



NEW CREATION NEWS

Mar. ~ Apr. 2025

St. Peter's United Church of Christ

1475 Orchard Park Rd., West Seneca, NY 14224

(716) 674-1233 • stpetersws@gmail.com • www.st-petersucc.org

PASTORAL PONDERINGS

March 5th begins the season of Lent in the Christian church. We remember the long forty days of Jesus being tempted. There are numerous times when he is tempted to betray the love of God and the calling as the son of God. Some of us may remember giving something up for Lent. I don't remember doing that as a child. I think my parents said that was a Catholic thing, but I have over a few times as an adult, wondering if it would make a difference in my life. Of course, giving up something that you really do enjoy in order that you can pray and draw closer to God, is the more important reason to give it up. The goal is that when you really want what you gave up for the forty days, you pray more or study the bible more or meditate more. It's not to complain about it or brag about it, it is to draw closer to God, to relate in a small way what Jesus went through. It is to experience the pain, the angst of his last days on earth, to really celebrate the resurrection when it finally comes and to experience the gifts of joy and blessing.

It's always nice to see young families in worship. We have a young family with a two year old, the Mom's great aunt was active here years ago. February 16, we had a young family with two boys (4 and 6 years old), whose Mom was raised in the church through her teenage years. They stayed for fellowship hour and I and several people chatted with them. There is also a 3 year old, who comes frequently. That is enough, especially if they all come the same Sunday, to make a class for a half hour or less during worship following a children's time with them. The Council members are contemplating how we will do that. It's one of those "good problems", especially if all of them come all the time.

We will not be having an Ash Wednesday service but we will have a Maundy Thursday service at 7 pm on April 17th and a light breakfast at 9 am on Easter Sunday. On Easter Sunday, you are welcome to bring potted plants for the service, placing them on the railing and then take them home. We will again decorate the cross with fresh flowers and I encourage you to remember to bring a flower or a few. I am trusting the weather will be much more pleasant and maybe we can actually bring our own flowers from our yard this year.

Please come and celebrate this special Christian holiday.
Pastor Paula

St. Peter's Council 2025

- DEACONS:** Marina Heppner, President
Kathy Reandeau, Treasurer
Christel Kasprzak, Secretary
Donna Albert
- ELDERS:** Sandy Fiegl, Vice President
Sue Beier, Financial Secretary
Karen Buranich
Paul Gannon
- TRUSTEES:** Linda Richards
Brian Welsh

Installation of Church Council 2/23/25

(Paul Gannon is missing from photo)



CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: *Please call ahead.
The church office hours are Monday - Thursday from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. The office is closed on Fridays.

PASTOR OFFICE HOURS: *Please call ahead.
Rev. Paula will be in the office on Tuesdays from 10:00 am - 12:30 pm and Thursdays from 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm.

PASTORAL CARE
Rev. Paula Gustafson is available to provide pastoral care for members of St. Peter's congregation. Rev. Paula can be reached by phone at 716-476-9261 or by email at pastorpaula2021@gmail.com.

COUNCIL CORNER

Your Church Council hopes that everyone is prospering in this new and exciting year of 2025. As we contemplate the meaning of the Lenten season, we hope that it will be a journey of reflection for you individually as congregation members and for St. Peter's UCC as a church family.

We want to thank everyone for their thoughtful and supportive attendance at our Annual Meeting on February 2. Although the news of a final closing date for the sale was bitter-sweet, it does give us the flexibility to move forward in new directions. A committee is being formed to ideate ways to use this money to secure our future. Please let any Council member know if you want to participate. As part of the annual meeting, Council president, Marina Heppner also conducted a brief survey to gauge the spirit of the church. The results were heartening:

1. What brought you to St. Peter's?
Answers: Pastor Paula, my parents, Nancy, recommendation, friendly, warmth of people
2. How did you first come?
Answers: Marty Hamman, Rod Tolley came up and said hi.
3. What keeps you coming?
Answers: Music, people, Pastor Paula, spirit, fellowship, food
4. What do we do right?
Answers: Friendly, fellowship, welcoming, mission work, we punch above our weight, Pastor talks real life.
5. What could we do better?
Answers: Turn the heat on in the fellowship hall!

