

February 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Deacons Meeting	2	3	4
5 Peanut Butter Sunday Confirmation 11:30am		7	8	9	10	11 Women's Society Book & Sandwich 10:00am
12 Trustee Meeting 11:30am Caring Com. Mtg 11:30am Confirmation 11:30am	13	14 Valentine's Day	15	16	17	18
19 No Church School	20 President's Day	21	22	23	24	25 The Creeds 10:30am
26 Congregational Meeting (Budget) Confirmation 11:30am	27	28				



THE OPEN DOOR

The Briarcliff Congregational Church

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“BEHOLD, I HAVE SET BEFORE YOU AN OPEN DOOR, WHICH NO ONE IS ABLE TO SHUT.” REVELATION 3:8

Dear Good People of Briarcliff Church,

This morning I ordered three books dedicated to the subject of Pastoral Transition, because I know this congregation and I have to undertake the work of pastor/parish separation. And we need to do this before our relationship is dissolved and I leave BCC at the end of June: We need to do some remembering, we need to do some grieving, we need to do some celebrating, we need to do some forgiving and we need to thank God for the thirteen years that it's been my dear privilege to serve this church. I know it's highly recommended that all this work be undertaken very intentionally because a new pastorate likely will be hampered if it's not. But, I confess I just don't quite know how to go about the tasks. I'm in denial, I suppose; or, resistant on some other level. And I suspect that I'm not alone. Some of us, or some parts of all of us, would probably rather avoid the whole thing. So, I've ordered the books. I think they might help. I'm also inviting your thoughts: How shall we say “Goodbye?” How shall we say “Thank you?” How shall we say, “Can you forgive me for that?” How shall we say, “I'm going to miss you?” How do we say, “I'm looking forward to a new chapter...”

When I was shopping for help with all this, I was reminded one of the classics of this book genre is entitled, “Running through the Thistles.” That sounds dangerous, like nothing anyone would ever want to do. And if it's a description of what pastoral transition entails, it's no wonder we're ambivalent! But, run through the thistles we must; for it's time that new, fresh leadership serve BCC and it's also time for me to discover who I am if not a congregation's pastor (as I've been my whole adult life).

Stay tuned. You'll be hearing more about this, as I'll let you know what I discover. In the meantime, BCC is very busy in its ministry, as the following pages of *The Open Door* attest. I've long maintained the best thing about February is it's only twenty-eight days long; but when I think about all that this church is doing, I think the best thing about February is how very much love of God, neighbor and self can be expressed in its time!

In Christ,

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SAVE THESE DATES

February

- 5 *Peanut Butter Sunday*
- 11 *WS Book & Sandwich*
- 12 *Trustee Meeting*
- 19 *No Church School*
- 26 *Budget Vote*

March

- 1 *Ash Wednesday*
- 5 *First Sunday in Lent*

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MEETING OF THE

CONGREGATION

SCHEDULED FOR 26 FEBRUARY

The Trustees expect to call the congregation to meeting, February 26, for the purposes of endorsing a budget for 2017. While a formal Call to Meeting will be read before worship on the two Sundays before the 29th, this serves as a “save-the-date” because everyone’s so busy and calendars fill so fast. Put this meeting on your calendar now! It’s expected that the Trustees’ proposed budget, reflecting adjustments to the draft circulated in the fall, will be available for review a week before the meeting.

ADULT STUDY

BEGINS IN FEBRUARY

“The Creeds: Context, Content and Consequence”
February 25, March 4, 11; 10-11:30

Have you ever wondered, “What do we in the United Church of Christ profess to believe?” Or have you found yourself at a loss for a satisfying answer when asked that by others?

An excellent response to the question about what faith our denomination professes is found in the Preamble of the UCC. It reads, “*The United Church of Christ...claims as it’s own the faith of the historic church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. It affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own...*”

That’s a mouthful, one which we’ll chew on in what’s to be the final offering of the “Pastor Bonnie and Historian Joan Teaching Team.” “The Creeds: Context, Content and Consequence,” will begin on the last Saturday of February and extend through the first two Saturdays in March. During

this time, we’ll consider those “ancient creeds,” “basic insights” and contemporary expressions in terms of their historical context, theological meaning and impact. We’ll happily continue our tradition of using maps, pictures and other aids to assist the studies. Each session is designed to stand-alone; that is, one needn’t be obliged to the whole series but can easily participate in one or two sessions. We’ll meet in the Eastman Room at 10AM and finish by 11:30.

