

**UPDATE**  
**December 9, 2014**  
**Christ United Methodist Church**

**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:

I read a lot about people struggling with loneliness around the Advent/Christmas season. What I have read is that the loneliness is often born of grief – remembering the loss and absence of those who used to be present in the season. I am also reading that the loneliness is often born of unreal expectations or a yearning for the “good old days when . . .”. I spend a lot of time alone and am working on converting being alone to learning solitude. I will admit that I am not yet doing a very good job at it but progress is being made. I am aware that even though the Christmas story is God’s embrace of the world (“God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself”) and therefore we are never, ever alone. I am also cognizant that as human beings that deeper theological understanding is not always enough. Sometimes, as the small child once said, we just need God with skin on. I am convinced that this one of the reasons Jesus organized his followers into groups. Christianity is an experience of life in community. In community we become “God with skin on” for each other.

Here is what is happening at Church:

1. Attendance last Sunday was in the 130's. We celebrated communion, heard about John the Baptist's message of repentance, and lit a candle of Peace. Thank you to the Tech Team (9:00) and to the Caller Team (11:00) for lighting our Advent wreath this past week. Thank you to Dennis Scaringi who filled in for Kevin Durkin this past Sunday.

2. This Sunday is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent. I will be looking at a passage from Isaiah 61 about the "year of the Lord's favor." It is a passage that Jesus quotes in his first sermon in Nazareth and is sometimes called the "Nazareth Manifesto". The coming of Jesus becomes an inversion of the way of the world. Bottom is up and up is down. The Magnificat, sometimes called the song of Mary, is another example of that same imagery. The oppressed are lifted up, the prisoners are freed, the broken are healed and justice and mercy become the normal way of life.

**CANDY AND COOKIE SALE THIS SUNDAY!!** – The Outreach Team is baking up some delectable holiday treats which will be on sale Sunday, December 14 from 10:00a.m. to 1:00p.m. 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!

**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. Those Pledge Cards continue to trickle in and it looks like this year's pledges will be well over 10% above last year. THANK YOU for stepping up. If you haven't yet 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.

4. **SPEAKING OF SERVICE** . . . 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!

5. In our prayers: Dr. Robert Nachbar fell last week and broke his leg. He is currently at Suburban Hospital following surgery and will be heading to rehab soon; Pastor Grace of Kirimandagi, Uganda is hospitalized for malaria, I spoke with her husband, Owar Naphtal late last night and he asked for prayers; Mac Sabol (great to see Mac back in church this past Sunday); 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); 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).

6. The MYM dinner and "Buffalo Silver Band" concert were huge successes. The MYM gifted to the Mission Youth (Uganda mission) \$852 from the concert with more on the way (THANK YOU). The Band was terrific and about 170 of us (and the wider community) were present to enjoy the event.

7. The next "pre work" men's breakfast will be on Thursday, December 18 at 7:00 a.m. at the Sheridan Family Restaurant.

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8. This week at Christ Church:

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

Wednesday, December 10 – Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, December 11 – Bel Canto's Craft show and bake sale (3:00p.m. to 8:00p.m.) in Crafts Hall

10:00 a.m. – Bible Study

Saturday, December 13 – 10:00 a.m. – Christmas Pageant Rehearsal

Sunday, December 14 – 12:45p.m. – Church Council

Tuesday, December 16 – 2:00p.m. BJ at Asbury Pointe will be showing pictures of Uganda/Kenya

7:30p.m. Choir Rehearsal (NOTE CHANGE)

## 9. CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS AT CHRIST CHURCH

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

### **CHRISTMAS EVE**

**9:00 P.M. – Carols, Candles, Choir**

**11:00 P.M. – Carols, Candles and Communion**

10. MISSION YOUTH – is meeting on Friday, December 19 at 6:30 p.m. at the Church

11. Happy Birthday this week:

December 11 – Ed Fisher, Gavin Gabel, Geoff Hill, and Dave Wolf

December 13 – Betty Kreib, Marcia Rhinehart, Marilyn Morris

December 14 – Chris Smith

December 16 – Meaghan Ramsey

December 17 – Guy Castellino

12. There are no Anniversaries listed for this week.

13. Through the Bible this week:

December 9 – Esther 9-10 and Luke 13

December 10 – Haggai 1-2 and Luke 14

December 11 – Joshua 1-3

December 12 – Joshua 4-6 and Luke 15

December 13 – Joshua 7-9

December 14 – Joshua 10-12 and Luke 16

December 15 – Joshua 13-15

December 16 – Joshua 16-18 and Luke 17

December 17 – Joshua 19-21

#### 14. MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

**Uganda 2015** – Our team is nearly 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 (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 presented 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!!

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**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** – the Giving Tree will be in Crafts Hall this Sunday. If you wish to participate, please take a tag and return your 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). Most of the remaining tags are for the “Three Kings” celebration at Primera Iglesia! Thank you.

15. 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.

16. 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 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

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).

17. We celebrated Mary Parson's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday this past Sunday with her family and friends enjoying cake and punch following the 11:00 worship. Happy Birthday Mary!!

### **Parting Thought**

Jesus is coming . . . are you ready? I find it useful to remember that the message of the Gospel (the Good News of Jesus Christ!) found its first and strongest audiences among soldiers, slaves, the poor and under classes of the Roman Empire. The good news of salvation and hope for change (both here and now and into eternity) was a message people readily embraced and a message that transformed lives and, ultimately, an Empire. I also am not surprised when I read that the message of the Gospel is falling on increasingly deaf ears in the affluent West – in Europe and the United States – but is being embraced by ever increasing numbers in Africa, Asia and South America. I suspect the reasons are pretty obvious. The message of Jesus was a message of radical change – the poor lifted, the broken healed, the prisoners set free. The message of Jesus WAS embraced by people of wealth and position (Lydia the seller of purple, the wife of Herod's steward, teachers and thinkers in Athens) but, to a large degree, the change for them was harder than for others. When I already have everything I've ever wanted it is harder to change from that position of power and prestige to one of service and mercy and justice. The Christian movement has always struggled with wealth and power and, frankly, over the centuries wealth and power have won many of those struggles. The fundamental Christian question is not: What do I have? The fundamental Christian question is: What has me? We tend to ignore the very upsetting and underlying message of the Christmas story that the world, as we know it, the values we have held, the rights of privilege and power that have benefited us, are about to change. Solidarity with the poor and the oppressed is not a political position - it is a biblical position. At Christmas it is right to ask: in the name of Jesus, what am I doing to lift the

yoke of the oppressed and to set the prisoners free? Miriam Therese Winter's setting of the Magnificat (UMH 198) puts it this way:

My soul gives glory to my God. My heart pours out its praise.  
God lifted up my lowliness in many marvelous ways

My God has done great things for me; yes, holy is this Name.  
All people will declare me blessed, and blessings they shall claim.

From age to age, to all who fear, such mercy love imparts,  
Dispensing justice far and near, dismissing selfish hearts.

Love casts the mighty from their thrones, promotes the insecure  
Leaves hungry spirits satisfied, the rich seem suddenly poor.

Praise God, whose loving covenant supports those in distress,  
Remembering past promises with present faithfulness.

Be blessed and be a blessing this week,

BJ Norrix, missionary, coach, lead servant