***Christ United Methodist Church***

***Snyder, New York***

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

***UPDATE***

***December 31, 2013***

***EVERYONE is WELCOME***

***EVERY SUNDAY AT CHRIST CHURCH***

***9:00 – Praise Celebration Worship***

***10:00 – FaithXpress/soul Strength***

***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:

We are 7 days into the season of Christmas (7 swans?) and preparing to enter a new year. A New Year is observed differently around the world. For example, among our Jewish friends and neighbors Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year – sometime in September/October depending on the Lunar Calendar) is not a day of celebration and revelry but a day of repentance, reflection and restoration. In the oriental tradition “Tet” (New Year – usually late January to early February) is a time to give gifts and wear red and shoot off fireworks. For we North Americans New Year has become a time to “ring out the old and ring in the new” which generally involves parties and booze and lots of food – and that kiss with the one we love at the stroke of midnight. We have also developed the tradition of making “resolutions” a list of things we will do (or stop doing); a collection of life adjustments we promise to engage in as we enter a new calendar year. I’m pretty sure “getting in shape” or “losing weight” tops most people’s resolution list. The gym is packed the first two weeks of January and then, slowly and gradually, it gets back to the regulars – having added, at most, two or three new regular faces to the mix. I am not much interested in resolutions but I am interested in practices and habits. Practices and habits are essential to the growing spiritual life – they are sometimes called spiritual disciplines.

This is why I am issuing an 8 day call to Prayer and Fasting for the Christ UMC community – to extend from January 1 through January 8. Set aside some time and space in any or all of these 8 days to intentionally listen to God and pray for our relationship with Christ, with each other and the world. Pray for clarity of vision for the Christ Church community as we move into a new year and for clarity of purpose as we embrace the future. Below is the list of eight (8) items I passed out on Sunday for us to hold in prayer – pray for these things and everything else the Lord leads you to pray for. This is not a resolution but an invitation to a new practice!

Here is what is going on at Church:

1. We were just short of 100 on the last Sunday of the year. We were 180 on Christmas Eve and just a hair short of 200 for the Christmas pageant. All in all it was a very good week for the Christ Church family. It was great to see family and friends and the kids who have been off to school. The celebration of the incarnation touched many lives.

Special appreciation to Kevin Durkin and the Church Choir for their excellent Christmas Eve musical contributions.

Special appreciation to Sally Pollard (and friends) who set up the very nice Christmas Eve fellowship time!

Thank you candle lighters, ushers, my nine (9) readers and Barb Carier (who set up communion for the 11:00)

2. This Sunday is January 5. I am beginning the New Year with a series on the “Fruit of the Spirit”. Fruit does not come from effort but are the consequence of being connected to Christ and of “abiding”. When a branch remains connected to the tree it bears appropriate and bountiful fruit. When a person remains connected and growing in Christ Jesus certain fruit is born of that connection and relationship. In Galatians 5:22 there is a list of 9 – Love, Joy, Peace Patience, etc. – fruit of the spirit that becomes manifest in our lives as we live out our spiritual lives connected to Christ. This week we will talk about Love. Love as the Bible describes it is not rooted in emotion or in physical attraction. Love is not even a preference. I can love people I don’t even like. Love, in the Biblical sense, is a choice about how we will treat other human beings and how we will live in relationship with others.

3. **Donna Yungbluth** will be concluding her time as our church treasurer in the next few weeks. We are pleased to announce that **Eric Dokken** has agreed to take over this position. Eric is an accountant and works in banking and is a life member of our church community. Eric and Donna will be working out the transition over the next few weeks.

I know you will all want to join me in expressing our deepest appreciation to Donna. She has served as our Treasurer for the past two years and has done her work with grace and excellence. THANK YOU DONNA!

4. **Disciple Bible Study** – is a 34 week Bible Survey Course. An Information Meeting will be held this **Sunday January 5 at 6:00 in the Wesley Room** at Christ Church. Rev. Jim Pollard and Rev. B.J. Norrix will be team teaching this course. The cost for this class is the cost of materials. Isn’t it time to take your knowledge and understanding of the Bible and Christian Community a bit deeper?

5. In our Prayers: Marg Bouza is having surgery on Thursday; keep the family and friends of Art Gundlach in your prayers: pray for Fred Painton, Sandy Cumming, Guy Castellino, Mitch Mooney, Richard Ball, Bim Rowlands, Beth Sweet (following surgery), Marian Steve, Glenn Hurst, Nicky Sebastiano, Ruth Kitson, Shirley Downey, Ed Maker, Ed and Jean Ericson, Alice Schmidt, and Diane Lovejoy. Remember those who are in harm’s way, for families in crisis and all who are looking for work.

6. **Arthur Gundlach’s Memorial Service** will be Saturday, January 4: Calling hour at 10:00 a.m. and service at 11:00 – at Dietrich Funeral Home on Kensington Ave near Main.

