

Christ United Methodist Church

Harlem at Saratoga

Amherst, New York

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

UPDATE

March 11, 2014

EVERYONE is WELCOME

EVERY SUNDAY AT CHRIST CHURCH

9:00 – Praise Celebration Worship

10:00 – FaithXpress/soul Strength/AOL (Adult Opportunities for Learning)

11:00 – Traditional Style Worship

Bring a Friend this week and share the Love and Grace of God!

Hi Everyone:

I’m one week into Lent and I’m trying to make space to sit with God; how are you doing? Over the years of my Christian journey, I have found that the hardest part of having communication with God is turning off the static around me and inside of me. I sit to pray and my mind goes bouncing around from distraction to distraction; from bright shiny object to bright shiny object; from to do lists to anger fantasies to whatever might take me away from being quiet and listening to the voice of God. Because I am an extrovert I have to impose order from the outside. I keep a prayer journal where I can write down the distractions – when there are no more things popping into my head I can begin to pray. Some days this takes longer than others. Sometimes I use an old Quaker centering technique – sit quietly with feet flat on the floor and palms down on my thighs. I listen to my breathing and as thoughts and issues pop into my mind I offer them to God. When the flow of distractions stops I flip my hands over and see myself receiving from God the

answers to all of those distractions, problems, needs, etc. Now I am ready to listen. I am ready to begin to pray. Remember, when you sit to listen to God, turn off the phone and other electronics – it can wait – and just be.

Here is what is happening at church:

1. Attendance last Sunday was in the 130's I didn't see anyone come in for the 10:00 or the Noon worship gathering on time change weekend. There were over 40 of us for the Ash Wednesday gathering on March 5.
2. This Sunday is the 2nd Sunday of Lent. I will be preaching from John 3:1-17. It is primarily the story of a very religious man named Nicodemus. Nicodemus has been faithfully following the dictates of his religion but is yearning for something more. He comes to Jesus under the cover of night and experiences something greater. C.S. Lewis wrote: "if I discover in myself a desire for which nothing in this world can satisfy the only logical conclusion is that I was created for another world." Nicodemus comes to Jesus to fulfill that deepest of desires.
3. The "Discussion/Action" group met again last night. We discussed Small Group ministries, especially as it related to Seniors and Singles. Some action plans are being developed. We also discussed the ministry of hospitality and how we can be more welcoming when there are guests in our midst. We discussed the process of congregational revitalization: there is an inward transformation as people move to a deeper relationship with Christ and one another and there is an outward focus as we seek to make a difference in the world for Jesus sake. We can't have one without the other. Both working in tandem reenergizes and transforms a Christian community. We appreciate your prayers. The next gathering will be on April 28 (Monday) at 7:00.
4. Men's pre-work breakfast will meet on Thursday this week (after getting shoveled out) at 7:00 a.m. at the Old Fashioned Pancake House on Main Street in Williamsville. This is an open group. Come and join us on your way to work.
5. Mission Youth: next gathering is March 28 at 6:30 at Pastor BJ's home. Come and enjoy food, fun, Bible study, fellowship, mission interaction and fun. There is a mission project for March 30 at Seneca Street – contact Viki Smith or Tim Reed for the Seneca Street outing.

6. In our Prayers: Sean Brown, Fred Painton, Mitch Mooney (should be home from rehab this week); Guy Castellino, Bim Rowlands, Glenn Hurst (and Beverly), Nicky Sebastiano, Marian Steve, Ruth Kitson, Shirley Downey, Ed Maker, Alice Schmidt and Diane Lovejoy. Remember those serving overseas and in the military; remember those looking for work; remember families in crisis. Remember our Bishop (Mark Webb) our District Superintendent (Wayne Butler) and all the congregations and pastors that are in or preparing for leadership transition.

7. Lenten Supper and Study: resumes March 12 from 5:30 to 7:30. We are discussing Larry Beman's God's Gift of Life. Copies can be obtained from Sally Pollard.

