

**Christ United Methodist Church**  
**Snyder, New York**

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

**UPDATE December 11, 2012**

**SUNDAY WORSHIP AT CHRIST CHURCH**

**9:00 – Praise Celebration Worship**

**10:00 – FaithXpress and Soul Strength and AOL**

**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.drjithoughts.blogspot.com](http://www.drjithoughts.blogspot.com)**

Hi Everyone:

We are half way through the season of Advent – just two more Sundays until the Feast of the Incarnation. Signs of the coming of Jesus are all around us: People are fighting about the “war on Christmas” failing to realize that the “secularization” of the “Holy Day” has been present from the day the church chose December 25 as the day to celebrate the birth of Jesus. People are fighting for stuff and presents and gifts and toys and (honestly) junk that we would never think to buy any other time of the year. And, still, somehow we seek to honor Jesus Christ in the middle of all the insanity. It may just be that December brings that difficulty into high relief. Living my life for Christ is not just difficult this time of year it is difficult every time of year. However, it may just be that in the wash of consumer frenzy and conspicuous consumption (nothing says Merry Christmas better than a brand new Lexus . . . heck, even Santa drives a Mercedes) striving to live by biblical values really stands out as being out of step with our culture – it is way too easy to just be absorbed into the mayhem. I choose to slow down, pause, reflect, light a candle, pray, read, listen, serve, be present with others . . .

Here is what is going on at Church:

1. Attendance last Sunday was 150. Appreciation to our “not ready for church time players” (aka Scott and Tom) and their ongoing assistance in the recent children’s moments. Thank you, also, to the Kremziers and the Critophs for lighting our Advent candles this past Sunday.

2. This Sunday is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent. I will be speaking from Luke 3:7-18. John the Baptist has been preaching a “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”. He is preparing the way for Jesus arrival and ministry. He is preaching a “Belief we can Change in”.

We will be baptizing Evan Michael Carney at 11:00

***We are also receiving new members this Sunday – if you are not yet a member of Christ Church and would like to be – contact me.***

Remember at 10:00 the AOL group is studying “Christmas is not Your Birthday” by Mike Slaughter. Copies are available. This Advent study is about seeking a different kind of Christmas.

3. In our prayers: please pray for the 7 year old granddaughter of a friend of mine her name is Brooke Frega and she is in ICU at Women’s and Children’s here in Buffalo; pray for Marion Swanson at Millard Fillmore Suburban; Don Munson; Nicky Sebastiano, Barbara McCray, Bim Rowlands, Juliana Sabol; Marian Steve, Ruth Kitson, families in grief, families in crisis, those looking for work . . .

4. Congratulations to Kristy and Jim Dorman who welcomed daughter, Julia Rose, into the world on December 3, 2012. Congratulations to grandmother Rosemary Kochan. The family lives in Tennessee.

5. The Worship/Altar Guild will be in the Parlor one last Sunday (the 16<sup>th</sup>) selling red and white Poinsettias at \$8 each. They can be taken home after worship on Christmas Eve or left to decorate the sanctuary.

## 6. MISSION REPORTS

A. Disaster Relief: we have collected over \$2000 for Hurricane Sandy relief. If you would like to contribute to the clean up and rebuilding mark your checks “3021787 for Hurricane Sandy Relief” and put it in the collection plate or send to the church office. Questions? Call the church office 839-2460.

We are also still collecting Flood Bucket and Health Kit materials – see list on Web site [christchurchamherst.org](http://christchurchamherst.org).

**B. The Giving Tree is now empty of tags and the tree has been surrounded with gifts for various children around the Buffalo area – THANK YOU.**

C. Remember to save Campbell’s labels, box tops for education, cancelled stamps (tear off envelop corner from cards) and Dash’s register tapes. Put in the containers on top of the microwave in the kitchen – Gateway-Longview benefits from this collection.

D. **Ugandan Orphans:** if you sponsored a Ugandan Orphan last year and would like to continue that sponsorship for 2013 please be sure to give your \$125 sponsor fee to the church office. Thanks!

E. **Youth Group** – The Christ Church Youth group is providing a special dinner for the Seneca Street Church on December 16. They thank you for your support in this mission endeavor.

7. This week at Christ Church

Wednesday, December 12 – Choir Rehearsal is at 7:30

Thursday, December 13 – Bible Study is at 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, December 15 – Christmas Pageant Rehearsal 10:00 a.m.

8. Happy Birthday this week:

December 11 – Dave Wolfe (church custodian); Ed Fisher; Gavin Gabel; Geoff Hill

December 13 – Betty Kreib; Marcia Rhinehart

December 14 – Sheldon Kennedy; Chris Smith

December 16 – Meaghan Ramsey

9. No Anniversaries listed for this week

10. Through the New Testament in 2012 see my commentary at

[www.drbitthoughts.blogspot.com](http://www.drbitthoughts.blogspot.com). Readings for this week: December 11 – Luke 14; December 12 – Luke 15; December 13 – Luke 16; December 14 – Luke 17; December 17 – Luke 18; December 18 – Luke 19; December 19 – Luke 20

The reading challenge for 2013 is to read the entire Bible together. This will take 3 to 4 Bible chapters a day for the year. A schedule has been printed in the Caller and I will be printing the schedule in this update beginning the last week of December. We will be reading 3 Old Testament chapters and 1 New Testament chapter a day.

