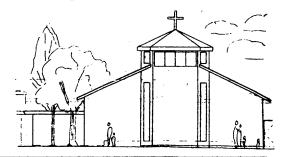
HILLTOPPER

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"



APRIL 2012

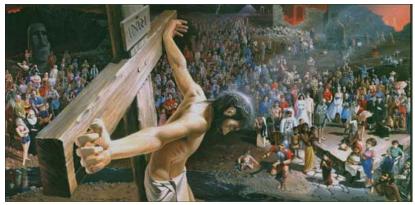
The Passion Story of Jesus

as recorded in chapters 26 and 27 of Matthew's Gospel. Join us in the fellowship hall as we act out the defining story of our faith, using music, lighting and screen projections. Experience anew the astonishing power of Jesus' death and his divine, suffering love.

Maundy Thursday, April 5th at 7:30 p.m.

This performance will include Holy Communion, as well as anthems by the adult choir and the children's bell choir.

Good Friday, April 6th at 7:30 p.m.



The cast includes Betsy Adams, Garrett Belanus, Gail Booth, Mark Chauhan, Earl Christopherson, Kayla Christopherson, Bobby Edwards, Jeff Edwards, Sarah Edwards, Kate Eiring, Jennifer Eng, Terry Germann, Norma Owens, Jolie Rajasekaran, Eric Roelofs, Garin Roelofs, Jean Sakelakos, Kaitlyn Sklow, Julia Sklow, Mariahna Suzan and Richard Witter, Jr.



Palm Sunday, April 1st – Featuring the Adult Bell Choir

Maundy Thursday, April 5th, 7:30 p.m. "The Passion Story of Jesus" along with a service of Holy Communion. The Choir and the Children's Bell Choir will perform.

Good Friday, April 6th, 1 p.m. Cross Walk beginning with a service St. Gregory's Episcopal Church, 480 S. Beverwyk Road. We will process with the cross to our sanctuary, concluding with a brief worship service.

Good Friday, April 6th, 7:30 p.m. "The Passion Story of Jesus"

Easter Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m. The Youth of our church will put on an Easter Egg Hunt for our children following worship.





EASTER FLOWERS - On April 8 we will be celebrating Easter. If you would like to purchase flowers for the altar that morning, please place your order with Connie Keller 973-568-5404 or 973-887-4384 no later than March 28. Prices are as follows:

Azaleas (6" pot) \$7.00 Azaleas (8" pot) \$13.00 Tulips, Hyacinths, Daffodils (\$7.00 each) Lilly (\$10.00)

You can also dedicate your flower in honor of someone special, or in memory of someone. Dedications will be published in the Easter Sunday bulletin.





COME CELEBRATE OUR NEW KITCHEN

The first dinner to be cooked in our newly remodeled kitchen has been scheduled for Saturday, April 28 We're very excited and hope you will plan to attend. Here are the details:

THE BEST ROAST BEEF DINNER IN TOWN SATURDAY, April 28, 2012
4-7 pm

Tickets for the dinner will be available at the door: \$11.00 for adults \$9.00 for seniors (62+) \$5.00 children (6-12 yrs)

Visit the UMW's Mini Bazaar from 3-7 pm, it will be featuring Gently Used Jewelry, small theme baskets, and a garage sale room.

Help is needed for the dinner and bazaar – please speak to Connie Keller or Doris Bradley if you can lend a hand.



A sermon preached on March 4, 2012, based upon Mark 8:31 – 38, entitled "The Way of Jesus."

A rather unremarkable comment made to me by another pastor nearly 30 years ago has stayed with me through the years. The pastor was maybe fifteen years older than I was, and he had been kind to me, offering himself as something of a mentor to me, but I found his comment troubling. Like I did, he served a

two point charge – that is, he had two churches he served at the same time. He was happy with the relationship he had with the larger church, the one at which he lived in town. There were more professional people in

his congregation, and he felt they treated him with the sort of

respect he felt he deserved.

But the smaller

church that was out in the country was more troublesome to him. Apparently the little country church struggled to pay its bills, and to do so, they held a dinner each month.

