

The First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ, Walton
4 Mead Street
Walton, NY 13856

THE CONNECTION

February 2023

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love.



But the greatest of these is love.

1ST Corinthians, 13:13

Connecting God's People Through Love

February 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3 Elijah's Closet 10-2	4 Elijah's Closet 10-2
5 <i>5th Sunday after Epiphany</i> Worship 10 AM Communion Trustees Mtg. after service	6	7	8 Elijah's Closet Mtg. 4:45	9	10 Elijah's Closet 10-2	11 Elijah's Closet 10-2
12 <i>6th Sunday after Epiphany</i> Worship 10 AM Deacons Mtg after service	13	14	15	16	17 Elijah's Closet 10-2	18 Elijah's Closet 10-2
19 <i>Transfiguration Sunday</i> Worship 10 AM No Sunday School	20 Church In Society Mtg. 6:30 @ Church	21	22 Ash Wednesday Service 3:30 PM	23	24 Elijah's Closet 10-2 Prudential Board Mtg. 3:30	25 Elijah's Closet 10-2
26 <i>First Sunday in Lent</i> Worship 10 AM No Sunday School	27	28				

Revised Common Lectionary

The readings used at our weekly worship service and in most Mainline Protestant Churches and in Roman Catholic Churches are from a list of assigned readings known as The New Revised Common Lectionary. In our Congregational tradition, pastors are encouraged to use the assigned readings but it is not mandatory.

I personally prefer to follow the readings and I mainly focus on the Gospel lessons for my meditation. It gives me and you a structure through which we can study and learn from the teachings of the scripture of the Word (Logos) of God in our midst.

The readings for January: (You are encouraged to read them as well)

Date	1 st Reading and Psalm	Alternate 1 st Reading and Psalm	2 nd Reading	Gospel
Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany February 5, 2023	<u>Isaiah 58:1-9a (9b-12)</u>	<u>Psalm 112:1-9 (10)</u>	<u>1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16)</u>	<u>Matthew 5:13-20</u>
Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany February 12, 2023	<u>Deuteronomy 30:15-20</u> or <u>Sirach 15:15-20</u>	<u>Psalm 119:1-8</u>	<u>1 Corinthians 3:1-9</u>	<u>Matthew 5:21-37</u>
Transfiguration Sunday February 19, 2023 (Last Sunday before Lent)	<u>Exodus 24:12-18</u>	<u>Psalm 2</u> or <u>Psalm 99</u>	<u>2 Peter 1:16-21</u>	<u>Matthew 17:1-9</u>
Ash Wednesday February 22, 2023	<u>Joel 2:1-2, 12-17</u> or <u>Isaiah 58:1-12</u>	<u>Psalm 51:1-17</u>	<u>2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10</u>	<u>Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21</u>
First Sunday in Lent February 26, 2023	<u>Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7</u>	<u>Psalm 32</u>	<u>Romans 5:12-19</u>	<u>Matthew 4:1-11</u>

Moderators' Message

Happy February! As we prepare for the Lenten Season, Pastor Janet will offer an Ash Wednesday service in the Parlor on Wednesday, February 22nd at 3:30 pm.

By the time you read this, we will have held our Annual Meeting. We are facing many challenges, so watch for news about our next steps to remain a viable presence in the community. This is a season for reflection. Please pray with us for vision, wisdom, and honest introspection as we determine our path forward together.

The Pastoral Search Committee has reviewed several potential applicants and decided that hiring an assistant pastor may not be feasible at this time. We are open to considering future candidates and/or redeveloping the position to be more in line with our current challenges.

In the Foreword to the UCC Desk Calendar and Plan Book, *Making All Things New*, President and General Minister, Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer writes,

There is, within the makeup of Earth and Sky, a capacity for healing and hope when every day the sun rises again. There is, within the human heart, a blossoming of love and light when our better angels are loosed on the world. There is, between nations, a capacity for human kindness when dignity and worth are centered, when differences are celebrated and valued rather than demonized and vilified.

