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United Methodist Church of Parsippany

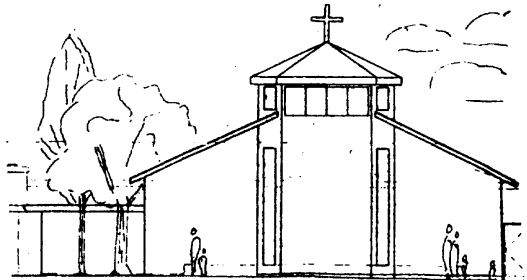
903 So. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054 (973) 887-4657

<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"



FEBRUARY, 2011



A sermon preached on Epiphany Sunday, January 2, 2011 based upon Matthew 2:1-12, entitled "The Resolutions of Wise Men."

For me, the interesting question regarding those magi – the wise men — is this: *How does a person decide to make a journey such as the one they made?* I mean, it certainly wasn't the usual path to choose — to set off on such a long and arduous journey into the unknown. It involved extraordinary sacrifice, enduring hardships, taking themselves out of the familiar and comfortable, and exposing themselves to countless risks.

Presumably they weren't especially young. To be referred to as "wise" requires you've lived a few years to attain your wisdom. And if you're not young, you know the way age diminishes one's physical energies, making the decision to embark on such a demanding journey all the more remarkable. What would it take to do such a thing?

They studied the stars and astrology. We might say, *well, their study led them to conclude that this is what they should do.* But there's a problem here. When it comes to setting forth on a course that requires a commitment of every part of one's being, a mere "should" — or an "ought" — just won't cut it. It's hard enough to get yourself out of bed on the morning on your day off to take that walk you "should" take because your doctor said you "ought" to lose a few pounds, especially when it's cold and wet outside and your bed feels so warm and comfy.

It wasn't a matter of one day the magi held a meeting where they weighed the pros and the cons for making the journey, and concluded that the pros outweighed the cons. Their motivation had to come from a deeper place than merely the conclusion of their rational brains — not when staying home would have been so much easier.

They read books — a rarity in those days. They had dexterity with words, but it wasn't so much words as an image that caught their attention: a strange, bright star arising in the night sky that called to something deep within — like a dream, that you can't let go of after you wake up.

It would have been pretty tough for the magi to put into words why they were setting off, at least in a way that would convince others that it made any sense. Imagine the response of others: How do you know this isn't just a wild good chase? Think of all the dangers awaiting you once you leave home!

But something arose within their souls that was expressed in the star arising in the sky, and provided what was needed to get these middle-aged men to set off in a completely new direction, on a quest.

My son Andrew was home for Christmas from graduate school in Denver where he's studying in a MFA program. He was telling me about some fascinating stuff he's been studying about the left and right hemispheres of the brain. It is a gross simplification, but the left hemisphere is the part of the brain that is associated with the rational, logical, sequential capacities of thought. It is where our capacity to use language is based, through which we impose order on the confusion of reality.

The right hemisphere, in contrast is associated with imagination, creativity and emotion. The thoughts that arise in this section of the brain often arise as images rather than words. There is a tendency for people to be dominant in one side over the other. Men tend to live more out of their left brain than women do. In general, however, since the age of enlightenment, where the kind of organized thought required for scientific inquiry began, most of us have been left brain dominant.

These distinctions are overly simplistic. For instance, we may think of scientists as being strictly left brain people. But the best scientists – like the wise men before them — blaze new trails by thinking “outside the box” to come up with new theories that advance our understanding of reality, and inevitably this kind of thinking involves the right side of the brain. They tell stories of insights that came to them in dreams — images that arose for them seemingly spontaneously that provided a way of conceiving reality that was beyond the capacity of the left brain to conceive.

God made us with two parts to our brain, presumably with the intention that we would put them both to use. *To be truly whole* involves having both sides fully engaged, but in truth, more often than not we don't live that way.

Clearly, the passion and insight that made it possible for the magi to decide to set off on their great journey arose from the right brain.

I am reminded of the parables of Jesus. The realities that Jesus was pointing to were, in a certain sense, beyond the capacity of the right brain to grasp. That's why Jesus spoke indirectly about these realities through the images of his parables.

A number of times he spoke about seeds. Using this image, when it comes to charting the path forward in our lives, we would do well to look for the seeds that are buried within our souls. Locate the seed, and the direction begins to become clear.

These words of Jesus strike me as a commentary on the story of the Magi:

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.” (Matt. 13:44-46)

In the course of searching the sky, the magi caught a glimpse of the treasure buried in the field – the pearl of great value – and having caught that glimpse, they are empowered to sacrifice all to pursue it.

The language used to describe the holy spirit also provides a way to think about what it takes to set forth on a journey like the magi. Jesus said to Nicodemus, *“The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”* (John 3:8) The wind is mysterious; we can't control, or even see it. But if you take the time to discern which way the wind is blowing and get in line with it, wonderful things become possible. In contrast, if you try moving against the wind, you will soon give up.

