

Christ United Methodist Church
Snyder, New York
"Living Christ's ways and exploding with love and service"
UPDATE
December 13, 2011

SUNDAY WORSHIP AT CHRIST CHURCH
9:00 – Praise Celebration Worship with the new worship team.
10:00 – FaithXpress, Soul Strength, youth Sunday school and AOL
11:00 – Traditional Style Worship with Choir.
Bring a Friend this week and share the Love and Grace of God!

www.Christchurchamherst.org

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Dr. B.J.'s blog is www.drbitthoughts.blogspot.com

Hi Everyone:

Less than two weeks to the celebration of the Feast of the Incarnation (aka Christmas). We have been planning our Christmas eve and Christmas day celebrations (Christmas eve at 10:00 – lessons and carols with plenty of special music; at 11:30 – candles and communion; Christmas Day 10:30 carols and prayers and a retelling of the story). I am excited about celebrating our first Christmas together. Churches tend to fall into one of two categories: they are churches that people “come home to” for the holidays or they are churches that people “go home from” for the holidays. In many churches around our country Christmas eve worship attendance often equals the entire month of August – those would be “come home to” churches (kids, grandkids, etc. home for the holidays). On the other side some churches have difficulty matching a normal Sunday attendance on Christmas eve – they would be the go home from variety – everyone has left to be with mom and dad, grandma and grandpa in other cities, towns and distant lands. It will be fun to see who gathers. I am looking forward to meeting all of the kids and grandkids and those who are coming home for the holidays. I am looking forward to meeting those that feel a deep obligation to worship on the “high holy days” of Christmas and Easter. Either way, it is going to be a great gathering and we will do our best to raise our voices in song and praise and celebrate the core truth of the Christian life – that God became a human being and lived among us! Invite your friends and neighbors to come and celebrate the birth of our Savior on Christmas!

Here is what is going on at Church:

On behalf of the Staff of Christ Church, thank you to the Staff Parish Relations Committee for an excellent Christmas party/gathering at the home of Ed and Cindy Fisher on Monday, December 12. I had a great time (and so said all the staff!).

1. Attendance last Sunday was 171. Thank you to the Mission team for reporting on our feeding and Christmas mission projects (see mission report below for more). Thank you to our musicians and to all who make Sunday morning at Christ Church a time to connect with God.

2. This Sunday, December 18 is the Fourth (and last) Sunday of Advent. At 9:00 we will have our regular praise celebration with our 9:00 a.m. worship team.

At 11:00 we will have our annual Christmas pageant put on by the Faith Express, Soul Strength and Senior High groups they will be assisted by our choir, our 9:00 worship team and a cast of dozens! The program is titled **"If It Happened Today"** and retells the Christmas story from a modern perspective.

3. Christmas Eve, Day and New Year's Day worship schedule:

Christmas Eve at 10:00 – Lessons and Carols and Choir and Candles

Christmas Eve at 11:30 – Christmas Eve Communion

Christmas Day at 10:30 (ONE WORSHIP TIME) – Christmas Day Carols, stories and celebration.

New Year's Day 2012 9:00 and 11:00 – regular worship schedule – Communion and "unpacking 2011"

4. **MEETINGS THIS WEEK:**

Tuesday, December 13: The "Make A Difference" team is meeting tonight at 7:00. These are open meetings. Among other things, we are recommending setting growth goals for Christ Church (100 in Sunday school; 500 in worship by 2015 – 1 and 5 by 15) and are exploring many new outreach ministries. Currently in our conversation: a drop in/drop off center for middle school children. The middle school does not begin until 9:00 – many parents have to be to work long before this hour. The drop in center would be a "Safe Place" for parents to leave their middle schoolers and for the middle schoolers to wait before heading to school in the morning.

Thursday, December 15 – Trustees at 7:30

Friday, December 16 – Books Loved 10:00

Saturday, December 17 – Pageant Dress Rehearsal

5. In our Prayers: Nicky Sebastiano, Mary Emens, Barbara McCray, Erik Schmitz, Jane Darling, Carmen Ticconi, Peter Russell (Fred and Lynda Painton's grandson), Drew Heitzenrater; those struggling during this Season; those looking for work; families in crisis.

6. Happy Birthday this week:

December 13 – Betty Kreib, Marcia Rhinehart

December 14 – Sheldon Kennedy, Chris Smith

December 16 – Meaghan Ramsey

December 19 – Harold Ortman, Alexander Wilson

And Geoff Hill's birthday was Sunday, December 11.

7. Happy Anniversary this week:

I have no anniversaries listed for this week

8. We had a great time at "Angels Aware" put on at Christ Church last Saturday (December 10) at 1:00 – Crafts Hall was packed, the kids were great and we enjoyed some great cookies and cocoa afterwards. Thanks to all who came and supported our friends from the Amherst Players in this production!

9. Pastor's Bible Studies changes coming in January:

A. The Monday Night Bible Conversations Class is moving to Sunday evenings at 6:00 beginning January 8

B. A New Wednesday morning Class will begin January 4 at 11:00 a.m.

10. **Here's the challenge: Read the New Testament together in 2012.** Read one chapter a day on week days. I will print the schedule in each week's update and it is available in the Caller as well. I will be posting comments on my blog – go to www.drjthoughts.blogspot.com and find my comments. We begin with the Gospel according to Mark chapter 1 on January 2. Are you in? Will you do this with me?