He considered these dinners to be a waste of his time. The comment he made with obvious anger in his voice was this: "They want me to stand

around at these dinners and serve coffee. I didn't go to four years of college and three years of seminary just to stand around serving coffee."

He saw their expectation as being demeaning to him, expressing a lack of appreciation and respect on the part of his parishioners for his status as a professional and the knowledge he had worked so hard to achieve.

From the perspective of the world, he certainly had a point. I mean, you put in all that time in school precisely so you won't have to do menial work to make a living, right? Nobody asks lawyers or doctors to serve coffee, right?

The problem, of course, is this peculiar vocation we'd chosen. Yes we had spent all those years in higher education, but ultimately the purpose of all that education was to get a clearer handle on Jesus the Messiah. His way was that of a servant — somebody who washes feet, and, if necessary, serves coffee.

Now I have my own forms of arrogance and pride to grapple with – just ask my family — and usually it's easier to see such things in others than in oneself. Nonetheless, way back then it seemed clear to me that my colleague's comment was promoting a direction in ministry I shouldn't try to follow.

It is in this spirit that I have always made it a point in worship when I'm not actually leading worship to sit with the rest of the congregation in the pews — and especially not to sit in one of those thrown-like chairs you find on altars. In most churches, the pastor or priest sits on the altar on an elevated plane, suggesting that he or she is on some higher plane of existence.

But the truth is, we're all in this together.

So accustomed to the way of the world, the disciples found it hard to grasp the way Jesus was leading them in. In the passage immediately before this morning's Gospel lesson, Peter has come up with the "right" answer when Jesus asked them, "who do you say that I am?"

He'd answered, "You're the messiah." It was the right answer, but strangely, Jesus tells them to tell no one. The world's idea of the messiah was different from the kind of messiah that Jesus was called to be. The disciples assumed along with every body else that the messiah would come with power and glory to set everything straight, barking a lot of others, vanquishing his enemies.

As the conversation continued, however Jesus starts talking about how at the center of his mission as the messiah is the trip he must make to Jerusalem where he will suffer and die at the hands of the religious authorities.

Peter tries to set Jesus straight. He takes Jesus aside and "rebukes" him, telling Jesus he doesn't have to suffer and die. And then Jesus explodes. He rebukes Peter in the presence of the other disciples, calling him nothing less than Satan, the tempter. He says Peter has his mind on way of people, not God.

The way of people is to rise above other humans, to accumulate more status or money or power or recognition than the next guy. It's to try and rise above the human condition, to be special -- not like others.

But God's way involves descending into the depths. If we're paying attention, we see this continually in the Gospels. Jesus is born at the bottom of social status — into a homeless family fleeing from violence. At John's baptism, Jesus enters the waters as if he were just another slob on the bus trying to get home. (Which, if you remember, is the precise moment that God says to him, "You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." God gives the stamp of approval in regard to the direction Jesus is taking.)

The Spirit led Jesus out into the wilderness so he could experience what it is to be hungry and tempted, just like every other human being. And now he tells the disciples that he will suffer being misunderstood and abandoned and even death itself, just like every other human being experiences.

But Peter wants his messiah to stay up on a pedestal. "You're above all this, Jesus. Your God's special child." You don't serve coffee at church dinners.

"No," says Jesus. "You're trying to pass off the human way as God's way." But God's way is to enter the muck with the rest of us.

Peter tries talking Jesus out of the cross because he cares about Jesus. But there's more to it than that. Peter wants to be exempted from all that painful stuff as well. And it's not hard to see that if the messiah he is following is headed to suffering and death, his followers will be headed there as well.

Jesus goes on to spell it out: "If you want to follow me," he says, "you have to pick up your cross and follow me."

Notice this: The strongest rebuke that Jesus ever gave to an individual human being – calling that person no less than "Satan" – is given to the man who is destined to become the first pope – the first clergy person. The point seems clear: the Church will always be tempted to head the wrong way.