THANKING ALL CHRISTMAS ELVES

There’s something quite magical about the Pastor’s desk at BCC: It produces goodies, treats and treasures every year, beginning in late Advent and continuing through the whole Christmas season! And what wonders it produces: cookies, books, music and more! If you happen to have been one of the (elfin?) sources of such bounty, magically appearing as it did again in ‘16, the Pastor thanks you. ‘Tis a generous and kind congregation my successor will inherit! Along with the magical desk...

CONFIRMATION, 2017 TO BEGIN

A Confirmation Group will be convened in early February for those 8th and 9th graders in the parish who are interested in learning more about what it means to be Christian, the faith claimed for them at their baptisms. The Pastor will be leading the effort. We will meet Sundays, after worship, in the Minister’s Study. Our time together will provide an opportunity to explore the “quadrilateral” sources of our faith: Scripture, Tradition, Community and Self. It will conclude with the rite of Confirmation, to be celebrated on Pentecost, 6/4.

IGLESIA EL SEMBRADOR -

SHARING OUR SPACE

The Trustees are pleased to welcome Iglesia El Sembrador as part of our community worshipping at the crossroads of South State and Pleasantville Road in Briarcliff. The name of this church translates “Church of the Sower” and so they do sow the seeds of God’s love and grace.

This adventure began on the Mickels’ front porch when one of our workman shared his distress: his church needed space to worship! Thus began BCC’s relationship with this wonderful Spanish-speaking church. They began with us in December, renting space in the Parish House, 4 days per week. They are prayerful and joyful; you may have seen their musical instruments on the stage of Beebe Hall. Approximately 60 men, women and children are there on Friday, Saturday, and Monday evenings, and Sunday afternoons. On Sunday afternoon they also use one of our Sunday School rooms for their children, as part of their worship time. One thing we have seen: they love to sing!

Pastor Bonnie wrote and delivered letters to our neighbors so they are aware of the new movements in and around our property. Bev Aisenbrey and I met with Phil Zegarelli, Briarcliff Village Manager, and he notified the police so they are aware of new people at the Parish House on these evenings.

The Trustees decided to invest in two large rolling screens to help make the stage look more worshipful for our Spanish friends and more orderly for storing the Garden House School toys. It also looks looks nicer for us on Sundays. So far this group is most careful of our facilities and Yasna has given us good reports. We pray for the continued success of this sharing of our facilities.

Carol Mickel



WOMEN’S SOCIETY OPEN DOOR

The Women’s Society met in January to degreen the sanctuary and put away all the outdoor wreaths and electric candles to mention just a few of the many elements that go into decorating the church for Christmas. Truly a labor of love. This was also our chance to thank Wicki Martin for graciously opening her home for cookie packing in December. Scheduling this event on a Sunday afternoon rather than in the evening proved to be a good idea and we’ll plan on continuing that time.

BOOK SHARE AND SANDWICH LUNCH

Our next meeting is on **Saturday, February 11, from 10:00-Noon in the Eastman Room.**

This is one of our most popular and well-attended events. Come and tell us about a book you’ve enjoyed, whether current or old, fiction or non-fiction. We love getting to know our members better by knowing what they read. Who reads mysteries; who reads science; who reads The Great Books (yes, you Joan Austin)?

Pack a sandwich and something to drink. We’ll provide dessert. Everyone is welcome even if you’ve never come to one of our meetings before. If you don’t feel like sharing, come anyway and just enjoy getting out of the house in the dead of winter.

COMMUNION TABLE FLOWERS

Please sign up to donate the flowers arranged most weeks to grace the Communion Table. They can be in memory of someone or to celebrate an event in your life or just to celebrate the Love of God. Watch for a sign up sheet or call Jodi in the church office. The cost is modest, just \$35. The Women’s Society arranges for their delivery, the arranging, and the billing.

RUMMAGE SALE, APRIL 29

Start sorting out what you would like to donate but please hold on to everything until April. We have very little storage space. We look forward to welcoming all your boxes and bags of donated items on Moving Sunday, April 23.

MODERATOR'S REPORT

LOOKING BACK – LOOKING FORWARD

As I look back at all our year-end activity, I am so heartened by your generosity to others in our community. The bags and bags of food gathered in the month of November and the mounds and mounds of clothing and toys contributed and purchased so that those less fortunate can have a gift at Christmas never fails to touch me. And, what about all those bags of cookies delivered to those who work for us and so many in our church family that our Women's Society wanted to reach out to during the holidays? Those bags included lots of love along with the sweets.

And, we are off to a great start for the New Year as we host a group of homeless people in the cold January nights and consider how we can help resettle refugees in our area. I don't usually like to get complaints, but I loved it when some of you complained to me that you wanted to help, but all the slots on our sign-up site to help with sheltering the homeless were full.

On an internal note, we adopted our Safe Church Policy in November and we are organizing training so that all of us will understand our responsibilities to make everyone comfortable at BCC and protect our children.

