

# Congregations sharing space in Allegany

## Presbyterian Church of Allegany opens its doors

By **Kate Day Sager**  
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ALLEGANY — When Barb Endersen read an article in the Times Herald that indicated the Olean Unitarian Universalist Community had outgrown its surroundings, she thought of the extra space available at her own church.

The divine result was the sharing of the Presbyterian Church of Allegany with the congregation from the Unitarian Universalist. At 11 a.m. Sept. 16, the Unitarian Universalists will hold its first formal service in the fellowship room at First Presbyterian, which holds earlier services at 9 a.m. on Sundays. After that the Unitarian Universalist, which has lay leaders and guest speakers conducting services, will meet at 11 a.m. the first and

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Kate Day Sager/Olean Times Herald

**Barb Endersen of the First Presbyterian Church in Allegany looks forward to the shared use of the church with the Olean Unitarian Universalist Community in the future.**

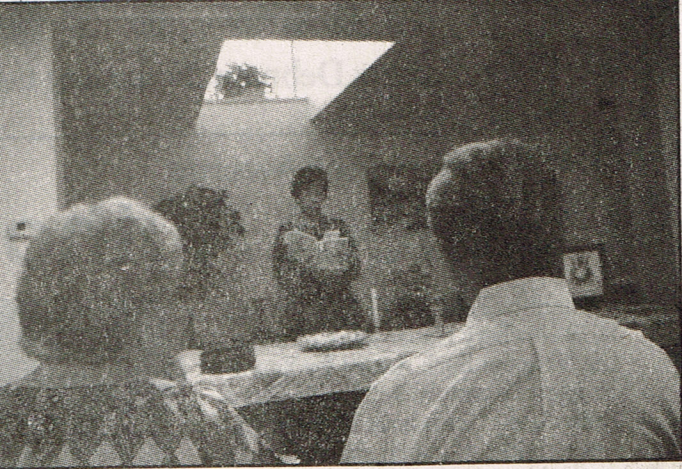


Photo submitted

Unitarian Universalist lay leader Robin Muscato (center) leads the congregation during its first gathering in June at the First Presbyterian Church in Allegany.

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third Sundays of the month at the church.

Anna Eskenazi Bush, a member of the Unitarian Universalist community, said the congregation's new home is one that was much needed. The faith, which is a liberal religion encompassing many faith traditions, had met at the Yoga Betsy building in Olean. The 60-member congregation is now in its third year of services.

Ms. Bush said an article published in the Times Herald in December mentioned that the congregation was expanding and outgrowing its space at Yoga Betsy.

Ms. Endersen, who serves as a lay minister at her church, said she read the article and approached the other church leaders and The Rev. John Woodring to see if they would rent space with the Unitarian Universalist congregation.

They all agreed to the idea as the 152-year-old North Third Street church has had declining membership and has been underused in recent years.

"I called (Ms. Bush) and said, 'If you're really interested in space, we might have something that would work for you,'" Ms. Endersen said, noting that the shared space is something new for her congregation.

"We had used the building for Girl Scout troops and things like that, but never for any other religion," she explained.

Ms. Bush said when several members of her congregation

speaking, in June and found the fellowship room met all their needs.

"It went fantastic. We just had a good feel, and everyone was really excited," she said. "The space is just wonderful. We have a children's program, and they have rooms that are made for children to be in."

Ms. Endersen said the two groups will try to hold some functions together, such as dinners and other activities.

"This may be the wave of the future," Ms. Endersen said of the shared services. "It's one way to deal with a congregation that is shrinking. You may see this more and more."

Ms. Bush agreed and added, "I think we can learn from each other. It's good when you have different perspectives and different energies."

(Contact Kate Day Sager at [kates\\_th@yahoo.com](mailto:kates_th@yahoo.com))

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Ms. Bush said when several members of her congregation visited First Presbyterian they saw an inspirational banner that made them realize they had selected the right place.

The banner's message, which was in white print on a red background, said, "Kindle In Us The Fire Of Your Love."

"We were all like 'We love that banner and its message,' Ms. Bush recalled.

Ms. Endersen said the shared services on Sundays will work out for both groups because of the different time schedules.

"There's no conflict whatsoever. We're all done by the time they show up," she said.

Ms. Bush said her congregation did a practice run, so to

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