Keep an eye out, be on your toes as Christmas inches ever closer

It’s two weeks before Christmas arrives, and there are several chances for fellowship, service and more to bring meaning to the season.

This Sunday, Dec. 14, the Handbell Choir will perform, and four youth will be confirmed.

Don’t forget to bring a dish to pass for the Advent Potluck Luncheon right after worship. We’ll have caroling here, and you can join

Tim Neiss: our new building superintendent

Meet our new building superintendent, Tim Neiss (pronounced NEES), who takes over for Don Betz. Don is retiring after more than 10 years at UUMC.

Tim grew up in Rome, N.Y., and graduated from Holland Patent High School, where he played football.

He’s a graduate of Onondaga Community College and Virginia Commonwealth University with a degree in therapeutic recreation.

He worked eight years for Water Safari in Old Forge and has 20 years’ experience in apartment maintenance. He most recently worked for Choice Hotels.

He has a side business that in-
Two poems/prayers offered as early Christmas gifts

Don't tell my wife, but I've got most of my Christmas shopping done already.
I also have the bulletins and worship services planned out for most of the month.
That leaves me free to devote myself to what the season of Advent is all about — a time of rebirth and renewal.
I'm giving some favorite devotional books a fresh reading.
I'm finding my heart tugged in both familiar and unfamiliar ways. And I'm thinking about what lies at the far end of Christmas, past the rush of Christmas Eve to the lasting impact of Jesus' birth.
I'm being pushed on two fronts — by the racially laden miscarriages of justice in Ferguson, Missouri, and New York City, and by the up and down health of my father.
Two texts (two poems, two prayers) have made their way from the back row into the foreground of my Christmas season: one by Howard Thurman, describing the real work of Christmas, and one by Maren Tirabassi, rooted in the story of aging Simeon and Anna, celebrating the gift of God in their midst.
I offer them to you as an early Christmas gift.

Howard Thurman
“When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among people,
To make music in the heart.”

Maren Tirabassi
(for God's older children, remembered, too, in the Nativity story)
God, we pray for Lizzies and Zachs,
for Gram Anna and old Si,
for all your children who have lived so many years.

May those who play like children,
because their minds are full of hide and seek –
be respected for their intact hearts,
greeted with fluent compassion,
and listened to always by those bilingual in love.

And bless also those who choose to simplify their lives –
laughing at cranky knees,
holding up a black gloved hand to catch the snow,
then opening the fingers wide into a perfect snow angel.
Amen.

— Craig

Citywide Worship Service
This service is planned for Sunday, Jan. 25, at 3 p.m.
It will be a Christian Unity Service with Communion.
It will include special music, readings and Communion by both laity and clergy of our Syracuse city congregations.
The location for this service will be announced soon.
If bad weather forces a postponement, it will be held Feb. 8.

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United Methodists from other Syracuse churches for caroling at Loretto or Van Duyn at 2 p.m. After that, carolers will head to Brown Memorial UMC for caroling and a fund-raising cookie party that supports the Syracuse Westside Urban Ministry there.
Rehearsal for the Christmas Eve pageant service will be held at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 20, in the sanctuary. Children who wish to participate in the service should attend the rehearsal.
On Sunday, Dec. 21, music will be offered by the Senior Choir and No-Fault Orchestra.
Monday, Dec. 22, is the annual Neighborhood Christmas Dinner at 6 p.m.
Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, we’ll have the pageant service at 7 p.m. Children participating should arrive at the church by 6 p.m.
Here we are in December. It’s time to reflect on the successful distribution of Thanksgiving bags.

Thanks to Joyce Flynn and the amazing Hunt clan. And to talk about needing coats for Christmas, the Neighborhood Christmas Dinner (on Dec. 22 and we need helpers!) and the steady stream of items being donated for the pantry, for Eva and for the clothes closet. Thanks to all of you.

With special thanks to Rev. Colleen Preuninger and the students at the United Methodist Ecumenical Campus Ministry at Syracuse University for their generous donation of $150! And don’t forget to buy pecans; the proceeds go towards the Outreach program.

Maybe you’ve heard that I’ll be leaving this position as pantry coordinator. My plan was to stay a few months ... and that’s stretched to over a year.