7. Food pantry collections: January 5 – Mac and Cheese; January 12 – canned vegetables and fruit;

8. Through the Bible in a year: This year’s plan is designed to add variety to our reading of the Bible. The plan divides the Bible so that the reader will read books in a non-traditional sequence. This week’s readings:

January 1 – Genesis 1-3; Romans 1

January 2 – Genesis 4-6; Romans 2

January 3 – Genesis 7-9; Romans 3

January 4 – Genesis 10-12; Romans 4

January 5 – Genesis 13-15; Romans 5

January 6 – Genesis 16-17; Romans 6

January 7 – Genesis 18-19; Romans 7

January 8 – Genesis 20-22; Romans 8

9. Happy Birthday this week:

January 1 – Brian Carney; Marie Miller; Phyllis Nicholson

January 2 – Alice Richards

January 4 – Tom Weaver

January 5 – Guy Ferrelli

January 7 – Mary Jane Shanley

10. Uganda Necklaces are still available – want some? See Pastor BJ -- these colorful lacquered paper necklaces are available for just $5 each. All proceeds go to support a women’s ministry in Jinja, Uganda run by our friend Moses Wasige.

11. At Christ Church This week:

          NOTE: the Church office will be closed January 1

          January 2 – Bible Study at 10:00

January 3 – Books Loved at 10:00

January 5 – Disciple Bible Study Information Meeting at 6:00

January 6 – SPRC Team Meets at 7:00

12. Beginning January 5 AOL (Adult Opportunities for Learning) will begin a series titled “The Wesleyan Way: A Faith that Matters.” This class meets in the Wesley Room on Sunday’s at 10:00 a.m.

13. ***Call to Prayer and Fasting: January 1 through 8***

Pray 1. That I may know Jesus better

2. FOR Christ Church’s leaders (Staff, Council, DS, Bishop, etc)

3. for clarity of vision: What is God calling us to be and thus to do?

4. the will to live out that vision

5. for strength to persevere

6. for grace to release the past

7. for the love needed to embrace the future

8. that all may come to know Jesus

Set aside some time. Pick one day or all eight days. Give up something (a meal, a TV show, whatever) and use the time and energy to pray. Listen to God. Ask “What is the vision or your church.” And sit in silence. Pray for vision and wisdom and for all of Christ Church team.

14. United Methodist Men: Saturday, January 11 – we are going snow tubing! We will meet at 10:00 at the church and carpool to the Holiday Valley Tubing Co. Bring the kids and the grandkids. Cost is $17 (13.50 if there are more than 15 of us). Contact Tom Nye at 648-1850 or 213-3642.

15. January 17 – is the Bloodmobile is at Christ Church from 2 to 6. Contact Geoff Hill (316-1522) to set up an appointment.

***Parting Thought:***

I’m sitting here at the very bottom of the year. It is the last day of 2013. I don’t know how you work through transitions like the change of the calendar but for me today is a day of reflection, anticipation and a little planning. I usually use this day to look at the previous year. I look back and see a lot of great stuff: time with family, new members in our church, baptisms, great mission accomplishments and new connections in our community. I also see some sadness – we said farewell to a lot of Christ Church friends and family; we had families move; we had some struggles. This is life – there are ups and downs, joy and sadness. I also take a look at what I tried to accomplish. How did I do with my goals? How did I do with my aims and objectives? Was I able to make a difference? Once again there is good news and things to work on. Some goals were accomplished. Some goals fell a little short. Some goals never got started. I am healthier this New Year’s Eve than I was a year ago. I am a little wiser (many life lessons in the previous year and lots of reading and learning). I believe my relationship with Christ grew and deepened. What will 2014 look like? More importantly, what will I do to make 2014 better yet. Here are some of my personal goals: 1) to grow deeper in my relationship with Christ (to meet this I will read through the Bible this year and spend time in prayer every day and spend time with my covenant group every month); 2) to grow deeper in my relationship with my wife (we will continue our day off together and plan a few weeks away this Summer); 3) to grow wider in my knowledge and understanding of the faith and my calling (I will read at least 20 books this year); 4) to continue my healthy trajectory by eating right (no refined sugar and a few other things plus regular trips to the gym). For Christ Church I want to see a year of growth and vitality. We need to 1) increase the number of first time visitors at Christ Church; 2) we need to practice radical hospitality in being open and welcome to all who God sends us; 3) we need to help one another grow deeper in our relationship with Jesus Christ; 4) We need to be even more intentional about engaging our world and making a difference for Jesus sake. I am organizing a once a month “Action Group” that will meet on 2nd Monday’s at the Church at 7:00 – the group is open and any and all are welcome. The plan for this group is to read, discuss, plan and take action on how to move forward in our ministry locally, regionally and internationally.

What are your plans? What would you like December 31, 2014 to look like when do the 2014 year in review? Will it be another year of just ups and downs or will you be able to look back at the year and say: I did that! I was a part of that! Look how I’ve grown! Look at what God has done through my hands and feet and efforts!

I’ll see you when the Church gathers!

B.J. Norrix, lead servant, coach, missionary, dreamer

This email is a communication ministry of the Christ United Methodist Church of Snyder, New York. If you do not wish to receive this communication please let us know. If you like this please feel free to share it with friends!