***Christ United Methodist Church***

***Snyder, New York***

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

***UPDATE***

***January 7, 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!***

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:

OK, it is cold outside. Listening to the howling wind and seeing the lake driven snow reminds me that it is Winter – it is beautiful, it is powerful and it is normal. Stay warm and stay safe and remember that every Winter is followed by Spring. I have heard from a few of you on your participation in the Call to Prayer and Fasting that concludes tomorrow. Part of my new year discipline has been to add an hour of reading to my day. I started with a great book by Michael Slaughter titled Momentum for Life. Michael is pastor of the Ginghamsburg United Methodist Church near Dayton, Ohio. In our spiritual journey there are certain practices that keep us close to God and one another and help to focus our hearts and lives on the right things. He uses the acronym DRIVE to show these practices. D – Devotion to God. Without daily prayer and Bible reading we simply lapse into the same old patterns and the attitudes and mores of the world around us. R – Readiness for lifelong learning. The goal of the Christian life is not just to spend eternity in heaven sitting on a cloud playing a harp (Christianity is not a “get out of Hell free card”). The goal is to be useful and productive citizens of the Kingdom of the Heavens – to do this we need to be constantly growing in our faith and lives. I – Investing in Key Relationships. How am I building sustainable and healthy relationships in my life? V – Visioning for the Future. We can’t plan for the journey if we don’t know where we are going. E – Eating and Exercise for Life. If I am going to be a productive citizen in the Kingdom of the Heavens then I need to eat right and do what I need to do to stay healthy and strong. I found this book very helpful and wonder if any of you would like to walk through it together with me? If you are interested let me know.

Here is what is happening at Church:

1. Attendance last Sunday was just short of 120. We began our series on the “Fruit of the Spirit” and spoke about God forming within us the Love that gives. It was good to have the Choir back after a Sunday off!

2. This Sunday is part two of the Fruit of the Spirit – “Joy”. When we are a living life devoted and connected to God (the reason we were created) we are filled with a sense of gladness that circumstances cannot touch. Joy is the outgrowth of a life lived connected to our creator through Jesus Christ.

3. DISCIPLE BIBLE STUDY: Update. We held an information meeting for the Disciple Bible Study this past Sunday. The Group has chosen to meet on Sunday’s at 6:00 p.m. **beginning January 19.** This 34 week group based Bible study is designed to survey the entire Bible and to build covenantal relationships within the group. There is room for more but as the weekly assignments begin on Monday January 13 (in anticipation of our first class on the 19th). If you want in I need to know ASAP so that materials can be ordered.

4. AOL – at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings is studying the “Wesleyan Way” with Rev. Jim Pollard. What does it mean to be the spiritual descendent of John Wesley? What is unique about the Wesleyan way? Come and find out Sunday’s at 10:00.

5. In our Prayers: Louise Barber (at Wesley Rehab); Beth Sweet (recovering); Marg Bouza (recovering from surgery); Janelle Martin (recovering from surgery and planning to come back to work on January 14); Fred Painton, Sandy Cumming, Guy Castellino, Mitch Mooney (recently hospitalized), Richard Ball, Bim Rowlands, Glenn Hurst, Nicky Sebastiano, Marian Steve, Ruth Kitson, Shirley Downey, Ed Maker, Carl and Jean Ericson, Alice Schmidt, Diane Lovejoy. Remember all who are serving in the US Military; for those looking for work, for families in crisis and for a warm place to reside for those who live on the streets.

6. FOOD PANTRY: This week we are bringing Canned fruits and vegetables. Remember we are always collecting non perishable food to support local food pantries.

7. **Jeanne Bartholemew** was Choir director at Christ Church for nearly 30 years. She died in December (a memorial service will be held in Maryland later this month). Anyone wishing to remember Jeanne with memorial fund gifts or to contribute to a brick in the walkway of the Celebration Garden, be sure to mark your gift “memorial fund” and “brick” as well as Jeanne’s name. Acknowledgements will be sent to Jeanne’s family.

8. **UMW** (United Methodist Women) GENERAL MEETING is this Saturday, **January 11th at 10:00 a.m.** in the café. The program will be **The Family Justice Center.** Here is an opportunity to learn about the new Northtown Family Center and what we can all do to break the cycle of domestic violence. Breakfast will be served for $5. Contact Peggy Bermudez at 626-4897 or bradbermudez@hotmail.com if you plan to attend.

