

HILLTOPPER

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

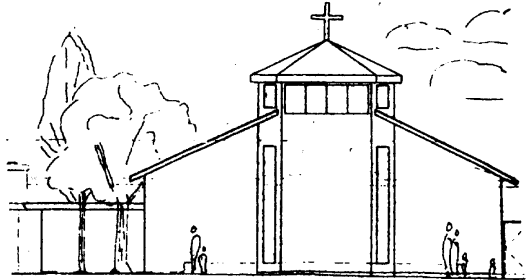
903 So. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054 (973) 887-4657

http://www.parsippanyumc.com E-Mail: jedwards14@juno.com

Sunday Worship Celebration: 10:30 a.m.

In a hostile, hurting world we reach out to share kindness and laughter. Our spirituality is based on Jesus and his love and compassion. We provide a community of support and healing where all are welcomed and valued regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, disability, gender, or economic status. In a world where people feel they can love only those who are like themselves, we seek to celebrate the uniqueness of every human being.

"Making Room in the Circle"



DECEMBER, 2010

A cast of 25 adults, youth and children have been working on this mind-boggling Christmas play. Please don't miss it! December 11th and 12th at 7:30 p.m.

The Parsippany United Methodist Church presents

This Subway Is Bound for Glory

an original Christmas play by Jeff Edwards

Performances:
Friday, December 11th
& Saturday, December 12th
@ 7:30 p.m.

Admission is free

903 S. Beverwyck Rd.

We are young
We are old. We are in this moment...
And every moment is connected to eternity. And life is full of surprises. very weird



Hanging of the Greens

Hanging of the Greens – We will be decorating the sanctuary and Fellowship Hall for the Christmas season on **Saturday, Nov. 28**. We are planning to start at 10:00 am. Refreshments will be provided. Everyone is welcome. If you have questions, speak to Connie Keller.

Our **Christmas pageant and Cantata** will be held on **Sunday, December 19th**. Children and adults who would like to be in the Pageant are invited to come to the church on Saturday, December 18th for our rehearsal. "There's always room in the circle."



The **Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service** will be held at 7 p.m.



Christmas Offering

Since the Hilltopper is now electronic, we cannot send your annual Christmas Offering envelope. If you can, please consider making an additional donation this Christmas to help our church do the Lord's work. Envelopes will be available at church, but you do not need one to make your Christmas offering. Please bring your envelopes to church any time during the holidays and put it in the collection plate.



Christmas poinsettias - This year I will be taking orders for poinsettias until Dec. 12. Order forms will be included in the bulletins for those weeks. The poinsettias will be placed on the altar Dec. 19 and traditionally stay on the altar until after the Christmas Eve service. If you would like to make a monetary donation (instead of ordering poinsettias) that will be used to provide flowers for the Christmas season, please call me. Connie Keller 973-887-4384.



"Time and Small Minds," a sermon preached by Pastor Jeff on November 7th, 2010 based upon Luke 20:27 – 39.

I've been thinking about time.

When we were babies, time as we're accustomed of thinking of it didn't really exist. We hadn't developed the capacity to file memories away, so there was no past. And we surely hadn't begun to give any thought to the future either. Everything was simply now – the present.

An essential part of our growing up involved coming to terms with the concept of time. We learned about clocks and calendars and the techniques we have to gauge the passage of time. Parents and teachers conspired together to get us to get with the program. In kindergarten, if not sooner, our report cards began including the question: "Does the child make good use of his or her time?" Which meant, did we stay focused on the task at hand – did we get it done on time?

Generally speaking, when we were little kids, we resisted getting with the program with every fiber of our being. Why do I have to hurry on to the next thing if I'm enjoying this thing I'm doing right now?

Gradually we learned to submit. It's pretty basic stuff, this coming to terms with time, because without it, we can't really function in society. There are people counting on us, and they count on us within the confines of time. If we can't *get to work* on time, we won't keep our job. If we don't *pay our rent* or our mortgage on time, we'll end up on the streets.

To some extent we *come to experience time* as something we are in bondage to – a harsh taskmaster. We find ourselves constantly in a hurry, always aware of what needs to be gotten done in the limited time we have, whether it be the *limits of the day, the week, the year, or our lifetime*. It becomes very hard for us to be in the present moment precisely because we have become so aware of an endless series of deadlines to meet.

In our bondage to time, in our hurry, we become small minded. We *can't think outside the box*, so to speak. All we can focus on are the places we need to get to on time, the "to do" list hanging over our head.

