



## Why

We humans are insatiably curious creatures. We hunger for explanations. We especially hunger for explanations of tragedy. We don't like to accept randomness. We crave meaning.

People challenged Jesus to explain why Galileans were murdered by Pilate's soldiers while they were in the Temple, offering sacrifices. ([Luke 13:1-5](#)) This story makes us think about the nine people murdered in Emanuel AME Church in Charleston six years ago. People (then and now) ask Jesus why these apparently good and religious people were murdered as they worshipped. Were they struck down by God, abandoned to the powers of human evil wielded by the state or by a racist attacker?

Jesus says these people were not being punished for sin. He adds another example. Jesus asks his hearers to recall the collapse of a tower that killed 18 people, and we can't help but think of the collapsed tower in Surfside, Florida. He refutes the idea that these people were singled out for punishment by God.

Our explanations of why bad things happen often lead us astray. It's hard for us to accept that innocent people can be harmed or killed without rhyme or reason. Sometimes people are caught in the snares of evil that seems random. A hate-filled killer shoots people who happen to be within his range of fire. Sometimes people are caught in storms or earthquakes; sometimes buildings collapse.

We seek to know why disease and death strike; we ask: 'Did they smoke? Did they exercise, eat organic? Did they work around toxic chemicals?'

We want explanations, but mostly we want the (false) assurance that we are not vulnerable to the things that happened to them. *But we are vulnerable.* No amount of careful, healthy living and no degree of pious holiness will protect us from suffering and death.

Life is full of tragedies that are not earned. We are all mortal. We are all suspended between life and death at every moment.

Jesus said, "unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did." Does that mean that if we 'get right with God' things like murderous soldiers and collapsing towers will not touch us? No!

Jesus is telling us that it's not just the unrighteous who face tragedy; everyone faces death. Death is inevitable. Perishing is not. We can be fully alive in this moment if we walk with God in faithful trust. Part of walking in trust is the refusal to attribute life's tragedies to God. Relationship with God brings us fully to life – a life that tragedy and suffering and even death itself cannot eradicate.

**Prayer:** *Holy One, I know there is no safe path to escape life's trouble or my own mortality. Save me from perishing – from being lifeless and lost even while I'm still breathing. Amen.*

-Pastor Lynn

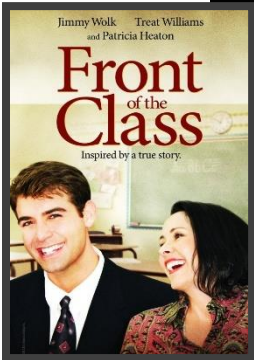
Pastor Lynn is on vacation through August 9th. In his absence, Pastor Alva Looze and Rev. Steve Hall will be preaching and leading worship. Should a pastoral need arise, Pastor Lynn can be reached on his cell phone at 866-3085.

Adult

# MOVIE NIGHT

## Friday, August 6

Movie will begin at 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall



### Free popcorn & snacks!

Feel free to bring your favorite chair, beverage & friend or 2!

Featured film, "Front of the Class" is inspired by a true story about Brad Cohen, who despite being challenged by Tourette's Syndrome at a very young age, defies all odds to become a gifted teacher. He overcame prejudice, ignorance and fear as he struggles to make his dream come true. (run time is 1 hour, 35 mins)

## A Sign of the Times



Be careful driving down McKinley Parkway. You're going to be wanting to look at the handsome new sign in the front lawn, but you really need to keep your eyes on the road. Thanks to the generosity of Tom and Lisa Koch and Stone Art Memorials, their family business, St. Matthew's has a lovely new granite sign.

Although the sign is rock-solid and in place to stay, there is still some landscaping and lighting to be done, so keep an eye on it in the coming weeks. You might want to get out of the car and take a closer look.



## Bringing Communion to You

Now that Pastor Lynn is vaccinated, he is able to visit and bring Communion to all those who are unable to attend worship. If you (or a loved one) are interested, please speak with the pastor. He is looking forward to being with you and offering the sacrament.



