

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

**UPDATE
April 18, 2012**

**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:

Six days from now the United Methodist General Conference will begin meeting in Tampa, Florida. General Conference meets every four years and is the final decision making body of the United Methodist Church. There are many critical decisions regarding the life of the United Methodist church that will be part of the discussion. There is a proposal for a major restructuring of the national church, the core proposal would merge most of the General Church agencies and greatly streamline the national church structure. There is a proposal to create a new Episcopal office. There are multiple proposals on evaluating and improving clergy effectiveness, congregational development and redevelopment, etc. The American Press will probably not report any action on any of these. What we are most likely to hear about will be decisions regarding the Book of Discipline's language and the church's official stance on the homosexuality. Although I believe the discussion is important, I also believe that it is a minor matter when compared to the focus and future effectiveness of the denomination and our clergy. Somehow, one way or the other, we have to get past this. I am calling all of us to a time of Prayer beginning today and running through the first week of May. Hold our delegates in your prayers. Pray for our Bishop, Markus Matthews and for all who have a voice in leading in these days.

Here is what is happening at church:

1. Attendance last Sunday was 139 (somewhat down from the week before {grin}). We heard a faith renewal story from Alicia Ticconi and celebrated God's grace as we rediscovered our first love and the fire of renewal. Thank you to Kathy Weaver who served as our liturgist this past week.

We will be dedicating the new kneeling pads in memory of: Lucille Cook, Verna (Mickey Duke), and Paul Nachbar at 11:00 on Sunday.

2. This Sunday I am looking at some glimpses into worship as expressed in Revelation 4 and 5. Worship is acknowledging that we are created beings and is, at its heart, surrendering to the one who made us, who redeemed us and who sustains us still. Kathy Weaver will again be our liturgist and we will hear from Mary Ball for the children's moment.

3. The offering for Africa University topped \$1500 this week! (Thank you, everyone!).

4. Talk to the Experts begins April 24 (next Tuesday) with a workshop on “Financial Legacy Planning”. Led by Patrick Allaire and Keith Schottman from Allaire Financial Strategies the workshop will in-depth, the purpose of Wills, Trusts, Powers of Attorney, and Health Proxies as a foundation for the rest of the series. Workshop begins at 3:00 and is free of charge.

Future Workshops:

May 1 – Planning Ahead for all the Right Reasons – preplanning funerals, etc.

May 8 – Honoring Memories, Celebrating Lives – led by Dr. BJ Norrix, elements of a vital funeral/memorial celebration

May 15 – Overcoming Medicaid Myths

May 22 – Values Workshop with a Financial Twist

All workshops are at 3:00 at Christ Church and are open for all.

5. MAKE A DIFFERENCE – BE THE CHURCH – is coming May 20 – remember to sign up at church on the clip boards provided.

6. The first of the Boiler Replacements has begun and will be completed by week’s end!!!! Thank you to all who have made this possible.

7. THIS WEEK AT CHRIST CHURCH:

Wednesday, April 18 – Choir at 7:30

Thursday, April 19 – Donald Coovert Memorial Service at 11:30

Trustees meet at 7:30

Friday, April 20 – Books Loved at 10:00 a.m.

Youth are gathering for CCYM (through the weekend)

Sunday, April 22 – is EARTH DAY (reuse, recycle, reduce – taking better care of our planet.

8. In our Prayers: Diane Lovejoy had surgery on Monday this week, The Coovert family, the Metcalf Family (funeral on April 27), Carol Gundlach, Nicky Sebastiano, Mary Emens, Barbara McCray (come to the end of her treatments), Carmen Ticconi, Helen Peacock, Ed Maker, Alicia Ticconi, Marg Facklam (Presbyterian home in Lockport), all those representing the church in Tampa at General Conference beginning next Tuesday, families in crisis, those who struggle with addictions.

Remember to pray for Jim and Sally Pollard as they travel and for all who are on the road in the weeks ahead.

9. Happy Birthday this week:

April 18 – Joyce DeLong, Ed Maker

April 19 – Charles Terranova

April 20 – Janet Barber

April 21 – Courtney Hannon, Drew Smith

April 22 – Chris Klenk

April 23 – Pamela Gibson

10. Pledge Update: 105 Pledges for \$212,201 – There are still a dozen to fifteen of us who have not yet returned their pledge cards. This information helps the church leadership to establish our budget for the coming fiscal year. If you need envelopes see Doris or sign up on the envelope table in the parlor.

11. The Youth Group would like to thank everyone who supported their Krolic's Fish Fry on April 13!

12. We are celebrating Richard Mestler's ministry of Caller editor and Christ Church photographer at the 8th Annual Laity Banquet held on Sunday April 29. Thank you Richard for all you do.

13. THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT: follow my comments on www.drbjthoughts.blogspot.com. **This week's readings:** April 18 – Revelation 6; April 19 – Revelation 7; April 20 – Revelation 8; April 23 – Revelation 9; April 24 – Revelation 10; April 25 – Revelation 11.