We will soon begin the process of filling our Committee roles for next year. I hope you will all consider how you would like to serve the church with your time and talent and answer the calls of the Nominations Committee promptly.

Respectfully yours, Beverly Aisenbrey



NEWS FROM THE PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

The Pastoral Search Committee is deeply appreciative of everyone who responded to our surveys in November and December, and to those who attended our small group sessions. The congregation's input has been a vital source of guidance to us in finalizing BCC's church profile. Our church profile is like a job posting, and its purpose is twofold: to inform candidates of the kind of spiritual leader we are seeking, and to help candidates decide whether BCC is a church they would like to be called to serve.

We prayerfully considered all of your thoughts and comments submitted to us through our surveys, small group sessions, and other emails and conversations. We made revisions to the profile to reflect what our committee believes, to the best of our ability and with your help, is the most accurate description of who we are as a congregation, who we would like to be and who we would like to lead us. As of the date of this newsletter, we hope to have submitted the final version of our profile for inclusion on the UCC website and to have begun to receive resumes from potential candidates. Over the next few months, we will begin to select, interview and assess candidates.

We thank you again for entrusting us with this most important undertaking. In an effort to ensure that all voices are heard, we encourage you to share with us your thoughts, questions or concerns by emailing any member of the committee, or by talking with any of us before or after Sunday worship.

Yours in faith,
Mel Corbett (co-chair), Sheri Gausepohl (co-chair), Judy Beck, Ted Buerger, Barbara Gasparik, Kevin Junkins, Brian Lewis, Nancy Panagacos, Debra Stewart, Robyn Wild

BENEVOLENCE NEWS

The spirit of giving is an important part of Christian life. It's clear that our congregation feels that spirit deeply. The Benevolence Committee would like to share an overview of our congregation's tremendous generosity across several initiatives during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons.

Coat Drive – Thank you for rummaging through your closets and donating 51 coats for those in need! The Interfaith Council for Action (IFCA) was thrilled to receive 32 women's coats, 8 children's coats, and 11 men's coats. As temperatures plummet, at times without warning, these coats provide vital protection and a form of shelter to those who need it most.

Christmas Gift Giving – You blew us and the recipients away with your generosity with this initiative! Kristen reports that when she dropped off all the gifts, the organizations were so moved – so happy and grateful – for these blessings. Donations were as follows: 38 gift cards for For All Seasons, 26 gift cards for Hope's Door, plus 78 unwrapped gifts for IFCA and the Ossining Prison Ministry! Our congregation also sponsored Christmas gifts for 11 children through the Grandparent Coalition, and 4 families via the Ossining Children's Center. The spread under the Christmas tree in the sanctuary was an impressive site. The depth and breadth of your generosity has been delivered as joy to many in our community. For that, we thank you once again for taking the time, the care and the money to shop for those you don't know and sharing your bounty.

We also had a very busy season for disbursements, supporting around 23 organizations, many of which are near and dear to our congregation.

As we begin 2017, The Benevolence Committee is continuing our work of supporting local and global needs. This involves outreach to spread the word of our objectives and resources. Please take a moment to read about these funds and consider if

we can help an organization or person in need of assistance.

Jan & Wayne Byers Fund

Nominations are now open for the Jan and Wayne Byers Memorial Fund special donations. Do you volunteer with or know of service organizations who are particularly deserving? This is an opportunity to extend our BCC outreach to our neighbors with needs through organizations identified by members of the congregation. Please consider proposing nominees for this award whose purpose and work honors the spirit of service and compassion of the Byers.

Please give this opportunity some thought. Applications for nominating recipients are available at the back of the Sanctuary, in the Church Office and through the website. The deadline for submission is **Sunday, March 5th**, and awards will be made in the spring. Questions should be directed to any member of the Benevolence Committee.

Special Opportunities Fund

As a reminder, the Special Opportunity Fund provides small grants to assist members of the BCC community achieve their educational and vocational goals. Are your aspirations jeopardized by high tuition costs or financial challenges? The BCC Special Opportunity Fund may be able to help.

Applications for grants through this fund are available at the back of the Sanctuary, in the Church Office and through the website. **Anyone looking for scholarship assistance in the fall will need submit their application by the end of May.** Off-cycle applications will also be accepted to address individual needs. Talk to anyone on the Benevolence Committee if you have questions.

May God bless you all for your support and generosity.

The Benevolence Committee



CE NEWS

The CE committee is so busy through the Christmas season, we take a little break until the end of January. Due to inclement weather, the Christmas pageant had no practice but the cast performed just as well. Londa Wilson was a miracle worker, outfitting each pageant character as fast as she could. The children seemed to know what to do so I worried for nothing. My favorites were the little angels twirling up to the manger. So many parents and teachers helping made this event another success. Thank you.

