

November 12, 2014

Christ United Methodist Church

UPDATE

***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

Or call us at: 716-839-2460

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

Like us on Facebook!

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

Hi Everyone:

What will the long-term Christ Church legacy be? Will we find ourselves saying we had a great 70 year run and produced many excellent pastors from our congregation? Or will we be able to say we managed to “reinvent” ourselves and once again became a church that is relevant to the world around us and therefore effective at bringing the world to Jesus? I find these questions to be the heart and soul of the struggle within the United Methodist Church. As I mentioned last Sunday, our denomination has been on a long and precipitous decline since its creation in 1968. The national numbers are simply a reflection of our experience at Christ Church and are seen in the stories of once healthy and vibrant churches throughout the country that are now closed or in decline. There are dozens of theories and even more fingers pointing blame (we’re too liberal, we’re too conservative, we are too anti-this or too pro-that) but the bottom line is pretty basic. Our task from the time of Jesus to today is very simple: go, make disciples of

Jesus Christ! The reality is that we are easily sidetracked. There are churches that think their mission is to survive. There are churches that think their mission is to preserve a certain style of worship or leadership or theological understanding. In the grand scheme of things these “shadow missions” end up distracting and redirecting us from our core purpose: Go, make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The question to ponder, as we approach Stewardship Sunday, is not how much money we should be giving to support the ministry of Jesus Christ through Christ Church. The question to ponder is how do we redirect our hearts and minds and attitudes from trying to survive to deciding to thrive. The only way we thrive is by introducing people to Jesus Christ and by helping them live as Christ taught us. Christ Church’s mission statement says we are “Living Christ’s ways . . .” (which begs the question: “are we living Christ’s ways?” What would Jesus say about our attitudes, our priorities the values we use in making decisions?). And we are “exploding with love and service . . .” (and how explosive are we?).

Here is what is happening at Christ Church:

1. Attendance last Sunday was 130. We were reminded that the church, the faith, the Christian life we live was held by others and passed to us and that we hold it for those who are coming after us. We are stewards of our faith.

2. This Sunday is “Stewardship Sunday” and we will be talking about being stewards of our resources. I believe in tithing and have, for the past 24 years, given the first 10% of every pay check (and all other gifts and income) for the ministry of Jesus Christ through the congregation I was serving. In learning to live at this level of generosity I have been blessed beyond description and God has enabled to me see and participate in some wonderful things. In the New Testament tithing does not stand as a LAW but is an invitation to live life generously and with open hands. I have never met anyone who learned to tithe who ever went back to doing less and I have never met anyone who learned to tithe who ever stopped at 10%. I have managed to purchase international plane tickets, support young people on their mission and find a little extra for all of the other mission and ministry projects I come in contact with while giving a tenth of the produce of my life.

The scary truth is that if a typical United Methodist Congregation tithed at the level of the average public assistance grant most congregations would double their annual income. This increase would fund local, national, and global missions and ministries. I don’t know that we have been taught all that well and the majority of United Methodists around the country have not learned to be disciplined in their giving.

So, we will talk about money on Sunday. Buckle your seat belts; the preacher has stopped preaching and will begin to meddle.

We celebrate the ministry of Bill and Marg Bauza this Sunday at 9:00 and 10:00 a.m. Bill and Marg have served with our 9:00a.m. worship team for just over three years and have decided it is time to step away and pursue other ministry (that and a grand baby in Chicago). There will be a reception to celebrate Bill and Marg’s ministry with us at 10:00 a.m. in Crafts Hall. Come and join me as we express our deepest appreciation for Bill

and Marg and their ministry of music and leadership. (They want everyone to know they are not leaving us and will continue in all of the other ministries in which they are engaged).

3. In our Prayers: Mac Sabol (surgery on 11/18); Dona Dalton (Dona was my Administrative Assistant for 27 years in Syracuse. She is battling Lymphoma); Barb Critoph (recovering from knee surgery); Al Wrisley (recovering from oral 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).

4. Congratulations to Ian Johnson and Nicole Langenfeld who are to be married at Christ Church this Saturday!

5. **FOOD PANTRY:** We are collecting items for Thanksgiving Turkey Baskets, which will provide Thanksgiving dinners for hungry families in our community. There are baskets in Crafts Hall and here is what we need: **canned fruits, vegetables, cranberry sauce, stuffing mix, brownie mix, frozen turkeys, fresh potatoes and Dash's receipts will also help.** Bring in for this Sunday, November 16 so they can be distributed on time.