On Pentecost, when the holy spirit was given to the first church, the prophet Joel is quoted where it speaks of God pouring out his spirit leading to young men seeing visions and old men dreaming dreams. (Acts 2:17) Again, it would seem to be the right brain that is engaged when a such a life-giving new beginning occurs.

I am also reminded of the people of whom Jesus spoke glowingly regarding their “faith.” They were all grasped by a vision of wholeness that gets their whole being in motion. To give but one example, consider the four friends who bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus for healing. Finding his house so crowded they can't get in the door, they think outside the box, refusing to give up. They climb up on the roof of Jesus' house, tear open a hole, and lower their friend down. Jesus is much impressed by their “faith” — the vision that has taken a hold of them to lead them to do something which others would have found purely irrational.

So yesterday was New Year's Day. It is traditional for people to make resolutions regarding new courses they've decided they will chart in their lives moving forward. Many of us long ago gave up this practice, because each year we found ourselves making resolutions that we quickly discovered we didn't have the will to carry out.

Why was this? Well, most likely we came up with our resolutions with our left brains. We thought about what we “ought” to do, or “should” do, for instance, eat better, lose weight, get exercise. But as I said earlier, “oughts” and “shoulds” don't come from a deep enough place to provide the motivation and energy necessary to truly change the course of our lives.

Resolutions, if they are to have any hope of being carried out, have to arise from a much deeper place.

And so the best way to make a new year's resolution is to begin by locating the seeds God has buried within us... of catching a glimpse of what the kingdom of heaven would mean embodied in our own lives... of determining which way the wind is blowing in our lives and letting the wind carry us.

So I invite you to give yourself permission to dream dreams. Give your imagination free reign. Ask yourself, what have I dreamed of doing, or once dreamed of doing, but haven't given myself permission to do so recently, because it didn't seem practical? I am reluctant to name particular possibilities, because each of us is unique, and the realm of possibilities of what the new journey might mean for us is infinitely broad.

If you think you're too old – that you can't teach an old dog new tricks – consider those old wise men.

If we want to find out what it is God wants us to do with our lives, a good place to begin is with our deepest longings. Not the superficial longings – *I want a donut, or I want a fast car* – but the deepest, most exquisite longings of our hearts. God put these longings there. We would do well to pay attention to them.

We imagine God to be the harsh taskmaster – the God of the *oughts* and the *shoulds* before which we can never quite measure up. What if God's greatest desire was to see us live out our deepest longings?

If you find yourself hard pressed to come up with the dreams and longings that are buried deep within you, perhaps a place to begin is to simply pray to God to reveal some signs of what these might be.

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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In January we will begin a new tradition in our worship. Each Sunday, a different member of our church family will give a 1 – 2 minute talk regarding some aspect of our church's life for which he or she is grateful. We will be looking for volunteers to do take their turn. If you are interested please speak to Pastor Jeff or our lay leader, Bob Keller. Here is the first of our moments....

A Moment of Gratitude to God for the Gift of Our Church by Betty Polen

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church said "the world is my parish." Whenever there is a disaster: a tsunami, hurricane like Katrina, earthquake like in Haiti, anywhere in the world, people give through various charities like the Red Cross and others. Over the years, I have learned that invariably, UMCOR, that is the United Methodist Committee on Relief, is the first organization on the scene. They bring medical supplies and shoes among other necessities. The reason that they can act so quickly is that through the giving of local United Methodist Churches, like ours, UMCOR is always instantly ready to go. Any donated funds go to the disaster- Nothing goes for administrative costs. (*Some relief organizations use 62% or more of donated funds for administrative costs.*) No church could do all this alone, but the 35,000 United Methodist Churches in the US can. When I first learned this it made me feel really good to be a part of the nationwide and worldwide United Methodist Church. Through your giving we have been able to do so much, perhaps we can do even more.

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Pastor Jeff will appear on the Cable Television Program "**Mountain Views**" two times: Saturday, January 29th and Saturday, February 12th at 5:30 p.m. Pastor Jeff preaches a sermon and then discusses the sermon with the moderator. On Cablevision of Morris the show is found on channel 20.

Pastor Jeff is holding a **day time men's book reading group** meeting on Fridays at 1 p.m. at the home of Al Booth. The group meets for for 90 minutes discussing the book "Adam's Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation" by Richard Rohr. Any man who is available during the day if invited to join us.

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United Methodist
Women

Looking back...No January meeting.. All women, non-members and friends – DO join us in March. The UMW is a group of women expanding concepts of missions through participation in the global ministries of the church. We read the UMW Purpose at every meeting. United Methodist Women are known for mission work in the world. Local mission is also very important to us.

No February Meeting

Feb. 2 – Groundhog Day
Feb. 14 – Valentine's Day

Feb. 21 – President's Day

Get well wishes to those of you who are ill, and
HAPPY BIRTHDAY to those of you celebrating this month with Denise White and Grace Agre.
God Bless,
Doris Bradley

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

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Josh Romine is our youth leader, assisted by Dawn Barhite.