My other job, working with refugees at Catholic Charities, is growing, and it’s time to focus my time and energy there. I’ve never worked two (paid) jobs before, and I’m glad to have had the experience. But also glad to be done with it.

I admit it; I’m doing a little happy dance here (Tom probably is too!). This is the last Chimes article in my role as coordinator for the Friday Community.

Every month I agonize and procrastinate about what to write. It shouldn’t be this hard.

The Friday Community is a wonderful, rich and diverse part of this church. And you’d think that running a food pantry is simple and straightforward, but it’s not. It’s full of challenges and thoughtful planning.

Every month I try to convey all of this through this column. And I’m thankful that Tom Boll has been there to straighten out my awkward sentences!

Through the past year I’ve learned so much about the food pantry business, and about myself. Some of the lessons I’ve learned are:

- How to blend patience with action. Sometimes we have to sit and watch and sometimes we have to jump in and do something. I tend to act first and think later. Chances are I stepped on a few toes. I’ve tried to stop, breathe and listen. Several times I found that through collaborating with all stakeholders in the Friday Community we were able to make changes that were welcome and will stick.

- Understanding poverty and persons in poverty. I think I made a dent in my understanding of poverty. Issues are rarely black and white. I certainly am more comfortable around “poor folk.” I admit I used to be shy and hesitant about the thought of sitting down at breakfast with our guests.

- Volunteerism versus mission. I can’t say enough about the people who show up on Fridays to help. They are amazing and a joy to work with. The word volunteer doesn’t cover it. They are people with a mission.

- We have wonderful partners in this work. I’ve gotten to know the staff at the Food Pantry, the Interreligious Food Consortium and the other food pantries on the Eastside and all across our region. Especially the pantries at Temple Concord and Grace Episcopal. They are caring and passionate partners who share our vision for building community.

- Enjoying the chaos. On most days I’ve had fun rolling with whatever happens on a Friday morning. There’s always something. There is joy in chaos, along with the messiness.

- Groups! I love a group: be it a committee, a book club, Bible study or a staff meeting. I love the dynamics between the people and how we learn about each other as well as ourselves. In the past year we’ve had a series of groups that met on Fridays and they’ve been a joy to participate in.

- I won’t miss the keys! Every door here has a lock, and every door has a different key. What’s that word: chatelaine? I won’t miss them. They are a reminder of the dark side of poverty. If you don’t lock up your stuff, someone will steal it.

Some people asked me if I had “short-timer syndrome” — where you know you’re leaving a job and you stop caring about what happens. Nope. I’m not going far.

See TRANSITION, Page 5
CONNECTIONS GROUP:
Young adults came to the Price-Fought home Saturday in DeWitt for a Christmas brunch and tree decorating.

Here are (back, from left) Nate Medford, Deanna Dimmick and Josh DeHoop. Front row are Run Zhang, Maddie Buckley and Sungsu Lee.

Two who attended but left before the picture taking were Liz Pruchnicki and Rebekah Grella.

(photo by Barbara Fought)

What Nourishes Your Spirit?

This survey is designed to gauge spiritual activities among the UUMC community and to guide planning of spiritual activities for 2015.

Engines need oil, plants need water and spirits need nourishing. How do you nourish your spirit? Check all boxes that apply.

- Reading the Bible
- Reading spiritual book
- Prayer
- Meditation
- A walk
- Being in nature
- Worship
- Sunday School
- Small group
- Volunteer work
- Advocating for justice
- Singing in a choir

Others:

What are some activities that you would be interested in being involved in to nurture your spirit in 2015?

- Weekly small group
- Monthly small group
- Weekly Bible Study
- Monthly Bible Study
- Weekly prayer group
- Monthly prayer group
- Monthly nature walk
- Lenten study group
- Occasional 4 week study
- Occasional world music/drumming group

Others:

Your name: ___________________________ Email: ___________________________
Phone: ___________________________

Put in offering plate or email to bcfought@gmail.com

January birthdays

1 - David Lund, Samuel Weah, Pablo Weah, Tae’jin Spinner, Kaleigha Spinner
2 - Maria Pedro
4 - Autumn Kerr, Charlotte Burnap, Ken Craig
9 - Joseph Smythe
11 - Jim Samuel
15 - Martin Luther King Jr.
16 - Eric Nilsson
20 - Ebony Wilson
21 - Jacob Upcraft
22 - Diane Swords
23 - Eboni Marshall, Judith Bowers
24 - Fred Zuti, Seineh Weah
25 - Lara Chappell
26 - Matt Rokahr
27 - Colleen Magowan
30 - Eros Marshall, Gwen Tillapaugh-Fay
31 - Neil Damron