Council is working to vision a renewed future for St. Peter's based on the strengths we already have. We welcome your ideas; please give your thoughts to any Council member of ways we can strengthen our fellowship, grow as a church community, and build on the solid foundation we have. Help us spread the word in South Buffalo and the South Towns to let them know we exist. Have faith in our future and be part of making our vision become a reality!

As part of our commitment to do good, be good, and love one another, there will be a mission project in support of Church World Service efforts during the Lenten season. Let's make sure everyone knows what St. Peter's is doing.

We need your help in many ways to keep St. Peter's functioning. Sign up to bring Altar Flowers, serve as a greeter on Sunday mornings, join a monthly Game Night

(and bring a friend!), or participate in hosting a monthly fellowship gathering after worship. Please sign up if you are interested in any of these activities, or see a Council member if you have any questions. Upcoming Council meetings are scheduled for March 19, April 21, May 19 and June 16 at 7:00 p.m., with an Open Forum until 7:15. A blessed Lenten season and joyous resurrection celebration to all!

ENCIRCLING IN OUR PRAYERS...

FOR GOD'S HEALING

Renae Johnson; Marge Applebach; Esther Woltz; John Sworen; Chuck and Irene Brooks; Tim and Sue Schrader; Milton and Elenore Keim; Janet Hunt; Audrey Seaman; Dorothy Probst; Esther Heppner; Rod Tolley; Prayers for those lost, injured and traumatized by the mass shootings across the U.S.; Continued prayers for the people of Ukraine, Sudan, and the Middle East.

FOR GOD'S PRESENCE

For **those in the hospital and with medical problems** known only to God and their loved ones.

For **all victims of violence**.

For all **Gold Star parents** – those who have lost sons or daughters in the military—may God be with them and comfort them in their time of loss.

FOR THOSE IN SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY:

Earle C. Heusinger III ★★ ★ Army

Justin Hurlburt ★★ ★ Army National Guard

Jacob Kruwel ★★ ★ Army

Kristin McDermott ★★ ★ Navy

Caleb Tolley ★★ ★ Air Force

Holly Tolley ★★ ★ Air Force

Jack Welsh ★★ ★ Marine Corps

**And for all firefighters, EMTs, law enforcement
& border officers.**



St. Peter's UCC....

Faith, Fellowship and Service

Faith in Christ,

Welcoming **Fellowship**

and Loving **Service**



MISSION MUSINGS

Submitted by
Kathy Reandeau

Sharing Christ's love and peace with all!

As I write, it is cold and windy outside, which makes us think more hopefully about spring – it really can't come soon enough! Spring, Lent and Easter are about rebirth, renewal and looking forward. I think that applies to our focus on mission outreach as well. This year we are going to provide our usual Easter dinners to those in the community. I will supply more information on that in church and through emails. I have also brought back the idea of a Church World Service Lenten mission project. There is more information in another section of the newsletter, but we will be collecting money to purchase blankets and care items to create hygiene kits. I hope to collect items every week and then set up a time to collate all the kits, but look forward to your enthusiastic participation in this effort!

SIERRA LEONE/JERICHO ROAD GLOBAL OUTREACH:

Phebian Abdulai continues her medical mission at the Adama Martha Memorial Community Health Center in Sierra Leone. Thank you for supporting this life-transforming work by donating money through the bi-monthly envelopes and gently-used clothing to the clothing shed. Learn more at <https://www.jrchc.org> and visit the global work tab.

Jericho Road has also established medical missions in other areas, based on this successful model. One of these is in Goma, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is in the midst of serious regional tensions. Jericho Road reports that, "The situation remains critical, but our dedicated staff is staying safe and doing everything they can to support those in need. Their resilience in the face of hardship is truly inspiring."

