



From the Moderator

April 25th at 10:45 am Congregational Meeting

for the purpose of **VOTING** on the Search Committee's recommendation to approve Reverend Richard G. Reed as the permanent, part time pastor of TUCC

This is a reminder: Congregational Meeting Scheduled for April 25th

Preparation for the April 25, 2021 Congregational Meeting

Information for Members of TUCC

A congregational meeting has been scheduled for 10:45 AM on April 25th for the purpose of voting on the Search Committee's recommendation to approve Reverend Richard G. Reed as the permanent, part time pastor of Tully United Community Church. The meeting will be available on Zoom. A quorum of 10% of the Church Membership is required for business to be conducted. Voting will be done with paper ballots or chat voting via Zoom

Questions can be directed to members of the Church Council.

Prayer and Reflection is Needed!

The pastoral selection process is a spiritual exercise in discerning God's will for the TUCC congregation.

Hiring Package

The Church Council, Search Committee and Reverend Richard G. Reed have agreed to this hiring package:

A part time position for 30 hours per week (Salary plus payroll taxes for Medicare and Social Security)

Residence in the parsonage with the church paying utilities

4 weeks (30 hours each) of paid vacation

Continuing Education, Books, Periodicals, Resources - \$1000 Annually

Automobile at \$.55 per mile (Upper limit – 9000 miles annually)

Full Answers to TUCC Search Committee Questions 2021

Reverend Richard G. Reed

1. What excites you about becoming our settled pastor?

The interim period is all about maintenance; keeping the church running, preaching on Sundays, performing the occasional wedding or funeral, providing some guidance in the interim. In this extended interim period, I fell in love again with pastoral ministry – specifically with this congregation. And I found that the congregation, by and large, was desirous of having me stay on for a bit as more than an interim pastor.

Just before the pandemic hit and caused us to retreat to isolated and socially distanced forms of being the church, the Transition Team and Leon Oaks-Lee led us in a wonderful afternoon of visioning. And I was, and still am, excited about the ideas expressed and the energy that was generated around these ministry possibilities. I wrote them down and they are on my desk in the office. I look at them from time to time and my mind begins to churn and the visions of what might be begin to come into focus. That's exciting. I wish to be a part of that. I am anxious to get started.

2. What concerns you, if anything, about becoming our settled pastor?

I will say that I hope this long period of indecision and this protracted search process is not indicative of how we will be moving forward once settled. We need to be of one mind. It only takes one or two to distract us from our mission, to frustrate our efforts, or to cause us to lose focus. It is time to move ahead. My mentor, friend and colleague in ministry, Walt Griffith, used to say: "Everyone gets their say, no one gets their way." We each have our opinions, and it is important for each and all to express them. But then we make a decision as a congregation and we move ahead based on that decision, each doing his or her own part to support and promote the whole in doing the ministry of Jesus Christ in this place.

The Apostle Paul wrote in his Second letter to the Church at Corinth (The Message Version):

"Companions as we are in this work with you, we beg you, please don't squander one bit of this marvelous life God has given us. God reminds us,

I heard your call in the nick of time;
The day you needed me, I was there to help.

Well, now is the right time to listen, the day to be helped. Don't put it off; don't frustrate God's work by showing up late, throwing a question mark over everything we're doing. Our work as God's servants gets validated—or not—in the details. People are watching us as we stay at our post, alertly, unswervingly . . . in hard times, tough times, bad times; when we're beaten up, jailed, and mobbed; working hard, working late, working without eating; with pure heart, clear head, steady hand; in gentleness, holiness, and honest love; when we're telling the truth, and when God's showing his power; when we're doing our best setting things right; when we're praised, and when we're blamed; slandered, and honored; true to our word, though distrusted; ignored by the world, but recognized by God; terrifically alive, though rumored to be dead; beaten within an inch of our lives, but refusing to die; immersed in tears, yet always filled with deep joy; living on handouts, yet enriching many; having nothing, having it all." (Second Corinthians 6:1-10)

Or as John Wayne said: "Slap some bacon on a biscuit and let's go. We're burnin' daylight!"

3. What is the most exciting aspect of ministry for you?

Helping people make connections. Connecting with people on a personal level. Helping people connect with one another. Connecting people with God. Helping connect with our environment. Encouraging people to connect with their truest self, their deepest longings, their highest ideals and potential. Jesus

said, “I have come to give life, and give it more abundantly.” He sent his disciples, and by extension, sends us, his modern day disciples, to “teach and preach and heal.” This is all about the connections we make. This is about the relationship that God wishes to have with the creation and wishes for the creation to share. The longer I am alive and in ministry, the more excited I get with exploring and promoting this interconnectedness with God and creation.

4. How do you go about developing a sermon?

Theologian Karl Barth, said: “Take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible.” (Time Magazine, May 1, 1966.) I learned this quote early on in my studies at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary (now named Palmer Seminary and part of Eastern University) and it is the basis of every sermon that I write. Even prior to learning this in seminary, the motto of my alma mater, Eastern (College) University is, “The Whole Gospel, for the Whole World.” Attending a private Christian college and then a Baptist seminary, I learned that the Good News is about more than saving souls and the grace of God is for more than just those who consider themselves saved.

