

**Christ United Methodist Church
Snyder, New York
“Living Christ’s ways and exploding with love and service”**

**UPDATE
May 7, 2012**

**SUNDAY WORSHIP AT CHRIST CHURCH
9:00 – Praise Celebration Worship with the new worship team.
10:00 – FaithXpress, Soul Strength, youth Sunday school and AOL
11:00 – Traditional Style Worship with Choir.
Bring a Friend this week and share the Love and Grace of God!**

**www.Christchurchamherst.org
716-839-2460**

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

Hi Everyone:

Thank you for your prayers and encouragement while I was on retreat with my covenant group last week. Aaron, Alan, Bill and I spent the better part of last week playing, praying and working together in the Plattsburgh, New York area. We played all 14 holes of golf on Wednesday (yes, the course only had 14 holes); we taught and encouraged and led a church in worship and tried our best to make a difference. I was able to spend time with Karen (her birthday was last Monday) and to see my parents who just returned from Florida (and dad and I did get a round of golf in on Friday). It was good to be away but was WAY too much road time. Plattsburgh is a long way from pretty much everywhere (except maybe Montreal, Canada) and is an especially long way from Snyder. Good to go, really good to be home.

Here is what is going on at Church:

1. Attendance last Sunday was 158 (our Sunday worship attendance is up over 17% from a year ago through March!). Special thanks to my communion servers and helpers. Thank you also to Molly and Peggy and Bill who did fine jobs promoting their projects and encouraging all of us to engage and get involved.

2. This Sunday is Mother’s Day and, as promised, I will not be preaching from Revelation. I will be turning to Galatians 1 (this Friday’s reading). St. Paul is encouraging the Galatians to not abandon the “Tradition” that is to say the gospel that he preached to them and taught them. We did not invent the gospel of Jesus Christ – it was handed down to us. What are the elements of the Tradition?

3. REMEMBER: on May 20 (two weeks away) – we will gather at 9:30 (there is no 11:00 service). At 9:30 we will have a brief worship celebration, we will commission our “Be the Church” teams and send them out. We will gather back at Church for lunch at 1:00. Thank you, everyone, for signing up – there is still time and to join a team and “MAKE A DIFFERENCE.”

4. TALK TO THE EXPERT – Tomorrow (Tuesday, May 8) a workshop on Honoring Memories, Celebrating Lives. Why are Memorial/Funeral services important? How would you like to be remembered? We will look at key elements and do some planning together. We begin at 3:00

Next Tuesday, May 15 Patrick Allaire and Keith Shottman and Laurie Menzies will be discussing “Overcoming Medicaid Myths”

5. In our Prayers: Dick and Mary Ball and family on the death of Dick’s sister, Marilyn Wyles, (funeral was Saturday); Jayne Kremzier and family grieving loss of Jayne’s mother; Nicky Sebastiano, Mary Emens, Barbara McCray, Carmen Ticconi, Ed Maker, Helen Peacock and Alicia Ticconi. Remember those in harm’s way, remember those who are looking for work, remember our missionaries around the world.

6. Saturday, May 12 – Letter Carrier food drive. The Cheektowaga food pantry could use help. The event runs from 10:30 to 4:30 p.m. – contact Bill Bauza for details and to volunteer at 837-2421.

7. This week at Christ Church:

Monday – May 7 – 6:30 9:00 a.m. worship team rehearsal

7:00 – SPRC

Tuesday – May 8 – 3:00 Talk to the Expert

7:00 Christian Education Team

Wednesday – May 9 – 11:00 Pastor’s Bible Study

7:30 Choir rehearsal

Thursday – May 10 – 10:00 Bible Study

7:00 Stewardship and finance team

8. Happy Birthday this week:

May 11 – Marion Swenson

May 12 – Rosemary Little

May 13 – Mary Ball, Charles Terranova

May 14 – Jordan Lawson

9. Happy Anniversary this week:

May 10 – Roger and Dede Johnson

10. We celebrate with Jamilyn Thibault and Stuart Woodside who will be married by Pastor BJ this Saturday afternoon.

11. Stewardship Update: Through this past Sunday we have 115 pledges for \$242,109 in pledges. Remember that our new fiscal year (pledging year) will go from May 1, 2012 through April 30, 2013. Thank you, everyone, for your faithfulness. Special thanks is extended to the Stewardship and Finance Team for their excellent work!