PLYMOUTH CROSSROADS:

Plymouth Crossroads provides a bright future for young men who may not have anywhere else to go. In 2024 they were the Charity of the Year for the Western New York Federal Credit Union, and recently received their last donation from that association. The Western New York Insurance Association asked Plymouth Crossroads to present at its February 28 Luncheon Meeting, where they shared the mission of Plymouth Crossroads, and discussed ways the Association can help. The Buffalo Niagara Association of REALTORS, Inc. named Plymouth as their 2025 BNAR



President's Charity, and interviewed Jenn McAndrew and Donell Gibson recently. You can listen to that audio at: <https://youtu.be/DOga4yR1pYQ?si=Wy6U0YltIbh4fHN0>. Visit www.plymouthcrossroads.org for more info.

CLOTHING SHED: The clothing shed collects and redistributes gently-used clothing to organizations and people all over the world, and it continues to receive a great deal of donations every week. We use funds raised to support Phebian Abdulai's work in Sierra Leone. **DO NOT** put any household items, pillows, electronics, toys, or books in the shed!

FOOD PANTRY: The food pantry helps address emergency food insecurity issues in our church or community, and will fill in any additional needs for the Easter dinners. Please put any donations in the barrel in the glass vestibule during church office hours, or contact Kathy Reandeau for a pick-up. Please contact me if you know of anyone in need of food.

NY/HELP HONDURAS: Since 1989, NY/HELP Honduras has been working with the indigenous people of La Laguna and surrounding communities to help them empower and improve their lives in these remote mountain communities. For information about mission work in Honduras, contact Ginger Comstock [gkcomstock@gmail.com], David Makepeace [dmake8@yahoo.com], or Judy Toner [jactoner45@twcny.rr.com]. Donations gratefully accepted at: NY/HELP, c/o Arcade UCC, PO Box 95, Arcade NY 14009. Make checks payable to NY/HELP.

CHURCHES IN ACTION:

CIA is a Southtowns organization that was started to help churches of different denominations work together to serve neighbors in need. In early February, they helped settle two families into new homes in the same building! One family of three moved into the upper apartment, while another family of three settled into the lower apartment. This effort came together quickly after a last-minute request on Tuesday, and by Friday both apartments were fully furnished and ready for their new residents. Follow them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ChurchesinAction>.



10th Anniversary of Phebian Abdulai's Medical Mission in Sierra Leone

Jericho Road Community Health Center recently made a Facebook post about the 10th anniversary of its Global Work in Sierra Leone. We remember that Phebian and her family arrived as refugees from Sierra Leone in 2001, and became part of the St. Peter's family. She eventually joined Jericho Road in its Buffalo clinic as a nurse. In 2013, she made the momentous decision to return to her home country, making her dream of building a medical clinic there a dream for so many of us here. Her first clinic, the Adama Martha Memorial Community Health Center, went up in 2015. Now, there are three clinics, a high-risk pregnancy center, and various social programs. Phebian's courage, determination, and love for our Sierra Leonean neighbors humble us and serve as examples of God's work in our global community. St. Peter's continues to support Phebian's medical mission through our bi-monthly offering envelopes and contributions to the clothing shed.

In honor of the ten years of service, a huge celebration was held in Sierra Leone. Words from Dr. Glick:

By God's Grace.

From 1991-2002 a fierce and brutal civil war tore apart the country of Sierra Leone. This war took the lives of more than 70,000, caused the displacement of 2.5 million and left thousands of amputees and countless Sierra Leonians traumatized. Colonialism, greed for power and the world's insatiable appetite for diamonds were all to blame for the devastation left behind by this war. The heart of the war was fought in Kono District which is the center of diamond mining in this nation.

It was in Kono District where Phebian Abdulai (Clinic Director) was born and raised. In the aftermath, Phebian and her young family fled and eventually, in 2001, ended up sitting in the waiting room of a small fledging family medical practice on the westside of Buffalo called Jericho Road. This began a relationship that eventually led us to follow Phebian back home in 2013 and to help her construct a health center. This clinic was literally built on land right near her family home, which was, by then, littered with empty, burned-out buildings from the war. In 2015, the Adama Martha Memorial Community Health Center was born (AMMCHC).

By God's Grace.

This week, Paul Violanti, Karlin Bacher, Fidele Menavanza, Joyce, and I took the long journey from Buffalo to this amazing place to celebrate the 10-year anniversary (Phebian's children Martha, Ruth and Emmanuel also traveled here for the occasion – see photo – many people from St. Peter's fondly remember their joyful smiles). It is a special time to travel here with

the JR people who have invested so much to birth and lead our global health work and to celebrate together with the woman, Phebian, whose courage made this all possible. Our time here has been a real celebration.

