

Christ United Methodist Church

UPDATE

January 6, 2015

Harlem Road at Saratoga Road

Amherst, New York

“Living Christ’s ways & exploding with love & 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

Or call us at: [716-839-2460](tel:716-839-2460)

Dr. B.J.’s blog is www.drbjthoughts.blogspot.com

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<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Christ-United-Methodist-Church-Amherst/294709713921168?ref=hl>

Hi Everyone:

Today, January 6, is the Feast of Epiphany. Epiphany means to reveal or to be made manifest. It is the day the Church celebrates the arrival of the Magi (Wise Men) to visit the child Jesus and to present Jesus with gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. It is called Epiphany because the Magi are the first “outsiders” to have the true nature of the child Jesus revealed to them. Epiphany, in the earlier days of the church, was a much more important observance than

Christmas (which was a relatively minor Holy Day). In many cultures “Three Kings Day”, or, what my mother called, Petit Noel (Little Christmas) was an important day and marked the end of the Christmas celebration. One always held back a small Christmas gift to be given on January 6. Matthew chapter 2 records this episode in the life of Jesus. Because of Sunday School mash-ups over the years we have the impression that the Magi arrived on Christmas Eve or day – Sunday Schools probably did this to be able to include more children in the annual pageant. But notice in Matthew 2 that the magi arrive at a house (not the stable) and that Jesus is referred to as a “child” not a baby (baby and child are different words in Greek as they are in English). Most Bible scholars put the arrival of the Magi as somewhere between 18 months and 2 years after Jesus was born. The other thing the Bible never reveals is how many Magi visited Jesus. No number is given in the Gospel account. The tradition of three probably came from the three gifts (Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh) – after all, who would arrive empty handed? Orthodox tradition has the number of Magi as twelve. Someone once said that if the Magi had been women they would have arrived with practical gifts – diapers, blankets and a casserole. The gifts are highly symbolic and highly suggestive of Jesus destiny: Gold is a gift for a King. Frankincense is a gift for a priest. Myrrh was used in embalming and was a gift for someone who was to die.

Here is what is happening at Church:

1. We were a little over a hundred on Sunday as we began the New Year and started a series on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). We also seem to have been hit with the flu bug as many of our choir and others were out sick. Pray for those battling the flu - it is a particularly nasty strain.
2. This Sunday my sermon will be titled “The Power of Zero”. We will be looking at the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-12). Remember these are not new laws, Jesus is giving us a description of what life in the kingdom looks like. When you look at the list of “Blessed are the . . .” in Matthew 5:2-12 do you think the people in those categories felt blessed?? I think this is a list of the “zeros” from the world’s perspective and Jesus reminds us that in the Kingdom of the Heavens there is a place for everyone!

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. Click on worship then sermons. They are listed in chronological order and by title.

Sunday Morning at 10:00 AOL (Adult Opportunities for Learning) is in a study called “Six Ways We Encounter God”. Led by Rev. Jim Pollard

3. 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 serve 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.

4. January brings many new spiritual growth opportunities:

1. Through the Bible in 2015 – readings will be published here throughout the week and are available through our website 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 12:15 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 6:00 in the Wesley Room (prerequisite for Disciple II is having taken Disciple I – but I am willing to negotiate) 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!**

5. In our 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; Debbie Fiebelkorn and family on the death of Debbie's aunt Arlene; 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 making progress; Dorothy Brown is home and appreciates your prayers and encouragement; Dona Dalton; Barb Critoph; Brian Martin (He has passed 100 days since his transplant – continued prayers for healthy markers); 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:

January 7 – 7:30 p.m. Church Choir Rehearsal

January 8 – 10:00 a.m. Bible Study

January 9 – Mission Youth 6:00 p.m. Café

January 10 – 10:00 a.m. – UMW meet in the Café

January 10 – 10:00 a.m. – UMM going to Harbor Center Tour

January 11 – 10:00 a.m. – Hearts and Hands

12:30 p.m. – Disciple I Information Meeting

6:00 p.m. – Disciple II

January 12 – 7:00 p.m. – Discussion/Action Group

7. January 17 – the Red Cross Blood Mobile will be here from 2 to 6 p.m. Contact Geoff Hill (316-1522) to set up an appointment. All donors receive a \$5 Dunkin Donuts card.