9. **UMM** (United Methodist Men) – Welcome to Buffalo’s winter season. Join us **January 11th (Saturday)** at 10:00 at the church parking lot to carpool to Ellicottville to the Holiday Valley Tubing Company. That’s right! You need to get out of the house and enjoy the season! You are not too old to join the fun. Explore a new activity for yourself and the kids (and grandkids). Dress appropriately for the day and bring a change of clothes if you wish. There is a warming hut on the premises. If you get there and you just want to watch the activities, that is OK. There are 20 slopes and 2 twos to take you up the hill on your personal tube. We wouldn’t want to over exert ourselves! For those who get bored quickly there is a free shuttle to take you to the new lodge where you can relax by the fire place until the rest of us join you for lunch. The price is $17 for 2 hours. If we have 15 or more and 48 hour notice, it drops to $13.50 each. They make their own snow (not a problem this week) and if the weather does not cooperate we’ll try again on the 18th. Call Tom Nye at 648-1850 or 213-3642 for questions.

10. Through the Bible this year: readings

 January 7 – Genesis 18-19 and Romans 7

 January 8 – Genesis 20-22 and Romans 8

 January 9 – Genesis 23-24

 January 10 – Genesis 25-26 and Romans 9

 January 11 – Genesis 27-28

 January 12 – Genesis 29-30 and Romans 10

 January 13 – Genesis 31-32

 January 14 – Genesis 33-35 and Romans 11

 January 15 – Genesis 36-38 and Romans 12

11. Happy Birthday this week:

 January 7 – Mary Jane Shanley

 January 9 – Jenny Groh, Pam Lopez

 January 10 – Lindsey Darling

12. At Christ Church this week:

 Wednesday, January 8 – Choir Practice at 7:30

 Thursday, January 9 – Bible Study 10:00 a.m.

 Stewardship and Finance Team at 7:00

 Saturday, January 11

 UMW General Meeting at 10:00 (Northtowns Family Justice Center)

 UMM Outing to snow tubing at 10:00

 Monday, January 13 – SPRC (postponed from 1/6) at 7:00

13. COMING SOON TO CHRIST CHURCH

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

 January 19 – 6:00 first Disciple 1 class (see BJ or Jim Pollard for information)

14. CATCH THE SPIRIT 2014 – the Niagara Frontier District is holding a one day gathering where people from all over the district can take a workshop (or two), and have worship together, check out some new supplies and enjoy lunch. This year’s event will be at the Clarence UMC (10205 Greiner Road, Clarence) with the theme “Building Relations with Depth.” Come and bring a friend! Registration is due by January 17 – brochures and registration forms are available in the café or through the church office.

15. Action Group – last week I printed an announcement regarding a “moving forward” action group for 2nd Monday’s. This open group will begin in February (on the 10th) here at Christ Church at 7:00. If you are interested in exploring ways for Christ Church to be more effective in its ministry, outreach, evangelism, witness, etc. let me know.

***Parting Thought:***

What does it mean to be successful? In American society success is usually defined in terms of money, prestige, influence. This definition is often translated to the life of the church in terms of worship attendance, buildings and giving (butts (in the pews), buildings and bucks). I have often fallen prey to this American culturally influenced definition of what it means to be successful in ministry. Lately I have come to acquire a different view. When I look at the gospel, when I read the Bible when I listen to the great spiritual leaders of the past and the present I am constantly shown another way to see it. Success in ministry is not seen in breadth of the ministry (that is how large, numerically, it has grown) but in the depth of ministry (how many Disciples are being grown). I have built a congregation that was both numerically strong and spiritually deep – and therefore I know it can be done. But when I look back at when the church began to significantly grow larger (numerically) it was concurrent with a season of the church when the leadership and core members chose to grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus and with one another and in service in the wider world. This deeper turn was facilitated by a number of things: retreat experiences, Disciple Bible Study, renewal events, a choice by the core of the church to intentionally hold me and one another in prayer on a daily basis and a shift in focus from what we want and need (inside the church community) to how we can make a difference in our wider community. In all of the consultations with all the congregations I have had over the years what I have found is that most congregations are focused on the wrong metrics. They want to be bigger but they won’t make the effort to go deeper. When we focus on the three B’s listed above we may, occasionally, find someone going deeper – but let’s be honest, if the goal was just to fill the building we could put a sign on the lawn 10 cent beer night and we would fill the building (notwithstanding that would be against United Methodist polity and practice). I don’t have any desire to serve a dying church. I don’t feel any calling to pastor a community that is 10 miles wide and ½ an inch deep. I think the call is to go deeper in our love and passion for God; deeper in our commitment to help one another become all that God has called us to be and deeper in our efforts to be difference makers in the world around us. I believe this will attract others into the life we have chosen to live together.

I’ll see you when the Church gathers,

BJ Norrix, missionary, God lover/Christ follower, lead servant

This e-mail is a communication ministry of the Christ United Methodist Church, Snyder, New York. If you do not wish to receive this email let me know. Feel free to share this with your friends and family.