

***Christ United Methodist Church
Harlem at Saratoga
Amherst, New York
“Living Christ’s ways and exploding with love and service”***

April 1, 2014 UPDATE

EVERYONE is WELCOME

EVERY SUNDAY AT CHRIST CHURCH

9:00 – Praise Celebration Worship

10:00 – FaithXpress/soul Strength/AOL (Adult Opportunities for Learning)

11:00 – Traditional Style Worship

Bring a Friend this week and share the Love and Grace of God!

Visit us on the World Wide Web at: www.Christchurchamherst.org
716-839-2460

Dr. B.J.’s blog is www.drbjthoughts.blogspot.com

Hi Everyone:

Today is the Feast of All Fools (aka April Fool’s Day) a day anchored in the murky past of hazing rituals as one of the rites of passage into spring. It is a day for pranksters and jokesters and general foolishness. Being the serious minded and emotionally sober human being that I am, I find April Fool’s day to be in rather poor taste and a profound waste of energy. I mean, seriously, how could we lower ourselves to a day of silly tricks and goofy jokes? I find the whole thing a deplorable waste of time and energy and encourage all of us to get back to the somber work of faith and life. This faith experience should only be done by SERIOUS people! (OK, April fool’s!) Our ability to play and to create amusement is one of the vital characteristics of being human. When Jesus cries (on all three occasions 1) the death of Lazarus in John 11; 2) over Jerusalem in Luke 13; 3) and in the Garden of Gethsemane) it is somberly recorded in the Bible. But the bible never says “and Jesus laughed.” It never says “and when Jesus saw what the disciples were doing he had to hold his sides he was laughing so hard.” I believe that being the perfect human being the reason “Jesus laughed” is never recorded is because it would have been stating the mundane, the routine the obvious. I believe

that Jesus normal demeanor was joy and humor and laughter. It sneaks into his teaching “why removed the speck of dust from your brother’s eye when you have a log hanging out of yours?” It is one of the reasons people follow him. He was likeable. He was playful. While his disciples are busy with serious business of following the Messiah, Jesus has the equally busy task of “keeping them loose” and on point and engaged with the world around him. So, in honor of the Feast of All Fools and our laughing savior . . . allow yourself to be playful today! Deeply spiritual relationships are playful it is only the terminally religious that have to be serious all the time.

Here is what is going on with the Christ church family:

1. Attendance last Sunday was 121 – not bad for ANOTHER snowy Sunday morning. Thank you to all my readers who presented John 9 to us. We learned that we were created to be vessels of God’s glory. We collected \$547 for UMCOR (THANK YOU). Anyone else ready to say “enough already!” with the snow?

2. This Sunday, April 6, we are looking at the resurrection of Lazarus. The text is John 11 and my sermon is titled “Day of the Undead”. Do you wonder why our culture is infatuated with zombies and vampires? Do you wonder why there is such fascination with “non conventional” presentations of eternal life. In the story of Lazarus we will learn that there are things that must be removed and things that must be unbound for us to be free from death.

This is Also a Communion Sunday!

PHOTOGRAPHERS AT WORK THIS SUNDAY: We are putting together a Photo essay titled “*Sunday at Christ Church.*” This will be shown at various places and be available through the web site (christchurchamherst.org). Ian Webber and Ross Markello will be taking photographs all day Sunday this week, April 6. **Please be cooperative and try to ignore them.** The idea is to capture the un staged ongoing activity of a typical Sunday morning at Christ Church. We are also planning a “One Week at Christ Church” essay for a later date that would show all of the Christ church and community partners that use our facility at 350 Saratoga. THANK YOU for your cooperation.

3. In our Prayers: Fred Painton, Guy Castellino, Mitch Mooney, Bim Rowlands, Glenn Hurst, Nicky Sebastiano, Marian Steve, Ruth Kitson, Shirley Downey, Ed Maker, Alice Schmidt, Diane Lovejoy. Remember those serving overseas (in all capacities); remember families in crisis; remember to pray for Christ Church; pray for all who are in harm’s way.

4. We will be celebrating the life of **Jim Luss** on Saturday, April 5 at 11:00 a.m. here at Christ Church. Jim sang with our choir for nearly 30 years and has been a faithful member of our Men's fellowship. Calling hours for Jim are at the Dietrich Funeral Home from 6 to 8 tonight (Tuesday) and from 2-4 and 7-9 on Wednesday. There will be a light reception following the Memorial service if you can be of assistance see Sally Pollard.

5. Thank you for your support of ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING we collected \$547 for UMCOR. This money is used to fund their overhead expenses so that all funds given for disaster relief can go directly to the point of need.

6. Finance team sent letters and "Interim Pledge Cards" this past week. Many of you have already returned your cards (THANK YOU). We are celebrating the impact of the Christ United Methodist Church as we live out our mission to "Live Christ's ways and explode with Love and Service!" We are grateful for your support of the cause of Christ through Christ Church! Please return your cards as soon as possible.