This is one way to understand Jesus' *story of the Good Samaritan*. The priest and the Levite are oppressed by time hurrying down the road to get to their shift at the temple on time. They become small minded, afflicted by tunnel vision. And so they can't really take in the stranger left beaten, half-dead at the side of the road.

Our relationship with time is connected to our awareness of death itself, and perhaps part of the reason why the priest and the Levite hurry on down the road is the fact that the man at the side of the road is described as "half dead." To stop will mean pondering their own deaths, and that is precisely what they don't want to do.

The knowledge of our deaths can create a sense of panic in relation to time: *Time is running out!* It can lead us to keep ourselves so busy in time so that we'll be constantly distracted from contemplating the fact that we eventually will die.

And yet the awareness of death can also lead us in the opposite direction: It can slow us down. A friend dies suddenly, and in the sorrow of our loss we pledge to savor time; to spend more time in the present moment. We realize that hurrying through life is precisely what we don't want to do. We don't know what to waste whatever time we have left.

In our Gospel story, the passage of time and the reality of death looms large in the background. Jesus is in the final week of his life. He has arrived in Jerusalem; in a matter of days he will be hanging on a cross. Jesus is acutely aware that he has little time left in this world. It brings poignancy to all his interactions.

And some Sadducees approach Jesus intent on tripping him up in a battle of wits. We don't know a great deal about the Sadducees other than that they were a group that didn't believe in an after life. The question they address to Jesus has a condescending tone. They conjure up a hypothetical possibility which seems to imply that an afterlife would create chaos and confusion: one woman with seven husbands. Since all they know is this world with the order that time creates, they can't imagine anything other.

Jesus responds by saying in essence that their question arises from small-mindedness. When we ponder life beyond this life, we don't have the concepts with which to wrap our minds around what it would be like. We will be like angels Jesus says, but who has any notion of what that will be like? Just because we can't wrap our minds around it, however doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

It was Jesus who said that unless we turn and become like little children we will never enter the kingdom of God. The implication is that little children perceive something that we adults have long since lost the capacity to perceive with all the assumptions we accumulate about life. In order to encounter the deepest realities, we have to let go of all that we think we know, and become once more like a little child.

There is a little story I love from the end of the life of the great 13th century Italian systematic theologian, Thomas Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas was brilliant; he wrote thousands and thousands of pages of theology that served as a guide for the Church for centuries. Towards the end of his life however Thomas Aquinas had some kind of direct experience of God – a “near death experience” perhaps — and afterwards he referred to his life work – all those books he had written about God — as just “so much straw”. He realized that all that he had written simply could not convey the beauty and the power of the love he had experienced in his face to face encounter with the living God.

Part of what little children perceive is that time isn't everything it's cracked up to be. Einstein had a big mind. He had to in order to think outside of the box of Newtonian physics in which everybody had been thinking for centuries. One of the things Einstein concluded was that time as we know it is an illusion. Late in his life, when a close friend named Besso died, Einstein wrote this intriguing words:

“Now Besso has departed from this strange world a little ahead of me. That means nothing. People like us ... know that the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.”

In responding to the Sadducees, Jesus calls to mind a formative story of the Hebrew people — the first instance when God spoke to Moses. It's a curious story. He was out doing his job, watching his father-in-law's sheep, when he notices something weird in the distance. A bush appears to be burning, and yet it's not consumed.

He was on the clock with his father's sheep, and they were surely due somewhere before nightfall. He really shouldn't have wasted time, but he did, becoming like a little child, chucking his wrist-watch, and turning aside to investigate this curious sight.

It was then that God spoke. “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Well, said Jesus, for God to introduce himself this way implies that Abraham, Isaac and Joseph must be alive in some realm that is beyond our comprehension in order for God to still have a relationship with them.

When Moses went on to ask God what his name was, God's response was a real puzzler. It was, in essence, an unpronounceable word, but the best effort at translation would be, “*I am who I am,*” or, “*I will be who I will be.*” He is the God **beyond** time.

Now the point here isn't that we should all chuck our watches and calendars and begin to live like little children. What a mess that would be!

We are called to walk a fine line, in time, and yet out of time. It's not easy being a human being, because our tendency is to fall off on one side or the other. To either obsess over time, or to be irresponsibly cavalier about time.

The truth is, the world of time matters. The God beyond time cares about intensely about the world that is in time, and he hears the cries of his people suffering under their various taskmasters. And he calls us to make a difference – to ease the suffering, to set the people free.

Here's another interesting quote from Einstein.

"Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to a divine purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know: That we are here for the sake of others...for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy. Many times a day, I realize how much my outer and inner life is built upon the labors of people, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received."

We come to church on Sunday, and we can't help but worry over time as we go through the routine of getting out the door and arriving here. *(We are a church of chronically late people, with me being the first and foremost in this regard.)* Hopefully however, once we get here, to some extent we begin to leave this bondage behind, and touch the eternity that is beyond time. We gather with Jesus once more in his upper room, and the fact that this took place in time two thousand years ago doesn't really matter. He is here, as are all the saints, in this moment.

And touching eternity, we find strength to live in time as those who bear the grace of God.
In the kindness and courage of Jesus,
Pastor Jeff

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Check out our website, and Pastor Jeff's posted sermons and other reflections, at www.parsippanyumc.com. You'll also find the church on Facebook. Pastor Jeff invites us to submit questions and topic suggestions for him to write reflections on, as well as to preach about. You can place suggestions in the offering plate, or give them to Pastor Jeff directly. JEdwards14@juno.com

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Our **annual Church Conference** has been postponed to **Saturday, December 11th at 11 a.m.** Either Rev. Renee McCleary or Bishop Devadha will be on hand as we elect officers of our church and share holy communion. All members of our church are encouraged to attend. The **Staff-Parish Relations Committee** will meet before hand at 10 a.m. Please pray for Rev. McCleary whose son died of a heart attack.

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Looking back...the annual pledges were made, 2011 budget accepted, 2011 officers nominated and programs selected.

All women of the church family are invited to join us....



United Methodist Women

Wednesday, December 1st – 7:30 p.m.
PROGRAM: Officer Installation, Christmas Party,
And Gift Exchange Game
Bring a wrapped gift (approx. \$5) with your name on it –
and the recipient will pray for you during the next year.
Refreshments

Dec. 1 – World AIDS Day
Dec. 7 – Pearl Harbor Day
Dec. 21 – First Day of Winter

Dec. 25 – Christmas Day
Dec. 29 – Cakes for Morris View Nursing Home
Dec. 31 – New Year's Eve

Get well wishes to those of you who are ill, and
HAPPY BIRTHDAY to those of you celebrating this month with Ann Hawkins, Terri Ferris and Helen Miller..

God Bless,
Doris Bradley

Prov. 17:17 "A friend loves at all times."



Our **youth group** will meet from 7 to 8:30 p.m. on the following Sunday evenings, 12/5 and 12/19. All youth from 8th through 12th grade are warmly welcome. Josh Romine is our youth leader, assisted by Dawn Barhite.

Youth Group Mission Project: Youth Group to raise green to make it clean!

Overview of Project: More than 1 in 6 people in the world don't have access to safe drinking water. The Parsippany United Methodist Youth Group is trying to help. During the Fall of 2010 and the Spring of 2011, the Youth Group will lead a project to raise \$2000 to build wells in Kenya to provide clean water to an entire community. The Youth Group will be working with an organization called The Water Project whose goal is to provide clean water one village at a time to the 1 billion people around the world who don't have access to clean water.

Overview of The Water Project Organization: The Water Project is an organization who has a very simple mission: Provide Clean, Safe Drinking Water by 1) Matching donors to proven partners who are drilling fresh water wells and constructing other sustainable water projects, 2) Sending up to 100% of public donations to fund these efforts, ensuring your gifts provide clean water where you choose, 3) Showing every donor the specific impact of their gifts through photos, short stories and GPS map coordinates. In just a few short years, The Water Project has already completed over 200 projects and served over 100,000 people who prior to the wells being built, did not have access to clean water. Go to <http://thewaterproject.org/wells-for-kenya.php> to learn more about The Water Project.

How can you participate?--Support Fund Raisers The Youth Group will be leading several fund raisers in which all of the proceeds will go to this project. A few of the fund raisers are listed below:

- 1.) **December 17th - Movie Night in the Fellowship Hall and holiday gift wrapping.**
- 2.) February 6th - Annual super bowl sub sale
- 3.) Easter Chocolate Candy Sale
- 4.) Spring Car Wash

--Contributions

All donations large and small are welcomed and greatly appreciated. If you want to contribute, contact Josh Romine (jromines@gmail.com), Dawn Barhite (Lilgems4me@yahoo.com), or see Pastor Jeff.

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Pastor Jeff leads worship at **Troy Hills Nursing Center** on Reynolds Road on the third Thursday of every month at 10:30 a.m. Anyone who would like to share in this ministry on December 16th is invited to join him.

