



# The Beacon

The Newsletter of  
St. Paul's  
UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
McConnellsburg, PA  
Trinity  
UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
Fort Loudon, PA

O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things!  
His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory. The  
Lord has made known his victory, he has revealed his vindication  
in the sight of the nations.

*Psalm 98:1-2*

September 2019

## Sunday School is starting UP

**St. Paul's youth Sunday school is kicking off on Sunday, September 15th.**

There will be new, exciting things going on for the kiddos!

9:30 is the start time: some of the children will be in new classes.

Our teachers are staying the same (*thank you God*)

4:00 will be the kick off event with the showing of the movie "The Pilgrim's Progress", hot dog bar and popcorn and other goodies will be served.

Stay tuned for the FALL Activity...FALL Project...SPRING Activity...SPRING Project and more!

"Unique As A Snowflake"



1 Corinthians 12:27 Lesson Plan

# Youth

The Fort Loudon-McConnellsburg Charge

United Church of Christ

228 North 2nd Street

McConnellsburg, PA 17233

STAMP



# WORSHIP

## *Blessings from the Pastor*

Each and every Sunday I pray that in our worship together, you are met here by the Holy Spirit. I pray the music touches you, the sermon speaks to you, and the liturgy "works."

The liturgy is all the stuff that makes up a service: the greeting, the call to worship, the confession, the prayers, the benediction. What makes a liturgy "work," is when those elements do what they are intended to do, when they draw us closer to God.

The term "liturgy" literally in Greek means "work for the people" but a better translation is "public service" or "public work" as the entire congregation participates in and offers the liturgy to God. Each week, I plan the liturgy to go with the scriptural theme. I find things like the "call to worship" from worship resources or write them myself.

I invited others to join me in this process as a part of a worship committee, because worship works best when people with a wide range of gifts participate in its planning. People with a gift for words and for music, for prayer and performance, for engaging with children, for design and coordination. The goal is never to be flashy, but to help create that sacred space where we can connect with God through all of our senses.

Our first conversations centered around what people thought about changes to the worship service that we made over the summer. For example, moving the prelude after the passing of the peace, trying the scripture in a dialogue format, and offering personal testimonies during our affirmation of faith. We talked about other creative ways to bring the liturgy to life.

Overwhelmingly, the feeling among participants was that before we changed or added anything, the first task was to get to the heart of what we want and need from our worship service. And, most importantly, what God wants from us and for us.

The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship recommends asking the following questions about the purpose and meaning of worship before addressing the style or practices of worship.

*How can we help our congregation to pray more honestly and deeply through the words we speak and the music that we sing together?*

*How can we proclaim the gospel message more meaningfully through preaching, music, and the arts?*

*How can we practice Christian hospitality in worship more intentionally?*

*How can we celebrate baptism and the Lord's Supper in more profound and significant ways?*

*What practices will form our congregation more richly in the contours of the Christian faith?*

*How can we improve patterns of communication among worship leaders and between our leaders and all members of the congregation?*

I hope you'll spend some time thinking about these questions and share some of your thoughts with us. We'll be working through these questions together on Sept 8 at the joint picnic following the service. I look forward to that, and to our time together on Sunday mornings.

May it be meaningful, may it be filled with the Spirit, and may it draw us more deeply into relationship with God and one another!

*"Come, Lord, stir us up and call us back. Kindle and seize us.*

*Be our fire and our sweetness. Let us love. Let us run."*

*— Augustine of Hippo, Confessions*

*Rev. Marleen Shepherd*

marleen.shepherd@gmail.com

618-521-3541

I ♥  
MY  
CHURCH

# Harm reduction ministries welcome drug users, save lives

People who use drugs may not come to mind immediately when United Church of Christ members think of values like [Extravagant Welcome](#) or [Love of Neighbor](#). A growing community of UCC people is working to change that.

In worship services and at a 2019 General Synod exhibit, they have blessed [Naloxone](#), or Narcan, which counters the effects of an opioid overdose, and trained people to use it. They have decorated needle receptacles in a local church. They have made buttons that say, "People who use drugs are beloved by God."

This [harm reduction](#) movement centers around an urge to eliminate the stigma surrounding [opioid](#) and other addictions, to help churches talk about drugs, and to recognize that people who use them have wisdom to share about saving lives and building community, whether they are able to abstain or not.

"A core value of this effort from the very beginning has been to center the voices of those with lived experience," said Mike Schuenemeyer, Executive for Health and Wholeness Advocacy Ministries in the national setting of the UCC.

## 'They do not need our pity or condemnation'

A leader of the movement is [Blyth Barnow](#), a [Pacific School of Religion](#) graduate who speaks and teaches about harm reduction all over the country and is pursuing ordination in the UCC. She helped run the Synod workshop and exhibit space, where, she said, "we distributed over 300 Naloxone kits – we ran out – trained more people than that, and gave out 450 of those buttons." She wrote a "Naloxone Saves" worship service that has been used in UCC churches around the country, including the [Amistad Chapel](#) in Cleveland on Sunday, Aug. 25. Her work even informed an [overdose victim's funeral](#) this summer.

