

**December 23, 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.drjbthoughts.blogspot.com](http://www.drjbthoughts.blogspot.com)

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Hi Everyone:

I’ve survived my annual Christmas shopping day. For the past 25 years I have tried to do all my Christmas shopping on the Monday before Christmas. I have a plan, a list and I go to the stores early (before noon) and usually have the mall pretty much to myself for a couple of hours. I am of the hunter type person (as opposed to gather) so I don’t really shop – I know what I want, what I am willing to pay for it and I look until I find it and then move on. Not exactly a social event for me but it gets the job done. Anyway, it was fun and I love giving presents to friends and family. I made sure to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and worked really hard at not being cranky when I couldn’t find one of the items. All in all it was a good morning and now, with all of that aspect of Yule tide taken care of my heart and mind turns to the central story of the season. Perhaps you have heard it before? It is a story that involves a young (very young) woman and her betrothed. There are visits from angels and people being pushed around by an oppressive government. There is a peasant family in a less than desirable birthing center . . . and an inexpressibly joyful gift for the whole human race. It is summarized in the simple words of the announcing angel: “Today in the town of David a Savior has

been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Merry Christmas and blessed feast of the incarnation everyone!

1. Special appreciation to the entire cast and support and special music that made "The Kings of Orient, AR" a rousing success and a wonderful way to tell and retell the Christmas story. Actors and children (who were also acting) and musicians and technicians and all made this a great day. Special appreciation to Sally Pollard and her team for a great, great morning at Christ Church. Attendance Sunday was 211.

**2. Tomorrow, December 24 is Christmas Eve.**

9:00 p.m. – Worship features candles, carols, lessons, our church choir and a message from Pastor BJ

11:00 p.m. – Worship features candles, carols, communion and a message from Pastor BJ

Bring your friends and come early!

3. The **Church office** will be closed Christmas Day and December 26. In an emergency call the parsonage.

4. This Sunday is the First Sunday of Christmas. I will be preaching a message titled "What happens next?" The Bible passage is Luke 2:22-40. The message looks at the year past and anticipates the year coming. In nine (9) days it will be 2015.

**DID YOU KNOW?** That every Sunday sermon is recorded and is available for listening or down load through the Church's web site: [www.christchurchamherst.org](http://www.christchurchamherst.org). Click on worship then sermons. They are listed in chronological order and by title.

5. In our prayers: Sue Estee began radiation treatments yesterday and her husband Harley began treatments a few weeks ago; Sharon Ferrelli; Dave Mitchell and family as they grieve the passing of Dave's mother Dorothy; Dr. Robert Nachbar is now at Wesley Rehab. Mail can be sent to: Room 710, Wesley Rehab at Beachwood Homes, 2235 Millersport Highway, Getzville, 14068; Mac Sabol; Dorothy Brown is home and appreciates your prayers and encouragement; Dona Dalton; Barb Critoph; 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. Pray for those who are travelling these weeks. Remember our service men and women (domestic and foreign) especially: Alex Dunbar, Ian Johnson and Lindsey Darling (all serving in the US Navy).

**6. DISCIPLE BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITIES**

The Disciple 1 Class completed its course last night by celebrating our covenant and holy communion.

**1. A new Disciple 1 Class** is being formed. Information meeting will be January 11 following the 11:00 worship. Questions? See Pastor BJ. Disciple 1 is a 34 week Bible Survey course that meets and works within covenantal relationships.

**2. Disciple 2** will be offered on Sunday nights beginning January 11 at 6:00p.m. – interested see Pastor BJ (prerequisite is having taken Disciple 1). Disciple 2 is an in depth study of Genesis/Exodus and Luke/Acts

7. Happy Birthday this week:

December 23 – Lois Lewis and Jocelyn Reagan  
December 25 – Tim Reed and Jesus of Nazareth (observed)  
December 26 – Allen Dengler, Jacqueline Morris  
December 27 – Laurie Hannon and Emily Scaringi  
December 28 – Teresa Watson  
December 29 – Paula Kreib

8. Happy Anniversary this week:

December 23 – Peter and Patricia Zaleski (54 years)  
December 25 – James and Rosemary Leas (63)  
December 27 – Joseph and Carolyn Day (63)

9. Through the Bible (2014) This week's readings

December 23 – Nehemiah 12-13 and Luke 21  
December 24 – Micah 1-3  
December 25 – Micah 4-5 and Luke 22  
December 26 – Micah 6-7  
December 27 – Zechariah 1-4  
December 28 – Zechariah 5-8  
December 29 – Zechariah 9-12 and Luke 23  
December 30 – Zechariah 13-14 and Luke 24  
December 31 – Malachi 1-4

Next week I'll begin posting the readings through the Bible for 2015. We will be using a different schedule.