YOUTH GROUP SUB SALE

The youth group is selling sub sandwiches for Super Bowl Sunday again this year. All revenue from the sale this year will go to the youth group's water project for Kenya. The subs are \$7.50 each with chips optional for \$0.50 per bag. If you are interested in buying, speak with any of the youth group members to fill out an order form. Subs will be available to pick Sunday February 6th after the church service in the fellowship hall.

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.

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.



COTTON PATCH GOSPEL: Rediscovering the Good News of Our Faith - A 6 Week Small Group Experience

HAVE YOU EVER WISHED that the familiar stories of our faith would jump off the pages of the Bible and come to life right before your eyes? If so, "Cotton Patch Gospel," may be just what you've been waiting for. This award winning musical drama retells the gospel story of Jesus with extraordinary vibrancy, humor, tenderness, and joy.

During the season of Lent, David Turner will lead 6 small group gatherings to watch, enjoy, and discuss the Cotton Patch Gospel movie. You are invited to join us. **Beginning on March 16th**, we will meet in the sanctuary on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30. The group size will be limited to 15 members. If you have questions or want to sign up, please speak to David at church. Or contact him by phone (973-759-7580) or e-mail at psalter103@aol.com.

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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 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.

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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, February 10th**. 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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Thanks to Darryl Sokolowski, copies of our production of Pastor Jeff's Christmas Play, "This Subway is Bound for Glory" are available in the church office.



Mark your calendars: A **Church Dance** for all ages will be held on **Saturday, March 5th at 7:30 p.m.** with the band the "Outsiders" who feature music from the 50s, 60s and 70s.

We are hosting a concert by the **Watoto Children's Choir** from Uganda on **Tuesday, March 22nd at 7:30 p.m.** You can see videos of their wonderful music of praise on You Tube. If you would like to help with the organization of the event, please speak to Bob Keller. The choir consists of 31 people; we are looking for homes to host 3-4 children and a chaperone on the night of the 22nd. If you can are interested in hosting, please speak to Amy Gripp.

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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!

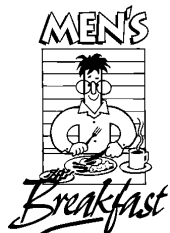
Choir – rehearses Thursdays at 7:45 p.m. We always have an "open robe" for anyone who loves to sing. We sing in 4-part harmony, so if you've sung in your high school chorus or any other equivalent, you have a great start! Speak to any choir member or Barb Bradley if you're interested.

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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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 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 FEBRUARY

Feb. 6th

Isaiah 58:1-9a
1 Corinth. 2:1-12
Matthew 5:13-20

Feb. 13th

Deuteronomy 30:15-20
1 Corinth. 3:1-9
Matthew 5:21-37

Feb. 20th

Leviticus 19:1-2,9-18
1 Corinth. 3:10-11,16-23
Matthew 5:38-48

Feb. 27th

Isaiah 49:8-16a
1 Corinth. 4:1-5
Matthew 6:24-34



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

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|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 2 nd | Mia Savarin | 11 th | Valia Hawkins |
| 3 rd | Denise White | 11 th | Julianne Karr |
| 3 rd | Justin Cogan | 11 th | Ryan Wink |
| 4 th | Susan Valcoff | 19 th | Charlotte Romeo |
| 5 th | Barbara Munnelly | 22 nd | Elizabeth Vance |
| 7 th | Charlotte Vance | 24 th | Al Booth |
| 8 th | Andrew Schnetzer | 24 th | Tracy Krisa Kempinski |
| 10 th | Mark Dierbach | 25 th | Sarah Edwards |
| 10 th | TJ Cogan | 25 th | Keith Hawkins, Jr. |
| | | 28 th | Grace Agre |

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 16th Mariahna Suzan & Joshua Vedam
19th June & Russ Schnetzer

Our Skylands District Day of Learning will be held on Saturday, February 19th at the Newton UMC at 111 Ryerson Avenue from 9 to 3:30 p.m. The following workshops will be offered:

Location: First UMC of Newton, 111 Ryerson Avenue, Newton, NJ 07860

Time: 9:00 am—3:30 pm

#1. Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee. #2. Roadmap to Renewal: Rediscovering the Church's Mission. #3. Unpack Your Stewardship Toolkit. #4. The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry. #5. A Taste of Camp. (For children from Kindergarten to 6th Grade) #6. Growing a Healthy Church with Natural Church Development. #7. Engaging Ministry with the Poor. #8. Board of Trustees. #9. —Continuing the Conversation. This workshop will teach you how to use resources like Adam Hamilton's Christianity and World Religions to learn about and be in dialogue with our neighbors of other faith traditions. Join us as we study other religions from a Christian perspective and give you tools to do studies like this in your local church. #10. CF&A: Things You Need to Know. (For Treasurers, Finance Chairs, and Trustees) #11. Year End Statistical Report Training. #12. Introduction to Planned Giving – How to Benefit Yourself and Your Church.



February 2011

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																																																
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