Jeff Cotton; Jane Duewiger; John & Karen Kaitanowski; Sheri Jankowski-Smith; Pauline Syms; Helen & Marvin Wilson

If you have a prayer request for the bulletin, newsflash and/or a more urgent prayer to go through our prayer chain, please contact the church office (649-1532) or Pastor Lynn (866-3085) OR fill out a Prayer Request card on Sunday (located on one of the tables) and place in offering plate.



**Happy Birthday!!** ... Marna Pritchard (8/1); Gail Vara (8/1); Carl Ertel (8/4); Pamela Kaznica (8/5); Judy Meegan (8/6); Nancy Jankowski (8/7); Max Zdrojewski (8/9); Joe Schneider (8/10); Julianna Hamm (8/13); Casey Zdrojewski (8/16); Pat McDonald (8/17); Adam Hamm (8/20); Devon Asboth (8/21); Liam Hamm (8/23); Perry Kaupa (8/25); Kurt Rich (8/26); Ben Hamm Jr. (8/27); Lucy Hamm (8/28); Marilyn Rich (8/30)

**Happy Anniversary!!**

Rich & Barbara Middaugh (8/2/1975) \* Kurt & Vanessa Rich (8/11/1990)  
 Joe & Karen Schneider (8/11/2018) \* Gayle & Denise Woodruff (8/12/1972)  
 Bob & Linda Ferraro (8/16/1997) \* Chris & Corey Wilson (8/24/1996) *Happy 25th!!*  
 Keith & Anne Kanaley (8/30/1986)

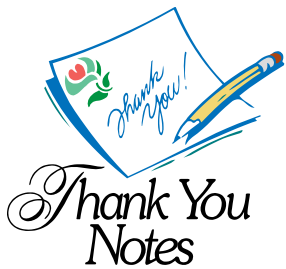
**Church Directory**  
**Change:** Shirley Jones  
 Elderwood at Hamburg,  
 5775 Maelou Drive,  
 Hamburg, NY 14075.

**Bulletin Dedications**

If you'd like to honor, memorialize or celebrate a person or event, you may dedicate a bulletin. Your donation will be put into the Memorial Fund and the dedication will appear in that chosen week's bulletin. Special envelopes are available; contact the church office. If you have any questions, please contact Marilyn Rich (649-6979) or the church office (649-1532).

**Missions Collections**

- **Nonperishable food items, paper products, toiletries, personal hygiene items or other necessities** will be delivered to #feedhamburg.
- **Pull can tabs** will be delivered to the Ronald McDonald House in Buffalo. Pull tabs are recycled and the money purchases household items for the Ronald McDonald House. (We no longer collect used pill bottles and at this time, we are not collecting clothes.)



Proceeds from the recent Chicken Barbecue are making a difference in our community! HEART Animal Rescue and the Kathleen Mary House have expressed their appreciation for the donations made possible by the barbecue.

Thank you so much for your very generous donation to benefit the animals in our care. Your donation will be used strictly for the spays/neuters of the 60 kittens we currently have. Again, thank you!  
 Carol Rich, HEART Animal Rescue

To the members and friends of St. Matthew's United Church of Christ,  
 I can't thank you enough for your generous donation of \$150.00 from the fundraising committee. We too are small but mighty. The past several months have been challenging for all of us and I do so appreciate you reaching out to us. You are a blessing to the Kathleen Mary House.  
 With gratitude and love,  
 Sharon Wroblewski, Executive Director

## Snoozy

I'm not much of a napper – at least not an intentional napper. People say that taking a nap in the afternoon is re-energizing and good for stimulating creativity. I won't argue with those findings, but I have never been able to incorporate napping into my routine. I recall precious little from Kindergarten, but I remember the frustration of the enforced nap time.

On the other hand, I have been known to fall asleep unintentionally. On Sunday afternoon. In my chair. Reading. Watching a game on TV.

Making oneself fall asleep is almost impossible; ask any insomniac. Preventing oneself from nodding off is almost as hard. I have fallen asleep sitting upright, hands on the keyboard. I have fallen asleep reading, even when I was deeply engaged in the book in my hands. I have done pullups in the cab of the truck to keep myself from falling asleep at the wheel of an 80,000 pound semi. When you are tired enough, sleep feels inescapable, an inevitability.