## 10. MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

**Uganda 2015** – Our team is set. Dr. BJ Norrix will be leading a team of 8: John and Brandon Miller, Viki and Hannah Smith, Kathryn Weaver, Janelle Martin, and Erisawe Briere. 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.

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

**CANDY AND COOKIE SALE – raised over \$500 for our Outreach and Mission!!**

**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.

**The Giving Tree** – THANK YOU for all who gave to help brighten the lives of children across the Buffalo area!!

11. UGANDA TEAM raising funds:

1. WE are selling necklaces in Crafts Hall. These necklaces were made by a women's ministry in Jinja, Uganda. This ministry is led by our friend Rev. Moses Wasige. The necklaces cost \$5 each and all proceeds go to support these women – most of whom are widows or single mothers. Thank you for your support.

2. Cowls, toys and Anderson Coupons – are also for sale to support the team (and members of the team). See our table in Crafts Hall. Handmade Cowls (by Kathryn Weaver) are \$25 each, the toys are a donation and the Anderson Coupon Books (over \$60 worth of coupons) are for sale for \$4 each.

12. Coming in January:

Action/Discussion Group resumes on Monday, January 12 at 7:00 p.m. We came together to begin discussions of strengthening and building the ministries of Christ Church. The monitors, the 350 concert, and some new small groups have emerged from these discussions. These gatherings are open to all who wish to help build our community of faith.

**Disciple Bible Study – information on the new class** – Sunday, January 11 at 12:30 p.m. in the Wesley Room. Disciple is a 34 week in depth study of the Bible. If you are interested (and would like information in advance) see Pastor BJ

**Current Disciple Group plans to continue with Disciple 2 – Want to join us? Let me know. Begins January 11 at 6:00**

UMW and UMM are both meeting on Saturday, January 10 at 10:00 a.m. (The women are at the church the men are going to the HarborCenter).

13. Pledge Report: Doris Schanzlin tells me that we have received 107 pledges for \$246,816 (a nearly 12% increase). THANK YOU for stepping up. If you haven't turned in your card please do so as soon as possible. Christ Church is living out its mission to Live Christ's Ways and Explode in Love and Service.

**YEAR END GIVING** Just a reminder that for gifts to be counted toward your 2014 giving we need them by the 31<sup>st</sup> of December.

14. Christ Church's Mission footprint: Peggy Bermudez (and friends) has put together a couple of maps. One is Erie County and the other is the rest of the world. On the map is a representation of the agencies and ministries that the Christ Church community is engaged with around town and around the world. The display is in the parlor. Take a look and see that Christ Church people are in ministry in a multitude of places and ways!

### **Parting Thought**

On a Silent Night in a tiny town in an insignificant back eddy of the great Roman Empire a male baby was born. His parents were nobody, really. A young woman, Mary, and her betrothed, Joseph. Joseph could claim a distant lineage to King David but those days were centuries removed; little remained of the former glory in the life of this simple carpenter. Other than a group of shepherds and the animals in the shelter Joseph and Mary were using, the only witnesses to this birth were the parents and a single star in the dark Middle Eastern night. From the perspective of the mighty empire, from the perspective of the seats of power, from the perspective of the wealthy and mighty (with the exception of crazy King Herod), the birth was unnoticed and would have been considered insignificant and largely irrelevant – just another peasant mouth to feed. Rumors of angels and choirs in the night and exotic visits of scholars from faraway lands would not have changed the view of this event from the perspective of the seats of power. It didn't happen in a palace, the parents were nobody, really, and the troubled land of Palestine was of minimal political importance. What difference would one baby, more or less, make in the big wide world? But great change begins in small ways. Mighty invasions begin with a single event. The world transformed and began with a single baby. On a Silent Night in a tiny town in an insignificant back eddy of the mighty Roman Empire the renewal of the world (and my life and your life) began with the birth of a baby. His name is Jesus.

Have a holy Christmas,

B.J. Norrix, lead servant, missionary,