PAYNE AVENUE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

(Disciples of Christ)
1459 Payne Avenue North Tonawanda, NY 14120
(716) 260-1217 payneavechurch@gmail.com

SEPTEMBER 2026 NEWSLETTER

Elders Communion	Bread	Cup
September 6	Ed Wokersien	Barb Wokersien
September 13	Jim Wokersien	Nancy Golba
September 20	Ken Ozzimo	Ross Benton
September 27	Jim Wokersien	Brett Kofod

Deaconess Schedule – September (4 Sundays)
Prepare – Nancy Golba Clean Up - TBA
***Please see Sandy Lange to sign up or use the clipboard in the back of the church.*



"Walking With Trees" by Becky Wilson
Art work included with July 12th Bulletin

OUTREACH AND MISSION:

This month we will explore how we can begin to work with Northtown Care Connection, a well-established ministry based at Kenmore Alliance Church in Tonawanda. They provide clothing, infant supplies, and hygiene products to low-income families, refugees, and people experiencing homelessness. They also offer compassionate spiritual care. Stay tuned to learn about this new (to us) partnership opportunity.

The North Tonawanda Interchurch Food Pantry really needs our help in restocking their shelves with key items so we can continue to provide low-income people with nutritious food. They are just about out of **spaghetti sauce**, as well as **applesauce** and **salad dressing**.

More and more families are coming to the pantry each week and contributions aren't keeping pace, so please consider adding a little more to your grocery bill to purchase some non-perishable food. If we each bring a few items to Sunday worship, the table will be full and many will be blessed.

I will end with a note of congratulations: Because you gave so generously to Phebian Abdulai's mission in Sierra Leone, Payne Avenue Christian Church is covering the training cost for two women to learn how to create and sell clothing. Our church is also sponsoring five youngsters whose families couldn't afford to buy their books or school uniforms.

What a great way to make a huge difference in the lives of these children!
Plus, we provided over $400 to Phebian's medical ministry.
I love these win-win-win situations, don't you?



Yours in Christ,
Nancy Golba, Coordinator

UPDATES FROM PASTOR HOPE:



GREAT NEWS: Ash Lynn Dzik gave birth to her little boy, Desmond. It was a planned-induced labor at 38 weeks to avoid other complications. Ash Lynn said, when he began to cry… "I was crying happy thoughts. He has been with me in the same room since he was born." He was born at Sisters Hospital on **Monday, August 24th. Desmon Lee Dzik weighed 5 lbs. 10 0z.**and was 19inches long. Mother and baby are very healthy. Hallelujah!!

UPCOMING EVENTS:



On **Sunday, September 6th I have invited WNY poet Bob Frost to share some of his poems during my sermon as I preach about the Psalms** and our own spiritual struggles and prayers. Bob is a former middle school counselor and a resident of Barker, NY, and a poet friend of Mitch and myself. I have also invited other poets and friends who know Bob to come and enjoy worship with us!



BIBLE STUDY: The first gathering is Saturday, September 19 at 11:00am – 12:30pm. The focus will be on the Gospel According to Luke. All are welcome and invited to start studying right away!

CHIAVETTA'S BBQ dates for 2026:
September 26th, and December 5th!



Tickets are only $17 includes ½ chicken plus sides & dessert treat!!
Please call Brett @ 716-491-6205 or email: payneavechurch@gmail.com for more info. We accept Cash and Venmo



Sun. Nov 22nd at 4:00 pm: Formal Installation ceremony for Pastor Hope featuring Regional DOC Minister Rev. Dr. Thaddaeus Allen.

OFFICE UPDATES:



Thank you to everyone who attended on Sunday, August 30th, after worship. It was a wonderful Fellowship Time and "Meet and Greet" to welcome Kelly Salas as Interim Music Director. So nice to connect with her about what she does in the Buffalo schools and clubs with music; about her gardening and her dogs; and about her faith journey.