"I have known in my gut for a long time that the church has wanted and needed a space to talk about substance use in this way," Barnow said. "Synod really confirmed that. I didn't really anticipate how it would feel for me to walk around Synod and see people I didn't know wearing the buttons, or to see how touched people were to engage with ministers in their church around substance abuse, knowing that abstinence is not always possible or where people are at yet. It was deeply meaningful."

Related ministries, such as syringe exchanges, started as early as the 1980s in response to the AIDS epidemic, and some congregations and ministers have been promoting harm reduction more recently. "What felt different to me at Synod was to have a *denomination* step in and say, 'We need to be talking about substance use through a harm-reduction lens,'" Barnow said.

Barnow got involved partly because she lost a partner to overdose 15 years ago. But for her, it's more than personal. It's systemic, and it connects with other justice issues the UCC cares about, including racism. Her teaching delves into America's long [history](#) of "racialized drug policies," ranging from the targeting of Chinese migrants in past centuries to today's disproportionate sentencing of African American and Latinx people while white people use drugs at the same rate. "Today, the administration is leveraging overdose deaths to push the dehumanizing immigration policies we see at the border," she said.

Instead of demonizing them, harm-reduction principles encourage churches to learn from people who use drugs, who themselves are the people who prevent the most overdose deaths. "Even in the midst of this current overdose crisis, people who use drugs are focused on building community and practicing safety," Barnow said. "It's about resurrecting our communities and our sense of hope. These issues that we're facing are fixable. People who use drugs are showing us the way forward. We just need to listen. Not only do they not need our pity or condemnation, they deserve our thanks."



## 'Recognizing them as made in the image of all that is good'

In churches, "drug use is an issue that people are dealing with, but folks are having a hard time articulating it," said Erica Poellot, another leader of the movement. This can be true even in churches that are progressive on many other issues, like New York City's [Judson Memorial Church](#), where she directs its [Faith and Harm Reduction](#) program, which is part of the national [Harm Reduction Coalition](#). She, too, speaks around New York City and nationally on harm reduction and helped lead the Synod workshop and exhibit activities.

Judson, affiliated with the UCC, the American Baptist Churches and the Alliance of Baptists, had a breakthrough when harm reduction was the topic of a 2017 sermon. "People had never heard drug-related issues talked about in a sacred space in that way," Poellot said. "All of a sudden we started hearing stories: a woman whose adult children were incarcerated in other states; she had never thought she was able to bring that into the church. A young man who was having trouble accessing help here locally. We'd been making safe injection kits and safe sex kits for years, but the universal thing we began to hear was that people don't know how to talk about drug use."

Poellot, herself in recovery through 12-Step programs, sees value in Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Heroin Anonymous and other similar programs that many churches host. A particular value of harm reduction is that it counteracts messages that society and the church have sent for too long. "The core of this is that we have dehumanized folks who use drugs, instead of recognizing them as made in the image of all that is good," she said.

In part through connecting with a local harm reduction agency and [drug users' union](#), Judson is now more comfortable with a visible ministry with people who use drugs, overtly welcoming them to a monthly [Agape Supper](#), for example, and including them in its leadership. Judson even overcame an initial discomfort about having safe disposal containers for syringes in the church building and wound up decorating them.

## What churches can do

Many churches could help by just considering the messages they send, said Peggy Matteson, Commissioned Minister of Congregational Health with the Rhode Island Conference of the UCC. Language can stigmatize people in congregations who use drugs or have family members who do.

The stigma is similar to the shame sometimes attached to mental illness. "How many people are walking around with depression but are not asking for help because they are ashamed to?" Matteson said. "There are people who are addicted to opioids and can't go off them. The drug has become a vital part of their ability to function, but they can't tell anybody." A friend of hers, for example, was rear-ended by a drunk driver 20 years ago. Pain management for her severe injuries includes a steady level of legally prescribed opioids. Neither she nor other drug users deserve stigma, Matteson said.

Matteson and her colleagues in the UCC's national [Wellness Ministries](#) and [Faith Community Nurse Network](#) offer [resources](#) for churches that want to do better. She especially recommends the [Opioid Epidemic Practical Toolkit](#) from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

A family member's experience using Naloxone to rescue overdose victims motivated Alan Stivers of First Congregational UCC, Palo Alto, Calif., to get involved. His in-law in Ohio saved the lives of one person in the big-box store where she works as a security manager, another in the store parking lot, and one more at – of all places – a medical school commencement. "When people are OD'ing at a medical school graduation, something's really off the rails," Stivers said.