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Sunday Morning alert: We've all become dependent on all of our electronic devices. Please take note of the announcement in the Sunday bulletin about your cell phones. Please remember, as a courtesy to those worshipping with us on Sunday mornings, to mute or turn off your cell phones. A random ring tone is not nearly as cute as a baby's cry. Thanks for your help!

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Our church website has been revised and updated. If you haven't seen it lately, check it out at Parsippanyumc.com. At the website you will find a link to all of Pastor Jeff's sermons, as well as his occasionally bloggings.



Consider becoming a part of one or more of our Musical Groups here at church:

Bell Choir – rehearses Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. The Bell Choir has been shrinking over the last few years and we sure would like more people to join us! Speak to Tom Smith or Barb Bradley - or just show up on Thursday and see what happens!

Choir – rehearses Thursdays at 7:45 p.m. We always have an "open robe" for anyone who loves to sing. We sing in 4-part harmony, so if you've sung in your high school chorus or any other equivalent, you have a great start! Speak to any choir member or Barb Bradley if you're interested.

Kids Bell Choir – rehearses every Sunday after worship. All children and youth in 3rd grade and up (including junior and senior high school) are welcome. Directed by Aimee Letsch (973-585-7634).

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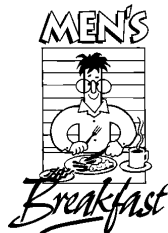


On the second Thursday of every other month our congregation provides dinner for the families at **Homeless Solutions**. Our next scheduled dinner is **Thursday, December 16th**. If you would like to take a turn in helping with this outreach, or if you would like to donate money towards the expenses, please speak to Laurie Wilken or Connie Wallace.

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Healing Prayer sessions are held every Wednesday morning from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in the prayer chapel. All are invited to come and be a part of this time of prayer -- for yourself or for others.

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A **small gathering of men** from our church meet together every Tuesday at 7:15 a.m. at the Empire Diner with Pastor Jeff for breakfast, conversation, and a concluding prayer. All men are welcome.

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The **UMW** is selling **Food Certificates to benefit the General Budget** for ShopRite and PathMark as an *ongoing Fund Raiser*. The church will receive 5% of all purchases (you buy \$100 of certificates, the church gets \$5). Certificates are available in \$5, \$10, \$20, \$25, \$50 and \$100 denominations. Please see Betty Polen at the beginning of Coffee Hour if you would like to purchase Food Certificates. Checks should be made payable to The United Methodist Women.

Thank you, The UMW



Anyone aware of a **Prayer Concern** is invited to contact Grace Agre at 539-3855 who will put the **Prayer Chain** into action. If Grace cannot be reached, please contact Pastor Jeff. If you would like to add your name to the people who receive the prayer chain, please speak to Betty Polen

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Parsippany Food Pantry - Wes Sitgreaves has called to our attention the ongoing need of the Emergency Food Pantry in Parsippany in these difficult economic times. There are more and more families turning to the food pantry for help. You can bring your donations of non-perishable food items to the church any Sunday. Wes Stigreaves takes the food over as the bin gets filled up. Supermarket gift cards are also welcome - buy them from Betty Polen and raise money for the church at the same time!!! This is a very easy way to give back to the less-fortunate in our own township.

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SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR DECEMBER

<u>Dec. 5th</u> Isaiah 11:1-10 Romans 15:4-13 Matthew 3:1-12	<u>Dec. 12th</u> Isaiah 35:1-10 James 5:7-10 Matthew 11:2-11	<u>Dec. 19th</u> Isaiah 7:10-16 Romans 1:1-7 Matthew 1:18-25	<u>Dec. 26th</u> Isaiah 63:7-9 Hebrews 2:10-18 Matthew 2:13-23
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2 nd Fred Davis	20 th Marissa Raier
3 rd Ann Hawkins	24 th Linda Winz
4 th Fred Coleman	24 th Deana Larsen
5 th Andrew Edwards	25 th Keith Sakelakos
8 th Tom Zibura	25 th Helen Miller
14 th Gloria Gounaud	26 th Jean Sakelakos
14 th Claudia Bartek	30 th Marian Steen
16 th Jessica Colletto	31 st Flora Dierbach
20 th Jennifer Savarin	31 st Kassie Dadian



Oh Holy Night

On September 25th we were pleased to have three persons profess their faith in Jesus and take the vows of membership in our church:

Sangeetha Gunaseelan is a homemaker who lives in Pine Brook with her husband Raj and her two sons, Santash, 15 (who likes basketball) and Eazhil, 6. She was born and raised in Salem, India. She enjoys shopping, cleaning her house, reading the newspaper and talking to her parents and siblings. Sangeetha has found the people of our church to be very friendly. Her advice to young people would be, always be honest.