6. **ANNUAL CHURCH CONFERENCE** is this Sunday at 3:30p.m. at Pendleton Center UMC. Car pool from Church at 3:00p.m. We will gather with other congregations at 3:30p.m. and our meeting will commence at 4:30p.m. It should be brief. We will elect Trustees, approve the Pastor's support package, approve Lay Servants and other necessary annual business. This is a Church conference - meaning all members of Christ Church are eligible for voice and vote.

7. **Crafting for a Cause** will meet this Saturday November 15 at 10:00 in the Wesley Room. We will be working on Teddy Bears for the Giving Tree. Please bring sewing scissors, Beige thread, needles. Everyone is welcome! Nine handmade quilts were delivered to the VA Hospital this past weekend for the Veterans. Thank you to everyone who helped!

8. **DRESS OUR PEOPLE:** All are invited to help as we begin cutting and sewing clothing for children in Uganda. We will be meting this Thursday, November 13 at noon in the Youth Hall downstairs. Come and join anytime – no sewing experience necessary. Bring your own cutting shears.

9. **Christmas Pageant - there's a place for you!**

At FaithXpress at 10 am this Sunday through December we'll be preparing to tell the Christmas story in a fun and memorable way. All children, youth and adults are invited

to participate in speaking & non-speaking roles as well as instrumental and song opportunities. Join us Sunday at 10 am to hear more about **The Kings of Orient, AR.**

10. This Week at Christ Church

Wednesday, November 12 – 7:30p.m. Church Choir

Thursday, November 13 – 10:00a.m. Bible Study

Noon – Dress our People

1:00p.m. Bible 101

7:00p.m. “Living Well Coaches”

Sunday, November 16 – 3:30p.m. Annual Church Conference

6:00p.m. Disciple Bible Study

11. Thanksgiving Celebration: There will not be a “Thanksgiving Eve” service this year at Christ UMC (on Wednesday at 7:00). However, there is a community-wide Thanksgiving celebration on Tuesday, November 25 at 7:30 p.m. at Crossroads Lutheran Church, 4640 Main Street. Special music will be provided by Amherst High School’s “Sweet 16’s”. This gathering is sponsored by the Snyder/Eggertsville Clergy Association.

12. Happy Birthday this week:

November 12 – Grace Markello

November 13 – Carol Corsaro, Ian Webber

November 15 – Chris Sciolino

November 16 – Lynn Ramsey

13. There are no anniversaries listed for this week.

14. THANK YOU – Ron Corsaro and friends for an excellent evening of jazz music on Friday, November 7. We raised a few hundred dollars for Mission Youth!!

15. MYM Christmas Dinner and Concert: COMING DECEMBER 5 – MYM Christmas Dinner and Concert

5:30p.m. on December 5. Special concert by the Buffalo Silver Band at 7:30p.m.

Dinner is Appetizers and Punch, Ham, Au Gratin Potatoes, Fresh Green Beans,

Applesauce

Rolls and Butter and Chocolate Trifle.

Cost is \$18 – Tickets on sale November 16, 23 & 30 in Crafts Hall. Proceeds benefit Christ Church youth.

The Buffalo Silver Band concert will be at 7:30p.m. in the sanctuary and open to everyone, not just the dinner folks. It will be free but the youth will get up and tell the audience that an offering will be taken for the youth projects (including the mission trip).

This from Bob Snyder: The Buffalo Silver Band is celebrating its 100 year anniversary and their music is really great! Marcia and I heard them at Kleinhans this spring. In your email would you please make the points 1) it is a big 30 plus member English style

brass band. 2) They have played at the amphitheater at Chautauqua and of course Kleinhans plus other places in Western NY. 3) This year they won the Hannaford Cup at the Toronto Festival of Bands (They are the real deal) 4) They play jazz, classical, marches, etc. I asked and they will play Sing Sing Sing. Wait 'til you see and hear that! We had the Lancaster Steel Drum Band a few years ago and this group will also rock big time.

16. Through the Bible in a year: This week:

- November 12 – 1 Chronicles 4-6
- November 13 – 1 Chronicles 7-9
- November 14 – 1 Chronicles 10-13
- November 15 – 1 Chronicles 14-15 and Luke 1
- November 16 – 1 Chronicles 16-18
- November 17 – 1 Chronicles 19-21 and Luke 2
- November 18 – 1 Chronicles 22-24 and Luke 3
- November 19 – 1 Chronicles 25-27

17. AOL (Adult Opportunities for Learning) kicks off Advent with a series titled "Christmas: The Good, The Bad & The Ugly". Led by Rev. Jim Pollard. The study launches November 30 and will run for 4 weeks. See Jim or Sally for more information.

18. MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

Cheektowaga Food Pantry – Janet Neiman, Director of the Cheektowaga Food Pantry, is in need of volunteers to help each Tuesday and Wednesday during November. Call Janet (392-2318) for details.

Uganda 2015 – Our team is nearly set. Dr. BJ Norrix will be leading a team of 8: John and Brandon Miller, Vicki 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 and much, much more.

Habitat for Humanity: Christ Church was one of the founding partners for Buffalo Habitat and will present its annual \$1000 check of support on December 4th at the ingathering.

19. **2014 GIVING TREE** – The Giving Tree will be in Crafts Hall beginning November 23. If you wish to participate, please take a tag, purchase the gift, and bring the gift (UNWRAPPED) with the tag by December 14th. This year's recipients are Gateway-Longview, Haven House, Primera UMC and Habitat for Humanity. If you have any questions, please contact Diane Klenk (651-0236). Let's remember those who are less fortunate and add a bit of joy! Thank you.

20. Within the staff we are noting a couple of significant anniversaries this month:

Janelle Martin is completing her first full year as our Office Manager and Ministry Assistant next week!

Kevin Durkin is completing his first full year as our Minister of Music
Thanksgiving week!

We are profoundly blessed to have Janelle and Kevin as a part of our staff and I am sure you will want to join me in expressing our appreciation to them!

21. Thoughts and ponderings:

Christmas is coming and many of our congregation do not go out at night. Would there be interest in a mid-afternoon (say 3:00p.m.) Christmas Eve worship experience for those who have evening plans or cannot get out at night??? Let me know what you think and we'll see what we can do. We might have communion at 3:00p.m. and cancel the 11p.m.? Or . . .

Youth Ministry is the foundation for the future. I am becoming convinced that we need to hire a ¼ time youth pastor but, with the rest of the finances where they are, cannot afford to do so. Some of you (two in particular) have expressed a willingness to help fund such a project . . . what say you??

I cancelled the "Thanksgiving Eve" gathering because of lack of participation. What works in one place does not always work in others. Thank you to those who joined me the previous two years. Please make space for and enjoy the community Thanksgiving gathering mentioned above.

22. What are "Shared Ministries" (formerly known as Apportionments)? Shared Ministries is money we pay to the Upper New York Annual Conference as our fair share to fund the missions and ministries of our denomination (the United Methodist Church). These funds are used to support Seminaries, our District Superintendent, UMCOR, Global Missions and missionaries, our Bishop, new church development, and my friend Aaron Bouwens the Congregational Development director; just to name a few. These funds help fund hospitals around the world and support the denominational structure. The Annual Conference budget is "apportioned" to the 950 Upper New York Annual Conference congregations based on relative financial strength. It is a vital part of our connection. In 2013 Christ Church paid 61% of our shared ministries and we hope to continue to move toward 100% over the next few years. Your year-end giving and extra gifts around the Holy Days are a significant portion of our reaching these goals. THANK YOU for your support.

Parting Thought

When we speak of Church budgets I refuse to reduce the cause of Christ to a utility bill. The reality is that Christ Church has chosen to be a community center of faith and a resource in our community. We provide a building that houses AA groups, FA groups, musical groups, a counselor, dancers, girl scouts and many many more. We provide a ministry that serves our wider community in dozens of ways (from food to housing to emotional and spiritual support). But these resources and outreach are not the reason we are here – they are the result of a Christian community being located at 350 Saratoga. Christ Church has the mission and purpose of making disciples for Jesus Christ. We have Disciple Classes, we teach our children, we challenge each and every one of us to go deeper, to live deeper, to sacrifice for the cause of the Gospel. We do

this through supporting our staff: Sally Pollard who works with Community life and our education ministries; Kevin Durkin who works to provide meaningful music for our worship gatherings; Janelle Martin who holds the rest of us together by taking care of the administrative details and anchoring the office; Dave Wolf who keeps the place clean and running; Doris Schanzlin who keeps the giving records correct up-to-date and, me. My job as pastor is described in Ephesians 4:11 and following. I am here to equip the saints for the work of ministry to build up the body of Christ. Our staff does its work by helping all of us be better disciples of Jesus Christ and by challenging us to grow and reach out to a lost and hurting world. In my 3 plus years at Christ Church I have become aware of what a great ministry this is and HOW MUCH BETTER we could be if we didn't have worry about every dollar we spend. This Sunday (and forever moving forward) I plan to challenge myself and ALL OF US to step up and do better with our financial support of Christ Church. We are living Christ ways but our exploding in love and service often fizzles because of fiscal restraints. It is time to step up . . .

Blessings,

BJ Norrix, tither, lead servant, missionary