8. SHOES – Shoe collection is underway. Pick up a collection bag (instructions are on the bag) and gather as many pairs of shoes as possible to support developing countries AND the ministry of Christ church. Shoes may be dropped off at the main entrance of Christ Church now through Make a Difference Day (May 18).

9. SENIOR SERVICES PRESENTATION: Christ Church will be hosting a FREE presentation on senior services on Friday, March 28 at 2:00 p.m. Come to hear an overview of topics such as financial benefits, disease prevention and preventing Medicare fraud and abuse. RSVP with the church office at 839-2460.

10. Pancake Breakfast: The Amherst Lions Club will be holding its annual pancake breakfast to raise funds to help the blind, visually-impaired hearing-impaired, and others in our community who need assistance. **This year's breakfast is Saturday, March 22 from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.** at Christ UMC. Tickets may be purchased at the door or in advance from Tom Davis, Ruth Munson, or Herb Wilbur. Cost is \$6 for Adults and \$3.50 for children 12 and under.

AND – in conjunction with the Christ UMC Health and Wellness Committee there will be a community health fair in the Youth Hall (downstairs) from 8:00 a.m. through 11:00 a.m. featuring a FREE diabetes screening. Kalieda technicians will draw blood samples from 8 to 10 to test for blood sugar and cholesterol. Lab results will be sent directly to your physician. There will be an ophthalmologist to conduct eye exams and representatives who will offer outreach on nutrition and physical activity. Preregistration is recommended: call the Church Office at 839-2460 and provide 1) your name; 2) your address; 3) address of your physician. You may also register on site. If you can help out with this event please contact Janelle in the church office.

11. MEN's and WOMEN's groups had very successful gatherings this past Saturday

12. This week at Christ Church:

Tuesday March 11 – Caller Deadline

7:00 – Stewardship and Finance Team in the Library

Wednesday March 12 – 5:30 to 7:30 Lenten Supper and mini-retreat

7:30 – Choir Rehearsal

Thursday March 13 – 7:00 a.m. – Men's pre-work breakfast at Original Pancake House in Williamsville

10:00 a.m. Bible Study

Tuesday March 18 -- 7:30 Trustees

13. Happy Birthday this week:

March 12 – Andrew Lopez

March 15 – Joanne Gilbert

March 16 – William Morris

March 17 – Marshall Rhinehart

March 19 – Karen Arrison; Marjory Gibson; Florence Stengel

14. I have no Anniversaries listed for this week

15. Mission of the Month for March is UMCOR – we will be making flood buckets – watch for more information. Our goal is to fill 25 5 gallon flood buckets. Each bucket has the following: Two (25 z) laundry detergent 12 –16 oz. liquid household cleaner 16 –20 oz. dish soap Aerosol air freshener 6 –14 oz. Insect repellent Scrub brush 18 cleaning wipes 7 sponges 5 scouring pads 50 clothes pins 100' clothes line 24 heavy duty trash bags 5 dust masks 2 pair rubber gloves 1 pair work gloves (cotton with leather palms). Most items can be purchased at the dollar store. Buckets are along the wall in Crafts Hall awaiting your assistance

16. Money to support the Kirimandagi orphans was wired this week. Between our efforts and the efforts of the Christ Community UMC in Syracuse we were able to send over \$2800 to send these children to school. WELL DONE!!

17. THROUGH THE BIBLE IN 2014: This week's readings

March 11 – Job 14-16 and 1 Corinthians 6

March 12 – Job 17-19

March 13 – Job 20-21 and 1 Corinthians 7

March 14 – Job 22-24 and 1 Corinthians 8

March 15 – Job 25-27 and 1 Corinthians 9

March 16 – Job 28-29 and 1 Corinthians 10

March 17 – Job 30-31

March 18 – Job 32-33 and 1 Corinthians 11

March 19 – Job 34-35

18. **MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES (ministry is what we do for the existing church community)**

Opportunity 1: We need people to sign up to host morning coffee hour – sign up is outside the Kitchen.

