



Musings along the way

By Pastor Henry

Dear Church Family,

We love to celebrate freedom, but are we carrying burdens we were never meant to bear? Political freedom can liberate a nation, but can it free our souls?

In the summer of 1776, the word "yoke" was synonymous with oppression, igniting

a revolution that gave birth to a free nation. American leaders like Thomas Paine and John Adams defined British rule under King George III as a tyrannical "yoke" of oppression and injury. Across Virginia, the prevailing cry was that the people could no longer endure "the heavy yoke of British tyranny." Writing in his pamphlet Common Sense, Thomas Paine

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urged Americans to “throw off the yoke of Britain.” After the Declaration of Independence was adopted, John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail, “It has been a severe Trial, but the Yoke is broken, and we are Free.”

But 250 years later, as we look back on that historic liberation, a deeper question emerges: What if the key to true freedom isn't living with no yoke at all, but rather choosing the right one to carry? In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my **yoke** upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my **yoke is easy**, and my burden is light.”

In the Bible, a yoke often symbolizes bondage, oppression, or legalistic demands (1 Kings 12:4, Galatians 5:1). But Jesus transforms the image. His yoke is a **shared yoke**. He walks alongside us and bears the burden with us.

While the Declaration of Independence lists 27 grievances illustrating King George's tyrannical rule, Jesus models an entirely different kind of leadership. He is neither a self-serving tyrant with no sense of accountability nor a leader driven by hubris and arrogance. He is “gentle and humble in heart.” Where worldly power breeds distrust and division, Jesus brings peace and unity through justice and compassion.

Matthew 11:28-30. Jesus says, “Come to me, ...

Amid the fireworks, flags, and parades of the Fourth of July weekend, may we always remember that true freedom comes not from total independence but in **surrendering** our hearts to a Savior whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light, freeing us to **love God** and **serve our neighbors**. At First Congregational, we strive to live out that kind of freedom. Happy Fourth, everyone!

Yours for the journey,
Pastor Henry

Carrying Pride Month Forward

As the rainbow banners, bunting and flags come down, the hard work of human rights advocacy continues for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and their allies. The street and film festivals, the parades and educational forums, the art exhibits and musical performances throughout the month of June celebrated Pride identity and achievement here and around the world, while honoring the legacy of sacrifice by those who fought discrimination in earlier years.

In 1999, thirty years after the Stonewall uprising in NYC which erupted on June 28, 1969 and lasted six days, June was declared to be national Pride Month by President Clinton. In 2016 President Obama established the Stonewall National Monument within the National Park Service which encompasses the Stonewall Inn and neighboring streets. The former dance floor of the Inn became the monument's visitor center, opening just two years ago on June 28, 2024 under President Biden.

Our church was one of fifteen sponsors of this June's Pride Festival in Corning. Our booth was colorful and well visited. Our support for the Pride community was visible and very much appreciated. Thank you for contributing to the strength of our presence this year! Let us consider how we might move forward with ongoing support as an Open and Affirming congregation.

Lynn Decher Mission and Outreach Team



The First Congregational United Church of Christ of Corning, NY believes we are all made in the image of God and we are called to celebrate our God-given identities regardless of age, class, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical ability, marital status, race, ethnicity, or mental ability. Jesus calls us to love each other as we are loved by God, and we welcome, affirm, and support all people into our full life and ministry.

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!



26 Bridge Street
Corning, NY 14830
T. 607-654-7487
F. 607-973-2202

www.ArborDevelopment.org

May 27, 2026

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Jennifer Fais and Pastor Henry Pascual
171 West Pulteney Street
Corning, NY 14830

Dear Jennifer, Pastor Henry and Members of the First Congregational Church,

On behalf of Arbor Housing and Development, thank you for your generous gift of \$547 in support of our domestic violence shelter. Your donation helps ensure that we can continue to give individuals and families fleeing abuse access to critical services – a vital lifeline for those in need.

We are truly grateful for your partnership and commitment to offering safety, healing and hope through this important program. This support from your congregation allows us to offer safe housing, counseling and advocacy, but even more, to share compassion, hope and support for those in crisis.

Thank you again for your generosity and dedication to making a difference in our community, and your donation in support of our domestic violence services!

With sincere appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Bull".

Susan Bull
President / CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carrie House".

Carrie House
Director of The Domestic Violence Shelter

Thank you so much!
A simple hand-drawn smiley face consisting of a circle with two dots for eyes and a curved line for a mouth.

Thank you to everyone who attended our Annual Program Meeting. What a great past year and hearing all the exciting things happening as we continue to mission and outreach to members, guests, and the community.

A copy of the Program Report along with the previously released Financial Report are available in the Church Narthex and online at <https://www.corningucc.org/pages/resources>

Thank you members for being a part of church leadership! For questions or how you can be a part contact Nominating Committee members Judy Graf (607) 368-7178 or Maria Quintal (607) 684-0766.

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Ruth Ann Hooey/Ruth Burritt Scholarships

Applications for the Ruth Ann Hooey/Ruth Burritt Scholarships are now available on the Church website, corningucc.org. Completed applications should be emailed **by July 4, 2026**, to margokbrown1940@gmail.com. Scholarships will be awarded to members of the Church family of First Congregational United Church of Christ, Corning, NY.

The Scholarship Committee will receive applications and consider personal goals, financial need, academic performance, and service to school, church, and community in awarding the scholarships.

All candidates will be informed by July 15, 2026, as to their status regarding the scholarships.

**Thank you,
Scholarship Committee**

First Congregational Church of Christ, Corning, NY

Ruth Ann Hooley/Ruth Burritt Application

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

School you will/or currently attend _____

How do you plan to finance your education

High School GPA, or if in college, your most recent grades

Community/Volunteer/Church activities

School activities, such as Clubs, Organizations, Sports

How has the Church influenced your life or your educational choices (200 words or less, use a separate sheet of paper if needed)

What do you consider the role of the Church in our current society?

Please email by Noon, Sunday, July 4, 2026, to margokbrown1940@gmail.com. If you have any questions, feel free to email.

Thank you,
Margo Brown, Judy Garrett, and David Lambert; Scholarship Committee

Events and HaPPENINGS





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*The deadline for submitting
articles is the 25th of each
month.*

Office hours:

Tues/Fri: 9:00am-Noon

Pastor Office Hours:

Tuesday-Friday:

9:00am - 2:00pm

His visitations are
scheduled on Tues - Fri
afternoons. Mondays and
Saturdays he is off.

Sunday Service

In-person worship and
Zoom worship every
Sunday at 10 AM
<https://www.corningucc.org/>

Nursery

Nursery provided from
9:30am-11:30am for
children under 4.

If you are interested in
learning more about our
church, please visit our
website at
corningucc.org or scan
the QR code on the right.



Contact us

Pastor: Rev. Henry Pascual
e-mail: pastor@corningucc.org

Church Phone: (607)962-7423
E-mail: office@corningucc.org
Web: www.corningucc.org
Facebook.com/FCUCCC
Instagram: @corningucc
Admin Assistant: Charlette Smith
Choir Director: Mike Flanagan

