

I was talking with Joan and she told me that she does the same thing at Easter. She makes Easter baskets for all the kids. She also does a meal in summer with all fresh vegetables. She said that her daughters asked her why she does this. She said, "I told them that there were Christmases when they woke up happy, not because of what she was able to do for them, but because of what other people were doing for them. Now it's our turn to give back."

I would like to point out that Joan probably has very little, but she was providing so much for others. Does this remind you of a story that you heard somewhere?

P.S. Joan was also dressed in an awesome elf costume and was heading off to her church to give presents to kids there as well.

This was an experience that I will never forget.



UPCOMING RAIHN EVENTS:



"STRIKE" OUT HOMELESSNESS!

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 will 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

UPCOMING RAIHN VOLUNTEER ORIENTATIONS

If you would like to get involved with RAIHN but have not yet attended an orientation, there are several sessions coming up. Please RSVP at 506-9050 or coordinator@raihn.org if you would like to attend one of our upcoming orientations to learn about RAIHN, the families we serve, and the role of the volunteer.



Tuesday, February 5, 2019, 6:30 pm
New Hope Free Methodist Church, 62 N. Union St., Rochester

Wednesday, April 10, 2019, 6:30 pm
Temple B'rith Kodesh, 2131 Elmwood Ave., Rochester

June & August 2019, 6:30 pm - Date & Location TBD

OUR CHURCH FAMILY



LIGHT THE NIGHT

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

Thank you to Diana DeBruycker for keeping the steeple lights burning bright during the month of February in memory of her parents.



REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

Charlotte Jackson, Fairport Baptist Home
Gerry Hammond
Mary Lou Woodhouse



Next "Epistle" Deadline is
(The "Third Thursday")
February 21, 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.

The Epistle is printed once a month by the First Congregational United Church of Christ, 26 East Church St. Fairport, New York, 14450

Office Phone: 585-223-0224
Pastor's Phone: 585-223-8172
Fax: 585-223-4264
E-mail: vsherry.ucc@gmail.com
Webpage: fairportucc.org

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