

The Caller



First Congregational United Church of Christ of Corning



Musings along the way

By Pastor Henry

Dear Friends,

As we approach another midterm election, I want to share some thoughts on this civic duty, especially as it relates to our Christian faith. Don't worry—I won't be partisan. As a pastor of a 501(c)(3) church, I must remain nonpartisan in electoral politics. My hope is to offer neutral guidance and pastoral support as we go out to vote.

I recently watched one of Jonathan Rauch's videos on YouTube in which he connected three Christian teachings with the liberal democratic principles of James Madison (1751–1836), one of the principal architects of the U.S. Constitution. Rauch, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, draws a compelling connection between three Christian

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values and Madison's liberal democratic principles. The three Christian values are: "Do not be afraid," "Imitate Jesus," and "Forgive one another." Madison's three liberal values that tie to these Biblical values are: "share the country," "promote equality and dignity," and "show forbearance." Because of limited space in this pastoral column, I will focus only on the first Christian principle—Do not be afraid. For a fuller discussion of all three values, see his book, *Cross Purposes: Christianity's Broken Bargain with Democracy*, and his YouTube podcast.[1]

In the Gospels, Jesus repeatedly tells his followers not to be afraid (Matt. 10:26-31; Mk. 5:36; Lk. 12:32; Jn. 14:1). Jesus invites us to trust in God's sovereignty and accept that we do not control everything. This does not mean ignoring genuine dangers; it means refusing to let fear control our lives.

Rauch connects this teaching directly to our political life. In a healthy democracy, he argues, we must be able to lose an election without believing the world is coming to an end. Treating politics as a battle for our nation's survival tempts us to compromise our integrity by following leaders who exploit our fears.

Rauch points to what he calls the "Church of Fear"—a form of faith that continually emphasizes imminent threats. The danger is not simply that people become anxious. It is that fear changes what we think we are justified in doing, setting aside our moral convictions for politicians who promise protection. The biblical call to reject fear isn't just about personal peace; it requires the civic courage to trust God, accept political defeat when it comes, and participate in public life with ethical integrity rather than panic.

Living out Jesus' command to "not be afraid" means recognizing that while our political convictions matter, they are not the whole of reality. Our candidate may lose, but our calling remains the same: to live honorably, seek truth, respect others, and do good. When politics takes on the role of a religion, an electoral loss feels like spiritual annihilation—driving us to view political opponents as threats rather than fellow citizens. But a faith rooted in Christ frees us from that panic. It gives us the courage to share this country, accept political defeat gracefully, and love our neighbors even when we disagree on how the nation should be governed.

I believe this is good advice for all of us, whatever our political convictions. Please pray for a safe election and for divine wisdom as you vote. Happy All Saints Day and safe and peaceful midterm election!

Yours for the journey,
Pastor Henry

[1] "The Surprising Link Between Liberalism and Christianity," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X55ZVJ06ppE&t=1610s>

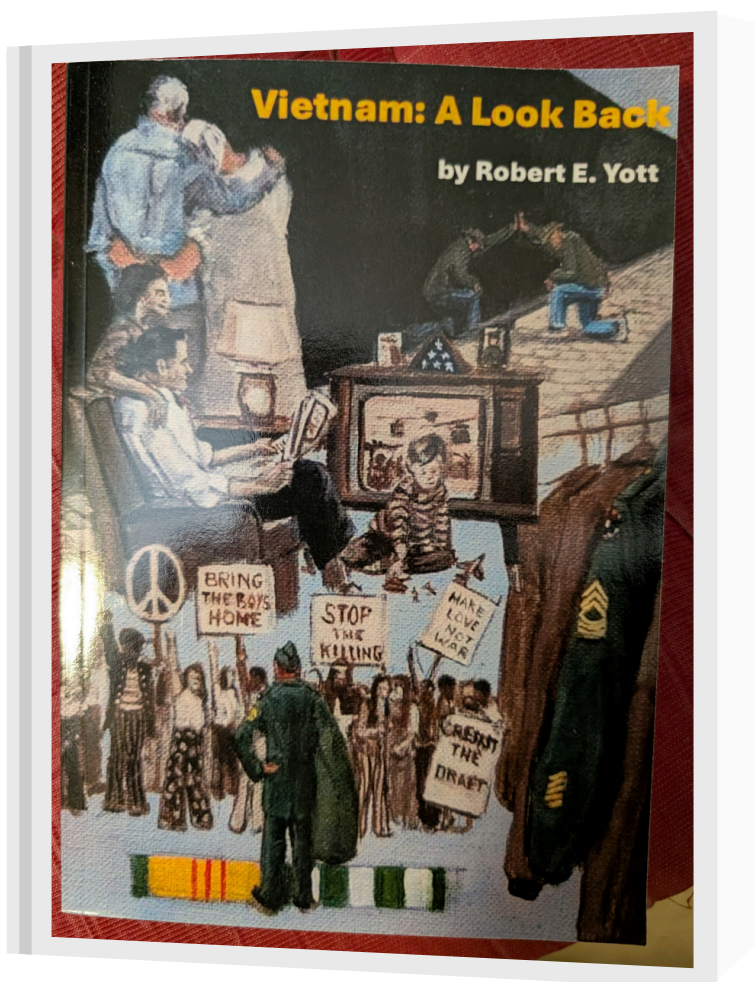
AUTHOR, ROBERT YOTT, TO BE GUEST SPEAKER ON VETERAN'S DAY

Our next **Midday Fellowship** meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 11th, Veteran's Day, from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm. We will be honoring our veterans.