As the days fill with meetings, assignments, tasks and travel, do not be unaware of our call to trust the new thing God is authoring. . . . We must trust God's willingness to speak anew; and that trust will be found in our willingness to pause and listen, not just work and worry. . . . Let not a single day pass or a new sun rise without a commitment for open space to hear God's voice, calling us to be repairers of the breach, builders of a new tomorrow, distributors of the peace that passes understanding, and architects of a human community bound in a solidarity that celebrates gender identity, race, and culture as expressions of God's love for us all.

We are better together, every day.

Diane Meredith

IRT Program (Innovative Readiness Training)

Free Medical Care

This program is sponsored by the Department of Defense and provides 11 days' worth of no-cost medical care for the residents of Delaware County. It will be held July 10-21, 2023 at Walton high School and is supported by Delaware County and UHS.

Major Daniel LaVorgna is the Program Manager for the Army. They currently have 18 projects running this year across the United States. This program encourages their medical personnel to stay mission ready by providing medical services in local communities.

In Walton, they will provide no-cost, no appointment, walk in medical assessment, physicals, prescriptions, basic optometry and dental services, and veterinary spay/neutering services.

More information will be available in the Spring.

A Note From Janet

TO SEE CLEARLY

Shortly after the birth of Jesus, Luke tells us that his parents took him up to Jerusalem to the Temple to be consecrated to the Lord as commanded by Moses. His parents offered a pair of turtledoves (pigeons) for this ceremony. It was at this time that Simeon stepped forward and said the words of what we now call the *Nunc Dimittis*: “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, A Light to lighten the Gentiles and the Glory of Thy people Israel.”

As Lutherans we sang these words at the end of every communion service. I often wondered how long Simeon lived after saying these words. But after having said these words myself for so many years in my life I now know that Simeon clearly saw and was aware of the presence of God in Jesus.

We see clearly when nothing distracts us, when fear and judgement are not in the way. We see clearly when we are aware of God’s presence among us and within ourselves. We see clearly when we are in the moment, when we are able to present ourselves to God to take us as we are. In that moment we can depart in peace.

We are still celebrating the incarnation of God, the incarnation continues. We are the people of God, the God who is with us! When we see clearly we can say with Simeon “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace according to your word.”

I am sure Simeon died, but when he did it was in peace!

Pastor Janet

The 229th Annual Meeting

The 229th Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church, UCC was held on Sunday, January 29th, 2023, following our regular Sunday service. There were approximately 20 persons in attendance.

Nancy opened the meeting followed by a prayer by Pastor Janet. There was a vote to accept all of committee reports, followed by a discussion on the spending in 2022. We then moved forward to discussing and approving the 2023 proposed budget.

Diane Meredith – co-moderator – then led us in a discussion related to the future of the church and committee position. There were several nominations from the floor for people willing to volunteer for vacant position. See below:

Committee	2023	2024	2025
Board of Deacons	Diane Meredith Ann LePinnet	Janet Brienza Donna Thompson Lorraine Miller	
Board of Trustees		Bruce Ellis Todd Ogden	
Board of Church in Society, Elijah's Closet	Janet Brienza Mary Carroll Deb Caruso	Lynn Allen Rosemarie Tiesler Charlene Gregory	Deb Caruso Mary Carroll Janet Brienza
Board of Christian Education	Judy Ogden	Ann LePinnet Chrissy Evans Beth Ogden	
Memorial Committee	Ann LePinnet	Ann LePinnet	
Auditor of Church Rolls	Mary Carroll	Mary Carroll	

A lengthy discussion was held regarding the future of the church and attendees were asked to think about and rank the importance of these of these questions:

- Should we continue what we are doing, knowing we may not remain viable within our community
- Do we need to make changes to our worship style? Time, format, music
- Restructure our bylaws and committees
- Consider a building repurposing grant to provide services/housing/etc.
- Focus on Elijah's Closet to increase revenue
- Develop and hire a new position

These results will be discussed at the next Prudential Bd. Meeting.