

***Christ United Methodist Church  
Harlem at Saratoga  
Amherst, New York  
“Living Christ’s ways and exploding with love and service”***

***March 25, 2014 UPDATE***

***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!***

Visit us on the World Wide Web at: [www.Christchurchamherst.org](http://www.Christchurchamherst.org)  
**716-839-2460**

**Dr. B.J.’s blog is [www.drbjthoughts.blogspot.com](http://www.drbjthoughts.blogspot.com)**

Hi Everyone:

How are you doing with your Lenten disciplines? I have found that the biggest struggle is really the simplest thing. The biggest struggle, for me, is just making the time and space to do what I have covenanted to do. I have plenty of desire to draw closer to God. I have plenty of motivation to know more intimately the creator of the universe. What I often lack is the simple act of will required to clear the decks, change my normal routine and making the space to do what I promised to do. How about you? Someone once said that a rut was just a grave without a roof and, yet, it is pretty darn easy to get stuck in a rut. I get up at the same time, I go through the same actions of getting ready for the day, I usually eat the same breakfast, take the same path to the office and start my day with the same rituals of getting coffee, reading my email, checking up on Facebook, etc. Making space for God in that routine requires a momentum shift. I learned in elementary school that a body at rest tends to stay at rest and that a body in motion tends to stay in motion unless acted upon by an outside force. I guess what I am suggesting is that we need to change the inertia of our lives (either get moving or change directions) and allow

the presence, love and power of God to impact our lives. How are you doing with **your** Lenten disciplines?

Here is what is happening at Church:

1. Attendance last Sunday was about 120. Special appreciation to our guest liturgist, Kathryn Weaver, and to all who helped make Sunday morning meaningful at Christ Church.
2. This Sunday is the fourth Sunday of Lent. I am looking at a story from John 9 about a man born blind. The first question the Disciples ask Jesus when they meet the man is “who sinned, this man or this man’s parents.” The assumption is that his handicap is a punishment for someone’s behavior. Funny how, even though Jesus seeks to banish that kind of thinking, that attitude prevails even to today. When life gets difficult or we pick up some illness or things don’t go the way we want them to go we assume we are being punished or that “God has it in for us.” What if the struggles and difficulties were simply the manifestation of the context in which we live and that our relationship with God does not prevent these things but allows these things to serve a much greater purpose?
3. In our prayers: Sean Brown; Fred Painton, Guy Castellino, Mitch Mooney, Bim Rowlands, Glenn Hurst, Nicky Sebastiano, Marian Steve, Ruth Kitson, Shirley Downey, Ed Maker, Alice Schmidt and Diane Lovejoy. Remember those who are serving overseas and in the military. Remember families in crisis and those looking for work. Pray for the families of the downed jetliner and for all who are in harm’s way.
4. Lenten Supper and Study will resume this week after taking a week off due to last week’s blizzard. We will gather at 5:30. Following a shared meal we will participate in a mini retreat time reflecting on the Lenten Bible readings. We are using Larry Beman’s book God’s Gift of Life. Everyone is welcome.
5. This Week at Christ Church:
  - Tuesday, March 25 – Church Council at 7:00
  - Wednesday, March 26 – Lenten Supper and Study 5:30 to 7:30  
Choir Rehearsal at 7:30
  - Thursday, March 27 – Bible Study at 10:00 a.m.
  - Friday, March 28 – Senior Services Presentation at 2:00  
Mission Youth at 6:30 at BJ’s house  
Game Night at 7:30 in the Wesley Room

6. The food pantry is collecting Canned Soups/Meals this week. Leave donations in the shopping baskets at either entrance.

7. **Mission Youth:** Middle and High School youth and their friends are invited to the next Mission Youth gathering. It will be held on **Friday, March 28** at 6:30 at Pastor BJ's house (next to the church on Saratoga). Parents are also welcome to attend.

8. **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.

9. **WE WANT YOUR 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). Any style, any size, any condition! ***Why not recruit your family, friends and co workers to help out?***

10. Happy Birthday this week:  
March 25 – Peggy Bermudez  
March 26 – Ashley Miller  
March 29 – Jordan Maliken  
March 31 – Jan Rhinehart

11. **EASTER FLOWERS:** Easter flowers can be ordered beginning this Sunday (March 30) as well as April 6 and 13 following both services in the parlor. Flowers are \$8. If you have any questions please see Beth Reilly Brown.

12. **SUGAR and SPICE evening** -- No Foolin' its April 1 at 7:00 in the Parlor.  
All Women are welcome to come for an evening of April Fool's Day fun and relaxation.  
Hosted by the Circle of Joy!