Come join author Rob Yott as he recalls his experiences interviewing local vets for his book, "Vietnam: A Look Back." Noel Sylvester, a Vietnam vet, will also relate stories of his deployment there. All of us will be invited to share our own or our family's experiences when they served in the military.

Please bring a dish to share for our dish-to-pass luncheon.

The public is invited. RSVP to NoelASylvester@gmail.com by November 10th so we'll know how much food to prepare.



The First Congregational United Church of Christ of Corning, NY believes we are all made in the image of God and we are called to celebrate our God-given identities regardless of age, class, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical ability, marital status, race, ethnicity, or mental ability. Jesus calls us to love each other as we are loved by God, and we welcome, affirm, and support all people into our full life and ministry.

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!

Holiday Giving

The Mission and Outreach Team is offering our church the opportunity to assist the Salvation Army-Corning with its holiday appeals. This season we will again be displaying a mini red kettle for monetary donations that count toward the traditional community-wide Red Kettle fundraising campaign. In addition, we will be “adopting a family” for whom we will provide groceries and their “angel tree” requests. Thank you in advance for your participation and generosity! Together we can make a heart-felt difference this holiday season!

The Bridge to Hope Center

Our near neighbor, **The Bridge to Hope Center**, founded in 2021 and located on the corner of Bridge and West William Street on Corning's Northside, has begun hosting a monthly meeting for the public to learn more about and engage with this center's mission. The first meeting which was held on October 13th was well attended and included a lively Q & A session. The next meeting is scheduled for November 17th at 6pm.

Please consider attending to learn about the center's efforts to address homelessness; to connect vulnerable people with needed services through an extensive network of agencies; and to welcome all in need of temporary or longer term support, all found conveniently under one roof at The Bridge. The best way to dispel fear and confusion is to begin the dialog.

corningbridgetohope.com

The Mission and Outreach Team



Visit our website at corningucc.org for
Sermons, Events, and other Happenings at FCUCCC

HANGING OF THE GREENS DECEMBER 6th, Noon to 2:00 pm!

December 6th is the date of Hanging of the Greens! Every year, since anyone can remember, the church family comes together to decorate the church for the Christmas season. Now this may sound like a daunting task, but many hands make light work, and we always enjoy the beauty that we create. We usually are done between noon and 2:00 p.m.

Because so many of us are new to the church, here is a list of the variety of decorating projects that happen:

- Creating two grapevine wreaths from fresh greenery for the front windows beside the front door. Jennifer and Noel bring a lot of greens, but more is welcome. Tools and gloves are provided.
- Putting up the artificial tree in the Fellowship Hall and decorating it. This is often where our kids help.
- Hanging the new Christmas Banner in the front of the church over the choir. This was created based on large original banners painted by Bob Garrett years ago. No need for the long poles this year!
- Bedecking the ends of the pews with pre-made bows and ribbons. We think we've finally figured out how to make them stay!
- Arranging fresh swags of greenery on either side of the hurricane candles that sit on the ledge along the far-side wall of the sanctuary.
- Hanging artificial garland at the back and the front of the church.

We'll have a sign-up sheet posted this year at the end of November. This is a truly fun time with our church family.



THE NOT-SO-SECRET LIFE OF BEES

Crawdaddy Bee Farm owners Jeff Muller and Karen Lewis provided a fascinating (and fun!) lesson on beekeeping at the October 14th Midday Fellowship meeting. The group enjoyed a dish-to-pass luncheon while learning all about this home honey operation located in Bath, NY.

Thank you, Jeff and Karen, for joining us.

And, after our tasty lunch, the group surprised Lois Katt with a pumpkin roll and song celebrating her birthday.



CAPTIONS: from top left to right:

Karen Lewis describes her beekeeper's suit.

Sherry Witt and friend Delores join Lucille Gorton, Diane Haskins, and Lois Katt in line for lunch.

Diane Haskins and Jan Kostolansky serve Lois Katt her pumpkin roll.

Jeff Muller talks about beekeeping.

A Benediction

As we approach the November elections at a time when our nation and all of civilization appear to be growing increasingly dark, I would like to share, as a reminder, the words of Christine Wells-Wonsley spoken on July 20, 2026 at her son Nolan's funeral. This family's story remains newsworthy.

"In a world that can often feel dark, be like Nolan, be the light that brightens the lives of those around you. Be the warmth for those who may be feeling the coldness of the world. Love deeply, protect fiercely, and welcome others with kindness, and remain faithful, knowing that God is always with you."

Amen,
Lynn Decher





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*The deadline for submitting
articles is the 25th of each
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Office hours:

Tues/Fri: 9:00am-Noon

Pastor Office Hours:

Tuesday-Friday:

9:00am - 2:00pm

His visitations are
scheduled on Tues - Fri
afternoons. Mondays and
Saturdays he is off.

If you are interested in
learning more about our
church, please visit our
website at
corningucc.org or scan
the QR code on the right.



Sunday Service

In-person worship and
Zoom worship every
Sunday at 10 AM
<https://www.corningucc.org/>

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Instagram: @corningucc
Admin Assistant: Charlette Smith
Choir Director: Mike Flanagan
Keyboardist: Melody Flanagan



Nursery

Nursery provided from
9:30am-11:30am for
children under 4.