I was a sociology major at Eastern. I ended up doing a double major in Sociology and in Religion, actually. And Tony Campolo was my advisor and mentor and the reason I majored in sociology. I say that one can explain the differences in a Keith Wimmersberger style sermon and my sermons by understanding that Keith was a philosophy major and I a sociology major. I understand the world through the lens of social interactions, popular culture, and social structures and norms. So when I read a Biblical passage, these are the questions I begin asking: Who is the writer of this passage? How was the passage conveyed (in verbal form? Written form?)? Who were they writing to? Who are the actors in this passage? How did they understand their world? Their culture? God? What were the known cultural norms of the time? What was happening in the broader world around them and how did that affect them? What are the themes in the story that are common to our place and time? What difference did this make to them? What difference does it make to us?

I learned long ago how easy it is to get into a preaching rut; sticking to favorite passages and neglecting the rest. In talking with fellow preachers of other Christian traditions, I learned how freeing the lectionary can be. That seems contradictory in that the Common Lectionary is a three year cycle of Old Testament, New Testament, Psalm and Gospel readings that are assigned for each Sunday and special Holy Day of the year. The freeing part of it, though, is that one doesn't have to try to think of a scripture passage that goes along with what one wants to preach about. Such proof-texting is really frowned upon anyway, since it often ends up more about what the preacher wants to tell the congregation instead of how God, through the Holy Spirit, wants to encourage the congregation through the preaching of the pastor. Well, preachers can and do continue to debate the efficacy of using the Common Lectionary. I use it – that is, I follow the lectionary and allow it to speak the Word through me to the people of God.

I enjoy reading what commentators have to say about the different lectionary passages for the day. Thank God for the internet – we preachers used to have to purchase an entire array of commentaries, rather like buying Encyclopedia Britannica, and haul them around with us wherever we went. Now the thoughts of numerous Biblical scholars are available to read and compare without having to purchase great tomes of often outdated material.

Word studies are also important and useful. What is the generally accepted meaning of a word in its original language? How is the word being translated into our language and what are the limitations that may present? How was a particular word used in the context of the passage and by the broader world

at the time? How has the translation of a particular word changed over time? How has a deeper understanding of the context of a passage or of the culture helped us to translate the word?

Reading what commentators have to say and considering words often leads to other passages of scripture that deal with the same theme – especially a passage from one of the Gospels. On my desk is a book called *The Synoptic Gospels* and across the pages are a particular passage from one Gospel, where that passage can be found in the other three Gospels, and how the passage is written in the other Gospels.

I think preachers tend to like to hear or read what other preachers have to say; to ponder the ways they express the Word of God on a given passage or a lectionary quartet. So I read sermons of other pastors. Sometimes they help me to develop an outline for a sermon. Sometimes I gain a story or a quote that is useful. Often they encourage ideas.

Along with this, I consider the use of outside sources; poetry, prose, inspirational stories, hymn lyrics, etc., as means to illustrate a sermon theme.

Prayer is an important part of this whole process. Asking God's help, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to discern what Word God has for this congregation, for the Church, for the world. Remember, it is the Whole Gospel for the Whole World. A sermon may be for a specific congregation of people, but it is proclamation of God's Word to the World. I pray Psalm 19:14 "May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."

In preaching class in seminary, we learned to make use of a "hook" at the beginning of a sermon. Like a hook is used to catch a fish, a sermon hook is a story, a joke, an object that gets the listener's attention and "hooks" them into hearing the sermon by causing them to ponder what the hook has to do with the sermon. The hook, I think, is most effectively used if it can be a recurring theme throughout the sermon. Sometimes a hook comes early in the process of writing the sermon. Sometimes it comes late in the process. Sometimes they just don't come at all – and then you punt!

As you might imagine, all of this is several hours of work before ever pen is put to paper (or rather, keyboard is put to Microsoft Word Document). The given norm for sermon length in our Protestant Christian Tradition is 20 minutes. The given attention span for listening to someone speak is 15 minutes. Another challenge added to the process! Reading, writing, re-writing, editing, timing – there is a *minimum* of six hours of work that goes into a sermon. Not counting prayer!

5. What do you do to relax?

I sing, I stamp, I sew, and I stew.

I was about 5 when I sang my first solo in the First Baptist Church of Sayre, PA – "It Is No Secret, What God Can Do." I've been singing ever since. I was in chorus in elementary school and high school and was in a select men's chorus through high school. I was selected for District Chorus and Regional Chorus (Pennsylvania) but but didn't qualify for All State because I graduated. I was in the choir and touring choir at Eastern (College) University, and have always been in the church choirs wherever I attended worship. When pastoring in Deposit, NY, I was a member of the Binghamton Symphony Chorus, and since living in Cortland, I joined the Syracuse Chorale and sang with that group for ten years. Music is as important to me as breathing and eating.

A few years into my membership here at TUCC, I decided on my own that I wanted to learn how to make cards. For a year I gathered different stamps and inks and had some limited success. Then Janice W, knowing this, told me about Laura Currie's Stamp-A-Stack workshop. I attended, changed up every card

that she had for us to make, and I was hooked. I became a demonstrator for Stampin' Up! and had my own small group of monthly stampers for several years. I got out of it about the time I was retiring, but rejoined last March – about five minutes before the pandemic hit! I don't have my own group again yet, but I do participate in card swaps with Laura's group. It is a nice creative outlet and can sometimes present itself like a puzzle to solve, figuring out how someone else made a card, or how to achieve a certain effect.