14. . HOLY LAND TOUR 2013: There will be a group going from Christ Church. The tour is 10 days: we spend 3 days in the Galilee in and around the sea; we spend four days in and around Jerusalem, Bethlehem, etc. We will visit Jericho and the Dead Sea and walk the via Dolorosa. We depart on January 28, 2013. If you would like to join us see the Church office or Pastor BJ for brochure and more information. All Inclusive cost is \$2598 (transportation from New York; deluxe hotel accommodations; breakfast and dinner ground transportation, guide, deluxe motor coach and all entrance fees).

This will be my 5th journey to the Holy Land. Each trip I discover something new to illuminate my understanding of the Bible (Old and New) and the background needed for understanding.

If you know anyone who would be interested in joining us there is room for more.

15. MISSION NEWS AND NOTES:

1. Hands for New York – this week's collection: **April 15 – BABY FOOD and formula (this is a growing need in food pantries around Buffalo).**

The goal is to feed 1million people in 1 year (July to June). If each congregation in Upper New York Conference fed 1050 people we would reach our goal. Christ church will well exceed that goal knowing that some congregations will not be able to feed 1050!

2. UGANDA PROJECTS UPDATE:

A. Dr BJ will be travelling to Uganda to continue his work with the Nexus Seminary this fall (October 1-October 17). The 2012 Uganda team: Rev. B.J. Norrix, Rev. William Mudge (Adirondack District Superintendent), Kathy Weaver and John Miller of Christ Church, Esther Keeney (of Pulaski) and Rev. Clair Mosher (Erieville and Ononativia United Methodist Churches in Onondaga County) **PLEASE KEEP us all in your prayers.**

B. I have three DVD's from last year's Uganda journey. I would be glad to lend them to you.

a. is me teaching a series of lectures on Palestine of Jesus time

b. is graduation in the village of Kikyusa.

c. is of the well project at Kirimandagi

3. **Habitat for Humanity:** Christ Church was one of the original Habitat Sponsors in Erie County. We continue our participation in several ways:

a. We contribute \$1000 annually to Habitat

b. We have several women who participate in the WOMEN BUILD

c. We will be helping with the Restore on "Make a Difference – Be the Church Sunday" on May 20.

16. ***A Biblical and Theological Primer***, written by Dr. B.J. Norrix is in the translation phase of its publication. This book was written for the Nexus Seminary students in Uganda and will be printed in English and Lugandan. We are planning to distribute the first copies of this book in October 2012. The total cost to publish the first 2000 copies of this book will be around 5-6,000 US dollars. Rev. Davis

Matovu has also written a commentary on the Book of Revelation that we will be publishing as well. Total Cost of both projects is 8-10,000.

Biblical Resources in Lugandan are nonexistent. There is a Lugandan translation of the Bible that we provide for our graduates but actual Bible study materials do not exist. There is a deep need for more and better materials in the native language (Lugandan). Rev. Matovu and Dr. BJ wrote their documents to respond to this need. We are hoping that these will be the first of many resources developed for the rural pastor in Uganda.

17. Copies of Sinnathamby Thevanesan's latest book are available for sale in the Café'.

18. MYM (Mid Years Ministry) is having "Dinner in the Country" on May 6 at 1:30 p.m. they will be traveling to Tillman's Village Inn in Albion NY. Tickets are \$18 and are on sale in Crafts Hall.

Signs of life are everywhere in the spring. There has been an ongoing study of what it means for a congregation to be "vital". Most of these studies try to identify measurable criteria that every congregation could look at and say with confidence that they were vital (or, of course, not). These metrics can be helpful. Generally they focus on numbers (worship attendance, children's ministries numbers, etc). What is often missed in these studies are the intangibles. For example: at Christ Church our attendance is running 15 to 20 % ahead of a year ago but do the numbers reveal vitality? I overheard from several Christ Church folks that the volume of singing on Easter Sunday was extraordinary – is that a sign of vitality? Is vitality seen in the number of children? In the number of new converts? Or can we say with confidence that babies and younger faces are a sign of vitality? But that would assume that older people cannot have a vital faith, which would clearly be wrong. How do you know that a church is vital, alive, making a difference? I am becoming convinced (we'll see how this evolves) that there has to be some combination of measurable (metrics) and intangible evidence to show vitality. How does a deep commitment to being a Disciple of Jesus Christ play out in real life? If participation numbers are up AND the congregation is engaged in living life as a Christian community (through worship, prayer, mission and ministry) would that indicate vitality more than just the numbers?

I mention all this because I am seeing signs of this kind of vitality around Christ church in dozens of small and great ways. Yes our worship attendance has picked up, yes we are seeing a few more children (and babies), yes there are more people connecting in more ways. But look at the participation side: Christ church people are doing more, giving more, responding more. We have dozens of us already signed up for "Make a Difference, Be the Church". We have 2 Christ Church folks (ok counting me is 3) heading for 2 weeks in East Africa in October. We have youth we are going to West Virginia this Summer. We have new connections to the community groups that use our facility and new connections to groups around our community.

I believe we are on the rise and what will help to continue the rise is for each of us to engage the world for Jesus Christ whenever and wherever we can.

Have a great week!

B.J. Norrix, lead servant, vitality student, coach