12. **MAY 20 (two weeks away) BE THE CHURCH – MAKE A DIFFERENCE** – we will gather at 9:30 (there is no 11:00 service). At 9:30 we will have a brief worship celebration, we will commission our “Be the Church” teams and send them out. We will gather back at Church for lunch at 1:00. Thank you, everyone, for signing up – there is still time and to join a team and “MAKE A DIFFERENCE”

13. THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT: follow my comments on www.drbitthoughts.blogspot.com. **This week's readings:** YES we finally finish Revelation. May 8 – Revelation 19; May 9 – Revelation 20; May 10 – Revelation 21; May 11 – Galatians 1; May 14 – Galatians 2; May 15 – Galatians 3; May 16 – Galatians 4

14. MISSION NEWS AND NOTES:

1. Hands for New York – this week's collection: **Canned vegetables including Tomatoes**

The goal is to feed 1million people in 1 year (July to June). If each congregation in Upper New York Conference fed 1050 people we would reach our goal. Christ church will well exceed that goal knowing that some congregations will not be able to feed 1050!

2. UGANDA PROJECTS UPDATE:

Dr BJ will be travelling to Uganda to continue his work with the Nexus Seminary this fall (October 1-October 17). The 2012 Uganda team: Rev. B.J. Norrix, Rev. William Mudge (Adirondack District Superintendent), Kathy Weaver and John Miller of Christ Church, Esther Keeney (of Pulaski) and Rev. Clair Mosher (Erieville and Ononativia United Methodist Churches in Onondaga County)

Watch for fund raising opportunities for our team. Our team met on April 29 to continue our team building and preparations for our journey. **PLEASE KEEP us all in your prayers. The team will be travelling to all of our previous graduation sites to distribute Dr. B.J.'s book to the Nexus graduates. Each location will be teaching day. The nurses (Esther and Kathy) will be providing health and wellness clinics at all of these locations. This year's itinerary will require a lot of day to day travel.**

15. ***Make a Difference: Be the Church:*** Christ Church's day in mission is May 20, 2012. We have over a dozen different projects available for the Christ Church family. We have projects to clean and build and gather and sew and cook and encourage, etc. There should be something for everyone! Join the over **90** who have already signed up! Sign up on the clipboards in the back of the Sanctuary. PROJECTS:

1. City Mission Cornerstone – to Serve Lunch (sign up in back of church)
2. Collection Trucks at Christ Church (sign up to help at the Church)
 - a. Asbury Shalom Zone – collecting clothing and household items
 - b. Habitat for Humanity – Electronics Truck (of any and all kinds to recycle)
 - c. Recycle-A-Bicycle – old bikes and bicycle parts
 - d. Shred it – sponsored by Allaire Financial: Paper recycling and shredding of out of date

documents.

3. Community Gardening Projects (sign up at church)
 - a. Babcock Neighborhood Gardens (Seneca Street UMC)
 - b. Christ Church garden
 - c. Garden of Stewardship at Central City Café'
4. Dress our People Sewing Team (sign up at church)
5. Habitat for Humanity Restore (sign up at church) – work at the Habitat Warehouse cleaning, organizing, etc.
6. Journey's End Refugee Family – spend time with the family's children and their friends at the park, playing game, enjoying snacks. (sign up at church)
7. LUNCH TEAM – making lunch for all the returning teams
8. MYM Repair Jobs – helping local families and projects in need of small repair jobs (sign up at church)
9. Refreshments provided by CUMC kids – sign up at church
10. Road Clean UP Crew – led by the CUMC youth group – clean up for Harlem Road
11. "keeping in touch" visitation – led by Ed and Cindy Fisher – touching base with our friends who cannot get out.