Having become good friends with Laura Currie, I asked her one summer day about four years ago to teach me how to sew. In my era, boys weren't allowed to take Home Ec or I might have already gotten the basics. I had sewn a few times, but with a seasoned sewer helping me. Laura asked what I wanted to sew, but I didn't really have a plan. "An apron? Pot holders? A quilt?" "Yes, a quilt!" So she and daughter-in-law, Colleen, taught me the basics and lead me to make a flannel rag quilt. Laura and I sew together often (even a little bit this summer in her garage and deck during the pandemic) and I find it challenging and relaxing.

When I say I stew, it is just to keep the alliterative nature of the answer: I really mean that I enjoy cooking. It is in fact a passion! I guess I first took an interest at a young age, pulling a chair up to the stove to watch my mother cook. When I was old enough, I was given a spoon to help stir. At cookie making time, I helped roll out the dough and cut out sugar cookies (though at that time eating raw cookie dough might have been more fun). Mom was a basic meat and potatoes cook, so I guess that is where I learned the basics. But she let me experiment some with Apian Way pizza mixes, BBQ'd spam, and Jello Cheese Cake mixes. Chinese for us was the Chung King Chow Mein in a can. In seminary, I worked the snack bar and helped cater banquets. There I honed my skills and broadened my horizons a bit more. I can make a pretty mean Philly Cheesesteak! While in massage therapy school in Ithaca, I worked after classes at Simeon's on the Commons as night line chef. As an adult my passion for cooking has become learning how to make dishes from other countries and cultures. Like most folks, I can make the (Americanized) basic Mexican and Italian foods. I've gotten pretty good at cooking Asian – Chinese, Thai and some Indian. I honor my German heritage by frequently cooking German food – especially Bavarian. We eat well in my home – and I guess it shows!

I also enjoy travel, reading, gardening, board games, live trivia competition, spending time with friends, my sons and my doggy, Puck.

6. How do you work collaboratively with the leadership of the church?

I believe that the first step is to get to know the leadership of the congregation. Learn their connections to the community, to the congregation and within their family system. Listen to their personal, faith and congregational history.

When Jesus called Nathaniel to follow him as a disciple, he already knew him. You recall that as Nathaniel was coming toward Jesus, Jesus commented to Philip concerning Nathaniel, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." Nathaniel, hearing him, asked, "Where did you get to know me?" And Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." The fig tree has symbolic significance in Israel as a sign of the nation. But Jesus' words have more than symbolic meaning. The fig tree was a common place for prayer, especially for young rabbinic students, which Nathanael may well have been. If he was specifically under a fig tree when Philip called him, chances are he was in prayer. Further, the Jewish believer was taught that 'he who, when he prays, does not pray for the coming of the Messiah, has not prayed at all.' Jesus listened to Philip, observed Nathaniel's faithfulness, and called Nathaniel to follow. Jesus learned the strengths and limitations of his chosen disciples – the leaders of his band of followers – and together they ministered to the people. And while Jesus spoke

“as one with authority” he also listened to his disciples, considered their feelings, their ideas, their fears and failings, their insights and victories.

This is a template for the pastor/leadership role in the church: to know the strengths and limitations of the leaders and for them to know them about me as pastor, and to work together using the strengths and supplementing the limitations. And of course, like Jesus, to show patience and offer forgiveness, one to another.

7. Share some ways in which you have improved communication in your church between groups.

Listening and valuing what is said.

Treating all with empathy, equity and intrinsic worth.

Asking questions for clarification.

Endeavoring to be clear.

Advocating for those whose voice is not as strong or in dissent.

Helping to reframe comments and promoting speaking in ways that are inclusive and not defensive.

Praying for a spirit of patience and understanding.

8. Describe your conflict management style. Discuss a recent conflict situation in a congregation you served. How did you work it through?

I don't like conflict and I guess I don't know anyone who does. Working as I did in Social Services, especially in my 10 years as a Child Protection Investigator, I learned to manage my feelings around conflict management and honed my skills at it. I believe that it begins with showing respect. Even for people who maybe have done some pretty bad things, if they aren't treated with respect as at least a fellow human being, conflict will just escalate and nothing will be solved. Also, I believe that it involves the attitude with which a conflict is approached. I do my best to seek solutions and not blame.

Humility is another important attitude. We are all humans. Conflict generally means that someone has an opposing opinion from mine and we both are passionate about our opinion. So, like the above answer, listening, asking questions, seeking clarity, and a little empathy and understanding go a long way in managing conflict. Then, in the end, seek compromise when you can and stand firm when you must.

I think the best example of a conflict situation at church that I managed successfully was when the church dismissed Doug as pastor. The skills enumerated above were all used to help keep us together as a congregation.