CE plans to meet soon to discuss the upcoming Heiffer fair and youth activities.

Our church school interview this month is all about John Panagacos. John and his wife Nancy moved to Westchester twenty years ago when Nancy got transferred to Armonk in order to shorten her work commute. Because they came from a Congregational church, BCC was the first church they visited. David Powers was the pastor then and visited them that first week. Everyone was so friendly at BCC, they kept coming back.

At that time, Julianne was in the second grade and Danny was in kindergarten. Joan Beicke was the church school director and there were lots of kids in the Sunday school and that was a deciding factor to join BCC.

After three years, John joined the CE committee. He had been an elder and the church school director at their Long Island church so CE seemed the perfect spot. He has served on that committee for over 15 years. John filled his Sundays by coaching soccer until Julianne finished HS. After that he volunteered to teach Sunday school. He has taught Sunday school for the last 8 years and also served as Director of the Sunday School for the last three years.

John's business career started with IBM and after five years he took a faculty appointment running

the Computer Center at Columbia University. After doing that for five years he moved on to run computer organizations at Equitable Life and then founded his own computer software company. After his move to Westchester, he went back to work at IBM as a contractor. No wonder he was on the Communications committee for six years. John developed the saying "Sunday School Makes a Difference"... John makes a difference. He says yes to everything...and he gets things done...thank you John.

Jill Benzenberg

TRUSTEES REPORT

Budget work headlines the Trustees report. We are working to finalize the budget, reworking and refining the numbers and adding footnotes. The budget will be mailed out and available to the congregation by Sunday, February 19.

The loan from the Endowment Fund to cover part of the Parish House roof cost has been paid off!! The Trustees are very grateful to all who contributed toward paying off this loan in a timely manner, and are especially appreciative of additional contributions from the Women's Society and from Joan and Bob Beicke.

Following further input from Church Council, the Trustees hope to present an accessibility plan at a special congregation meeting at the end of March. This will include the pros and cons and relative costs. The congregation will be asked to vote on one of the plans so that we can go back to the architect with a final decision before paying for additional work. We need to decide on one plan before we can move this project forward.

Our rental agreement with Iglesia El Sembrador is going quite smoothly, and the Trustees have extended the initial lease for an additional period of 6 months. It is exciting to be able to share our facilities with another family of Christ, with mutually beneficial results.

The Trustees would like to announce an important search for a new Treasurer. After her superbly capable service as Church Treasurer, Lisette Hautau is stepping down this summer. Please speak to a Trustee if you are interested in the role or know of anyone who might be qualified.

Kevin Beicke, Brian Lewis, Carol Mickel, Karen Sharman, Jim Stewart, Robyn Wild

SEEKING A NEW TREASURER

Lisette Hautau, who has ably served as our church Treasurer since Sally Lewis' tenure in the job, recently informed the Trustees that she's taken on much more responsibility at her "day job" with Pepisco and can no longer serve in this capacity at BCC. With gratitude for her work on the church's behalf these last seasons, the Trustees have accepted Lisette's resignation and are now searching for another to take on this important job. If you think perhaps it's something you're interested in (or perhaps something you'd like to know more about), please speak to either the Pastor or any of the Trustees (Kevin Beicke, Carol Mickel, Robyn Wild, Karen Sharman, Brian Lewis, Jim Stewart).

BCC's NEW WEBSITE

Our new website was launched in early December, if you haven't had the chance please check it out at www.briarcliffchurch.org. We also have two new Webmasters – Sarah Yergeau and Mike Aiello. The site is designed to be engaging and informative, please check it regularly to find out what's happening so you can join in. If you have events that you would like featured, please send an e-mail with a brief description of the event to upcoming-events@briarcliffchurch.org.

The website is mobile compatible and can be viewed on a computer, tablet or mobile phone. Plus, don't forget to "like" us on Facebook to get

updates and photos from church happenings: <https://www.facebook.com/briarcliffcongregationalchurch/>.

Deciding on the website strategy and gathering the information and photos for the website designer was a big task and many people gave countless hours to this project. We want to especially thank the Technology Team – Mike Aiello, Bev Aisenbrey, Barry Bozak, John Panagacos, Drea Pecor, Alan Pike, Pastor Bonnie Rosborough, Kim Ruffing, Robyn Wild, Sarah Yergeau and Mary Young. We also want to thank folks who contributed content to the website – Joan Austin, Kristen Basil, Mel Corbett, Barbara Gasparik, Karen Sharman and Penny Wolf. A team effort that was well worth it!