If any birthdays are missing or incorrect, please notify Tom Boll at uumctb@twcny.rr.com.
**PRAYERS REQUESTED FOR:**
- Those in military service: Jim Pettyjohn and Matt Fischer

**Sunday, Nov. 30**
- **Derrick:** God does answer prayers. Blessed is his holy name.
- **Peter:** An end to systematic bias and a return to due process in Ferguson and Syracuse.
- **Sheila:** A thanksgiving: My brother-in-law, who had heart surgery, is out of ICU and is awake.
- **Peace for all today.**
- **Stephanie Hitztaler** and family as they await the birth of a new baby any day now.
- **Everyone who is in need of a home, food and family.**
- **43 Mexican students & families and Nigerian girls & families.** May all victims be united with families.

**Sunday, Nov. 23:**
- **Peter:** The chance now being given to some migrant people here without documents to be free from the fear of deportation, and to work.
- **Linda Ricci:** That I find a job
- **Nelson Price:** Friend and former colleague Roger Burgess in severe pain
- **Students and families traveling for Thanksgiving**
- **Robert:** Understanding others’ lot in life
- **Elise:** Prophet Jesus: I plead with you to keep my inner heart chamber lighting bright and hot!
- **Matt:** Good to be back! Thank you for the great welcome!

**CARE AND SHARE MINISTRY ASKS PRAYERS FOR:**
- Jan. 4: Patricia Gill, Norma Goel, Ted Guercio
- Jan. 11: Ernest Hemphill, Bobbie Hemphill, Douglas Hemphill, Ping Wu Hemphill
- Jan. 18: Bernie Hinds, Barbara Nunn, Eddie Nunn
- Jan. 25: Jenny Hicks, Nancy Hough, Ruth Houser, Richard Houser

**BIRTH**
- **Stephanie Hitztaler** had a baby girl Dec. 5. **Vera** — her name means “faith” in Russian — was 8 pounds, 6 ounces and 21 inches long and is doing well.

**Thanks**
- Thanks to our wonderful church community for the generosity, kindness, help and support to our friends & neighbors with the Thanksgiving bags.

**Transition to new coordinator will be a smooth one**

CONTINUED from Page 3

And I care a lot about the Friday Community here at UUMC. As a new coordinator comes in, we’ll all make sure that the transition is a smooth one. Nor am I worried about the future of the Friday Community. Many of the volunteers have said that they will do their part to make sure things run smoothly. There’s a whole lot of passion and compassion here on Friday mornings.

Respectfully submitted,
— Deb Virgo

*Interim Friday Community Coordinator*

**From Joyce Flynn:** As a church community we should be thankful that we had the opportunity to once again work together to ensure that 120 families had a lovely Thanksgiving. Your generosity, contributions of time, groceries, bags and personalized notes to the families sent a message of caring and support. Joining us in the effort again this year were our neighbors: Nancy’s Deli at 1000 E. Genesee St., and SpaZend at 719 E. Genesee St. They are very generous, community-minded businesses, and we look forward to their support again next year.

**CONTINUED from Page 1**
stalls garage doors.

Tim’s wife, Kristi, had worked for Onondaga County in economic development and was recently promoted to a position with fiscal responsibilities.

Tim has three children: Briana, 15; Dominic, 12; and McKenna, 11. He’s a big sports fan and loves fishing and snowmobiling and plays in volleyball and softball leagues. Like Don, he’s a New York Yankees fan.

Tim likes to travel and has been to Aruba, Jamaica and Mexico.

As for his duties at UUMC, Tim said he wants to “keep going what Don has done.”
Finance Corner

Pledging Update
2014 total pledges: $230,877
Paid to date: $194,797
Non-pledge contr.: $21,729

Sounds of the Spirit Campaign
Donations received $74,519
Expenses paid $70,589
Current balance $3,930

2014 Contributions
All 2014 contributions must be in the church office no later than Sunday, Dec. 28.

Any contributions received after that date will be part of your 2015 contributions and will appear on your 2015 giving statement.