9. Tell us about a program you implemented that resulted in church growth?

I think maybe I have mentioned this before: it would be the Friday Night Bible Study group that we had in the Cortland church. It began as a way to address the desire of a few in the congregation to learn about the Bible. Several had children (us included) and weren't part of the “going out on a Friday night” set. But not all of them had children. So the invitation was for anyone who wished, to come to the parsonage on Friday at 5pm or as soon after as possible. We had food (usually Little Caesar's Pizza) and drink so folks could just come right from work and know they would be fed. Sometimes a member of the group would cook something for us all to share. We just made sure that there was food to eat and that we didn't have to take time to cook it. We arranged for teens from the youth group to come watch the kids and we took up a collection to pay them. Bible study started at around 6. The group determined what book of the Bible we studied. We took turns reading aloud (those who wished to read) a passage. This was so that if there was someone who had trouble reading could hear the passage and didn't have to struggle with trying to read it. However, we also encouraged folks to bring their

favorite Bible translation and part of what we did was compare the ways the different Bibles translated a passage and talked about what we liked or didn't like about the way a Bible translated. While I led the group, it was designed for folks to share what they got out of the passage. I was there to help provide context and answer questions. But the best part of it was that I wasn't "teaching" what it said, rather we were sharing what God was revealing to us. Then at about 7:30 we wrapped up the Bible study portion, and those who wished (and usually it was everyone who was there) joined hands and we prayed together. That group grew from a handful to on average 15 to 20 (plus their children) and we actually did gain new members as a result.

A quick note: The question asks about a program that resulted in church growth. Implicit in the question, I think, is defining church growth in terms of numbers – new members. Growth comes in many ways. Growth in understanding, growth in maturity, growth in faith and trust, growth in the depth of spirituality and devotion. And while we did add numbers, I count it as a great success, not because of numbers of new members, but because of the growth of these individuals, many of whom had not been involved in church before, in their faith and understanding and devotion. They became integrated into the congregation and took on leadership roles. Jesus never said to count heads; he said to make disciples. That's what our mission is. That's church growth!

10. What is your management style? Tell us about your greatest leadership success.

I have a collaborative management style. I have told every church secretary that I have worked with that they are in charge of the office, so if I have missed a deadline, they print without me. I support my staff and make it a point to tell them I appreciate them. And I say "thank you." I say it a lot. I am appreciative of the work that folks do – both paid staff and volunteers. The least I or any of us can do is say thank you. Frequently!

Perhaps my greatest leadership success to date has been to hold this congregation together when Doug was dismissed. It was a bit of a powder keg and could well have blown totally apart. And while we didn't hold on to all of them, we held on to most members. (And we keep praying and working to get back the ones who left!) If I am reading it right, it is a contributing factor to why so many wish me to stay on as settled pastor – a proven track record in leadership ability, mixed with a bit of gratitude. And after putting so much heart and soul, prayer and preaching into it, I am inclined to want to stay on for a bit longer!

11. What are some of the programs you have developed? What were the needs you were trying to address?

Elsewhere in the answers I tell about the Friday Night Bible Study group (#9), the Children and Families Holiday Workshops (#14), and the Praise Band (#13) and outlined the needs that generated them. I'll tell you about one more. The Cortland YWCA Day Care Center.

One of the more important aspects of pastoral ministry is getting to know and be known by the community. Taking an interest in the wider community is the model that Jesus set for the disciples. So a pastor makes community connections and helps a congregation keep abreast of the needs of the community and helps to shape a response. One of the needs of the Cortland community, and I guess an ongoing need of all communities, is adequate day care.

At the time, Holly Greer (wife of Episcopal priest, Bill Greer) was the director of the Cortland YWCA. They had a very active, and full to capacity, day care and drop in center. And they had the need to expand, but they didn't have the space. The Cortland United Community Church had the space, but not the children. The lack of children in a Sunday School program has been around for a very long time –

this was the 90s that I am telling about. Our nursery/small child Sunday School classroom was on the first floor of the educational wing. Otherwise, all other classes were on the second floor. I brought a proposal that we partner with the YWCA to establish a day care center in the first floor of our educational wing – the nursery/small child class to be used by us on Sundays and the rest of the wing for their exclusive use. The trustees and church council both liked the idea and I had already pitched it to the Y who liked it too.

We mutually adopted the concept and got to work. The Y would renovate the space so that it met with their and NY state standards for a day care center. There was a small patch of grassy lawn at the end of the building and along the back of the educational wing. The back of the property was already fenced in by the County Office Building property, so it only required a fence at the end of the building to keep the little critters from wandering off. Classrooms were made smaller by adding walls. Dutch doors were installed so that little ones couldn't wander out the door, but the top part of the door could be left open to receive parents and talk with adults as needed. The bathrooms were fitted so that little ones could easily use them. The fellowship room was on that level and they used the room especially on rainy, cold and snowy days for their "playground" activities. All this work was done at the Ys expense. We simply offered the use of the wing at no cost. And we contracted for the use of the space as such for 3 (or 5 – I don't recall) years with opportunity for renewal. What a joy to have little ones in our building every day! What a thrill to hear laughing, crying, shouting, giggling in that big, silent space. How fulfilling to walk into the wing and hear, "Hi pastor!" or to have a child ask, "What's your name?" and to be able to make a connection, even for a moment, with these little ones. I am proud to say that the first year of operation, our church was given a Community Service Award by Catholic Charities.

I understand that there used to be a day care in the educational wing of our building here. I also remember that during the visioning exercise of the Transition Team, there was desire expressed for both a day care and a senior center. Both? Together? Instant grandparents! Instant grandchildren!

12. How have you brought stewardship emphasis to a congregation? How has it made a difference financially?

We make a mistake if we think of stewardship as a program, emphasized once a year, in order to raise money and establish a budget for the coming year.

A steward in Old Testament times was a person who assumed responsibility and authority over the affairs of the household. Adam and Eve were given "dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." [Genesis 1:28-30](#).