Leah Benton



A snippet of her many years of faithful service to
Payne Avenue Christian Church
By Brett Kofod

Leah was elected to the Board of Elders in 2003. She took over as interim music director in May of that year, after a parting of ways with our then organist and music director for the past seven years. Leah served in this capacity for over two years, until August of 2005. She carried PACC's music program through this period of transition, bridging the gap between Sue Ann Culp and Michael Shamrock. Leah worked with our vocal choir throughout this period, and various vocal and instrumental soloists, including myself on trumpet.

In 2005, Leah created a pictorial board of all PACC active members. We hadn't had an official pictorial directory made for some time, so this was a wonderful project to put names with all of our faces. The board sat just inside the main entrance at the Masonic Lodge at 1400 Ruie Road, where we were renting worship space temporarily. You can still see these pictures today, in a photo album in the back of the sanctuary.

From approximately 2006 to 2014, Leah held the position of Church Clerk to the General Board. She took all meeting minutes accurately and with a sense of pride. During this same period, approximately 2011 to 2013, she also served as secretary to the Board of Elders. For many years, Leah made up the Elders communion schedule, seeing to it that each week had Elders coverage for bread and cup prayers.

In 2010, Leah chaired the Maundy Thursday service. This would have been our last Lenten season at the Masonic Lodge on Ruie Road, as PACC had already entered into contract with the Diocese of Buffalo to purchase our current home, the former St. Joseph's Roman Catholic campus. I had just become an Elder at the beginning of that year, and I was eager to help in any way that I could. As is customary to this day, the Elders meeting held just before Maundy Thursday is used to plan the service. Who will lead? Who will read? Who will help with setting up? Well, it was decided that we would serve wine at this service, along with grape juice. Hey, that's easy I thought to myself. I can go pick up a bottle. I realized quickly I knew nothing about wine. Nothing much has changed in 16 years. I was instructed to purchase a bottle of Mogen David. Just to be sure I had heard and written it down correctly, I repeated aloud "and I'm looking for a bottle of Morgan David??" The group found that particularly humorous, and Leah's signature chuckle is what I remember hearing above all else.

Several months later, in the early summer of 2010, Leah, her husband Paul, and son Ross were instrumental in getting our church set up and organized at our current home of 1459 Payne Avenue. Leah had meticulous lists of which items were currently in use at the Masonic Lodge, which items were in storage units on Niagara Falls Blvd, and which items had been stored in her basement (choir robes, audio/visual equipment) for now going on seven years! She had a plan and gave direction so that everything was moved and unpacked in a way that made sense. Ross' big van came in handy, as we loaded it up with as much stuff as we could to minimize trips.

I can vividly remember hand-writing cards to members or friends of PACC that hadn't been to church for some time at an evening Elders meeting in the Fall of 2013. It was on our agenda as part of our shepherding program. Leah always had input on topics for discussion at meetings, rooted in her many

years of experience and membership. By the time the next Elders meeting would take place, Leah would be in a much different place, fighting for her life.



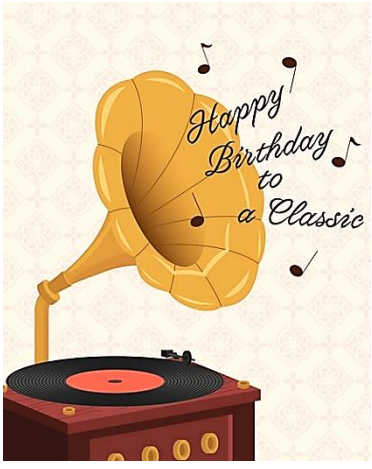
I had a very special visit with her in the ICU of Buffalo General Hospital, following a very serious surgery for a brain aneurysm. Her voice was weak yet I heard every word clearly. She didn't say goodbye, yet she let me know the church was going to be in good hands. I can remember her sharing some other thoughts and ideas on the church as well, but I kept the visit short so that she could focus on recovering. And recover did she ever! She clawed her way back from the brink and was able to walk back into worship with some assistance soon thereafter. Absolutely incredible.