Please call the church with any questions concerning your pledge or any other contribution.

Year-End Tax Planning
It is time for year-end tax planning. Please keep UUMC in mind, and remember you can pre-pay your 2015 pledge. If you would like to make a gift of appreciated stock, contact Vito Sciscioli or Gary Wood.

Altar flowers
Altar flowers were given:
- by the Hunt family with gratitude and love for family and friends
- by Jim and Deb Virgo in memory of Jim’s parents, Roderick and Dorothy Virgo
- The Thanksgiving Sunday cornucopia of vegetables was given by the Altar Guild and donated to the food pantry
- Flowers were given to Mary Klepper, Diane Tarbell and Liz Pruchnicki.
- Flowers were delivered by Margo and Don Koten.

WEEK OF DECEMBER 14
Sunday the 14th
9 a.m. Community/Church Breakfast
10 a.m. Contemporary Issues
10 a.m. Sunday School, kindergarten-12th grade
11 a.m. Worship, Rev. French, preacher; Handbell Choir
11:15 a.m. Sunday School, adults with special needs
Noon Fellowship, Gathering Rm
12:15 p.m. Advent Potluck Luncheon, Pettengill Center
Wednesday the 17th
9 a.m. Staff Meeting
7:30 p.m. Senior Choir
Friday the 19th
10 a.m. - noon Friday Community
9 a.m. Christmas pageant rehearsal

WEEK OF DECEMBER 21
Sunday the 21st
10 a.m. Contemporary Issues
10 a.m. Sunday School, kindergarten-12th grade
11 a.m. Worship, Craig French preacher; No-Fault Orchestra
11:15 a.m. Sunday School, adults with special needs
Noon Fellowship, Gathering Rm
12:15 p.m. Soup and Sermon Chat, Chappell Rm
Monday the 22nd
6 p.m. Neighborhood Christmas Dinner, Fellowship Hall
Wednesday — Christmas Eve
9 a.m. Staff Meeting
7 p.m. Christmas Eve service with pageant, candlelight
Thursday the 25th
Christmas — Office Closed
Friday the 26th
Office Closed;
No Friday Community

WEEK OF DECEMBER 28
Sunday the 28th
9 a.m. Community/Church Breakfast, Fellowship Hall
10 a.m. Contemporary Issues
11 a.m. Worship, Rev. Doug Mackey, preacher
Noon Fellowship, Gathering Rm
12:15 p.m. Soup and Sermon Chat, Chappell Rm
Wednesday the 31st
9 a.m. Staff Meeting
Thursday the 1st
New Year’s Day — Office Closed
Friday the 2nd
Office Closed
10 a.m. - noon Friday Community

WEEK OF JANUARY 4
Sunday the 4th
10 a.m. Contemporary Issues
11 a.m. Worship, Communion
10 a.m. Sunday School, kindergarten-12th grade
11:15 a.m., Sunday School, adults with special needs
Noon Fellowship, Gathering Rm
12:15 p.m. Soup and Sermon Chat, Chappell Rm
Wednesday the 7th
9 a.m. Staff Meeting
Thursday the 8th
7:30 p.m. Senior Choir
Friday the 9th
10 a.m. - noon Friday Community

Flowers and Sermon Chat:

Now available at the entrance to the fellowship hall.

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Sunday, Nov. 30, 2014 (2 photos)

Rev. French and the children discuss the change to the color purple on the First Sunday of Advent.
Elisa Sciscioli and Honey Child Soul Quintet conduct a workshop after worship on Nov. 30.
Thanksgiving Bags stuffing
Nov. 23, 2014 (8 photos)

After worship on Nov. 23, the congregation filled bags with Thanksgiving dinner fix-ins for food pantry guests — 120 families — who picked them up, along with a turkey, on Nov. 25.
Writing personalized messages for each family that gets the Thanksgiving bags.
Connections (Young Adult) Group Brunch
And Tree-Trimming at Price-Fought Home
Dec. 6, 2014 (4 photos)

Run Zhang, an SU student from China, decorates a Christmas tree for her first time ever.
Nate Medford and Deanna Dimmick are finding just the right place for each ornament.
Sungsu Lee, a medical student, helps decorate the tree.
Maddie Buckley and Josh DeHoog seem to be experts at tree decorating.