

# HILLTOPPER

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

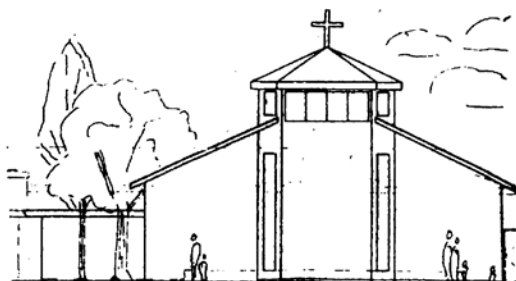
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*Sunday Worship Celebration: 10:30 a.m.*

*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"*



## SEPTEMBER 2012



**A sermon preached by Pastor Jeff on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012 based upon John 6:24-35 entitled "The Illusion We Live By."**

You might have thought Jesus would be pleased. The people can't seem to get enough of him. But Jesus almost seems like he's trying to get away. He heads out to the far side of the Sea of Galilee, and this huge crowd of people follow him there. Out in the middle of nowhere, the people don't have anything to eat, so Jesus perform whereby he fed 5000 people with no more food than one wee little lad offered up. At that point, the people get it in their heads to make Jesus their king, but Jesus gives them the slip, going up to the top of a mountain to be alone while he sends his disciples ahead on him in the boat to cross back over the Sea of Galilee. In the middle of the night, Jesus

walks across the sea to his disciples on the water. Now I know that this miracle probably has all kinds of profound meanings, but it reads as though it pulls this trick so as to make his getaway unseen by the crowd.

When the huge crowd of people receive word that Jesus has been spotted back on the other side of the lake, they too make the trip in order to find him, which brings us to the conversation we heard in our Gospel lesson.

The arrival of the adoring crowds doesn't seem to please Jesus. He says to them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because **you ate your fill** of the loaves." The larger meaning of the miracle Jesus had performed feeding 5000 people was to reveal the presence of God. What impressed the people though that their bellies had been empty, grumbling for food, and Jesus had done something that had taken away the grumbling and filled their bellies.

The full feeling didn't last, of course. The next day their bellies were empty again, grumbling once more for food. So their thought was, "If we can just keep Jesus close at hand, he can keep filling up our bellies. Then we'll have it made."

Now feeding hungry people is no small thing. It's a good thing – something Jesus commands us to do. Being hungry is a serious hardship. And for the folks who were trying so hard to get to Jesus, going hungry was a real possibility – much more so than it is for pretty much all of us sitting here today. (The same can be said for the possibility of not having access to clean drinking water, which calls to mind another story in John's Gospel: the one where the woman at the well gets excited about the possibility that Jesus might make it a whole lot easier for her to get water to drink.)

So we can't criticize them for being pretty impressed by the miracle. But the problem is that they are under the illusion that if they could only get a hold of what Jesus seems capable of providing them with – that is, a reliable source by which they could fill their bellies every day without all the work and struggle that filling their bellies typically meant, well, they'd have it made! They'd be perfectly content – not a care in the world.

But you and I, and most everybody else in America who isn't living on the streets – we are the living proof that having the problem solved of getting our bellies full every day is no guarantee that we will be content. If the people who were pursuing Jesus could have traveled in a time machine to see how easy it is for us to put food on the table, with such variety and abundance, it would have blown their minds as to how well off we are.

But strangely, there is plenty of evidence that our level of contentment is less than people commonly have in parts of the world where there is more of a possibility of actually going to bed hungry at night. My daughter, for instance, was struck when she went to live with people in rural Tanzania that they often seemed happier than most Americans. She didn't encounter the all too familiar sense of anxiety and restless discontent that so typically characterizes our lives.

Although freedom from the threat of starvation hasn't made us content, it hasn't stopped us from believing that there is some quick fix out there somewhere that will provide the contentment that seems to be missing. There are lots of places we look, but probably the most common place being in money: If we could just land the job with the big pay check. Or better yet, win the lottery! Take a look at big time lottery winners a couple of years down the road, and more often than not they have become less happy than they were before. The success of the lottery in terms of taking people's money is directly connected to the thing about human nature that led all those people to follow Jesus around the Sea of Galilee.

But there are plenty of other places we look as well.

Some people search and search for the perfect lover who will finally bring contentment. A good lover is a great gift, but in and of itself it doesn't bring happiness.

Many of us imagine there is some kind of success, some level of honor and respect we might achieve, in which we would finally rest contentedly. Or fame perhaps, in spite of the fact that there are so many famous people who are obviously not very happy.

Others imagine it's the dream house that will make them happy. Once they get the dream house, then the dream becomes figuring out a way to keep the house perfectly clean and tidy.

Or maybe having a child will be the thing, and though children are great blessing, they don't in and of themselves give contentment. Discovering this, perhaps we imagine contentment will come if these children grow up to accomplish great things.