In Mark's Gospel there will be two more times when Jesus will tell his disciples that he must suffer and die. On both occasions, the disciples clearly don't get it -- or don't want to get it. After the second time, the disciples promptly engage in an argument regarding which of them was the greatest – which of them had ascended to the highest status. In an attempt to get them to understand what he's talking about, Jesus places a little child in the middle of them. In those days, children were at the absolute low end of the social ladder. Welcome a child like this, he said, and you're welcoming me.

The third time Jesus talked about his suffering and death, James and John follow it up by asking for special status in the kingdom they're still expecting Jesus will establish when they get to Jerusalem. But the way of Jesus isn't the way of the world, and it can take a life time to get that.

In Mark's day, taking up your cross and following Jesus could easily have meant literally getting nailed to a cross just like Jesus. Emperor Nero was killing all the Christians he could find. There's a Christian in Iran who has been sentenced to death for his faith. Thankfully, that's not likely to happen to any of us.

What, then does the way of the cross look like for us?

Well first of all, it means living in solidarity with every other single person on the planet. It means striving to rid ourselves of the patronizing tones that so easily can creep into our language. We are no better than anybody else. When we see someone who has fallen, we resist the seduction of the pride that tells us we didn't similarly fall because we're better than they are. Instead, we remind ourselves, "There but for the grace of God go I."

It means a willingness to open our hearts to compassion. To share in, and feel the pain others experiences.

It means paying attention. The most basic form of giving love to another is them our attention. If you love someone, you will seek to understand what life feels like for them.

Part of the problem with the pastor's refusal to serve coffee was that is that it is in such settings that we can find out what life feels like for the people we are called to love.

You may have heard this story: The professor at a medical school surprised her students with the final question they found on their exam. The question was this: What is the name of the woman who cleans the bathrooms we use in this building?

At first the students thought this was a joke. But the professor was quite serious. All of them could not have helped but to noticed this woman who cleaned up their messes. She was there everyday in their building. Had they taken the time to, at the very least, learn her name?

This was a particularly powerful lesson for students making their way to the prestige that comes from being called doctor. There is a special kind of arrogance that can come to doctors - MDs, or "Medical Deities" as the letters sometimes are said to refer, who have risen high above the people they would condescend to help, never to be questioned or second quessed.

Recently a politician criticized President Obama because he issued an apology to the Moslem world after some American soldiers had thoughtlessly destroyed some Korans. another interview the same politician - very public about his Christianity - called into question the Christian faith of Obama. This is dangerous water for any Christian to be treading. Only God can make these judgments, and to set ourselves up as the judge of what's in the heart of another is to imagine ourselves to be lifted up high above others.

Putting his two comments together, this politician gave the impression that being Christian means you don't need to apologize, especially to Moslems.

Walking the cross walk means walking humbly — apologizing when necessary, and recognizing our own sins before we condemn the sins of others. It means caring enough about other people - all other people - to pay attention to what matters to them. For instance, to recognize that if you burn their holy book you will be offending them deeply.

Many American soldiers have gone out of their way to truly be in Iraq and Afghanistan with a desire to pay attention to the people who live in these lands, and sensitively help build a lasting peace. These soldiers have been servants following in Jesus' way.

But the soldiers who burned the Korans hadn't bothered to pay attention. If they had, they would have known how precious the Koran is to Moslems, and following the golden rule, wouldn't have so thoughtlessly burned the Korans.

In a few moments we will be celebrating Holy Communion. In doing so, we remember the act of self-sacrificial love upon we are all called to aspire to in our lives.

In order to participate in Holy Communion, it is not necessary to have our beliefs all neat and tidy. Hardly. It is, however, difficult to enter into the spirit of holy communion if we don't come with a spirit of humility and solidarity with all the other poor slobs on the bus of life.

Another distressing news item: a priest in Maryland refused to serve communion to a grieving woman at her own mother's funeral, because the woman had lived with another woman for 20 years in a committed Lesbian love relationship.

That priest just didn't get it. When we share the Lord's Supper, we remember that we're all in this thing called human life together. That all of us are vulnerable, and in need. We come as beggars side by side with other beggars to receive the life-giving bread we all need.