Opportunity 2: **I would like to build a new Hospitality team. Interested? See me (BJ)**

Opportunity 3: We are putting together a worship “creative” team. Want to be a part of this group? Let BJ know.

19. **Mission Opportunities:** (Mission is what we do for those who are not yet part of the church community)

Opportunity 1: **UGANDA 2014.** I am planning to travel in early October this Fall to continue our work in Uganda. Is God Calling you to join me? This journey

is 9 months away so I will need to know soon – Tickets will likely be purchased in March/April.

Opportunity 2: Rev. Davis Matovu (our Uganda Mission partner) will be in the US in April and May and will be preaching at Christ Church on the 2nd Sunday of May. He will be meeting with our Uganda travelers and supporters as well as the new Mission Youth group

Opportunity 3: MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY is only *10 Weeks* from this Sunday. Team leaders are being recruited and signup sheets will be going up soon.

20. Christ Church is blessed with excellent gathering and fellowship space. One of the most popular is the **Café on Sunday morning**. The café provides hot and cold beverages and tasty snacks before and following our Sunday worship gatherings. What makes this work is a lot of volunteers who “Host” the café by preparing coffee/tea, etc. and putting the snacks out and then cleaning up afterwards. Would you like to help in this vital hospitality ministry of our Church? Contact Sally Pollard at 839-2460 or by signing up on the sheet posted on the bulletin board in the Café.

21. COMING EVENTS

March 22 – Lion’s Club Pancake Breakfast and Health Fair

March 28 – Mission Youth 2 6:30 at the Parsonage

Holy Week is April 13 through 20 – watch for more

Palm Sunday – April 13 – Kevin Durkin Organ Recital at 3:00 p.m.

May 4 – Dinner in the Country – MYM at the White Inn in Fredonia

May 5 through May 12 – Rev. Davis Matovu of Soul Fishing Ministries and President of Nexus Seminary, Uganda will be with us.

May 16 – Church-Wide Variety Show (sponsored by UMW) – watch for more

May 18 – Make a Difference Day

May 19 – Carl Ericson Memorial Service

22. A memorial concert in memory of Jeanne Bartholomew was held this past Sunday (March 9) at the Amherst Community Church. Several members of the Christ Church choir participated. Jeanne was choir director at Christ Church for nearly 30 years before retiring and moving the mid Atlantic region.

Parting Thought:

It is Tuesday, the day before “snowpocalypse” 2014. The sun is shining and the temperature is in the low 40’s. I’m going out for a long walk – and I’ll deal with tomorrow when it gets here. The reality is that there is not much else I can do. Mark Twain once quipped that “everyone complains about the weather but nobody does anything about it.” I have to admit that I do have a sudden urge to make French toast (isn’t that why everyone runs out for milk, bread and eggs in advance of a “Winter storm”?). We are western New Yorkers. No panic here. We’ll just hunker down, read a book, watch some movies wait for the storm to pass and then we’ll put on the boots and woolies and dig ourselves out once again. I think that attitude should help us on our spiritual journey as well. Life has storms. There are moments of intense grief and disappointment and frustration along with the occasional disaster. Rather than be defeated by these life experiences ought we not simply hunker down under the shelter of God’s wings, ride out the storm, and, then, pick ourselves up again and begin to trudge forward once more? It is usually not the storms that beat us but our attitude. One of my mentors used to say that he was either up or getting up. Another of my teachers spoke frequently about being knocked down seven times and getting up eight. Early on this journey I would wonder what they meant. I understand it better now and I realize that the storms of life can wreak havoc all around us and will, on occasion, drag us down. I could stay down if I so choose. Or I can take the “snowpocalypse” attitude – ride it out, dig on out, and push forward (once more into the breach we go?) when it passes. I am building for a better future. How is it with you?

I’ll see you when the church gathers,

BJ Norrix, futurist, coach, lead servant