

Christ United Methodist Church
Snyder, New York
"Living Christ's ways and exploding with love and service"
UPDATE
December 20, 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

716-839-2460

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

Hi Everyone:

We are finally at the bottom of the year. The Winter solstice – the longest night the shortest day in our hemisphere – is upon us this week. Although the actual birthday of Jesus is a mystery it is fitting that the early church should choose to celebrate it this week. The bottom of the year is the darkest time, it is getting cold, and, where we live, anyway, snow and wind and clouds predominate. It is the time of year that we most need to hear a word of Hope! It is the time of year that we most need to hear a message of Peace. It is the time of year that we most need to hear of how deeply and completely we are Loved! The essence of the Christmas message on a personal level is there is Hope for our brokenness because God Loves us and came to give us Peace. That same message on a global scale: there is Hope for Peace in a broken world because the God of Love has become incarnate in the person Jesus of Nazareth. The announcement made in the Christmas story: "I bring you good news of great joy for all people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Christ, the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11) The announcement explained by John: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

Here is what is happening at Church:

1. Attendance last Sunday was 216. Deep appreciation to Lynn Ramsey and her team; to the singers and actors, to the readers and players, to the costumers and musicians, to the technicians and all who made "If It Happened Today" such a great retelling of the Christmas story. Thank you everyone.

2. Here is the Information on this Weekend's Celebrations

Saturday, December 24 **CHRISTMAS EVE**

10:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols and Candles; special music, message
from Pastor BJ

11:30 p.m. – Christmas Eve Communion/Candles/some Carols

These are Separate Worship Services and gatherings

Sunday, December 25 **CHRISTMAS DAY**: semi formal worship: **Wear your favorite Christmas Sweater to Church**

10:30 a.m. – ONE Christmas Celebration: Carols, telling the story, message from Pastor BJ

3. On **New Year's Day** (January 1) – regular worship schedule

9:00 a.m. – Praise Celebration with Communion

11:00 a.m. – Traditional Service with Communion

4. December 23 through January 2 – Office Manager Rachel Vaughan will be on vacation (going home to visit her family in Louisiana) . Are you available to staff the phones in the mornings, December 23, 27-30? Please let me (bj) know. Thank you.

5. READ THE NEW TESTAMENT IN 2012

1. We will read one chapter a day on weekdays (259 chapters, 262 weekdays in 2012) – that gives us weekends to get caught up.

2. Discussion 1: visit www.drjthoughts.blogspot.com and you will see my daily posting on today's reading. At the bottom of the post you will see the word "Comments" followed by the number of comments posted. Click on the word comments and you will see a place to make a comment, ask a question or respond to someone else's comment. You may need to create an "account" this is free and will give you a password for future commenting. I am hoping to have an on line discussion.

3. Discussion 2: At the start of my Sunday evening and Wednesday morning Bible Studies we will explore any issues or lingering questions from the readings.

4. Discussion 3: You can email me (drbj@christchurchamherst.org) with questions or observations as well.

5. I will be preaching from the readings of the week previous to each Sunday as we start the year.

Schedule: We begin with the Gospel according to Mark. January 2 – Mark 1; January 3 – Mark 2; January 4 – Mark 3; January 5 – Mark 4; January 6: Mark 5. I will post a brief introduction to Mark later next week on the www.drjthoughts.blogspot.com to get us started.

This is a different way to do bible study – some on line, some face to face, all of us reading together. It should be fun and I believe will deepen our understanding of the New Testament and our Christian Story. In case you are wondering I arranged our readings so that key liturgical readings (Easter/Pentecost/Christmas) will be in our readings in timely ways.

6. More Bible Study coming in January:

1. Dr. B.J.'s daytime class launches on January 4 at 11:00

2. Dr. B.J.'s evening class moves to Sunday night at 6:00 beginning January 8

Both classes are open and drop ins are always welcome.

7. AOL Classes in January:

January 8 – new Adam Hamilton Study begins

Thursday Class with Diane Klenk continues to meet Thursdays in the Wesley room.

8. 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 reserve a spot call the church – 839-2460.