Mariahna Suzan was born in Bangalore but grew up in the northern part of India with her mother, her maternal aunt, and her baby sister Sofia. Her parents were both in the military, and because of her father's frequent postings he was only able to visit once or twice a year.

When she was in senior high school, her Mom sent her back to Bangalore to take care of her Dad who had quit the army. She also attended college attaining a Bachelor's degree in business management, working as an intern in an advertising agency. Later she completed an MBA in Chennai and worked at a HSBC call center.

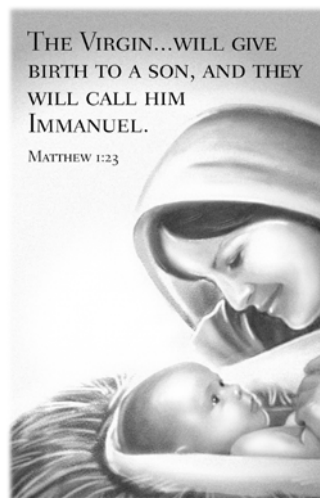
At an early age Mariahna had to learn to take care of her baby sister as well as her mom and herself, and in contrast to a lot of people her age she didn't have much opportunity to have fun. Nonetheless, she is happy, and is grateful that her parents made sure she had the opportunity and privilege to attend Sunday School and Church no matter where she lived. Her mother was Roman Catholic and her father was raised Hindu, but together they raised Mariahna to look to the Lord Jesus Christ in times of need and trouble.

When Maria was 23 her parents arranged for her to marry her husband Joshua Vedam in Bangalore. Together they came to live in the United States, first in Wisconsin, then Raleigh, NC before moving back to India in 2005 and 2006 where Mariahna worked as a computer teacher in a school. In November of 2006 God blessed Mariahna and Josh with their son Ian, and since then she has been a full-time mom.

Mariahna loves reading books, listening to music, cooking and sketching. She loves the fact that everybody is friendly at our church, the sermons are good, and there is Sunday School for her kid! Mariahna's advice to a young person would be that at those times when life can feel very tough, and you are lonely or you feel that the whole world is crashing down, just don't give up hope! Always look to the Lord Jesus; he is your best friend whom you can count on no matter what.

Carol Trezza was born in Elizabeth and grew up in Maplewood. In her adult years she has lived in West Orange before moving to Parsippany 19 years ago. She knows countless Parsippany residents from her work as the friendly counter person at Walgreen's (formally Drug Fair) pharmacy. She has three adult children: Gina and Matthew, who live with her, and her eldest daughter, Cara who lives in Flanders. Carol's grandson Nick, a 6th grader at Central Middle School also lives with her. Carol enjoys walking, rooting for Nick in his football games, and her two cats, Chunk and Suki.

She likes the warm and welcoming feeling feel of our church; she says it feels like she's been here forever. Her advice to young people would be, "Listen to your Mom and Dad; they probably know what they are talking about."



December 2010

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																											
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<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">12</p> <p style="text-align: center;">9:45 AM Finance</p> <p style="text-align: center;">10:30 AM Worship</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ad Council - after worship</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">13</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">14</p> <p style="text-align: center;">7:00 AM Men's Prayer Breakfast</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">15</p> <p style="text-align: center;">10:30 AM Healing Prayer</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">16</p> <p style="text-align: center;">7:00 PM Bell Choir</p> <p style="text-align: center;">7:45 PM Adult Choir</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Homeless Solutions</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">17</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">18</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pageant Rehearsal</p>																																																																																											
<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">19</p> <p style="text-align: center;">10:30 AM Worship</p> <p style="text-align: center;">7:30 PM UMYF</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Christmas Pageant and Cantata</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">20</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">21</p> <p style="text-align: center;">7:00 AM Men's Prayer Breakfast</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">22</p> <p style="text-align: center;">10:30 AM Healing Prayer</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">23</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">24</p> <p style="text-align: center;">7:00 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Service</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">25</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>																																																																																											
<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">26</p> <p style="text-align: center;">10:30 AM Worship</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">27</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">28</p> <p style="text-align: center;">7:00 AM Men's Prayer Breakfast</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">29</p> <p style="text-align: center;">10:30 AM Healing Prayer</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">30</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">31</p> <p style="text-align: center;">New Year's Eve</p>																																																																																												