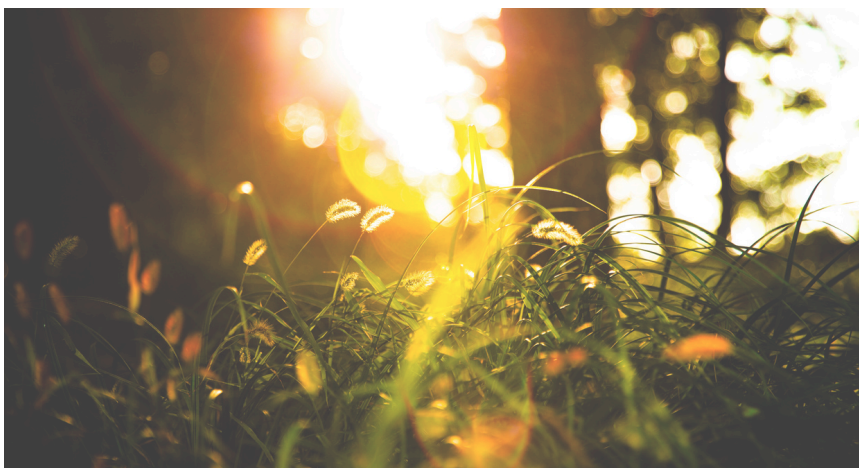




Musings along the way

By Pastor Henry

Dear Church Family,
Over the last few years, I've been following the political and cultural commentator David Brooks through his books, online lectures, interviews, and podcasts. In his final column after 22 years at The New York Times early this year, Brooks announced that he was leaving the paper to spend less time commenting on the daily

political cycle and more time exploring the deeper moral and cultural questions that shape society. He argues that what's wrong with America right now goes deeper than politics—it's really a loss of faith. We've stopped trusting our institutions, our neighbors, and the shared values that used to hold us together. He points to record loneliness and a harsher public climate, blaming the

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isolation caused by social media and hyper-individualism.

On top of that, he warns about a growing cynicism—the feeling that power and cruelty are somehow more "real" than basic honesty and kindness.

I find myself echoing a resounding "Amen" to that. Brooks laments that our society has lost its "connective tissue," calling for a "humanistic renaissance" to restore social bonds. Scripture names this tissue *koinonia*—a Greek term that means deep community and belonging to one another, embodied by Jesus in what John Dominic Crossan calls "open table fellowship," or radically open commensality: sharing meals without any boundaries of social class, moral standing, or religious purity. While our culture often prizes independence and self-expression, Jesus often addresses the community. In the Sermon on the Mount, he uses the "You" almost always in the plural form.

He isn't just saying you (individually) are the salt of the earth; he means that we are the salt together. We are the community that brings flavor and healing to the world (Matt. 5:13-14).

Additionally, Jesus teaches that true belonging involves a "death to self"—the willingness to put others first, reminding us of Jesus' words when he said, "I came not to be served but to serve" (Mark 10:45), and "but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant" (Matt. 20:26). Paul echoes Jesus' teaching on servant leadership in Philippians (2:1-11) when he speaks of "death to self" or "emptying of the self" (*kenosis*), as he puts it.

Cultivating civic virtue is a worthy pursuit, but the church has been called to an even greater witness. Jesus did not begin the Sermon on the Mount by urging people to win better arguments.

Mark 10:45

"I came not to be served but to serve" ...

He began by blessing the "poor in spirit"—those who know their need for God's grace. In a culture worn down by cynicism and division, we have the opportunity to live differently. As we practice humility, make peace, and open our lives to others, we point people to the lasting hope that no political system can provide: a true home in the community of God's people. Perhaps the greatest gift the church can offer today is a community that embodies the values of God's realm. May God grant us the grace to do just that. We are all in this together.

Yours for the journey,
Pastor Henry

Congratulations to FCUCCC's Scholarship Winners

In July the Scholarship Committee awarded scholarships to two of our young church members.

Finn Barber, one of our faithful Zoom techs, graduated from high school and has received a partial Navy ROTC scholarship. He will attend the University of Nebraska in Lincoln.

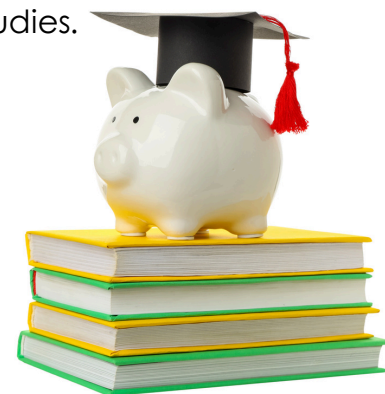
In high school, Finn volunteered at the Food Pantry, was class VP, and participated in Varsity golf and Model UN.

Patrick Wilken, also one of our Zoom techs, is beginning his sophomore year at SUNY Oswego. He was part of the school's Improve and tabletop game clubs. He also volunteered at Tanglewood Nature Center.

