



Musings along the way

By Pastor Henry

Dear Church Family,
Summer has been behind us for some time now, and here we are in October already, surrounded by changing colors and vibrant hues! Bright reds, warm oranges, cheerful yellows, and rich browns are beginning to paint the landscape. Fall is truly breathtaking, especially for this pastor who grew up in a country with only two seasons.

So, I truly look forward to the colors reaching their peak. But as the days grow shorter and the air cooler, it's also time to swap out my shorts and sandals! (Wish summer were longer.)

But something about October invites us to pause and notice God in every season: in winter's frozen earth and frosted windows, in spring's thawing lakes and

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swelling buds, in summer's leafy trees and beautiful gardens, and fall's clear blue skies and glorious colors. Through these natural cycles, we are reminded of a simple truth: *life is always changing, and impermanence is part of our journey.* Just as the earth must pass through its natural changes, our lives naturally shift through seasons of growth, harvest, letting go, and rest.

As the writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens" (Ecclesiastes 3:1.) Some of our personal seasons bring pure joy and clarity; others bring grief, waiting, or uncertainty. You might be starting a new career, stepping into retirement (like I am!), experiencing grief, or simply wondering where God is leading you next.

Our seasons are all different right now. Whatever your situation, please know that God's promise remains unchanged: the Holy One promises to be with us wherever we go (Joshua 1:9; Isaiah 41:10; 43:2.) The psalmist reassures us that "God is our strength and refuge, an ever-present help in times of trouble" (Psalm 46:1.)

We often wish we could hold on to our favorite season, but just as trees can't hold onto their leaves forever, neither can we. Faith isn't about controlling life's changing conditions; it's about trusting the One who walks with us through every shift.

This Fall, our church has plenty of opportunities to serve together. Be sure to mark your calendars for World Communion Sunday, our upcoming Stewardship Campaign,

"...life is always changing, and impermanence is part of our journey..."

All Saints Remembrance Sunday, and Thanksgiving (though it doesn't fall on a Sunday!)

As the leaves fall, perhaps we can let them remind us that change is not necessarily the end of something; instead, it may be part of God's continuing work in our lives. We may not know what the next season will bring, but we know who will be there. We may not know what the future holds, but we know who holds it. And that is enough.

Yours for the journey,
Pastor Henry

NEW WORSHIP ELEMENT: STORIES OF GRACE AND RENEWAL

Starting this last month, we introduced Stories of Grace and Renewal, a liturgy of public confession into worship. For now, this is once a month.

Building on the traditional practice of Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon, this liturgical practice features an individual sharing a personal testimony of struggle, healing, and God's grace. Sharing our vulnerabilities is an act of service. When others share their struggles honestly, we realize we don't have to mask ours. Public confession is not only personally liberating; it is also a powerful way to ensure our church remains a safe place where people can show up exactly as they are and know they are not alone. Although an individual shares, the whole congregation participates through a unison prayer, assurance of grace, and as compassionate witnesses.

Guidelines for Writing Your Story of Grace and Renewal

Length: About 5 to 7 minutes.

Target one specific episode or a turning point of personal renewal in your life journey. Be honest, not sensational: Share enough detail to be real, but avoid graphic or overly explicit details that might shift attention away from the journey of transformation. Share from a place of healing, not an active, ongoing wound: Sharing something that is still raw and unresolved can feel overwhelming—not only for you, but also for the people listening.

Keep the focus on grace: God's healing moments

The pastor will send you ahead of time the worship theme for the week and the Scripture readings. Read the Scripture. Pray about the text. Ask God what it means for your life right now.

Send the pastor a draft a week before the Sunday you're scheduled to share.

Three Parts:

- Where I was: Briefly set the scene. What situation, dynamic, habit, or mindset were you stuck in?
- The Turning Point: What shifted? Was it an encounter, a conversation, a realization, a mistake, or a sudden moment of grace?
- Where I am now: How has this changed how you live, view yourself, or relate to God and others today?

We encourage you to pray about sharing your stories. You won't have to navigate this alone—we will guide you through the preparation process. Please let Pastor Henry know if you're interested, via email at pastor@corningucc.org.

Update from Church's Future Working Group

After the September 27th Sunday service, the Church's Future Working Group convened an update meeting with approximately 30 in attendance. Bob Walker facilitated the overview and discussion. Jill VanDewoestine prepared the slides.

Remember that survey from earlier this year? Here is the compilation of the most frequently mentioned responses across the four questions asked:

- Do God's work/missions/community care
- Welcome and accept all/ONA (Open and Affirming)
- Enjoy friendship/fellowship
- Ask questions/explore faith/grow faith
- Promote kindness & love/follow a liberal, progressive interpretation of the Bible
- Good sermons/good pastor/good worship
- Care for each other/care for church family

The survey results work-up is available in Fellowship Hall for your review.

At this meeting, and as reflected in the above responses, it was agreed that we like things the way they are, that we want this church to continue, and that we hold dear our "motto": Wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here. CFWG is working hard to ensure our church's prosperity for years to come.

But what is our core reason for being this church?