In 2014, the Lord called her loving husband home, elder emeritus R. Paul Benton. Leah was strong and poised as only she could be. Paul's visitation was held on the same evening as the church's annual Krolick's Lenten fish fry. I can recall a group of us converging on Wattengel Funeral Home, in our PACC shirts which by this time smelled like they had been deep-fried right along with the fish we had just finished serving for the past three hours. It was important for us to be there and to show our support. I thought perhaps our casual dress and deep-fried odor would somehow detract from the reason we were there, however that was not at all the case. Somehow, I just remember being warmly received with that big smile and signature chuckle once more.

In August of 2016, Leah once again volunteered to take over the reigns as interim music director. She held the position until late November, refusing to accept compensation. Instead, she asked the Board to consider purchasing a 2nd hymnal, "the chorus book," which we still use today. It was important to her that the music program of this church continue to embrace the contemporary songs that we had first been introduced to almost twenty years earlier.

I have many happy memories ringing handbells and singing in the choir beside her. Music was very important to Leah. She was such an integral part of PACC's music program for so many years. She kept me involved, scheduling me to play trumpet while she accompanied me on the piano. This was back when I was in high school; a pivotal age where it is quite common to stray from the church.

In 2021, we honored Leah as an Elder Emeritus. To no one's surprise, she accepted the honor gracefully but wasn't ready to sit back and become a spectator, reflecting on all that she had done. She continued to serve as an active Elder in every capacity until her health prevented her from doing so in late 2025. Leah also filled in on the piano for worship at least six times between 2021 and June of 2024, when our then music director Kim Potfora needed a Sunday off.



When Ross would give his mom a ride to church after she gave up driving, Leah would climb up into his van using a stepstool without missing a beat. Like someone in their 50s or 60s perhaps, not someone in their 90s! She truly was incredible. She was dedicated. She was one of a kind.

Leah embodied what it meant to be a Christian, a member of His church, and an Elder serving the needs of His congregation at Payne Avenue Christian Church.

Happy Heavenly Birthday on September 26th!

Meeting Jesus at Jamie's Ice Cream in North Tonawanda

Pastor Hope's Dramatic-Dialogue Sermon, August 16, 2026
Excerpt of Ending

NOTE: At the end of Pastor Hope's dramatic-dialogue sermon, he said that inside the Jamie's Ice Cream menu he had taken home, Jesus had left him a note addressed directly to all the people of Payne Avenue Christian Church. And here's what it said:

> My beloved disciples at PACC,
>
> I miss you! Please…take time to look for me, to listen to my voice, and to learn my ways.
>
> Find a meditation spot that you can slip away to every so often: maybe around your yard or a bench near a tree, maybe at a café or a park.
> Keep going there to pause and to breathe, to be renewed and restored.
>
> I will give you daydreams of new ways to live and come alive.
> I will whisper guidance for your crossroads choices.
> And I will hum inside of you a new song.
>
> And as you go forth from that spot, you will find people who need your love,
> and people who need a gift only you can give.
>
> May Payne Avenue Christian Church always send out ripples of love, traveling far and wide, giving people waves of hope they never expected.
>
> Forever,
> Your Teacher

THE LEAST Of THESE:
How Anthony, My One Home-Nursing Patient, Has Taught Me Christ's Ways

By Paul White RN, a member of Payne Avenue Christian Church DOC, North Tonawanda

I have been taking care of Anthony Stinson for about 18 years. He was 7 or 8 when I started. Anthony was normal until he was about 2 years old. Then he started showing some developmental delays, and he was having headaches. He would hold his head in his hands and say, "Mommy hurt, mommy hurt." She kept telling the doctors something was wrong, but no one quite believed her. They did testing and found nothing. Then one day fateful day, Anthony had a major, catastrophic seizure, and he has been disabled like this ever since then. He turned 26 years old this past June. He's paralyzed and he has brain damage. He can't communicate, but he knows us and responds to us. He's on a ventilator to breathe for him and he has a feed pump which goes into his stomach. He's on 6 anti-seizure medications, and he lives in bed almost all the time because his bones are so brittle they break if we move him around too much. Anthony endures everything. I can't fathom the kind of life he leads, and the amount of suffering that goes along with all of his medical conditions, which are always changing. And I think he must feel isolated and bored by his condition sometimes. They call it "locked in syndrome." That's when a person can still think inside themselves, but they can't do anything about it. It all seems unendurable, because as a caregiver you can feel it sometimes. But here is the miracle. Anthony is the strongest person I have ever known. The miracle is, that Anthony still smiles. And it's not a normal smile; it's a very well-earned smile. Anthony's smile lights up the whole room. When Anthony smiles, he smiles from the bottom of his soul. Anthony is like a spiritual teacher. He has given me so much more than I could ever possibly give back to him. But that's the thing about God's grace. It flows both ways.