Stewardship is commonly described as including your time, talent and treasures. Biblical Commentator, R. C. Sproul has pointed out that "stewardship is about exercising our God-given dominion over His creation, reflecting the image of our creator God in His care, responsibility, maintenance, protection, and beautification of His creation." ([How Should I Think about Money? by R.C. Sproul](#)) This understanding expands stewardship to every aspect of life.

This is how I understand stewardship and I seek to express that theology in pastoral and offertory prayers, in sermons, and in responsive readings and to provide leadership and direction to the Stewards Board and the congregation to deepen and broaden our understanding of what it means to be good stewards. We are called to stewardship of our time, talents and treasures, but also of the environment and of the Gospel. These are tasks that are all year, every year and not just in the spring right after Easter.

How has it made a difference financially? That question moves us back to the original statement that I made – it is a mistake if we think of stewardship as a program, emphasized once a year, in order to raise money and establish a budget for the coming year. The difference is a deeper, broader understanding of what it means to be good stewards. The difference is identifying the gifts and talents of parishioners, helping them to make good use of their time for the benefit of the congregation, giving them a vision of the stewardship of the Gospel in this congregation so that they want to give to support the ministry here in Tully. The resources we need to support ministry in this place *are already here*. Our task as pastor and leadership is to pray for the vision, unite in our understanding of the vision, promote and interpret the vision, pray for the Spirit to help move us toward fulfillment of the vision. “Without a vision, the people will perish” has an implicit corollary: “With a vision, the people will prosper.”

13. In what style worship are you most comfortable? Can you effectively lead a more contemporary style service?

It is no secret that I am high church for a Baptist. A Baptist colleague from years ago told me that I am closet Anglican, and it stuck. I suppose he is kind of right. I don't see it as rejecting my Free Church upbringing, rather, it is to me embracing a wealth of Christian tradition and history and heritage. The Cortland church was American Baptist and United Church of Christ and is where I learned to baptize infants. Now in Tully, I am enjoying learning about the Methodists and make frequent use of the liturgy of the UMC (which, of course, comes out of the Anglican tradition). I believe that, especially in a Community church, it is important to know the variety of traditions represented by the congregation and to offer worship that is reflective of a wide variety of forms.

In my church in Cortland, we had a group that wanted to do more contemporary style worship and who organized a Praise Band. We had keyboard, guitars, drums, tambourine, and five or so people of all ages singing. Traditional worship started at 11. Praise Band led more contemporary worship from 10:45 until 11 and then led the congregation in praise songs a few times per month during the more traditional worship time. This was in the era when Tully church had their Coffee House – and our Praise Band came to Tully a few times to sing and play at the Coffee House.

I am comfortable with contemporary style worship. At the same time, studies suggest, contrary to some popular opinion, that contemporary style worship is not essential to bring in young people. And I say this to remind us that it is because there are some who like that kind of music and feel uplifted and blessed by it that we would incorporate it into our worship – not because of a false narrative that we have to have it to bring in young people.

That said, we have a LOT of wonderful musicians in our congregation – maybe more than I know of. I love us to use voice, guitar, flute, cello, organ, bells, piano, kalimba, marimba, drums, and saxophone – all of which we have available to us that I know of – in worship; whether traditional, contemporary, or somewhere in between. Whatever we have to offer, we offer it in praise to God, and those gathered to worship God are lucky because we get to hear and participate.

I will also say that I am not a fan of 7/11 songs – songs with seven words (e.g. “I just want to thank you, Lord”) repeated 11 times. The term refers to choruses that are theologically shallow, appealing to emotion but lacking substance. Like a Slurpee at 7/11 – they might taste good, but have little nutritional value. There may be times when they are appropriate, helpful, and praiseful. But I caution against a steady diet of them.

14. How effective is the ministry to children and youth in your church? What programs have you led and what was your role?

We know the answer to the first part of this question: Sunday School/Ministry to Children is faltering and Ministry to Youth/Youth Fellowship is small but solid. There are fewer children and youth to begin with at this time. The Transition Team has reported such and we know it from those involved in the Tully School System that the classes are smaller. And church is not a priority as it once was in our society as a whole. That doesn't mean that Sunday School is doomed to extinction. It does mean that we may have to come up with new ideas and ways to minister to children that don't resemble the old Sunday School model of the past.

Most folks don't know, but Sunday School came about not as a way to teach children about Jesus, but as a way to teach working class children how to read. In 18th century England, The Industrial Revolution was taking hold and children had to work from early morning till late at night, six days a week. Only on the Sabbath were they allowed to rest from their labors. Robert Raikes and Thomas Stock are recognized as the first to establish Sunday Schools as a means of education for these working class children on the only day they could attend school – Sunday. While there was likely some Biblical education through learning the catechism, the primary focus was on the “Three Rs” Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. Later, when child labor laws came into effect, children continued to attend Sunday School, but as public schools were established for all children, the focus became more religious education and the time for attendance was greatly shortened.

Remember the explosion of “Latchkey Children” in the early 1980s? These were children who came home from school to an empty house, due to both parents working, separation of parents through divorce, etc. Many churches established afterschool programs to reach out to those lonely children and give them safety, security and socialization until a parent could come pick them up and take them home. And of course, this has led to schools establishing after-school programs (and before school, too). Out of social need, comes a faith full response.