7. **KEVIN DURKIN** will be giving an Organ recital on Christ Church's Arrison Organ on **Sunday, April 13 at 3:00 p.m.** Kevin has been our Minister of Music since late November 2012 and this will be the first opportunity to hear him give a formal recital. Many of you have underwritten the costs of this event through your patronage (thank you). The concert can now be given free and will be open to the public – bring your friends and neighbors and hear the excellent organ played by an even more excellent organist! The program includes works by Josef Rheinberger, J.S. Bach, Daniel Pinkham, Cesar Franck, Samuel Barber and Luis Vierne. An informal reception will follow.

8. Due to the death of Jim Luss and Saturday's Memorial Service the following calendar changes are made:

1. The Sugar and Spice event scheduled for April 1 has been cancelled.
2. The Men's Group outing to Moore's Maple Shack on April 5 has been cancelled.
3. The Christ Church Choir will be singing for their friend. A special rehearsal has been scheduled for Thursday, April 3 at 7:30.

9. This Week at Christ Church:

Tuesday, April 1 – 7:30 Choir Rehearsal

Wednesday April 2 – 5:30 to 7:30 – Lenten Supper and Study

Thursday, April 3 – 10:00 a.m. Bible Study

7:30 p.m. Choir Rehearsal (for the Memorial service)
Friday, April 4 – 10:00 a.m. Books we have loved
Saturday, April 5 – 11:00 a.m. Jim Luss Memorial Service

10. MISSION YOUTH (MY) met on Friday, March 28 at Pastor BJ's house. We introduced each other (harder than you think); we learned about young heroes in the Bible, we ate great chicken soup, bread, salad and brownies, and we did some planning for future meetings.

On Sunday, March 29, members of Mission Youth joined the Youth Group to serve at the Seneca Street UMC

Next Meeting will be Friday, May 9 with special guest Rev. Davis Matovu

11. **WE WANT YOUR SHOES** – Shoe collection is underway. Pick up a collection bag (instructions are on the bag) and gather as many pairs of shoes as possible to support developing countries AND the ministry of Christ church. Shoes may be dropped off at the main entrance of Christ Church now through Make a Difference Day (May 18). Any style, any size, any condition! ***Why not recruit your family, friends and co workers to help out?***

12. Happy Birthday this week:

April 3 – Caleb Parete

April 5 – Kathy Weaver

April 6 – Charles Gilbert; Stephen Mugel; Julianna Sabol

13. Happy Anniversary this week:

April 5 – Todd and Mary Jo Evans

14. EASTER FLOWERS: Easter flowers can be ordered beginning this Sunday (March 30) as well as April 6 and 13 following both services in the parlor. Flowers are \$8. If you have any questions please see Beth Reilly Brown.

15. DRESS OUR PEOPLE: Will begin sewing clothing for the Ugandan children on Make a Difference Day, Sunday May 18. Donations of Cotton fabric or cotton/polyester blends no less than 1 yard in length, thread, bias tape, and trim are needed. Donations may be placed in or near the Dress our People mailbox outside the church office. Thank you.

16. CRAFTING FOR A CAUSE: will gather on Saturday, April 12 in the Wesley Room from 10:00 to Noon. Everyone is welcome to join. Current projects: cooling scarves for the troops, blankets for veterans and Gateway-Longview, mittens and

scarves for Seneca Street UMC, and prayer shawls. Please bring whatever you will be working on and join us for fellowship, crafting and refreshments.

17. The Red Blazer Men's Chorus (who rehearse at Christ Church) presents "The Red Blazer Varieties" on April 4 and 5 at 7:30 p.m. and a Saturday matinee at 2:00 on the 5th in the Amherst Central Theater Auditorium, 4301 Main Street, Snyder, NY. Special guest Nels Ross will entertain all with his comedic juggling. Tickets are \$18 or \$16 for seniors, students and children. Call 875-2958 or go to www.redblazermenschorus.com for more information.

18. Men's pre-work breakfast group will meet again on April 15 at 7:00 a.m. **We are moving** our gathering to the **Sheridan Family Restaurant** on Sheridan near Harlem Road. There were 6 of us at the last gathering and there is plenty of room for more.

19. Through the Bible this week's readings:

April 1 – Proverbs 25-26 and Hebrews 3

April 2 – Proverbs 27-29 and Hebrews 4

April 3 – Proverbs 30-31 and Hebrews 5

April 4 – Leviticus 1-3 and Hebrews 6

April 5 – Leviticus 4-5 and Hebrews 7

April 6 – Leviticus 6-7 and Hebrews 8

April 7 – Leviticus 8-10 and Hebrews 9

April 8 – Leviticus 11-12

April 9 – Leviticus 13 and Hebrews 10

20. **MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES (ministry is what we do for the existing church community)**

Opportunity 1: **I would like to build a new Hospitality team. Interested? See me (BJ)**

Opportunity 2: We are putting together a worship "creative" team. Want to be a part of this group? Let BJ know.

