

**December 30, 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.drbjthoughts.blogspot.com](http://www.drbjthoughts.blogspot.com)

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Hi Everyone:

Happy Penultimate Day and the sixth day of Christmas (insert favorite goose joke here). We had a great Christmas celebration here at Christ Church. Over 150 of us gathered on Christmas Eve to hear the Nine Lessons and Carols with some very special music from our Choir. Thank you chancel Choir and Minister of Music, Kevin Durkin, for a great evening together. Thank you Sally Pollard (and family and friends) for the luminarias and the great Christmas Eve reception! A big thank you to our Altar Guild and their helpers for trees and candles and poinsettias and all of the visual colors and banners remind us of the season! We have had a great Advent and Christmas and are looking forward to another great year at Christ Church. We have been blessed by so many and in so many ways!

Here is what is happening at Church:

1. We concluded the calendar year by looking back and forward into 2015 in our worship on Sunday by asking “What’s Next?”. There were about 90 of us here.

2. This Sunday, January 4, it is Epiphany Sunday (Epiphany is January 6) and celebrates the arrival of the Magi to worship the Christ. Scholars suggest that the visit of the Magi was somewhere between 12 days and 2 years after the birth of Jesus. I am beginning a sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). The Sermon on the Mount is a critical transitional document, a bridge if you will, between the Old and New Testaments. The key phrase “you have heard . . . but I say to you” is used by Jesus to help us understand the original intent of the Old Testament code and to help Christ followers see the reality of the in-breaking Kingdom of Heaven. This week I will be looking at Matthew 4 (Jesus’ first preaching) and Matthew 5:1 which is the set up to the sermon. “The Kingdom of the Heavens” is among us!

This Sunday is also a Communion Sunday!

**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.

3. January brings many new spiritual growth opportunities:

1. Through the Bible in 2015 – readings will be published here throughout the week and will be available through our web site as well. Why not join me as we become more familiar with the Bible.

2. In-depth bible studies: A. Disciple I – information meeting on January 11 at 12:15p.m. in the Wesley Room. Disciple I is a 34 week survey of the entire Bible. B. Disciple II – will begin meeting on January 11 at 6:00p.m. in the Wesley Room (prerequisite for Disciple II is having taken Disciple I) Disciple II is a 34 week study of Genesis/Exodus and Luke/Acts.

3. Discussion Action Group resumes on January 12 at 7:00p.m. Everyone is welcome who is interested in helping Christ Church move forward in its mission and ministry.

**4. Are you interested in joining or forming a covenant group? A prayer group? – see BJ**

4. January 11 – **HEARTS AND HANDS** -- Join us on Sunday morning, January 11, to hear about Hearts and Hands, a local organization whose mission is to help older and physically-challenged people be able to live with dignity and independence, improving the quality of their lives while remaining in their homes of choice. This is accomplished by caring individuals who provide (at no cost to the receiver) driving to appointments, light household chores and routine maintenance, companion care, as well as friendly phone calls and visits. Hearts and Hands currently serves over 500 care receivers. More than 300 volunteers are part of the organization, which now employs 4 full time and 4 part time staff and one AmeriCorps VISTA worker. Come and learn more about how your life might be enriched through the services of Hearts and Hands AND ways you might be able to help others.

5. In our prayers: Debbie Fiebelkorn’s aunt Arlene Fiebelkorn died last night following a stroke on Christmas, keep the family in your prayers; Sue and Harley Estee undergoing radiation treatments; Sharon Ferrelli soon to begin cancer treatments; 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). Pray for the members of our congregation who are headed south for some winter reprieve.

6. This Week at Christ Church:

Friday, January 2 – Books We Have Loved at 10:00 am.

Monday, January 5 – SPRC meets at 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, January 6 – Library Team at 9:30 a.m.

Pastor BJ is at Asbury Pointe at 2:00 p.m.

Wednesday, January 7 – Choir resumes at 7:30 p.m.

7. MISSION YOUTH – We begin 2015 with a gathering at the Church on January 9 at 6:00 p.m. Pizza and salad and Bible study and planning and some surprises. All youth (7<sup>th</sup> grade and up) are welcome to join us.

8. MEN/WOMEN – Meeting on January 10

United Methodist Women – meet at 10:00 a.m.

United Methodist Men meet at 10 and will touring the Harborcenter with lunch at the 716.

