

**Christ United Methodist Church**

***Harlem at Saratoga***

***Amherst, New York***

***“Living Christ’s ways and exploding with love and service”***

***April 29, 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](http://www.Christchurchamherst.org)

**716-839-2460**

**Dr. B.J.’s blog is [www.drbjthoughts.blogspot.com](http://www.drbjthoughts.blogspot.com)**

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Hi Everyone:

The long, slow ascent into spring continues. My bulb flowers have figured out the season but the April showers seem to be a bit late. There is something irresistible and, dare I say, inevitable about the march of the seasons. New life is emerging all around us. It will emerge all around us. We can’t make it happen, we can’t really stop it from happening – it is totally out of our control. What we can do is enjoy the journey. We can celebrate the flowers and the flowering trees, the return of the leaves, the greening of the grass and the reemergence of life all around us. In the Christian community we easily lose sight of this. God is at work in the world. God is at work in the lives of people all around us -- for whatever reason we seem to have a difficult time seeing it. It may be that we are just so wrapped up in our own stuff and our own battles that we don’t see the amazing emerging life all around us. Christ Church is becoming a birthing place. There are new believers in our midst.

There are newly renewed believers in the midst. We need to celebrate God at work. Here's what happens to me pretty much every year. I am wandering around grumbling about the rain, the cold, the delay of the warmer weather and then, suddenly, out of the corner of my eye I spy a splash of yellow or red or marvelous blue and I am distracted. I have to stop and take a closer look and admire these lilies of the field that out does the splendor of King Solomon. Whatever your current struggle might be, the new life among us is emerging. It is out there on the fringe; catch a glimpse out of the corner of your eye and you'll see it. It may not be moving in a directly obvious way but it is most definitely moving.

Here is what is happening at Church:

1. Last Sunday's attendance was 111. Through April this year our worship attendance is up nearly 10% over the same time period in 2013 (average of 159.7 compared to 146.1). We are making slow progress – in spite of the rather horrible weather this past January/February/March our congregation is beginning to grow. When was the last time you invited a friend, neighbor, coworker, family member, total stranger to attend worship with you?
2. This Sunday for our Communion celebration I will be looking at the story from Luke 24 of two disciples' encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. The highlight of the incident is where Jesus is "made known to them in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:35)." A lot of energy has been wasted trying to explain the mechanics and processes of Communion. Like most matters of faith there is a profound sense of mystery. The communion table is a place to which we are invited and at which we encounter our risen Lord. It is a place where Jesus reveals himself in the breaking of bread and sharing of the cup.
3. Rev. Davis Matovu will be with us next week: Davis joins me Sunday, May 4 in the afternoon and will be with me through May 12.  
Davis' schedule among us:  
Monday May 5 – Davis and BJ together to work on Davis' new book. He will attend meetings scheduled for that day  
Tuesday May 6 – Davis travels to Camp Asbury to meet with the Hand2Plow 1A group. Dinner at Weavers.  
Wednesday May 7 – Rest and play day. Dinner at Millers.  
**Thursday May 8** – Meeting with Pastors in East Aurora in late afternoon  
**OPEN HOUSE at Parsonage from 7:00 to ??**  
Friday May 9 – Meeting with area pastors in day; **Mission Youth** at 6:30  
Saturday May 10 – Attending Houghton College graduation

Sunday May 11 – Davis will be preaching both morning celebrations – open forum following worship

Monday May 12 – to be determined.

I have a few openings if any others would like to host our guest and I - please let me know.

I have known and worked with Rev. Matovu since the fall of 2007. His Ugandan registered ministry is called “Soul Fishing Ministries”. The goal of Soul Fishing Ministries is to “Strengthen the rural church in Uganda”. Soul fishing ministries is engaged in pastoral education (Nexus Seminary Uganda); community development (water projects and others); new church development; youth ministries; and publications to strengthen all of the above. Davis is married to Samale and they have two children, Joan and Jesse.

4. GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT – August 14 and 15, 2014. This event, put on by the Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, is an annual gathering of leaders from a wide variety of disciplines and expertise. It is an event I try to attend every year. The nearest satellite location is in Rochester. Sally, Janelle and I are preregistered but there is room for plenty more. Current registration is \$189 (\$199 after May 20). If you would like to attend with us please let me know ASAP and we’ll get you signed up. Scheduled speakers include: Louis Giglio, Erica Ariel Fox, Carly Fiorina, Patrick Lencioni, Susan Cain, Tyler Perry, Jeffrey Immelt and Bill Hybels (Pastor at Willow). This event was attended by nearly 200,000 people worldwide last year.

5. In our prayers: Tom Davis, Caroline Hess, Fred Painton, Guy Castellino, Mitch Mooney (good to see Mitch and Sissy back in worship this past week), Bim Rowlands, Glenn Hurst, Nicky Sebastiano (star of the Buffalo News last Friday), Marian Steve, Ruth Kitson, Shirley Downey, Ed Maker, Alice Schmidt, Diane Lovejoy, the Cataudella family on the death of Sue’s father (Memorial service will be in July), those looking for work, families in crisis, those serving overseas.

**6. MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY is less than 3 weeks away – Sunday May 18 – we gather at 9:00 a.m.**

Sign up for a project – clip boards are in the back of the sanctuary (or call the church office 839-2460)

Order a T-shirt (just \$10)

Come and help and do “What YOU can” as we make a small difference in a big way this year!

**7. Versatile Vibrant Vivacious Very Entertaining VARIETY SHOW – is Friday May 16 at 7:00**

Tickets are \$10 and are available in the Café between services (or order through Church office)

Sponsored by the Christ Church Outreach Team and the United Methodist Women.

The goal is to raise \$3500 to support for Habitat for Humanity Buffalo and United Methodist World Missions

An evening of music, laughter and special guests – bring your friends!

8. The Discussion Action Group met last night (Next meeting is June 12 at 7:00 – meeting is open for all interested in helping Christ church move forward).

-- A task force on senior ministries is being formed with Jim Pollard convening.

-- An exploratory group on Singles Ministries (in all its diversity) is being gathered around Sandy Cumming

-- Pastor BJ is looking for all of the friendly extroverts out there to help him with a project

-- We will be exploring stronger connections with Daemen College

-- We are exploring ways to connect with congregations of other ethnicities in our area.

WATCH FOR MORE – or step up and contact these team leaders and get in the game.

9. ***Take Me Out to the Ball Game!!!*** Saturday June 7 at 6:00. \$10.25. Christ UMC Men invite everyone to join us for “Star Wars Night” at the Bisons game versus the Syracuse Chiefs. Sign up this Sunday by returning the form in your Sunday bulletin. Baseball, Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader and . . . fireworks!! What a terrific night out.

10. This Week at Christ church:

Wednesday, Aril 30 – Choir Rehearsal at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 1 – Men’s Pre-work breakfast at 7:00 a.m. at Sheridan Family Restaurant on Sheridan across from Dent tower

Thursday, May 1 – 10:00 Bible Study

Friday, May 2 – Books we have Loved at 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 4 – MYM Dinner in the Country

6:00 Disciple Bible Study

Monday, May 5 – SPRC meets at 7:00

11. **WE WANT YOUR SHOES – *The Sole Survivor Update***: 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?*** As of April 29 we are nearly **80 bags** (25 pairs per bag means nearly 2000 pairs already collected). We are on our way to 300 bags (or 7500 pairs of shoes!).

12. Happy Birthday this week:

April 30 – Karen Bellimer and Benjamin Weaver

May 1 – Tom McCray

May 2 – Roger Johnson and Ruth Kitson

May 3 – Margaret Mugal

May 4 – Ruth Swenson (90)!

