

**December 2, 2014**

**Christ United Methodist Church**  
**UPDATE**

**Harlem Road at Saratoga Road  
Amherst, New York**

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

**EVERYONE is WELCOME**

**SUNDAY AT CHRIST CHURCH**

**9:00 – Praise Celebration Worship**

**10:00 FaithXpress, Soul Strength and 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)

Or call us at: 716-839-2460

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

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Hi Everyone:

It is Advent. Jesus is coming. We are preparing for the celebration of Christ’s first advent, his arrival in Bethlehem. The event we observe on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. We know that the date we celebrate the birth of Jesus is arbitrary – we have no way of knowing exactly what day Jesus was born. The early Christian leaders recognized this and did not focus on the birth of Jesus as much as they chose to celebrate the “Feast of the Incarnation.” The Incarnation is an event worth celebrating. Incarnation: God became flesh and dwelled among us. Incarnation: the Creator of the universe was born in human form as a human baby. The baby is not the point. The miracle of the incarnate God is the only point. I am kind of tired of all the chatter about the “war on Christmas”. Frankly, I don’t need to be reminded of the reason for the season. I don’t need to be hammered about “creeping secularism” and I am certainly not interested trying to combine all of the various religious and pseudo religious observances of late December. It is nothing against Kwanza or Festivus or Hanukah or the Solstice or Yuletide or whatever else people may be celebrating, I just want to sit and adore and worship the

Creator become human (and, yet, still remain the Creator). That adoration is all too often lost in living mangers and holiday concerts and office parties and cookie exchanges and general revelry. For me, I want to slow my roll and sit quietly and listen and hear and pray and worship and look in awe and wonder at the depth of God's love for all of creation. "People look east and sing today; Love the Lord, is on the way!"

Here is what is happening at Church:

1. Attendance last Sunday was 105 (those darn holiday weekends). We celebrated the first Sunday of Advent and looked to Jesus' return. I spoke of five things to do to prepare for the celebration of Christmas: 1. Slow down; 2. Look around; 3. Listen; 4. Feel the Joy; 5. Engage as Jesus engaged.

2. This Sunday is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent. We will be celebrating Holy Communion and will be looking at the preaching of John the Baptist. John's message was pretty short and to the point: Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand. The word "Repent" is a good Greek word that means "to turn away from one thing and turn toward something else." In the spiritual life it would be to turn away from the ways of death and turn toward life; or, to put it another way, to turn away from a meaningless life and turn toward the way of Christ. If I am going down the wrong road the only way to get on the right path is to turn around and go back to the point where I left the right road (that going back is repentance). Repentance has little to do with how I feel (like feeling sorry) and more to do with what I will choose to do.

3. Once again, THANK YOU, to everyone who have returned their 2015 pledge cards. We are doing well with nearly 100 responses. There will be acknowledgements in the mail this week (and friendly reminders for those of us who haven't responded yet). Nearly 2/3 of the Christ Church family has "stepped up" their giving. THANK YOU!!

4. Dinner and Concert: Mature Years Ministry is hosting their annual Christmas dinner on Friday, December 5 at 5:30 p.m. The menu this year includes ham, au gratin potatoes, green beans and chocolate trifle. Tickets are \$18.

**Following dinner at 7:30 will be a concert by the Buffalo Silver Band, which is open to the public.** This award winning group will present a variety of Christmas music with a big brass band sound. A Free-will offering will be received to support Mission youth (and our youth on mission).

This from Bob Snyder: The Buffalo Silver Band is celebrating its 100 year anniversary and their music is really great! Marcia and I heard them at Kleinhans this spring. In your email would you please make the points 1) it is a big 30 plus member English style brass band. 2) They have played at the amphitheater at Chautauqua and of course Kleinhans plus other places in Western NY. 3) This year they won the Hannaford Cup at the Toronto Festival of Bands (They are the real deal) 4) They play jazz, classical, marches, etc. I asked and they will play Sing Sing Sing. Wait til you see and hear that! We had the Lancaster Steel Drum Band a few years ago and this group will also rock big time.

Even if you aren't coming to dinner – come to the concert at 7:30!!

5. The next Men's pre-work breakfast is Thursday, December 4 at 7:00 a.m. at the Sheridan Family Restaurant.

6. Monday, December 8 at 10:00a.m. will be the first meeting of the Christ Church Visitation Team. 7 Christ Church members participated in visitation training in November.

7. In our Prayers: Family and friends of Bill Kearney; Mac Sabol is now home and recovering and hopes to be singing soon; Chris Smith is having some minor surgery; Dorothy Brown is home and appreciates your prayers and encouragement; Dona Dalton (Dona was my Administrative Assistant for 27 years in Syracuse. She is battling Lymphoma); Barb Critoph (recovering from knee surgery); Al Wrisley (recovering from oral surgery); Brian Martin (now home following bone marrow transplant); Glenn Hurst, Edmond Wrycza (Julianna Sabol's father in nursing home in Fort Erie); Lois Lewis, Barbara Clinton, Tom Davis, Fred Painton, Guy Castellino (and Guy's mother and father who are both dealing with major health matters); Mitch Mooney, Bim Rowlands, Nicky Sebastiano, Marion Steve, Ruth Kitson, Ruth Luss, Shirley Downey, Ed Maker, Alice Schmidt, Diane Lovejoy. Remember our service men and women and especially: Alex Dunbar, Ian Johnson and Lindsey Darling (all serving in the US Navy).

#### 8. THIS WEEK AT CHRIST CHURCH

Tuesday, December 2 – BJ at Asbury Pointe at 2:00p.m.

Thursday, December 4 – Men's pre-work breakfast (Sheridan Family Rest. At 7:00 a.m.)