The Least of These

By Paul White RN

I render what care I can
To a sixteen-year-old young man
Nailed to the cross
Of an unknown condition.

Sometimes when I turn him
He shows me the face of his agony.
At other times he smiles
As if a dove were above his head
To light up his face like the sun.



The doctors don't know why
He has so many seizures
And he's paralyzed.
No one can fix him
From the cross of his contractures
But God in his own good time.

So few people know
What a blessing he is
Because it hurts so much
To know him and his joy
Is so special and rare.
It makes me a better man
To do my best to care for him.

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MEMORIALS

Thank you for all the ways in which we honor and remember our loved ones. Here is a list of the wonderful and generous donations given in honor of our members since July 2026

Nancy Golba	In honor of Heather Raggi
Nancy Golba	In honor of Patricia Lange



Prayers of Healing and Caring:

Ross Benton and family
Kay (Sister of Mary Caldwell)
Devon Compton, (Nephew of Paul White & Nancy Mueller)
Summer Cook
Rev. Dr. Arthur Davis,
Nita Doucette
Mary Dzik
AshLynn Dzik
Deborah Evans
Lisa Geraci
Don Golba
Linda Harle-Mould
Jaime Hodge
Shirley Jayne
Brandon Kofod
Karen Lawrence and her daughter Ronda
Bob Link's Daughter Shelly and Grandson William
Autumn Lee
Matt Lipinczyk (Nephew of Paul White & Nancy Mueller)
Harry Madrid
Carol McBride
Burton Merriam
Ruth Misko, daughter of Leah Benton
Diane Misner (Bob Link's daughter)
David Misner (Son-in-law of Bob Link)
Family of Heather Ozzimo – Carter
Sherry Ostwald
Cynthia Pullman
Family of Heather Raggi (Family of Bob Link)
Joan Shamrock
Karen Smith (Friend of Marcy's)
Family of Madeline Mock (Friends of Marcy's)
Linda Staiger (Family of Jim Wokersien)
Janith Tooke's Sister-in-law Ronni
Sharon Weiss (friend of Karen Lawrence)
Bob and Becky Wilson and nephew Billy Wilson
Bill Wolcott
Jim Wokersien

***There will be copies of this list printed and located on the Deacons tables. Please be sure to take one home to continue your prayers. *Please note, after a 6 week period names will be removed unless a special request is received in the office.**

To add to the **Prayer Chain** call **Sherry Ostwald 716-471-6842** (before 9pm). **Thank you.**

Communion for the Homebound

"IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT"

If anyone needs to be placed on the Communion to Shut-Ins list - please be sure to contact Becky Wilson at 716-998-9052

Thinking of You!

Please remember our members that are unable to be in their homes any longer… send a card to help them know we care! Thank you!

Cynthia D. Pullman, (daughter of Gabe DiBernardo) Room 254, Comfort Care at Our Lady of Peace Skilled Nursing, 5285 Lewiston Road, Lewiston, NY 14092

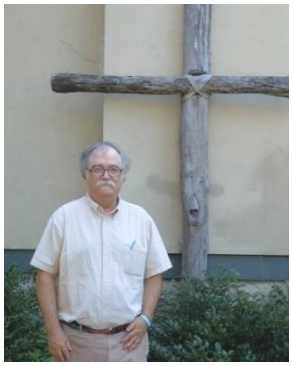
Also, some members cannot attend weekly, send a card and show they are remembered: Karen Lawrence, Sherry Ostwald, and Janet Holt (all addresses in Church Directory).