In the kindness of Jesus, Pastor Jeff

NURSING HOME MINISTRY 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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This guy is awesome. Have you put your awesome moments up on the Board of Awesome?

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Looking back...two women from Methodist Homes of NJ presented a program of interesting information about residing at one of their facilities. You are invited to visit one, be shown around and ask questions.

Join us, and bring a friend....

Wed, April 11th - 6:30 p.m.

Ladies' Night Out

At Annabella's – Smith Road, Parsippany RSVP to Karen Wilk (973-386-9889) or Doris Bradley (973-887-3219) Come and Enjoy!

April 1 – Palm Sunday/ April Fool's Day April 8 – Easter Sunday

April 6 – Good Friday April 28 – Roast Beef Dinner/UMW Mini Bazaar

Get well wishes to those of you who are ill, and

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to those of you celebrating this month with Treyreon Hillier (Cherokee Heritage, our CCF Boy), Gail Booth and Grace Schlosshauer.

God Bless, Doris Bradley

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

Something New: Our church calendar is now available on the church's website.

If you are planning an event and need to book the church or a particular room, please check the calendar on the website, then call Gail Booth or Wes Sitgreaves to confirm availability and reserve your time. (Fred Coleman will also have a hard copy of the calendar here at the church that you can also check for date availability.)

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We are working on a major overhaul of our website, making it very user-friendly, and an opportunity both for people outside our church to find out about us, as well as serving as a communications took within the life of the church. Stay tuned!



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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 day time men's discussion group with Pastor Jeff is meeting on Fridays at 1 p.m. at the church. We listen to short audio tapes and discuss what we hear during the 90 minute sessions. Any men available in the day time are invited to join us.

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Wilken or Connie Wallace.

On the second Thursday of every other month our congregation provides dinner for the families at **Homeless Solutions**. Our next scheduled dinner is **Thursday, April 12**th. 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

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Anyone who is interested in serving from time to time as a *liturgist* in the Sunday worship service is invited to speak to Pastor Jeff.

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News Alert!!! The Watoto Children's Choir from Uganda have been scheduled for an appearance at our church on Tuesday, November 7th at 7:30 p.m. We will again be looking for host families.



FLOWERS FOR THE ALTAR ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS - If

you want to remember or honor a special occasion in your life by putting flowers on the altar, please get in touch with Connie Keller. Flower arrangements are currently being purchased at Shop Rite for varying costs depending on what you want. You are certainly welcome at any time to place flowers on the altar. If you want an announcement in the bulletin, please call Connie

Keller or send her an email with the dedication. Contact information: Connie's cell: 973-568-5404: home: 973-887-4384: email: connie@mhmlender.com

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The *UMW* is selling *Food Gift Cards to benefit the General Budget* for ShopRite as an ongoing Fund Raiser. The church will receive 5% of all purchases (you buy \$100 of gift cards, the church gets \$5). Gift Cards 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 ShopRite Gift Cards. Checks should be made payable to The United Methodist Women.

Thank you, The UMW

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

Bell Choir – rehearses Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. If you are interested in joining us, please speak to Barb Bradley or Aimee Letsch - 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-

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SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR APRIL

April 1
Mark 11:1-11
Psalm 118:1-2,19-29
Mark 14:1-15

April 8
Acts 10:34-43
1 Corinth 15:1-1
John 20:1-18

April 15
Acts 4:32-35
1 John 1:1-2:2
John 20:19-31

April 22 Acts 3:12-19 1 John 3:1-7 Luke 24:36b-48

April 29 Acts 4:5-12 1 John 3:16-24 John 10:11-18



2 nd	Troov Pooth	16 th	Melissa Tribuna
_	Tracy Booth		
7 th	Charley Bruxgulis	17 th	Gail Booth
8 th	Gail Lingerman	18 th	John Sedlak
8 th	Annabelle Vance	20 th	Ruth Seaman
12 th	Steven Chun	23 rd	Bob Krisa
12 th	Kylie Morgan	23 rd	Bob Vance
13 th	Jon Keller	24 th	George Haddad
13 th	Eddie Abbott	26 th	Kathy Andersen
14 th	Betty Davis	27 th	Gina Trezza
14 th	Art Sakelakos	28 th	Grace Schlosshauer
15 th	Esther Chun	29 th	Debbie Gantert

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

13th Lynn & Bob Barbarite



Moment of Gratitude – Glen Owens

The first time I had the privilege to attend the Parsippany United Methodist Church was on October 31st, 2010. Although I'm a recent member it feels like I've been here much longer. I attribute this to the many meaningful discussions and good times I've already had here.