11. Coming in January:

January 8 – **Pictures and Stories of Uganda.** Following 11:00 worship (12:30ish), come and enjoy soup and bread and see photos and hear stories of Pastor BJ's recent mission to Uganda.

January 14 – **MEN'S Group** to hear Bill Bouza speak of a recent trip to Honduras, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands – 10:00 at the Church – Dutch treat lunch to follow.

January 11, 18, 23, 25, 29 and 30 – **FINANCIAL PLANNING WORKSHOPS**

Jan 11 – What is Financial Planning

January 18 – Basic Budgeting – Cash Flow Strategies

January 23 – Accumulation Strategies

January 25 – Distribution Strategies (how not to run out of money before you run out of life in retirement)

January 29 – Charitable Gifting

January 30 – Retirement Planning

Workshops are led by Patrick and Keith, local businessmen in the Harlem-Kensington-Cleveland Community. They are partnering with us to make these workshops possible. To save a spot call the church – 839-2460.

January 20 – The **Bloodmobile** returns to Christ Church – call Geoff Hill – 316-1522 to reserve a spot.

12. Boiler Project: Update – Trustees are gathering bids and will be meeting Thursday, December 15 to examine them. We are approaching \$45,000 in new pledges for this project. THANK YOU for your response to this need and for your generosity.

13. MYM's Christmas at Mount Vernon was a great time. Over 50 of us gathered to enjoy traditional recipes for the season and to hear the "Sweet Sixteen's" from Amherst High School.

14. MISSION REPORT:

Giving Tree: has collected gifts for:

2 local families.

20 Gateway Children

67 items for Santa Shop at Haven House.

1 Habitat Family.

There are many more for the Three Kings celebration at Primera Iglesia as well.

Hands4NY – Feeding a million people in a year: If every UMC in the Upper New York Conference served 1050 meals this year we would feed 1 million people: Christ Church report for June through November: we have served **2,743 meals!** (Well done, everyone!)

15. FOOD PANTRY SCHEDULE

THANK YOU for all the boxed cereals

December 18 – TUNA FISH

December 25 – Peanut Butter!

January 1 – Mac and Cheese

Any non perishable food is always welcome

16. From the Finance Team: Interim Envelopes are now available in the parlor. These envelopes will carry us until our new 2012-2013 budget begins on May 1. We will have our Stewardship emphasis time in March.

17. UGANDA PROJECTS UPDATE

A. Several of you have asked about sponsoring the orphans at the Blessed Primary School in Kirimandagi, Uganda (Pastor Grace's school). We are putting together a display. Sponsors will get a photo of the orphan they have sponsored. \$100 sends a child to school for a year. **See the new bulletin board in the Café or contact Rachel for more information.**

B. UGANDA PHOTO'S and STORIES – Sunday January 8 at 12:30. Come for a soup and bread light lunch. Dr. B.J. will be showing photographs and sharing stories of his October journey to Uganda. Program should take about an hour.

C. I will be returning to Uganda in October 2012. Feel the call of God leading you in this direction? See me

D. My friend, Rev. Davis Matovu, has mailed the DVD showing the completion of the Well project in Kirimandagi. I will show it when I have it!

I make a concerted effort every December to “De stress” the holidays. This has been particularly difficult this year due to my recent move, learning a new church and community and Karen commuting to Syracuse for her work. Having said that I continue to slog my way through trying to keep my head above water and my heart clear of the craziness. Some things that I do to help with this effort: I don't send Christmas cards (we haven't for over 20 years) – I don't mind getting them and appreciate the thoughts of those that do send them, but something had to go and this was the first to be cut from the December to do list. I don't go to a lot of December parties. Again, I LOVE gathering with people and really enjoyed the Staff Christmas party put on the SPRC last night. We had a great time at Ed and Cindy Fishers, enjoyed good food and great fellowship (THANK YOU SPRC). However, with my connections and work I could be out pretty much every night of the week in December so, don't be too disappointed, I don't always say yes to party invitations. What I try to do is make space in my day for slowing. When I can I take multiple walks (sometimes just around the block); I try to do more reading this month than my usual reading schedule; I look for more quiet and reflective time. It is not that I don't like the energy of the “Christmas Rush” – being an extrovert I find it quite compelling. I do this because my spirit needs to be calmed and quieted and focused. The beginning of the central event of our faith – God becoming a human being and living among us – is celebrated at Christmas. It doesn't matter to me when Jesus was actually born, this is the time Christians chose to observe and celebrate his birth, that's good enough for me. But I don't want to just see the cute baby and his young parents. . . I want to remember the bigger story. The love story of God and for all of Creation. A love story so amazing and so immense that God would take human form and dwell among us (This is called Incarnation!). Doing these things (and not doing these things) helps me stay focused on what matters. I believe it makes me more available to my wife and family and the church family when I do so.

How goes your journey through Advent?

Have a great week! And I'll see you when the church gathers,

BJ Norrix, lead servant, missionary, advent adventurer

(This e-mail is a communication ministry of the Christ United Methodist Church, Amherst, New York. If you do not wish to receive this e-mail please reply: remove.)