On Friday evening there was a 3-mile candlelight march through the heart of Koidu City with several hundred JR staff and community friends. The wind blew out our candles and vehicle traffic came too close for comfort but it was great to feel the excitement for this work.

On Saturday, we celebrated together with a 16-kilometer race (which is a little under 10 miles and yes, in the morning heat and sun, I completed the race thanks to the encouragement of several Sierra Leonian friends). In the afternoon, we had a soccer match on the main field in Koidu (I got to do the ceremonial first kick!).

Today (Sunday), we expect 300-400 community members, local dignitaries, and friends to gather here at AMMCHC for a thanks-giving service.

The health center grounds have been transformed to prepare for this service and for the past 24 hours our staff and community members have been preparing a meal for everyone using an outdoor cooking fire. It is possible that the celebration will go long with too many speeches, but what a privilege to be here to celebrate 10 years of God's faithfulness to Jericho Road in rural Sierra Leone. It will be an emotional service.

By God's Grace.

I have always thought that the impact of this special place would be measured by the much-needed health care that we can bring to this community—where many of the poorest here live off the equivalent of 1-2 dollars per day. And we have made a huge difference. Since opening 10 years ago, the AMMCHC team has done more than 256,000 patient visits, performed thousands of hernia repairs, and delivered thousands of babies. There is no question that many lives have been saved and that daily, this team has demonstrated the Love of Jesus to the people of Kono.

But there is more. This community was torn apart by the civil war. Death, destruction, and trauma devastated Kono District. The very fabric of the community was ripped apart. Families were left torn apart, it was hard to find a job, entire systems were broken. Hope was in short supply.

As I have witnessed the celebrations this week, I have a new appreciation for the profound ways that the work of Jericho Road has brought hope and healing to this community beyond the provision of medical services.

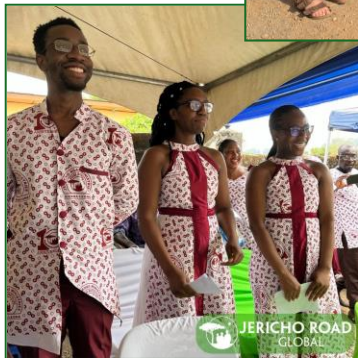
More than one hundred local people have jobs here. Their salaries provide sustenance for themselves but also for family members and neighbors. Every building at

AMMCHC was built with local workers. As I have watched the community march through the streets of Koidu, run a 10-mile race, play soccer, prepare food for hundreds, and come together for a thanks-giving service, I have realized that this work has brought a deep sense of pride, hope and joy that is hard for me to express in writing but is so easy to recognize in person. The fabric of this community is being rebuilt partly because of the work of Jericho Road.

Someone here told me a long time ago that "The civil war took everything from us. But the one good thing that came of the war was that Phebian came home and brought Jericho Road with her."

By God's Grace.

Myron Glick, MD



SERMON THOUGHTS FOR A NEW YEAR



We celebrated Epiphany, also known as Three Kings' Day, early in January by thinking about the three wise men's visit to baby Jesus. Like them, we should be seeking Jesus in our daily existence, living consistently in love on a long-term basis.

Each following Sunday is then observed as the "first, second, etc. after Epiphany." Let this be a time of patient waiting and faithful watching, when we do not grow tired in doing what is right. Let's look toward the goals and good God is calling us to and the faith projects before us.

What are we called to be as Christians? Let us proclaim the good news, and become leaders in a world that needs kindness, goodness, and love.

Ask, "What does God want for me in this moment?" God does not leave us, but we may leave him. Jesus' message is that "The Lord has chosen me. We are called to be the people who are His church. Be loving and kind to ourselves and one another." Exalt in His "Amazing Grace!"

Listen to what God is calling us to do, as everyone makes a difference in the life of the church.

We hear Jesus' call to "Come with me and I will make you fishers of men," and wonder what would happen if He got into our "boat" today. Do we look for opportunities to be of service in our daily activities? We can use what we have to help wherever we are right now. Reach out to others in need and offer hope.