9. Happy Birthday this week:

December 29 – Paula Kreib

January 1 – Brian Carney, Marie Miller, Phyllis Nicholson

January 2 – Barbara Critoph

January 4 – Tom Weaver

January 5 – Guy Ferrelli

10. There are no anniversaries listed for this week.

11. Through the Bible – 2014 concludes 2015 begins

December 30 – Zechariah 13-14 and Luke 24

December 31 – Malachi 1-4

**WE BEGIN A NEW STRUCTURE OF BIBLE READING FOR 2015**

January 1 – Genesis 1,2 and Luke 1

January 2 – Genesis 3-5 and Luke 2

January 3 – Genesis 6-8 and Luke 3

January 4 – Genesis 9-11 and Luke 4  
January 5 – Genesis 12-14 and Luke 5  
January 6 – Genesis 15-17 and Luke 6  
January 7 – Genesis 18-19, Psalm 3 and Luke 7

HERE'S A WAY TO ENHANCE YOUR BIBLE READING: Try keeping a Journal. Sometimes when you are reading something in the reading will speak to you or stand out to you. Take a moment and write it down the SCRIPTURE. Then make an OBSERVATION (what spoke to me??). Thirdly, ask "How would I APPLY this to my life. Finally, make what you learned into a PRAYER. This method of Bible reading is called the S.O.A.P. method and allows us to ask "how will I be different because of what I just read?"

## 12. . 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:** BEANS and RICE (always a good thing to bring)

**Uganda Orphan sponsorships** –Money will be sent soon. Thank you for your continued support of the Blessed Junior School in Kirimandagi.

## 13. 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.

3. A PANCAKE BREAKFAST will be held in early February. Watch for more information!!

## 14. The Blood Mobile is coming back: **January 16**

The Health and Wellness Team will sponsor a Bloodmobile on Friday, January 16 in Crafts Hall from 2-6 p.m. Please call Geoff Hill (316-1522) to set up an appointment.

15. NEW AOL STUDY – Begins on January 4. The AOL (Adult Opportunities for Learning) class meets on Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. in the Wesley Room. This new study is titled "**Six Ways We Encounter God.**" Rev. Jim Pollard will be the class leader.

16. FINANCE REPORT – With 108 pledges (plus 9 who haven't pledged but asked for Envelopes) we have over \$247,000 committed to the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ through Christ UMC for 2015. Well done everyone! This represents a nearly 12% increase in pledges from 2014!!

Envelopes are available to be picked up in the Parlor!!

17. 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:**

I am up to my elbows in taking inventory of my life. I find myself focusing on the same critical questions. 1. How have I grown, spiritually, in the past year? What helped me grow? What hindered my growth? What do I need to stop doing? What do I need to change? What do I need to begin? 2. How have I been a good steward this past year? Of my marriage? Of my health? Of my key relationships? Of my resources? Of my ministry? What do I need to stop doing? What do I need to change? What do I need to begin? I find it helpful to consider what I feed myself. Am I eating right (the answer to that is not so well)? Am I feeding my brain (what am I reading, watching, discussing)? Am I feeding my soul (prayer, study, action)?

All too often we focus on "resolutions" when we would be better served focusing on practices. What are my routines? Are these routines helping me become who I want to become? Are these routines helping form and shape me into an instrument God intends to use?

What if, instead of looking at numbers, we applied the same assessment to the life of our Church? How has Christ Church grown, spiritually, this past year? Do more of us know Jesus than last year? Are more of us growing deeper in love with Jesus, with each other, and in service to the world? What are our practices? Are we encouraging one another or in competition? Are we building one another up or tearing one another down? Are we learning and growing in our faith or are we stagnant or falling back?

God has an amazing plan for Amherst: Christ UMC. But churches do not grow by fiat. Growth is the natural (supernatural?) extension of a Christian community living out its love for Jesus, for one another and for a hurting and broken world. I am convinced that we are making progress but more of us need to take some simple steps:

1. Step deeper in your relationship with God (join a Bible study, begin to pray, practice spiritual disciplines);
2. Step deeper in your relationship with each other – community is about caring, building, encouraging;
3. Step deeper in your mission/ministry to the world – we are Christ's hands extended . . .

I am looking forward to a great 2015!! -BJ Norrix, lead servant, missionary, little christ (for the recently completed Disciple 1 class)