Opportunity 3: **A New small group for singles is being discussed: want to be a part of the discussion? Let me know.**

Opportunity 4: New "Senior Adult" ministries and groups are being discussed: want to be a part of the discussion? Let me know.

21. **Mission Opportunities: (Mission is what we do for those who are not yet part of the church community)**

Opportunity 1: **UGANDA 2014**. I am planning to travel in early October this Fall to continue our work in Uganda. Is God Calling you to join me? This journey is **6 months** away so I will need to know soon – Tickets **will likely be purchased in the next week to 10 days**.

Opportunity 2: Rev. Davis Matovu (our Uganda Mission partner) will be in the US in April and May and will be preaching at Christ Church on the 2nd Sunday of May. He will be meeting with our Uganda travelers and supporters as well as the new Mission Youth group

Opportunity 3: MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY is only **6 Weeks** from this Sunday. Team leaders have been recruited and sign-up sheets will be going up this week!!

OPPORTUNITY 4: We have begun collecting items for the September Uganda Fund raiser “Silent Auction” baskets. Watch for more information.

22. Christ Church is blessed with excellent gathering and fellowship space. One of the most popular is the **Café on Sunday morning**. The café provides hot and cold beverages and tasty snacks before and following our Sunday worship gatherings. What makes this work is a lot of volunteers who “Host” the café by preparing coffee/tea, etc. and putting the snacks out and then cleaning up afterwards. Would you like to help in this vital hospitality ministry of our Church? Contact Sally Pollard at 839-2460 or by signing up on the sheet posted on the bulletin board in the Café.

21. COMING EVENTS

- April 5 – Jim Luss Memorial Service at 11:00 a.m.
- Holy Week is April 13 through 20 – watch for more
- Palm Sunday – April 13 – Kevin Durkin Organ Recital at 3:00 p.m.
- May 4 – Dinner in the Country – MYM at the White Inn in Fredonia
- May 5 through May 12 – Rev. Davis Matovu of Soul Fishing Ministries and President of Nexus Seminary, Uganda will be with us.
- May 9 – Davis Matovu meets with Mission Youth
- May 11 – Rev. Richard Davis Matovu guest preacher
- May 16 – Church-Wide Variety Show (sponsored by UMW) – watch for more
- May 18 – Make a Difference Day
- May 19 – Carl Ericson Memorial Service
- June 8 – Confirmation Sunday

22. PHOTOGRAPHERS AT WORK THIS SUNDAY: We are putting together a Photo essay titled “*Sunday at Christ Church.*” This will be shown at various places and be available through the web site (christchurchamherst.org). Ian Webber and Ross Markello will be taking photographs all Sunday long this week, April 6. **Please be cooperative and try to ignore them.** The idea is to capture the un staged ongoing activity of a typical Sunday morning at Christ Church. We are also planning a “One Week at Christ Church” essay for a later date that would show all of the Christ church and community partners that use our facility at 350 Saratoga. THANK YOU for your cooperation.

23. HOLY WEEK/HOLY WEEK/HOLY WEEK!

April 13 – PALM SUNDAY – Palms, Procession and the Passion Narrative at 9:00 and 11:00

April 17 – HOLY THURSDAY – Worship with Choir and Holy Communion at 7:00

April 18 – GOOD FRIDAY – Stations of the Cross at Noon and 7:00

April 20 – EASTER (RESURRECTION DAY!) Festival Celebration at 9:00 and 11:00

Parting Thought:

In the past 20 years there has been an amazing upsurge in books, movies, television shows, games, etc. that are related to Vampires, Ware wolves, demigods (aka Thor) and Zombies. It is such a huge phenomenon it has me wondering: “Why?” What emptiness, what need, what unfulfilled fantasy or desire is being filled by these presentations? They all have something in common: immortality. In the case of Vampires, Ware wolves and Zombies there is some sort of blood transference that creates a permanent change in the other. One becomes what the “biter” is. The preoccupation with immortality is pretty clear: human beings have an innate desire to overcome their mortality. We are incurably spiritual creatures who desire to be reunited with our creator. Is it possible that the church has so profoundly failed in our time and age to speak to this essential human need that we have filled the void, not with resurrection and eternity but with transformation to darkness and a “twilight half life” for eternity? C.S. Lewis once wrote that “if I find in myself a desire for which nothing in this world can satisfy the only logical conclusion is that I was made for another world.” Could it be that the message of hope and the passing on of the Christ presence in others is being replaced by this fantasy of consuming others? The Bible says the life is in the blood. The Christian Church has said through the ages that the blood of Christ redeems us. Perhaps, the degeneration of this uplifting transformation message has become this modern

preoccupation with the undead . . . things to ponder as we look to the story of Lazarus this week.

Have a blessed week everyone:

BJ Norrix, missionary, lead servant, biblically undead

This email is a communication ministry of the Christ United Methodist Church. If you do not wish to receive this email please let me know.