17 . ***A Biblical and Theological Primer***, written by Dr. B.J. Norrix is in the translation phase of its publication. This book was written for the Nexus Seminary students in Uganda and will be printed in English and Lugandan. We are planning to distribute the first copies of this book in October 2012. The total cost to publish the first 2000 copies of this book will be around 5-6,000 US dollars. Rev. Davis Matovu has also written a commentary on the Book of Revelation that we will be publishing as well. Total Cost of both projects is 8-10,000.

Biblical Resources in Lugandan are nonexistent. There is a Lugandan translation of the Bible that we provide for our graduates but actual Bible study materials do not exist. There is a deep need for more and better materials in the native language (Lugandan). Rev. Matovu and Dr. BJ wrote their documents to respond to this need. We are hoping that these will be the first of many resources developed for the rural pastor in Uganda.

18. Copies of Sinnathamby Thevanesan's latest book are available for sale in the Café'.

19. There are now **6** of us officially signed up for the Israel 2013 journey. The tour is 10 days: we spend 3 days in the Galilee in and around the sea; we spend four days in and around Jerusalem, Bethlehem, etc. We will visit Jericho and the Dead Sea and walk the via Dolorosa. **We depart on January 28, 2013.** If you would like to join us see the Church office or Pastor BJ for brochure and more information. All Inclusive cost is \$2598 (transportation from New York; deluxe hotel accommodations; breakfast and dinner ground transportation, guide, deluxe motor coach and all entrance fees).

This will be my 5th journey to the Holy Land. Each trip I discover something new to illuminate my understanding of the Bible (Old and New) and the background needed for understanding.

If you know anyone who would be interested in joining us there is room for more.

United Methodist General Conference concluded in Tampa, Florida Friday, May 4, 2012. Historically, General Conference has almost always supported and maintained the status quo. This General Conference followed its historical trajectory. There were no earth shaking or significant decisions made at General Conference. A mild restructuring plan that will down size some of the National Boards and Agencies was approved in the last few hours of the Conference. The General Conference voted to eliminate "guaranteed appointment" for United Methodist Elders but a judicial ruling will be made on its constitutionality in the Fall. The church made no changes on its stance regarding homosexuality (ordination or marriages). The discipline continues to read "homosexuality is not compatible with Christian teaching." I have come to believe that keeping this provision in the discipline is harmful and exclusionary because it singles out one behavior (regardless of how one feels about homosexuality) over a wide range of other behaviors. We could just as easily say adultery or greed or hoarding or a thousand other things are "incompatible with Christian teaching" but we don't and I believe it is unjust and unfair to single out one behavior over all others. Perhaps we do this because we don't really want to deal with the underlying malaise of our national church. We are a denomination that has lost 1/3 of its members and regular attendees since 1968. We seem unwilling and unable to deal with this trend or even to acknowledge that it is a problem on the national stage. General Conference also revealed what we already know to be true about our country and our denomination. We are badly divided. The debate on most of these issues continues to arise from what appear to be mutually exclusive presuppositions and very different hermeneutics. The extreme wings of the church (and our nation) not only appear unlikely to ever agree, but appear to be speaking in different languages. My good friend Aaron Bouwens in his blog called watching this event like watching "a slow motion train wreck".

What does all this mean for Christ Church, Snyder? It means we continue to strive to live our lives faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It means we continue to make room for everyone and anyone seeking the grace and mercy of God. It means we continue to do all we can to bring heaven to earth and to make a difference for Jesus sake wherever we find ourselves. The hope for the national church is that local churches like ours will catch the fire of the Holy Spirit and move forward in new and life giving ways.

At Christ Church we are moving forward,

BJ Norrix, missionary, coach, historian