Stivers said a friend who runs large county health programs in California told him, "The most important factor is whether the recovering addict has a stigma-free relationship with someone who can help them get through." "I thought that would be a good role for congregations of the UCC," Stivers said. After conversations with national staff members, Stivers and his wife, Carole, contributed financially to the Synod workshop and exhibit, and provided seed money for the nascent Overdose and Drug Use Ministries work of the UCC's [Health and Wholeness Ministries](#).

Fighting stigma and amplifying the voices of those who use drugs will continue to be essential, said Schuenemeyer. "Working in this way is an important part of the legacy of the United Church of Christ," he said. "The stories of people's lives – the wisdom gleaned from people's acts of resistance to injustice and their resilience in response to adversities and marginalization – have provided deep insights into moving forward. In the brief time we have been working on this project, we have already witnessed the ways such accompaniment and solidarity open the way to healing and transformation."

**This and other articles can be found at [ucc.org](http://ucc.org)**



*Congrats to Trinity United Church of Christ for another great year!*



## *9th Annual Peach Festival*

From its small start to a regional draw attracting 100 vendors to Fort Loudon, Trinity's Peach Festival August 17, 2019 was an astounding success!



A special thank you to the many members who gave their time and effort to make it such a great event!





**2019**

# SEPTEMBER

- 1 Linda McLucas  
7 Amber Myers  
Jason Fox, Jr.  
8 Sam Rotz  
Shari Washabaugh  
10 Leah Hamil  
14 Reese Alexander  
17 Sam Burns  
Jeff Zeis  
18 Elizabeth Kerlin  
20 Joe Rotz  
23 Barb Bricker  
24 Kathy Hess  
25 Jerry Armstrong  
26 Ricky Lake II  
28 Troy Ott  
Richard Sheffield  
29 Ryan Koontz  
30 Linda Weller

happy  
Birthday

**Trinity's Ushers:**

**Ann and Percy Hays**

**St. Paul's Ushers:**

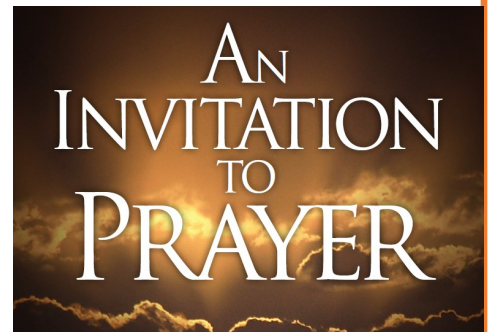
**Kirk Cover and Jack Glazier**

**St. Paul's Flowers:**

**Denise Mellott**



**Charlie Pryor  
Bill and Ann Hays  
Donna Keefer  
Betty Keefer  
Barb Hurst and family  
Corinna Rotz and family, Ryder, Korbyn  
Mary Haubrick  
Skip and Betty Daniels  
Pam and Denny Carmack  
Darren Hamil  
Nicole Hummel  
Carl and Carol Mellott  
Evelyn Zeis and family  
Dennis Hess  
Robert Door  
Nancy Barmont  
Sawyer and Jan Bye family  
Meril Fetters  
Military and families  
All Sunday school classes  
Our Church & ministries  
Prayers for the following pregnancies:  
Jenna (Armstrong) Wilhelm  
Bethany (Crouse) Wynn  
Amanda Zeis  
Kara Hess  
Bill Anderson  
Chase Andrews  
Tyler Long**



*If you have any additions or corrections to the prayer list or the birthday list, please contact the church office.*



*If you would like to get your newsletter emailed to you, please send an email with your name to: [mc Bucc@embarqmail.com](mailto:mc Bucc@embarqmail.com) and help us save paper and postage. Thank You!*

# 2019



# SEPTEMBER

Wednesday, September 4

Pool Party and Ernie's and Denise's, 5:30 p.m.

Friday, September 6

Fueled Youth Group...starting back up...6:00-8:00 p.m.

Saturday, September 7

All 6th—12th graders!!! Todd and Renee's home

Free Community Meal in Fort Loudon, 4:30 p.m.-?

Sunday, September 8

Joint Worship and Picnic at the Garber farm, 11:00 a.m.

Tuesday, September 10

Trinity Consistory meet, 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, September 15

4:00 will be the kick off event with the showing of the movie "The Pilgrim's Progress", hot dog bar and popcorn and other goodies will be served.

Tuesday, September 17

St. Paul's Consistory meet, 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, September 18

Trinity Worship Planning Group 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, September 22

Bethany and Alex Wynn's Baby Shower 1 p.m.

Sunday, October 6

Thank Offering

Saturday, October 12

Trinity Fall Potpie Supper

## *Things to be on the look out for...*



**St. Paul's UCC**

228 N Second Street, McConnellsburg, PA 17233

(717)-485-5554\*\*\*mcbucc@embarqmail.com

Facebook & [www.uccmccbg.weebly.com](http://www.uccmccbg.weebly.com)

**Trinity UCC**

P.O. Box 253

13189 Main Street, Fort Loudon, PA 17224

(717)-369-4773\*\*\*Find Us on Facebook

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