9. **In our Prayers:** Barbara McCray (chemotherapy); Carmen Ticconi (Carmen was diagnosed with brain cancer this past few week. It is a recurrence of her previous cancer. She has begun treatments and appreciates the prayers and encouragement of her friends); Don Parsons (pacemaker installed last week followed by a stroke – he is home and doing well, the stroke has impacted his eyesight); Peter Russell (Lynda and Fred Painton’s grandson); Mary Emens; Nicky Sebastiano; Erik Schmitz; Marilyn Welker (doing fine after new stents); Sandy Cummings; Rosemary Kochan; those looking for work; those families in crisis.

10. MISSION NEWS:

1. Giving Tree: Thank you for purchasing gifts to help Asbury Shalom Zone and Primera Iglesia UMC for their “Three Kings Day Celebration”. Gifts will be delivered this week. Thank you Christ Church for your generosity in giving through the giving tree.

2. **January 8 – photos and stories of Uganda with Dr. BJ** – 12:30 (following the 11:00 worship time). Come and enjoy soup and bread, see pictures and hear Dr. BJ share some stories of his recent mission to Uganda.

3. **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. I NOW HAVE the DVD on the Kirimandagi Well Project. Watch for more information on showing.

4. **FOOD PANTRY: Christmas EVE and Christmas DAY – Peanut Butter** (bring jars of Peanut butter!)

11. Happy Birthday this week:

December 21 – Nicholas Terranova

December 23 – Lois Lewis; Jocelyn Reagan

December 24 – Carol Metcalf

December 25 – Tim Reed; Jesus of Nazareth (observed)

December 26 – Allen Dengler

December 27 – Laurie Hannon; Emily Scaringi

12. Happy Anniversary this week:

December 23 – Peter and Patricia Zaleski (51)

December 25 – James and Rosemary Leas (60 years!)

December 27 – Joseph and Carolyn Day (60 Years!)

13. COMING IN JANUARY

January 10 – UMW Board 4:00

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

14. CONFIRMATION 2012 – Sally Pollard has begun to recruit confirmation class for 2012. See her for more information.

15. FROM THE **FINANCE** TEAM:

Offering Envelopes for the first four (4) months of 2012 are on the table in the parlor. Please pick yours up at your earliest convenience. There are also signup sheets on the table if you currently do not have envelopes but would like them for the coming year. Following the Pledge Campaign (in March) envelopes for the budget year will be made available. Thank you.

16. **TRUSTEES** – UPDATES

1. The foundation and brick work for the new Church Sign has been completed. The new Sign will be installed as soon as it arrives.

2. Bids are being completed for the churches boilers. Work on replacing the oldest of the boilers will begin as soon as the successful bid is chosen.

Christmas is often depicted as a “Season of Giving”. I have long suspected that this is a not so subtle commercialization encouraging us to get out there and buy stuff so that we can participate in the “Season of Giving”. I have come to believe over the past several years two essential biblical truths of the celebration of Christmas:

1. It is a Season of Receiving. The gift of Christmas is not to be found wrapped in pretty paper under a tree in your living room. The gift of Christmas will be found wrapped in swaddling clothes laying in a manger. This is the celebration of God’s gift to humanity. It is a celebration of God’s amazing love – a love so great that God would enter God’s own creation to redeem us. We cannot give this gift, we cannot earn this gift, it cannot be wrapped, it cannot be purchased – it can only be received. As the Christmas Carol so succinctly put it:

“How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given;
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
Nor ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.”

Make space this Christmas to welcome the Lord Jesus into your heart, once again.

2. It IS a season for Giving: but as Christians we have to take this beyond the norm. It is not MY birthday. (Except for Tim Reed – it is not YOUR birthday either). It is a celebration of the Birth of Jesus Christ. Shouldn’t he be given the gifts? And, if my reading of Matthew 25 is correct, shouldn’t the gifts

be given to “the least of these my brothers and sisters?” To provide food for the hungry, water for the thirsty, clothing for the naked, help for those wrongly imprisoned, hope for the hopeless, strength for the weakened. . . you get the idea.

In the Season of Christmas, first receive the gift of the Christ child! Then, find a way to make a difference in this world in his name and for his sake.

I am blessed to be your Pastor, and deeply blessed by all of the kind remembrances that have been sent my way. I have enjoyed the cards and cookies and invitations and other kind gifts. Thank you.

Blessed Feast of the Incarnation, everyone

B.J. Norrix lead servant, missionary, Christ follower

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