After thoughtful review of our Vision, Mission and ONA statements, the following draft Statement of Purpose was proposed:

- Our purpose is to be a friendly, kind, loving congregation that welcomes you into fellowship, no matter where you are on life's journey, into a safe space to worship God, to explore the teachings of Jesus Christ, and to support the broader community.

Those in attendance enthusiastically agreed with this first draft!

Such a statement puts us on the map, so to speak, with a clarity of purpose that distinctly defines our church, and that will, hopefully, attract community and new pastor interest. Several books on church renewal as well as our conference minister contacts underscored the importance of undertaking this exercise in order to move confidently into the future.

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!

In the Narthex you will find the books that CFWG has read on church renewal. Please check them out! Please also continue to pray for our church and consider forming a prayer group that intentionally asks God for guidance and support during this renewal process. Continue your participation in the life of this church and your ongoing dialog with CFWG. Bring a friend!

What are the next steps for CFWG? From the slide:

- Finalize consensus with the whole church family on the purpose statement
- Kick off NY Conference-led church renewal cohort with joint training and workshop
- Develop partnerships with non-profit building users to increase worship participants
- Begin discussions with other area faith communities to assess alignment with our purpose and ways to collaborate
- Start putting together a Pastoral Search process

Much discussion has already occurred with Ryan Henderson and Barbara VanOlpen, our conference ministers who are assisting our Church's Future leadership. We intend to join other similarly challenged churches in a cohort effort to learn, share and enhance our ongoing work. We have already learned about the four types of ministers available, from temporary to settled, and the roles they play. Which type will best serve our church's near future needs? That question remains under consideration. CFWG does not function as the actual search committee.

Thank you for your interest, your ideas, and your prayers as our church renewal research and work faithfully continue, with the help of God.

Lynn Decher
for CFWG



T-SHIRTS CAN BE ORDERED!

The new T-shirts were a hit at the Fall Fest and Bazaar, and they sparked quite a buzz.

SOOOO, an order form is posted in Fellowship Hall, or you can use the form below to order yours. This order will go in at the end of October, so do not delay!

NAME: _____

TOTAL: _____

SIZE : S	M	L	XL	\$18 each
			XXL	\$21 each

Include this order form and your check and mail it to First Congregational UCC, 171 W Pulteney Street, Corning, NY 14830.

Please make your check out to **First Congregational UCC** with "**t-shirt**" in the memo line. Get your order in today!



The Church and Family Life would once again like to invite you to an outing at Ives Run, 740 Ives Run Lane, Tioga, PA. We will gather at Ives Run at 2pm on Sunday, October 11th. There will be biking, hiking, games, or just visiting.

We plan to eat between 4pm and 4:30pm. Our resident griller, Bob Walker, will have hot dogs and we hope you will bring a dish to pass. We will furnish paper plates, napkins, utensils, cups, and Arizona Arnie Palmer lemonade/iced tea - also some water.

If you need a ride or want to carpool, please meet at church at 1:15pm. Contact Margo Brown, 607 725-0264 if you have any questions.



The **October Midday Fellowship** Meeting will be held on
Wednesday, October 14, 2026,
at 11:30 AM in Fellowship Hall. All are Welcome.



Neighbors in Need

Continuing our church's annual commitment to the **UCC's 5 for 5** giving opportunities, our collective budgeted amount of \$200 was submitted in September to benefit **Neighbors in Need**. "NIN supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants."

Individual donations are always welcome at any time, as cash, or payable to First Congregational UCC, with NIN indicated. Thank you!

We are so thankful and appreciate everyone that came out to our Bi-Annual Fall Fest and Bazaar!

The weather held off and was prefect for a fall atmosphere. From baked goods and plants, to treasures, collectibles, and something for everyone.

We appreciate our Building Users for tabling and sharing important inforamtion about their services and programs.



Social Media – How to help us engage and grow!

The **5-3-1 rule** for social media is an engagement habit used to grow accounts organically by leaving five likes, three thoughtful comments, and one new follow on an account within your niche.

How the Rule Works

This routine takes about 5 minutes a day and focuses on building real connections rather than just broadcasting content:

- 5 Likes: Tap the like button on five posts from our Facebook/Instagram/You Tube accounts, peers, or potential worshipers will see this and put the Church's profile on their radar.
- 3 Comments: Leave three genuine, value-adding comments, include hashtags; #FCUCCC #Corningucc, #sermonteaser, that spark conversation, thoughts, comments, reactions, interaction, even potential invites to join us!
- 1 Follow: Encourage one of your followers to follow one or all the Churches accounts.

We have three Social Media accounts so there is a niche for anyone.

Do not forget to encourage people to visit our website corningucc.org. They can read past Sermons, The Caller, learn about our History, Worship, Giving and Community Outreach, and so much more!



@OfficeUCCCorning



@FCUCCC

Follow us!



@corningucc



“The Caller”

is published by the First
Congregational United
Church of Christ
171 West Pulteney Street
Corning, NY 14830

*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.

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
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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
Keyboardist: Melody Flanagan



Nursery

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