You know who doesn't sleep? God. "He who keeps you will not slumber." (Psalm 121:3)

God never nods off, never loses the plot, never zones out, never ceases from watchful attention.

Jesus asks his friends to "watch and pray" in the Garden of Gethsemane as he prays on the eve of his crucifixion. (Matthew 26:41). Instead, they nap.

I'm no one to judge. Compared to all the things that lead me to unintentional napping (reading, baseball and football on TV), none compares to unintentional napping while praying. And not just bedtime prayers, either. Morning prayers... in a comfy chair... even kneeling at the altar rail in the sanctuary. When Jesus asks his disciples, "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour?" I squirm a little, because it doesn't take anything like an hour for me to drift away.

In truth, we drift away without sleeping all the time.

We are mostly unconscious to the grace that meets us at every moment, to the presence of God and to the wonder of life. We are mostly asleep on our feet, even while wide awake.

But God isn't asleep. God will be there when you open your eyes; when you open your heart. Watching. Waiting. Attending.

**Prayer:** *Constant Friend, nudge me now and then so I don't miss the best parts. Amen.*

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## Scenes from a Church Picnic

Our church family shared a family meal on July 11<sup>th</sup> under the pavilion. With just a light rain to make us grateful for the pavilion roof, we enjoyed a simple barbecue and conversation. Many thanks to Gail Burdick, Tracy Meyers, Mike

Meyers, Bill Hamm, Steve Jankowski, Kurt Rich and everyone else who pitched in to make the day such a pleasure for all who attended. (Special thanks to Linda Ferraro for taking the pictures.)





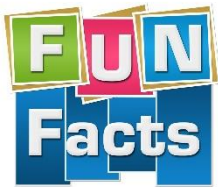
Senior Wishes strives to grant wishes that will make a significant impact on a senior's quality of life and bring them great joy. Wishes might be to reconnect with a loved one, visit a favorite place, celebrate a passion. Wishes also fulfill a lifelong dream, like riding in a hot air balloon, going to a ball game or learning a new skill.

I am a member of the Senior Wishes Committee and I would like to be able to submit 5 new wishes. You can nominate yourself, a family member, friend, or maybe a neighbor that meets the recipient guidelines. Copies of the guidelines and a wish application are in the church office (or go online to Seniorwishes.org to apply).

If you have any questions, please call or text me.  
Help make a wish come true for someone special.

Thanks,  
LaDonna Painter (715-7310)

Did you know? Senior Wishes was founded by the United Church Home Society in 2014 and is one of the ministries supported by the Western Area of the United Church of Christ. They grant life-enriching wishes in a five-county area including Erie, Niagara, Orleans, Wyoming and Genesee.



When the moon is directly overhead, you will weigh slightly less.

\* \* \*

An astronaut was allergic to the moon. It might seem like he was in the wrong line of work. Harrison Schmitt, from the Apollo 17 mission found out that he had a severe allergy to moon dust.

Pro baseball once had women players. The first was Lizzy Arlington, who pitched during the ninth inning for the Reading Coal Heavers in 1898 and won the game. A little over 30 years later, Jackie Mitchell, pitched against the Yankees during an exhibition game, striking out both Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, she was only 17 at the time.



The Empire State Building isn't only an iconic building, it also has its own zip code. It's the location of so many businesses that it had to be given its very own zip code. If you need to send mail to 20 West 34th Street, despite it being in the 10001 area, you use the special zip code 10118.



There's a decorated war hero dog. While in the trenches in WW I, the U.S. First Infantry Division found themselves unable to communicate with other troops because shellfire had damaged the telephone wires. A young private came up with a unique solution: Rags, a mixed breed terrier whom the soldiers had adopted in Paris, would carry the messages from one division to the next tucked into his collar. He saved many lives. When Rags passed away in Maryland at age 20, he was buried with military honors.

Along with having unique finger prints, we also have unique tongue prints.

**St. Matthew's United Church of Christ**

5289 McKinley Parkway

Hamburg, NY 14075

[www.stmattsucc.org](http://www.stmattsucc.org)