Is there a need in our community that is waiting for a faith full response?

My program idea of holding Christmas and then Easter workshops for children and their adult guardians generated enthusiasm from both our Christian Ed and Deacons boards. Folks were energized as they made plans for craft ideas, food, and activities to celebrate the season. The intention was to continue to hold these during the major holidays, expanding them as we went along, and to slowly emphasize the religious component. As children, parents/guardians and the community saw and experienced our love and commitment to ministering to children and families, the hope was to grow back a program of religious education (Sunday School). Participation had already grown from the Christmas to the Easter workshop as children shared their experience with their friends and invited them to come along and adults enjoyed the activities with their children.

Then, the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Well, the pandemic will be over and done – or at least manageable. And we will return to this program of outreach to the children of our community. I believe it is a smart and solid way of reaching out to children and their adults with the message of the love and grace of God through Jesus Christ. And it doesn't matter if children from another church or another faith tradition come. We are not trying to coax them away from their church. We mean to provide Christ centered activities for the children of the community. Kids talk. They tell each other about fun things they have done. They will be great missionaries if they have an enjoyable time. But remember, just like adults – and maybe more so – kids will know if we are playing a numbers game or if we are really caring about them. We do this, not because we want bigger numbers and a large Sunday School program. Rather, we do this because of

our love and commitment to ministering to children and families. When that is our focus, the Lord provides.

By the way, regarding our Youth Fellowship Program – it exists in part because a few youth went to Camp at Casawasco and they invited friends from their camp experience to come to church. Maybe we should establish a community wide scholarship for Casawasco to encourage youth who are not yet attending our church to be able to go to camp with our youth. Just a thought...

15. What can we expect to be different as a settled pastor compared to an interim pastor?

Stability – I can't tell you how often someone from the Tully community asks, "Are you the pastor yet? NO? What's taking those people so long?" I imagine that if I am being asked, you are being asked. And if the community longs for me or someone to be named as the pastor of this church, then I know the congregation longs even more so for it to be settled.

Settled. Stable. Secure.

As of May 20, 2021 I will have been Interim Pastor of this congregation for three years. One year of that term has been during a pandemic, which has been unsettling, unstable and quite insecure. Sometimes churches adopt intentional long-term interim periods to give a congregation a chance to regroup, refocus and regenerate. The important term here is *intentional*. From the very beginning the interim period is declared, what is intended for the term is spelled out and the interim pastor is contracted for that period of time. There is a sense of stability and security when matters are spelled out and boundaries are set. That is not the case in this interim pastorate. I am not bringing this up to blame or castigate, rather to point out that this is the source of much of the discontent that bubbled up last summer. The stability that will come with naming a settled pastor will allow the congregation to get back down to the work of Christ and the Kingdom here in Tully United Community Church. And the community will feel more secure knowing there is someone named as pastor and no longer in an interminable holding pattern. Oh, and I'll be happier too, knowing it is up or down!

Community – That is, being a part of the community. It means being recognized by the community. And it means serving the community. I have tried to be part of the Tully community throughout my interim pastorate – even more so as it appeared I would become the settled pastor. I have eaten at the Tully restaurants, purchased goods at both of the hardware stores, gotten to know members of the community, purchased stamps and mailed letters and packages at the Tully post office, bought food and goods at the Dollar General, Gas Station and Kinney Drugs. Recently we had a Community Prayer Vigil that was led by Father Carey and me and we both agreed that we are most anxious to do more of the same – even to bring back Food and Drink for Thought. This church is an integral and vital part of the Tully community, and the community looks to us for leadership. Being the settled pastor means, by definition, part of the community.

Authority – By this I mean standing before the congregation as *the leader* chosen to move us, and move with us, forward into ministry; as opposed to being asked to act in a caretaker or place-keeper role while we search for the "real" leader. It means being recognized by the congregation and the community as the leader, the pastor, of a congregation. There is no question, "Is that really the role of an interim pastor?" and no suggestion, "Let's wait until we have a settled pastor." Or as the sign on Truman's desk read: "The buck stops here."

As this word potentially carries with it some strong feelings, I will unpack what is meant by Biblical authority of a pastor.

The true authority of pastors and other leaders in the church is that of respect, aroused by their own loving and godly example. Authority is not to be confused with authoritarianism. Neither the pastor, nor any leader in the congregation, is a Biblical dictator, speaking as one who has exclusive rights to the word of God and lordship over the congregation. There are, however, some who try to exercise this kind of authority.

There are two verses which are often cited by those who claim a unique "command authority" of pastors over church members. The first is found in First Thessalonians 5:12-13a (RSV), "But we beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work." The key phrase is "and are over you in the Lord." The Greek word in question is *proistamenos* (*the one who presides*), the word and title of the [priest](#), minister or [bishop](#) who is in charge of a [parish](#) or congregation. It is Biblical in origin, coming from Romans 12:8, sometimes translated as "the one who governs" or "the leader." Though this is translated "over you" in both the Revised Standard and King James versions, the word itself contains no implication of being "over" another. The New English Bible more properly renders it, "... and in the Lord's fellowship are your leaders and counselors." The thought in the word is that of "standing before" others, not of "ruling over" them. It is the common word for leadership. Leaders can lead only if they are able to persuade some to follow.