The scriptures challenge us to make this world the kind of place God can come to. We were put on this earth to make the world different. We need to have God-sized dreams to alter the landscape so that it more closely resembles the kingdom of God. Remember what God can do with those who dare to dream big! Dream On. Work On. Don't Give Up!



**Sunday,
March 9,
at 2:00 a.m.**

Turn your clocks ahead one hour.

FAITH IN ACTION!

Submitted by Kathy Reandeau

Lenten Mission Project: Similar to projects we have taken on in the past, we will participate in two collections this year through Church World Service (CWS):

- **Blanket The World in Love:** By supporting the CWS Blankets program, we can offer more than just warmth; we can provide hope and love to those facing challenging times. 27,275 CWS Blankets were shared with people in need in 2024, thanks to generous donors like St. Peter's. This is a fund-raising program, where we hope to raise enough funds to buy 100 blankets by the end of April. I have requested promotional materials, and will have more details shortly.
- **CWS Hygiene Kits:** 30,580 Hygiene Kits were shared with people in need in 2024. For this program, we will collect enough items to complete 100 Hygiene Kits by the end of April. This can be accomplished by collecting specific items during each week of Lent, or by purchasing enough items at once to assemble a complete kit. We will set a date after Easter to fill all our kits. We already have the necessary washcloths, thanks to a very generous donor! Additional requested items and suggested donation dates:
 - March 9: Fingernail or toenail clipper (packaging removed)
 - March 16: Toothbrush (in original packing) and travel-size toothpaste (3.4 oz. or less, expiration date of 1 year)
 - March 23: Bath-size bar of soap (in original packaging)
 - March 30: Travel-size deodorant (3.4 oz. or less, non-aerosol)
 - April 6: Travel-size lotion (3.4 oz. or less, fragrance-free, NEW only)
 - April 13 (Palm Sunday): Travel-size shampoo (3.4 oz. or less, NEW only)
 - April 20 (Easter Sunday): Sturdy wide-tooth comb (6" minimum teeth, packaging removed)

During a January worship service, I mentioned a number of mission opportunities to make an impact in our world. I shared some time-sensitive items in a church-wide email, and also in my "Mission Musings," but here are other organizations if you are interested in doing more faith-based deeds:

- **UCC Climate Hope Youth Art Contest:** The theme this year is "Planting Seeds of Hope." Submissions accepted through March 14.

<https://www.ucc.org/the-uccs-2025-climate-hope-art-contest>.

- **Plymouth Crossroads:** Welcomes disconnected, abused and homeless youth males ages 16-20. This transitional program offers support for education, job training & placement and life skills support at no cost to the youth. <https://www.plymouthcrossroads.org>
- **Family Promise of Western New York:** Helps families experiencing homelessness find their way back home. See items for their Housewarming Starter Kit at <https://fpwny.org/housewarming-starter-kit>
- **WNY Refugee Partnership:** Collaborative project envisioned by local agencies that serve refugees and immigrants- Catholic Charities of Buffalo, International Institute of Buffalo, Jericho Road Community Health Center, Jewish Family Services of WNY, and Journey's End Refugee Services. There are 731 recently-arrived refugees in Western New York who are at risk. <https://www.refugeepartnership.org>
- **Kevin Guest House:** Keeps families together by providing a comfortable and supportive home away from home for patients and their families traveling to WNY for medical care. <https://kevinguesthouse.com>
- **Heifer International:** Supports smallholder farmers to sustainably address hunger and poverty in their communities while caring for the Earth. <https://www.heifer.org>
- **Local Organizations:** Learn more about the far-reaching work of the West Seneca Lions Club and the Rotary Club of West Seneca.
- **Friends of Night People:** Helps the poor, homeless and destitute in Buffalo by providing food, clothing, medical care, counseling and hope to those in need. <https://friendsofnightpeople.com>
- **St. Lukes Mission of Mercy:** Independent Mission in the Catholic tradition doing the works of mercy for the needy in Western New York. <https://www.stlukesmissionofmercy.org>

Contact Kathy Reandeau at 716-818-3086 or kreandeau57@gmail.com for further information.