8. FOOD PANTRY THIS WEEK – Canned Meats (Tuna) and Stews – Canned Fruits and Vegetables.

9. UMW (United Methodist Women) are meeting this Saturday at 10:00a.m. Light Brunch (\$5). Program is “Make it Happen: Reflections on Assembly 2014” presented by Beth Sweet and Peggy Bermudez. Please contact Peggy at 626-4897 if you are coming.

10. MEN’S Group to tour Harbor Center – DRESS WARMLY! They will car pool from Christ Church at 10:00a.m. to tour the hockey rinks and shops, with lunch at the 716 Sports Bar. Contact Bill Swenson if you have questions or plan to attend. He can be reached at 634-7147.

11. **SORRY** – MISSION YOUTH IS at 6:00 p.m. on Friday (not 6:30 as previously reported!!).

12. Happy Birthday this week:

January 7 – Mary Jane Shanley

January 9 – Pam Lopez

January 10 – Lindsey Darling

13. No Anniversaries listed for this week.

14. Through the Bible in 2015 – this week’s readings

January 6 – Genesis 15-17 and Luke 6

January 7 – Genesis 18-19, Psalm 3 and Luke 7

January 8 – Genesis 20-22 and Luke 8

January 9 – Genesis 23-24 and Luke 9

January 10 – Genesis 25-26, Psalm 6 and Luke 10

January 11 – Genesis 27-28, Psalm 4 and Luke 11

January 12 – Genesis 29-30 and Luke 12

January 13 – Genesis 31-33 and Luke 13

January 14 – Genesis 34-36 and Luke 14

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?"

15. 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: canned fruits and vegetables (beans and rice are always welcome)

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

I have 3 orphans without a sponsor . . . can you help? \$125 sends an orphan to school for a year in Kirimandagi, Uganda. Call Janelle (839-2460) for more information.

16. 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 February 7**. Watch for more information!!

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 thoughts

The internet and social media sites have been awash the past few weeks with articles and videos on why people are leaving the church; why it is bad to be conservative; why it is bad to be progressive; why young people don't participate in the life of the church; why, why, why (I think you get the picture). Like many things in life these articles all boil down to the same basic things and all, essentially, make the same points. Here is my summary: 1. In a world of liars there is a desperate need for authenticity – will those who claim to be Christian actually reflect in their lives the joy, compassion and fierce devotion of Jesus or will we simply paste Jesus over our broken values and keep doing what we've always done? Will we actually choose to live life differently? 2. In a world of talking heads there is a desperate need for participation – will the church stop talking about what we should do (or what others shouldn't be doing)? Will we actually set out to make this a better world and invite others in the great work of making this a better world for Jesus sake? 3. In a world of blaming and secrets and public scandal – will the church choose to be transparent about its own brokenness and its own need for grace and its own absolute trust in the grace and mercy of Jesus? 4. In a world of designer religion and a generic deity – will the church reclaim its unique and undivided devotion to Jesus? People don't need more programs and entertainment -we need Jesus. People don't need more glitz and show -we need to see transparent, authentic and engaged Jesus followers building and rebuilding community. Our Bishop, Mark Webb, made a statement at a meeting I was at in November. It was pretty simple and yet, I think, right to the point. The Church of Jesus Christ does not have an institutional/money/decline/communication problem. What we have is a lack of love for Jesus and love for one another problem. Remember our story is not about "getting to heaven" and "sin management". Our story is about living life together in the amazing new reality called the Kingdom of the Heavens!

I'll see you when the church gathers,

BJ Norrix, Lover of Jesus, lead servant, missionary