Which leads us to another verse used to support command authority – Hebrews 13:17a which the Revised Standard Version renders, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account." The imperative translated "obey" is from the word *peitho*, "to persuade." In the middle voice, used here, Thayer's lexicon gives its meaning as "to suffer one's self to be persuaded." Again there is no thought of a right to command someone against his will, but the clear thrust is that leaders are persuaders whose ability to persuade arises not from a smooth tongue or a dominant personality, but from *a personal walk which evokes respect*.

I like what Dr. Austin T. Duncan, Professor of Pastoral Ministries and Director of D.Min. Studies at The Master's Seminary, has to say about pastoral authority: "Among the followers of Jesus, leadership is not a synonym for lordship. Our calling is to be servants, not bosses; slaves, not masters. Proper pastoral authority is shown not in power but love, not force but example, not coercion but reason. Leaders have power, but power is safe only in the hands of those who humble themselves to serve."

Residency – I believe it is important for the pastor, especially of a church in a small community, to live in the community, and I have written above about the effects of being part of the community. So by residency, I mean that I will be around. Members of the congregation (as well as the community) will see me daily or at least regularly. And you will know that I am right next door – and not 20 minutes away. That's part of the stability I also wrote about above. In my imagination, it means having parishioners and community members, in for Kaffee Klatch, or Bible Study, or Appetizers at Fellowship Group Progressive Dinner. It means being "part of us". It signifies being "all in". There really is, I believe, something special about Tully. Living here will make me even more a part of what makes it special. I am ready.

FROM THE PASTOR – April 2021

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

This has been our theme for the past few weeks as along with believers across the globe we have celebrated the resurrection of Jesus! Every day around us there are signs of new life and new beginnings! In just a few days' time neon green leaves are bursting open from tight red buds and bright yellow daffodils punctuate the emerald green grass! More of the spring birds are arriving, bunnies are hopping around and soon there will be baby birds and baby bunnies! Farmers are turning the soil, spraying their "liquid gold" and preparing to plant seed. Everything outside my window says "LIFE!"

I wish that theme could be repeated for everyone everywhere. Sadly, many are still stuck in the drama, distress and death of Holy Week. We see the numbers of COVID cases rising and variants increasing and hear some say they still don't plan to get the vaccine. We watch on television the life of a black man, knee on his neck, slowly ebb and fade while another African American young man is shot and killed at a traffic stop by a 26 year veteran police officer who pulled her handgun instead of her taser. Mass shootings continue to take the lives of our young, our innocent. Asians and Pacific Islanders are targets of hate, hurt and homicide as racist and incendiary rhetoric is on the rise. The people of Myanmar have their democracy ripped from them as our own democracy feels tattered and threatened. Our environment cries out for justice, peace, relief. There is so much hurt, so much pain. We begin to feel helpless, hopeless and exhausted.

It is precisely now that we have to find a second and third wind. To dig deep into our Spirit-filled faith. To carry the hope of new life and the message of peace, justice and equity into the world around us. We maybe can't fix the whole world all at once by ourselves, but we can make a change in the way we think and talk and act that will reflect the power of the risen Christ and have a profound effect on our own selves and those in our sphere of influence. I think often of an old Gospel hymn:

**Do not wait until some deed of greatness you may do,
Do not wait to shed your light afar,
To the many duties ever near you now be true,
Brighten the corner where you are. (Refrain)**

**Refrain: Brighten the corner where you are!
Brighten the corner where you are!
Someone far from harbor "YOU" may guide across the bar;
Brighten the corner where you are!**

**Here for all your talent you may surely find a need,
Here reflect the bright and Morning Star;**

**Even from your humble hand the Bread of Life may feed,
Brighten the corner where you are. (Refrain)**

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia! Pastor Rick +

Mission Outreach

This year's project will be UMCOR Hygiene Kits

The following items are needed. You can bring in an individual item or all of the items. Financial donations are also welcome.

One hand towel (15 x 25 –17 x 27 inches)

- No kitchen, cleaning, or microfiber towels

One washcloth

- No kitchen, cleaning, or microfiber towels

One comb

- Must be sturdy with at least 6 inches of teeth
- No pocket combs or picks
- Rattail and combs without handles are acceptable but must have at least 6 inches of teeth

One toenail or fingernail clipper

- No emery boards or metal nail files

Bath-size soap (3 oz. bar or larger)

- No Ivory or Jergen's soap
- Do not remove from packaging

One adult toothbrush

- Do not remove from packaging
- Personal advertising not acceptable

10 adhesive bandages (¾ by 3 inches)

- Common household bandages acceptable

One one-gallon size re-sealable bag Sample Description

There will be a box in the Narthex

If you have any questions you can contact Lorraine Balmer at 607-279-7374

Stewards

A friendly reminder: Please turn in your personal information for the **updated directory** regarding communications and the **time and talent survey** that were mailed out last month.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

BIRTHDAYS:

Apr. 16th – Jacquelyn Franke, Apr. 19th – Sam Colombo, Apr 23rd – Edie Cook, Bennett Hillenbrand, Sarah Shepherd, Kristen (Thompson) Slater, Apr. 24th – Tom Kohberger



ANNIVERSARIES:

Apr 14th – Sam & Jaci Colombo (A); Apr 18th - Michael & Laura Rankin

Prayer and Praise

Prayer Requests:



Sympathy to Tom and Kim Dando on the death of their 13 yr old granddaughter, Hazel Elizabeth Shaw, daughter of Jason & Colleen Shaw. Hazel started a charity; Hazel's Hope, Inc., c/o M & T Bank, 43 Albany St., Cazenovia, NY 13035; www.michaelbrownfuneral.com, Grandparents- Tom & Kim Dando; Parents – Ted & Pattie Shaw

Nancy Chawgo had hip replacement Surgery and is recuperating at home. Paula Mickelson gall bladder surgery. Prayers for the people of Myanmar (Burma).