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

MARCH	7	Rod Tolley
	25	Karen Buranich
APRIL	3	Noreen Fruchtel
	19	Paul Gannon
	21	Marjorie Beers
	22	Donna Albert

Join us every Sunday at 10:00 am
for in-person worship service.
All are welcome.

FELLOWSHIP HOUR

We will continue to have Fellowship Hour once a month after worship service; on the third Sunday of each month. Coffee, tea, and hot chocolate will be served during winter months while iced tea, lemonade, and cold drinks will be served during the warmer months.



All are welcome and we hope you will join us!



- Palm Sunday – April 13 at 10 am**
- Maundy Thursday – April 17 at 7 pm**
- Easter Light Refreshments – April 20 at 9 am**
- Easter Sunday Worship – April 20 at 10 am**
- Food & Wine Pairing – April 27 at 5 pm**
- Memorial Candle Cross – May 25 at 10 am**

Please note: there will be NO Ash Wednesday service.



Game Night is Back!!



Looking for something fun to do on a Friday night? Once a month we get together to share a night of friendly fun and games. Grab your family and friends, then come join us for **GAME NIGHT!** The fun begins at 7:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. **All are welcome!**

Bring your favorite games, snacks, and beverages to share.

March 21 | April 18 | May 16

FOOD & WINE PAIRING

SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 2025

Doors open at 4:30 p.m. Dinner served at 5:00 p.m.

\$75 per ticket*

Includes appetizers, entrée and dessert
each paired with a glass of wine
*Gratuity not included

BRAVO CAFÉ & CATERING

5781 Seneca Street, Elma NY

For tickets call (716) 674-1233

Proceeds to benefit St. Peter's United Church of Christ

For the health and safety of all our beloved members of the congregation, please remember that if you are feeling ill you should stay home, rest, and join us for worship through our Facebook Live feed.

MAUNDY THURSDAY – APRIL 17

Maundy Thursday is a time to reflect on the Last Supper, that time when Jesus served his disciples with feet washing and a meal. We prepare our hearts and minds for the Good Friday story, finding the sadness of Jesus on the cross. The service starts at 7:00 pm and we will be serving altar communion at this service.

**EASTER SUNDAY – APRIL 20**

We will be celebrating the gift of the resurrection with special music, reading the Easter story and a meditation. Remember to bring a live flower and place it on the empty cross on the chancel. Church Council members will provide light refreshments at 9:00 am. With all the sadness and defeat, Jesus rose from the dead to proclaim God's love for each of us. If ever there was a time to be reminded that Christ rose from the dead to bring us salvation and new life, it would be now. This is a good service to bring a family member or a friend to.



*Billboard
by
Karen
Buranich*



Display case by Christel Kasprzak

Lent

**W.S. Community of Churches Lenten Journey 2025:**

- Services will be held at 7:00 pm on four Wednesdays
- This year's theme is "Renewed By Hope"
- Free-will offerings will be collected, with all proceeds going to the upcoming CROP WALK (cropwalkhunger.org) and the Seneca Street CDC, a local program for children.

March 12 at Ebenezer UCC on Main St.

Speaker is Rev. Rebecca Allis from Agape UMC

March 19 at St. John Lutheran Church on Clinton St.

Speaker is Rev. Gary Gossel from Ebenezer UCC

March 26 at St. David's Episcopal Church on Seneca St.

Speaker is Parochial Vicar Sam Giangreco from the West Seneca Family of Roman Catholic Churches

April 2 at Queen of Heaven RC Church on Seneca St.

Speaker is Rev. Claudia Scheda

St. Pauly Textile, Inc.

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! We're excited to share with you the impact your clothing shed made over the last year...

- 46,821 pounds of clothing were donated to your shed in 2024
- This was enough to clothe an estimated 8,625 people all over the world
- Based on this volume of clothing, your organization received \$1,873

Thank you so much for everything you, your volunteers, and your communities do to support the clothing shed program!

Sincerely,
The Team at St. Pauly Textile, Inc.

FAITH, FELLOWSHIP, SERVICE SNAPSHOTS