13. **DRESS OUR PEOPLE:** Will begin sewing clothing for the Ugandan children on Make a Difference Day, Sunday May 18. Donations of Cotton fabric or cotton/polyester blends no less than 1 yard in length, thread, bias tape, and trim are

needed. Donations may be placed in or near the Dress our People mailbox outside the church office. Thank you.

14. CRAFTING FOR A CAUSE: will gather on Saturday, April 12 in the Wesley Room from 10:00 to Noon. Everyone is welcome to join. Current projects: cooling scarves for the troops, blankets for veterans and Gateway-Longview, mittens and scarves for Seneca Street UMC, and prayer shawls. Please bring whatever you will be working on and join us for fellowship, crafting and refreshments.

15. The Red Blazer Men's Chorus (who rehearse at Christ Church) presents "The Red Blazer Varieties" on April 4 and 5 at 7:30 p.m. and a Saturday matinee at 2:00 on the 5<sup>th</sup>. In the Amherst Central Theater Auditorium, 4301 Main Street, Snyder, NY. Special guest Nels Ross will entertain all with his comedic juggling. Tickets are \$18 or \$16 for seniors, students and children. Call 875-2958 or go to [www.redblazermenschorus.com](http://www.redblazermenschorus.com) for more information.

16. Men's pre-work breakfast group will meet again on March 27 at 7:00. We are gathering at the Original Pancake house in Williamsville.

17. Through the Bible:

March 25 – Proverbs 6-7 and 1 Corinthians 15

March 26 – Proverbs 8-9 and 1 Corinthians 16

March 27 – Proverbs 10-12 and Titus 1

March 28 – Proverbs 13-15 and Titus 2

March 29 – Proverbs 16-18 and Titus 3

March 30 – Proverbs 19-21 and Hebrews 1

March 31 – Proverbs 22-24 and Hebrews 2

April 1 – Proverbs 25-26 and Hebrews 3

April 2 – Proverbs 27-29 and Hebrews 4

April 3 – Proverbs 30-31 and Hebrews 5

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.

Opportunity 4: A **New small group for singles is being discussed: want to be a part of the discussion? Let me know.**

Opportunity 5: New “Senior Adult” ministries and groups are being discussed: want to be a part of the discussion? Let me 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 6 **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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 **7 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 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 11 – Rev. Richard Davis Matovu guest preacher

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

May 18 – Make a Difference Day

May 19 – Carl Ericson Memorial Service

June 8 – Confirmation Sunday

22. FINANCE Team: With our change from a May 1 to April 30 Budget year back to a calendar budget year (January 1 to December 31) we need to have an interim pledge drive. In your mail this week is a letter from Stewardship and Finance Chair Brad Loliger and Pastor B.J. Norrix explaining the change. There will be an interim pledge card enclosed. Please fill it out and return it to us at your earliest convenience. Christ Church is seeking to “Live Christ’s ways and explode with love and service.” We are grateful for the support of all of our members and friends! God is doing great things through us!

### *Parting Thought*

Somewhere in the middle of our lingering winter is a glorious hope of spring. On a warm day last week snow drops raised their heads and, oblivious of the colder weather yet to come, had the audacity to bloom – they were very pretty. The flower beds close to the house all have little green heads peeking out – no it is not a Martian or other alien invasion these are the bulbs trying, like the rest of us, to advance the march of spring. There is something courageous and tenacious about these plants springing forth even when the actual weather of Spring delays. It reminds me of the Biblical cardinal virtue of “hope”. Hope drives us even when there is no positive evidence to continue. Hope for a better future causes the student to work harder and to battle through fatigue. Hope for a new life, even when the old life wants so desperately to hang on, is what causes us to get up again every time we are knocked down. I believe hope is a missing commodity in many of our churches and many of our communities and in many of our lives. We keep on doing what we’ve always done because we don’t really have any hope for change or newness. I believe the reason Christ followers keep getting up is because we know that our future (and therefore our hope) is not held by us or by other fallible human beings. We keep getting up and building for a better future because we know that God holds the future and that the Bible teaches us that God is at work in history in and through our lives and the lives of countless others. One more cold snap (or failure) one more snow storm (or set back) one more disappointment does not diminish our hope for Spring (we know it is coming). There’s an old hymn that concludes with the following: “we do not know what the future holds but we do know who holds the future!” And that, my friends, gives us hope.

I’ll see you when the church gathers,

BJ Norrix, hopeful, missionary, lead servant

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