Continue prayers for:

Also remember to keep in our prayers the following individuals who we hope are all getting better and staying healthy: Sam Colombo; Barbara & Arthur Berg; Joe Puccia; Charlene Gale's daughter-in-law and granddaughter; Rick Reed and Laura Currie's friend Allyson Hill; Tammy Huyge's brother Mike. Don Bickelhaupt; Rick's friends, Randy from college, Jenny from seminary and Tony Campolo, retired Professor at Eastern University; Jim Canole friend of Pamela Poulin; Harold- friend of Karen Rankin; Dawn Cox's sister Tammy James; Liz Spaulding's daughter; Amy Christopherson; Marie Kemps' friend, Maria; Bill Wright, Mary Thompson, Betty Ketcham, Liz Spaulding, Hugh Reed's mother- in- law, Barbara Stanley; Nancy Foster's daughter, Breanna; Wendy Dale's Aunt Claudia; Kay and Jim Butkus' daughter Pam Falge; Brenda Millis, Pamela Poulin, Cheryl Haskins' nephew Eric; Sharon French and Edie Cook

Joys Shared:

Diane Phom & her grandson visited Linda Cottrell on Friday afternoon. It was a wonderful surprise. Thank you to Hollis Rotella for our Tomb display. Thank you to the youth group for our outdoor display

Spring Church Activities

As you plan your calendar for our much-anticipated Spring, please add these upcoming church events.



Saturday, April 24th – Stewards are having their first TUCC Chicken BBQ of the year. Starts at 11:00 am until gone. They are still doing a drive through. **\$7 per Half Chicken**-(no sides offered).

Location: Tully United Community Church Parking Lot Meetinghouse Road

Pre-Order at: TUCCchicken@gmail.com; until 8pm on April 23, 2021
The TUCC Webpage also has a link for pre-ordering your chicken

P.E.A.C.E.: County South Family Resource Center

Friday, April 23 & 30, 2020, COMMUNITY CLOTHING DRIVE

9:00AM – 4:30PM AT Tully Masonic Lodge (rear entrance)13 State Street, Tully, NY

Good, clean Spring/Summer used clothing will be ACCEPTED:

Monday- Thursday April 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd 2-4:30PM

Volunteers Needed! Please call Barb @ (315) 696-8203



April 25th at 10:45 am Congregational Meeting

for the purpose of **VOTING** on the Search Committee's recommendation to approve Reverend Richard G. Reed as the permanent, part time pastor of TUCC

A congregational meeting has been scheduled for 10:45 AM on April 25th for the purpose of voting on the Search Committee's recommendation to approve Reverend Richard G. Reed as the permanent, part time pastor of Tully United Community Church. The meeting will be available on Zoom. Voting will be done with paper ballots or targeted private voting via Zoom.

Information was published in the March 31st mini Stepping-Stone and additional information will be provided over the next two weeks.

- **Peter's weeders** start beautification of our gardens on **May 5th at 9 AM** and immediately after church on **May 16th**, spring cleaning of the church begins.

- Bell Choir meets each Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. No experience is necessary.
- Prayer Shawl Meetings- **There will be no prayer shawl meetings until further notice.** Requests are still being taken. Shawl makers will be knitting and crocheting at home. Finished shawls can be left at the church office. If you have any questions, please call Sandy Burgett at 315-696-5197.

Ways to Support Your Church and Community

Ministries come in many forms. Some take time, some take money, and some take both! Here are some suggestions for giving to others:

1. Offerings to TUCC – mail or drop off at church; use the PayPal link on the church website or pay through the electronic bill payment process of your bank.
2. St. Leo’s Food Pantry and Outreach, POB 574, Tully, 13159. Attn: Cheryl Paccia. Pantry needs monetary donations for fresh produce, meat, and dairy
3. Donate sauce, tuna, canned veggies, PB, jelly, toiletries, paper products, etc., for the Food Pantry. A donation box is at the church or they can be left just inside St. Leo’s hall between 9am – 2pm or just outside the door.
4. Shop *smile.amazon.com* and select TUCC as your non-profit. A percentage is returned to the church!
5. Contact the Pastor, any Board chair or the Moderator to offer your ideas, time or talent. A vibrant church is built around the passions and talents of the congregation.

Meditation and Sunday Service in our Sanctuary

Our sanctuary is open daytimes for prayer or meditation. Hand sanitizer is provided by the door. Homemade masks are available for you to wear and take for added protection during COVID19.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87556610214?pwd=WE9kMnhaK2lSS3dFSk51WTI4MVVQZz09>

Meeting ID: 875 5661 0214

YouTube service: Please watch your emails, our website and TUCC Facebook for the update.

TUCC INDOOR WORSHIP GUIDELINES are on our bulletin board and website tullychurch.org.

***Remember: Wash your hands. Wear your mask in public. Stay home if you are ill.**