I've lived my entire life in Wayne, NJ and several years ago I had the good fortune of meeting Rebecca and Drew Morrison at a swimming and barbeque area. My wife Norma and I immediately "hit it off" with them. Drew offered me some steak and shrimp and was banging away on the conga drum as Norma and Rebecca danced around. We

had a blast!

Drew and Rebecca knew I was going through some personal difficulties at the time and they always gave Norma and me good advice. I was really surprised how compassionate and understanding they were and not judgmental or critical. They would often speak to me about the church and the times they spent here. They would tell Norma and I how great the sermons are, as well as how the people were so nice. They also raved about the music, the plays and special events.

They often invited me in a polite way to go with them to church. They never were pushy about it. I'd had very little interest in religion, and at that time my religious beliefs hovered between being an agnostic and atheist. I was brought up never attending church and religion was never discussed in my family. Looking back I never truly understood what church was about and I was reluctant to go to one because I didn't feel like it was appropriate based on my beliefs.

One Sunday, after getting in a major feud with my family, I was feeling down, lost, and without any purpose. For some reason I thought of how Rebecca had told me I was always welcome at her church. I didn't like about myself, and even though I didn't feel worthy I figured why not see what this church is all about? If I don't like it I just won't come back. So I called up Rebecca and she rushed right over to give me a ride here.

That was one of the smartest things I had done in a while -- right up there with marrying my wife and becoming friends with Rebecca and Drew. Attending this church has changed my life dramatically for the better. As we all know the people here are wonderful. I've thoroughly enjoyed the Sunday Worship Service and activities like Friday Men's Group, David's small groups ("A Time for God" and the summer movie nights), the Watoto Choir, and the Christmas play, "CulDeSac."

I've received a wealth of information about spiritual matters, and learned about what really matters in life. I love the deep philosophical discussions I have with the many knowledgeable and intelligent people I've met here. Before I came, I thought I would feel guilty and bitter about not being perfect, but I don't here. I get so much out of church. I certainly have room for improvement, and with the right attitude and energy channeled in the proper direction I can become the better person that I want to be, thanks to this church and the Lord's guidance. Now I have something to look forward to every week and hopefully for many years to come.

April 2012
United Methodist Church of Parsippany

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
/ Worship 10:30AM	2	7:15 AM Men's Breakfast	4 10:30 AM Healing Prayer	7:30 PM Maundy Thursday - The Passion Story of Jesus	6 1:00 PM Good Friday Cross Walk 7:30 PM The Passion Story of Jesus	7
8 Easter Egg Hunt After Worship Worship 10:30AM	9	10 7:15 AM Men's Breakfast	10:30 AM Healing Prayer 6:00 PM UMW Ladies' Night Out	7:00 PM Bell Choir 7:45 PM Adult Choir	13 1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group	14
15 Worship 10:30AM	16	17 7:15 AM Men's Breakfast	18 10:30 AM Healing Prayer	7:00 PM Bell Choir 7:45 PM Adult Choir	20 1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group	21
22 Worship 10:30AM	23	24 7:15 AM Men's Breakfast	25 10:30 AM Healing Prayer	7:00 PM Bell Choir 7:45 PM Adult Choir	27 1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group	28 3:00 PM UMW Mini Bazaar Roast Beef Dinner 4-7
29 Worship 10:30AM	30		S M T W T 4 5 6 7 8 11 12 13 14 15 18 19 20 21 22 25 26 27 28 29	2 3 9 10 6 7 16 17 13 14 23 24 20 21	May 2012 T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 8 9 10 11 12 15 16 17 18 19 22 23 24 25 26 29 30 31	