11. Upcoming worship schedule:

Sunday, December 16 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent “Belief we can Change in!”

Sunday, December 23 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent and Annual Children’s Christmas Program at 11:00 – 9:00 praise and worship

Monday, December 24 – Christmas Eve – Worship Celebrations at 9:00 (with choir and special music) and 11:00 with carols and communion

Sunday, December 30 – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Christmas “Out with the Old, In with the New!” – what do we need to unpack to be ready for a new year?

12. A number of you have asked already so here is my answer: ***YES I am planning to return to Uganda in 2013.*** At this point I am planning to travel in the first 2+ weeks of November, 2013. If you feel the pull and call of God to travel with us you would be more than welcome – come see me and we’ll talk and pray and see what God has in mind. The work that my team does has to do with who is on the team. We had nurses this year so we did medicine. In previous years I

have traveled with teachers (who worked with schools) musicians who worked with musicians and others. If God is calling you to serve in this way I want to help you realize that calling.

**13. Israel Update – I’ve just learned that my friend Rev. Davis Matovu** has been cleared by the Israeli government to join us on our Israel journey (now to figure out how I am going to pay for it). As of now we are still on for our late January 2013 journey to the Holy Land. Obviously, if it becomes unsafe we will postpone our journey but at this time we are good and ready to go. Keep the peace of the middle east in our prayers (and we travelers as well. Making this journey: Ed and Cindy Fisher, Don and Barb Critoph, Barbara Carrier, Marion Rowlands and Pastor BJ from Christ Church, we are being joined by 7 from Syracuse and now Rev. Davis Matovu. We leave January 28 and return February 6 (except Ed and Cindy who are going on an extension to see Petra in Jordan and will return on the 9<sup>th</sup>).

**14. LOST COAT – 44L light Tan London Fog Raincoat – contact the church for more information**

**15. Seneca Street Church After-School Program needs YOU!!!** During part of December and during the month of January we are without the college students that help our program survive. In addition, this year we will be without our Director during this time because she will be out on maternity leave enjoying her newborn baby girl!

The After-School Program runs Monday-Thursday from 2:30-5:30. Any help during the week would be greatly appreciated. The dates that we will need help include: Dec. 10-13, Jan 3&4, Jan 7-10, Jan 14-17 and Jan 22-24. If you are interested in any day please contact Cheryl Bird at [716-491-2200](tel:716-491-2200) or [cbird@daemen.edu](mailto:cbird@daemen.edu) OR Jamie Ryder at [215-219-8765](tel:215-219-8765) or [ryder.jamie@gmail.com](mailto:ryder.jamie@gmail.com). Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you!

**16.** Christ Church will be participating in a church revitalization training experience in 2013 called “Hand to the Plow”. The training has been developed by Upper New York Conference Director of Congregational Revitalization, Rev. Aaron Bouwens. The training will involve 9 sessions for clergy and 4 sessions for clergy and laity teams from participating congregations. I am looking for 10 to 12 Christ Church members who would be willing to participate in this event. All four sessions will be in 2013 and will be scheduled to accommodate normal work routines. If God is calling you to be a part of this training please see me. I have 5 on my list already. I believe this will help us to move toward our goal of 500 in worship and 100 in Christian Education by 2015.

Parting Thought:

I don’t know how well I do it but I am trying to slow down and walk patiently through the Advent Season. The frenzy of December is raging all round me. I am striving to step back, take another look, walk a little closer to God and remember whose birthday I am celebrating this month. I am still attending events and parties and trying very hard to be present with

whomever and wherever I happen to be. It is eye opening. I sat on a bench at a shopping mall. I wasn't shopping (I really don't shop), instead I was just sitting there watching people who were shopping at the mall. The song says "it's the most wonderful time of the year" and I know one of the central words to the season is "joy" but I didn't see much joy and people did not seem to be experiencing much wonder. What I saw was exhaustion, I saw panic, I saw a lot of frowns and nobody was really looking at anybody else – heads down (or sideways into the store windows) hunting for that last bargain, that last item, those things that just had to be purchased or someone's holiday would be ruined. It was quite interesting. Can we reclaim the wonder? Can we rediscover the joy? It won't be found in a store, it won't be found in the frantic frenzy . . . it is found in the simplicity and the quiet joy of the birth of our Savior. Are you getting ready for that moment?

I'll see you when the Church gathers,

BJ Norrix, coach, missionary, lead servant

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