

From Our Executive Director

One of the traditional practices of the Quakers is to light candles in the windows of their houses. These candles are a symbol of hospitality and warmth directed to those who pass by. When lit they bring hope of a welcome to weary travelers who may need a place to stay. But more importantly these candles are symbols of the faith that those who light them have. These candles reflect the inner light that illumines all that they do, offering the world outside a visible glimpse of the care, kindness, and goodness inside their home.

One of their hymns makes this particularly clear:

*Our candles in the windows,
Shine softly, not too bright,
Illuminating comfort,
throughout each day and night.*

*We share this light with others,
That passersby may see,
A welcome sign, "no strangers here",
Of Christian hospitality.*



As we head into the second year of this pandemic, we have already seen how folks in Broome County have lit candles of hope and kindness for their neighbors. We have witnessed ordinary people delivering groceries to people who are home-bound. Pantries and community meals continue to operate under very strenuous circumstances. These efforts do not go unnoticed. Candles of hope and kindness have been lit, showing to the world the hospitality of our faith and the love that flourishes in the heart of faithful communities.

Today we ask you to help us continue lighting these candles of hope. We could do none of this without you.

God bless,

Rev. Dr. Joe Sellepack

Greater Good Grocery is NOW OPEN!

Read more on page 5

Inside this
issue

Faith in Action _____ p. 2
Jail Ministry _____ p. 3
CHOW® _____ p. 4
Hospital Ministry _____ p. 6

"Connecting compassion with needs; inspiring growth with dignity"

Faith in Action Volunteers



How quickly 25 years goes by. ...

You have lit a candle of hope in dark places for older adults in need. During the 1990s, Rev. William Stanton envisioned the formation a group of volunteers that would help older adults in our community, and his dream became a reality in March of 1996 when a new program at the Council called the Neighborhood Interfaith Volunteer Caregiver Program began services in the homes of those who are elderly and disabled. The program recruited volunteers from local churches and synagogues to provide services to seniors in Broome County; this effort would eventually become known as *Faith in Action* Volunteers.

Our volunteers continue to provide vital services to the older adults in our community, allowing them to remain independent and healthy in their own homes. Despite the obstacles we have faced during the past year, **because of you:**

- Seniors have groceries and remain socially connected.
- Medical transportation will resume.
- Ramp It Up will provide ramps again this spring.
- The Senior Living Ministry program continues to expand.
- Virtual Chop & Chat sessions will engage seniors until we can reinstate in-person sessions.

As we move forward, and the demand for services for older adults continues to increase, we are confident *Faith in Action* Volunteers will continue to be a shining light of support and hope to the seniors in our community.

-Sue Spencer, Director of *Faith in Action* Volunteers



A volunteer picking up groceries to deliver to an older adult in need.

Jail Ministry



For Ash Wednesday this year, we devised a novel method to distribute ashes. The ashes were mixed into a paste with olive oil and applied with individual cotton swabs. The three of us chaplains (each from differing Christian traditions) dressed in our white albs, cinctures, purple stoles, face masks and face shields, and walked through the hallways lighting a candle of hope in dark times.

The value of the person to person contact was incredibly moving as so many, for so long, have been without it. The ritual helped them to reconnect to their faith.

Because of you:

- Those who are incarcerated and work in the jail receive religious support during these challenging times.
- Families of those incarcerated receive supportive services that make their lives a little bit easier.
- Returning citizens exit the jail and find a supportive community that will assist them during their transition into a healthier life.



May God bless you all for your heartfelt and generous support of this ministry to those who many forget.

Rev. Dr. Cris Mogenson,

Director of Jail Ministry

HEBREWS 13:3

Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.



If you know anything about fiber optics, a fiber optic cable acts as a conduit to bring light from one end of it to the other, no matter how many twists or turns there are along the way. Even over extraordinary distances, direct light can reach new places through fiber optics, and what was dark is now lit. But what does that have to do with CHOW®?

You lit a light of hope in the darkness. This has been a year of many twists and turns! With the pandemic raging throughout the world, the need for CHOW®'s services was never greater. People who had never dreamed of needing a pantry or soup kitchen found themselves suddenly in a dark place of need, where light could not reach. In fact, we, too, felt like we were wandering in the darkness. **COVID forced us to reimagine nearly every aspect of how we operate.**

Your support allowed CHOW® to function like a fiber optic cable, directing light to people who needed it. In fact, it is amazing how this community rallied during these challenging times to help their neighbors in need:

- Over 2.2 million meals were distributed in 2020.
- Meal sites developed plans to keep their clients and staff safe.
- Holiday Giving Boxes were distributed to local families facing hunger.

Though there have been many twists and turns because of COVID, what has not changed is our mission: **to stop hunger in the Greater Binghamton area.** We still don't know what challenges lay ahead or how soon things will get back to "normalish," but thanks to you, CHOW® will be there - to shine light in dark places.

Thank you for your continued prayer and support!

Les Aylesworth - Director of CHOW®



Volunteers packing Holiday Giving Boxes that were distributed to families in need during the holidays.

Greater Good Grocery

Greater Good Grocery opened for business on January 4, 2021. Located at 435 State Street in Binghamton, the store is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Thank you to our many partners that helped make this happen!

FAQ's:

Is the food donated?

100% of the food sold in the store is purchased from wholesalers, vendors, and partners throughout New York State.

Where does the food come from?

We have formed relationships with many vendors and wholesalers throughout the area and beyond to bring a variety of items to our customers.

Where do the profits go?

Profits from the Greater Good Grocery are rolled back into the Broome County Council of Churches to enrich its work throughout Broome County.

Is more food coming?

We are continuously forming new relationships with vendors and growers to provide the items our customers would like to see while maintaining the lowest prices possible.

Can anyone shop here?

YES! Absolutely anyone can shop here at the store. The more individuals that visit the store, the more successful it will become. Come shop with us at 435 State Street in Binghamton!





Broome County Council of Churches

3 Otseningo Street

Binghamton, NY 13903

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13903

Do you love the Together Newsletter? You can also subscribe to our email edition of "Connecting Congregations"—a monthly publication highlighting local events and needs from area churches.

Send your email address with your request to Barbara at: bcook@broomecouncil.net

Hospital Ministry



Stay Tuned - We are searching for a new Director for the Hospital Ministry Program.

If interested, please contact Rev., Dr. Joseph Sellepack at jsellepack@broomecouncil.net.

To see the full job description, visit broomecouncil.net/about/job-openings/



Together we light a candle of hope to help our community. Will you give today to help those in need?

I would like my gift to be used for:

Area of greatest need CHOW® *Faith in Action* The Jail Ministry

I would like to make this gift in: memory of honor of _____

Please send acknowledgment of this gift to: _____

I would like to become a monthly donor. Please charge my credit card the listed amount every month.

Yes, I/we want to support the Broome County Council of Churches!

ENCLOSED IS MY GIFT OF:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 Other: _____

Name

Address

City

Zip

Phone

Email

GIFT METHOD:

Check made payable to the Broome County Council of Churches, enclosed

Visa MC Discover American Express

Card Number

Exp. Date

Name on Card

CCV#

Signature

Or give online at broomecouncil.net/donate-now/