13. Happy Anniversary this week:

May 4 – Greg and Lynn Ramsey (30)

14. Through the Bible readings:

April 29 – Numbers 5-6 and Revelation 16

April 30 – Numbers 7-8 and Revelation 17

May 1 – Numbers 9-11 and Revelation 18

May 2 – Numbers 12-14 and Revelation 19

May 3 – Numbers 15-16 and Revelation 20

May 4 – Numbers 17-19 and Revelation 21

May 5 – Numbers 20-22 and Revelation 22

May 6 – Numbers 23-25 and Matthew 1

May 7 – Numbers 26-28 and Matthew 2

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. Men's pre-work breakfast group is now meeting at the **Sheridan Family Restaurant** on Sheridan near Harlem Road. We will next meet on May 1 at 7:00 a.m. at the Sheridan Family Restaurant. All men are welcome to join us.

17. 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.

#### 18. COMING EVENTS

May 4 – Dinner in the Country – MYM at the White Inn in Fredonia – tickets available in the café between services

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 10 – Men’s Club to visit the Buffalo Maritime Center (car pool at 10:00 a.m. at the church)

May 11 – Rev. Richard Davis Matovu guest preacher

May 16 – Versatile Vibrant Vivacious Very Entertaining Variety Show (sponsored by UMW) – appropriate comedy acts needed see the UMW for details

May 18 – Make a Difference Day SIGNUP NOW!

May 19 – Carl Ericson Memorial Service

**May 23** – US 2 Missionary Sarah Mudge will be with us – gathering at 6:30. Sarah, a 2013 Roberts Wesleyan graduate, is serving a 2 year stint as a Missionary in the United States (US2). She is currently working with a Women’s ministry in Seattle, Washington.

May 28 through 31 UPPER NEW YORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE -- Syracuse

June 8 – Confirmation Sunday

19. CHANGE TO CHANGE THE WORLD: Save up your loose change for the Family Justice Center! We will be collecting change on Make a Difference Day (May 18) to make a positive transformation in the lives of those affected by domestic violence.

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

Opportunity 1: Hospitality – looking for friendly extroverts – see BJ for more

Opportunity 2: Creative Worship Team being formed – see BJ

Opportunity 3: A **new ministry team for singles** – see above for more  
Opportunity 4: Ministry with Senior Adults – see above for more

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

Opportunity 1: 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of May. He will be meeting with our Uganda travelers and supporters as well as the new Mission Youth group

Opportunity 2: MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY is only **2 Weeks** from this Sunday. Team leaders have been recruited and Sign ups are UP!

OPPORTUNITY 3: We have begun collecting items for the September Uganda Fund raiser “Silent Auction” baskets. If you have something to donate please bring it to Pastor BJ’s office.

**Parting Thought:**

Ok, so I wrecked my car. Well, wrecked is something of an overstatement. I crunched the front left fender and bumper. I did this last Friday on my way to get my hair cut (insert appropriate or inappropriate bald joke here). The worst part of it all is that it was my fault. No question about it. I looked into the shop to see if there was a line (I do hate to wait) and that small distraction led me to clip the front left of a nice gentleman’s car who was minding his own business sitting at the stop sign. It reminded me of a time, as a young teenager, when I rode my bicycle into the back of a parked car – the young lady on the side walk, I will contend, had something to do with it. The car didn’t look too bad in the parking lot but the damage was nearly \$2000 (ouch). I am glad to report that I did not cancel the collision on my car insurance as I had planned to do a few weeks ago. . . I am amazed at how quickly things can change. In this case one left glance and crunch. That’s the bad news. The good news is that grace and mercy and the love of God works just as suddenly. It is amazing how quickly God’s grace can transform a life, a destiny, a future. Our cultural tendency is to focus on the negative turn of events (and it wasn’t pleasant seeing my damaged car and knowing it was “my bad”). But I see in my Bible a strong suggestion to shift the focus to the positive. We are told to “taste and see” that the Lord is good. Jesus is said to come “like a thief in the night” and “like a flash of lightening”. I believe he does, in fact, enter our lives just that way at the moment of our greatest need. At the moment of our deepest desperation we are met by the sudden, unexpected, influx of God’s grace and love and our lives are transformed from our heart outward.

Have a suddenly blessed week!

BJ Norrix, lead servant, missionary to Amherst, crash test dummy

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