I'm sure we all wish them well as they begin or continue their college studies.

Scholarship Committee:

Dave Lambert
Judy Garrett
Margo Brown



Attention All Gardeners!

Lynn Decher has a quantity of nursery plant pots available in all sizes. If you are planning to share your plants at the Fall Fest and Bazaar, these might come in handy.

Ldecher@earthlink.net

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!

2026 FALL FEST AND BAZAAR

Our Fall Fest & Bazaar will be held on Saturday, September 12th from 9:00am-3:00pm, rain or shine. This is a good time to get rid of those items that you don't use, take up space, etc.

We will be utilizing Marketplace, Ebay, and other sites for items that would be of higher value than items to be sold at the bazaar portion of the sale. If you have any of those potential items contact Bruce Graf, Rachel Hofstetter, or Joyce Nelson starting now to determine when the items could be dropped off.

If you have items to donate for the bazaar portion of the sale they can be dropped off beginning August 19th thru September 6th. Days & times for drop off days/times are posted in Fellowship Hall. **PLEASE** do not bring bazaar items earlier than Aug 19th as storage will be difficult due to groups/events that will be using tables/space in Fellowship Hall and other rooms.

You will also find signup sheets for helping to cover drop off dates, sale day and clean up day located in Fellowship Hall.

T-SHIRT 2026 - REVEAL!

It's time again to have new church t-shirts made up in readiness for our Fall Fest and Bazaar!

We're working with Studio LMG downtown Corning who will be getting t-shirt color options and prices to us soon. But why wait to see the new design? TADA!!

Looking forward to seeing a full array of church t-shirts - from vintage designs to today's - at the Fall Fest and Bazaar on September 12th.

Stay tuned for details!

GOD'S
DOORS
ARE OPEN
TO ALL



First Congregational United Church of Christ
171 W. Pulteney Street, Corning, New York
www.corningucc.org facebook.com/FCUCCC



Corning UCC Market Place - 2026 Online Rummage Sale

What we are looking for: Any “extra” items that you have that you want to sell and donate the proceeds to the Church.

This could include:

Furniture
Bicycles
Toys
Jewelry
Electronics (if they have some value)
Sports equipment in good shape
Antiques
Quilts
Dishes, Vases
and More.

Process for Donating Item to the Church Sale:

- 1) Take pictures of the item, write a description and email to brucegraf@gmail.com
- 2) If we are going to sell it, we will arrange delivery of the item to the Church.
The Church, as a meeting location, is a big positive on Marketplace. It is a safe place for strangers to meet to purchase something.
- 3) We will upload the information on Marketplace, and begin the selling process.
We will continue this process through September. Please understand that some items sell quickly and some take months, if they are sold at all.

Note: There can be a good bit of effort of selling an item on Marketplace: taking pictures, dimensions, writing an appropriate description, estimating the value, tracking the item on Marketplace, negotiating the price and arranging a meeting time with the buyer. It's really not worth the effort for a \$5 or \$10 item.

Also note: Sometimes our local market will not support the “true value” of the item. We are subject to local supply and demand. Almost invariably, there is a “Free” piano on Marketplace.

The Church's Future Working Group: What's Happening and What's Ahead

In January, you asked us to study three possible paths for the church over the next few years: Revitalization, Collaborations, or Winding Down.

Since then, we have been a busy group of "Doomsday Pollyannas" - people who are very aware of our church reaching "critical mass" in terms of people and finances, while we look ahead with optimism and hope to keep our church vibrant and welcoming.

Instead of just discussing our options to report this winter, we decided to try out some ideas NOW to get the ball rolling, inspired by comments in the church-wide survey:

- We made PRIDE month a priority with a bang-up booth at the Corning Pride Festival and colorful bunting and banners festooning the church during June.
- We became Corning Chamber of Commerce members to share our Caller and activities with the wider community.
- We post to Facebook and Instagram 2-3 times per week to invite people to join us in worship and in our mission projects.

(This is just a short list - much more is detailed in the **June 2026 Annual Program Report.**)

Follow us



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In the next few months,

- We will talk with UCC Conference staff about our options for finding pastoral leadership after April 1, 2027, when Pastor Henry retires. For example, do we have a series of supply pastors until a formal Search begins? Hire an Interim Pastor? Hire a Bridge Pastor - who could become our permanent pastor? Their guidance and support are needed to make this process efficient & effective.
- We will be starting conversations this fall with area churches on ways to collaborate on shared missions and community involvement, to explore our partnership options in the future.

Most importantly: we will be checking in with the 60+ members and friends in our church on the project's findings, direction, and specific next steps. Please mark your calendars for Sunday, September 27 for a church-wide Check-In Forum to make sure we're on the right path.

The Church's Future Working Group

Jill VanDewoestine, chair, Lynn Decher, Jennifer Fais, Bruce Graf, Tom Kowalik, Bob Walker, Tom Wilkinson

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articles is the 25th of each
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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.

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.

**Sunday Service**

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

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

**Nursery**

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