Beverly A. DiBernardo (nee Britton)



It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Beverly A. DiBernardo age 88, a devoted wife, proud mother, adoring grandmother and a life-long teacher. Daughter of the late Russell and Arlene (nee Geist) Britton, wife of Gabriel DiBernardo, mother of Cynthia Pullman, Denise (David) Bothwell, and Chris DiBernardo. Survived by beloved grandchildren, brother James (Carolyn) Britton, Anthony and Geraldine DiBernardo and Teresa DiBernardo. Predeceased by brother Charles (Joan) Britton, sister Patricia Britton, brother and sister in laws Vena and Camille DiBernardo, Gino and Flora DiMatteo, James DiBernardo, and Nicoletta Heider. Also survived by many cousins, nieces and nephews. Beverly was very proud of her children. She collected antiques, loved reading, and spending time in her garden. She especially loved traveling with her family on vacations throughout the United States. Friends were received by family on Friday August 14th , 2026 at Wattengel Funeral Home, 533 Meadow Drive, North Tonawanda. A service was held Saturday the 15th at Wattengel Funeral Home. A private burial in Mount Olivet Cemetery, Ascension Mausoleum. In lieu of flowers memorial contributions in memory of Beverly may be made to the National MS Society. https://www.wattengel.com/obituaries/beverly-dibernardo/#!/Obituary



In Memoriam: Rev. amos eugene acree, jr.

7/3/1947 – 7/8/2026

"Rev. amos acree, jr, was born/raised in Florida. He graduated from Bethany College in West Virginia in 1969, and later attended Colgate Rochester Divinity School, receiving a Master of Divinity in 1974. He married Marilyn Schulz née Massie in 1983 and enjoyed his role as step father, grandfather and great-grandfather. He was ordained by his home church, Edgewood Avenue Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Jacksonville, Florida, in May, 1974. His first call was to the University Christian Church in Buffalo, NY.

He was later called as pastor at Christ Church UCC in Buffalo, and served for 19+ years at East Aurora Christian Church, from which he retired from active ministry in November, 2011

In addition, he held many positions within the several departments of the Western New York Churches in Covenant (UCC/Disciples), including the In the Vineyard Editorial Board. He served on the New York United Church of Christ Disaster Response Team.

Outside of his many vocations, amos found great joy in sharing life with Marilyn. Expressions of sympathy may be sent directly to Rev. acree's stepdaughter, Tracie Lambakis (TraciePSFWS@verizon.net). Memorial contributions may be made in his name to East Aurora Christian Church, Faith Community Nurse Ministries of New York, Inc., the Chautauqua Association-Disciples of Christ or the Alzheimer's Association." -Published: In the Vineyard - Fall 2026, Quarterly Issue: September – November **Photo by Renee T. Engels - https://www.herald-courier.com/articles/spotlight-on-the-rev-amos-acree/

Let's Celebrate! Birthdays and Anniversaries:

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

8 Linda Staiger
11 Nate Spencer
28 Heather Perkins



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

8 Barb Wokersien
9 Felicia Gane
16 Phillip Ozzimo
18 Kate McCormack
22 Brenda Sass
24 Ed Wokersien

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

25 Alex Krull
27 Ken Ozzim02
28 Linda Harle-Mould



SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

14 Paul White and Nancy Mueller
20 Bob and Becky Wilson

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

20 Ed and Barb Wokersien
22 Andy and Suzanne Krull

**I would like to update the birthdays and anniversary dates so please be sure I have this information for all members of your family so they can be included each month.*

PAYNE AVENUE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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Espy Altamar
Secretary / Financial Clerk
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This Church Affirms You

Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.

A quiet room is available for families with small children, in the back of the church.

WiFi is available in the church building and grounds

Visit us on the Web: http://www.PayneAvenue.org
All upcoming Events are in the Newsletter which is always posted on the website!

Like and share our Church Facebook page! www.facebook.com/payneavenuechurch
Or https://www.facebook.com/share/1BoXaPjG7/?mibextid=wwXtfr