Thursday, December 4 – Bible Study at 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, December 4 – Habitat for Humanity Annual Ingathering (5:30p.m.)

Thursday, December 4 – Living Well Covenant meeting (Library) at 7:00p.m.

Friday, December 5 – Books we have loved 10:00 a.m.

Friday, December 5 – MYM Dinner and Concert

Monday, December 8 – Visitation Team at 10:00a.m.

Monday, December 8 – Christ Church staff party 6:00p.m.

Tuesday, December 9 – Stewardship and Finance at 7:00p.m.

9. The Giving Tree – the Giving Tree will be in Crafts Hall starting this Sunday. If you wish to participate, please take a tag and return you UNWRAPPED gift by December 14. Attach the tag to your gift. This year's recipients are Gateway-Longview, Haven House, Primera Iglesia UMC, and Habitat for Humanity. If you have any questions please contact Diane Klenk (651-0236).

#### 10. Christmas Celebrations at Christ Church

Sunday, December 21 – 11:00 -- **The Kings of Orient, AR. Annual Christmas Pageant.**

Wednesday, December 24 – Christmas Eve Worship

9:00 – Candles/Carols/Choir

11:00 – Candles/Carols/Communion

11. AOL (Adult Opportunities for Learning) kicks off Advent series titled "Christmas: the Good, The Bad & the Ugly". Led by Rev. Jim Pollard. The study launches November 30 and will run for 4 weeks. See Jim or Sally for more information.

12. **Disciple Bible Study** is down to its last 5 sessions. If you are interested in joining a Disciple Class for 2015 please let me know: Disciple is a 34 week in-depth survey of the Bible.

13. Happy Birthday this week

December 3 – Amy Johnston; Robert Paddock; Hailey Wilsman

December 4 – Mary Parsons

December 5 – Jean Ericson

December 6 – Diane Klenk

December 7 – Alicia Ticconi

December 8 – Michael Keller; Rachel Wenner

14. Happy Anniversary this week (none listed)

15. Through the Bible: This week's readings

December 2 – 2 Chronicles 28-29

December 3 – 2 Chronicles 30-31 and Luke 10

December 4 – 2 Chronicles 32-33 and Luke 11

December 5 – 2 chronicles 34-36

December 6 – Esther 1-2 and Luke 12

December 7 – Esther 3-5

December 8 – Esther 6-8

December 9 – Esther 9-10 and Luke 13

December 10 – Haggai 1-2 and Luke 14

16. **DOUBLE YOUR MISSION GIVING IMPACT** on "Giving Tuesday: December 2, 2014". The United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries announced that on December 2, 2014 it will match up to \$1 million in gifts made on line to any project through the Advance as part of UMC #Giving Tuesday. See more at [www.umcmmission.org/give](http://www.umcmmission.org/give). If you would like a suggestion or two: Mudge, Sarah (#3021845) is my friend and a US2 Missionary serving in Tacoma, Washington: UMCOR is always a good place to invest a few dollars.

## 17. **MISSION OPPORTUNITIES**

**Uganda 2015** – Our team is nearly set. Dr. BJ Norrix will be leading a team of 8: John and Brandon Miller, Vicki and Hannah Smith, Kathryn Weaver, Janelle Martin, and Erisawe Briere (and possibly ONE more). We will be travelling to Uganda for 2 weeks the end of June/July 2015. Your prayers are desired and appreciated. We will be visiting schools, presiding at Nexus graduations, dedicating water projects and a church, visiting an animal preserve, working in a health clinic and on a school and much, much more.

**Habitat for Humanity:** Christ Church was one of the founding partners for Buffalo Habitat and will present its annual \$1000 check of support on December 4<sup>th</sup> at the ingathering.

**Food Pantry Collections:** Just a reminder that we are always collecting!!

**CANDY AND COOKIE SALE** – The outreach team is baking up some delectable holiday treats which will be on sale Sunday, December 14 from 10:00 to 1:00.

Donations of homemade cookies and candy are appreciated and can be brought to the church on Friday December 12. All proceeds will support the mission of our church!

**Uganda Orphan sponsorships** – we are trying to get the funds to the Blessed Junior School in Kirimandagi, Uganda (Luweero District) by the end of the year. If you are “sponsoring” the same child, please let Janelle know as soon as possible. If you are not sponsoring this year let us know as soon as possible so we can arrange for other sponsors.

**Parting Thought:**

The life that Christ calls us to is a different kind of life. Most of the world around us (especially in the U.S.) is focused on comfort, pleasure and “striving to get ahead.” The culture in which we live operates on a “me first” mentality that celebrates greed. Jesus calls to a different kind of life. It is so different I am not at all surprised that few people strive to enter into it and a significant number of churches present a kind of Christianity that looks just like the society and world around us. Jesus calls us to a life of service and sacrifice. Bookstores are filled with “self-help” books; books designed to help you achieve your goals. We teach meditation as a benefit to physical health. We promote spirituality as a way to improve your life and get ahead in the world. But Jesus calls us to a life of transformation (he said be in the world but not of the world). Jesus calls us to a life that is other-centered and is constantly striving to make the world a better place for everyone. I realize this is not the usual kind of thing to discuss in the Christmas season but I think this, more than any other time of year, is when we need to be reminded that it is not “all about me”. Christmas is not my birthday. And, though giving gifts of charity and toys to the “less fortunate” is quite popular for the Christ-follower, it is not enough. The bigger question will be how can I engage the world for Jesus in January or May or July or October? The bigger question is not what can I do this holiday season for the less fortunate but what changes in my life will I make so that I can make a difference in the lives of others in all days and seasons.

Jesus is coming - are you ready?

Have a great week,

BJ Norrix, missionary, Christ follower, lead servant