I've been enjoying watching the Olympics, as I'm sure many of you have. I wonder sometimes though if all of the hype around the importance of winning the gold isn't connected to this illusion that we human beings so commonly fall under. We hear these touching stories of how these young athletes have sacrificed so much all for the sake of being able to reach this point of competing for the gold. The impression you get is that it will all have meaning only if they win the gold, and that if they do, they will have reached a plateau in life which will bring contentment for the rest of their lives.

Having won 18 gold medals, well Michael Phelps should abide in bliss for the rest of his life, right? Well I suspect there will come a day when Michael Phelps asks himself, "Is this all there is?" Unless he learns what it is Jesus is trying to teach in this morning's lesson, Michael Phelps has no better chance of finding contentment than anybody else.

Jesus goes on to say to the people, and to us as well in our mistaken quests for contentment, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life."

At this point the people think Jesus is selling a new religion, and they're ready to sign up. "*What must we do to perform the works of God?*" they ask.

Religion is one of the most common places in which people imagine they can find the elusive contentment. The thought is, if I can just learn how to believe the right way; if I can just get the rules and rituals down correctly, pray right – that kind of thing, then God will be pleased with me and work it out so I'll get the things I need to be content.

In response, Jesus says a puzzling thing to them: "*This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom God has sent.*" It sounds too simple. That's all? And it's not really what we

think of as a “work.” When we think of work we think of something we do out in the world to impact our environment somehow. But believing in Jesus is something that takes place outside, rather, it happens on the inside.

Generally speaking, “work” is something we do out in the world to impact our environment somehow. Believing in “him whom God has sent” – believing in Jesus – is something that takes place not on the outside, but rather on the inside.

Which is where contentment is found, if it is found at all: on the inside, rather than somewhere outside of us. The evangelical language of “receiving Jesus into your heart” speaks to this. As long as we are focused on some change that we think needs to take place on the outside, we will avoid facing up to the change that needs to take place on the inside in our hearts.

In my experience, there is a sense in which believing in Jesus is a kind of work. My heart is so susceptible with being taken over by so many states of mind that make contentment an impossibility; things like anxiety and fear, guilt, anger, envy, jealousy. Believing in Jesus means believing what Jesus said regarding these things on a day by day basis, or more accurately, minute by minute.

To remember when contempt either for myself or for somebody else threatens to take hold of me, that Jesus said he had only one commandment for us, and that was “Love one another, as I have loved you.” Remember that I am already loved, fully, by Jesus, and remembering this, find the freedom to love others.

To remember when I feel scared to remember how Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid” in situations as threatening as being in a boat at night with the waves threatening to sink you.

To remember when I feel anxious in face of the endless series of problems we face in the course of life Jesus saying, “Be not anxious, little ones, your Daddy in heaven knows what you need.”

To remember when I feel like my life will be incomplete because I can’t afford some enticing creature comfort that others are enjoying how Jesus told me not to put my heart in such things, for they are just so much food that perishes.

When I feel guilty because of the little voice inside says I haven’t done enough to justify my existence, to remember that Jesus has told me I am forgiven, and that there isn’t anything I can do to make me any more loved by God.

And when my heart starts to harden because of some wrong that has been committed against me (real or imagined) to remember the emphatic things Jesus had to say about the absolute necessity of letting it go by forgiving the one who has wronged me.

There is a kind of work involved in intentionally slowing ourselves down so that we become aware of the places where we are tempted to give our hearts over to such things. With practice, we can get better at this, and we find that a sense of contentment with life begins to settle in.

And yet, even with our best efforts, there will be times when fear or guilt or anger take us over. In the end, this is how it has to be, because otherwise it would mean we can save ourselves by our own efforts, fortifying the pride that imagines us to be gods unto ourselves. In the end, we have no choice but to put our trust in the gracious God that Jesus has revealed to us, who is working in our hearts through the Holy Spirit in ways we have no awareness of.

Our inevitable stumbling humble us, and when we become aware of the fact that we have lost our way, to pick ourselves back up by God’s grace and try again, knowing that a new beginning is always offered to us right here, right now.

In the kindness of Jesus,

Pastor Jeff

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**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.



United Methodist  
Women

Looking back...a group of us enjoyed an evening of fellowship and good food at the Olive Garden in July and the Brookside Diner in August. You don't need to be a member to attend any of our programs. All women of the church are invited, and bring a friend.....

**Wed, September 5<sup>th</sup> – 7:00 p.m.**  
**Program: Pastor Jeff – In Memory of his mother, Pat**  
Refreshments  
Bring a Friend - All women invited

Sept. 3 – Labor Day  
Sept. 9 – Grandparents' Day

Sept. 11 – Patriot Day  
Sept. 22 – 1<sup>st</sup> Day of Autumn

Get well wishes to those of you who are ill, and  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY to those of you celebrating this month with Connie Keller and Pat Winz.

God Bless,  
Doris Bradley

**Prov. 17:17 “A friend loves at all times.”**

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**SPARE CHANGE CAMPAIGN** – Don't forget to bring back your bags that you used to collect you spare change in over the summer. We'll accept them whenever you want to bring them back.

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Keep this date open – **October 27** – for the **Happy Apple Bazaar**. We will be needing workers the night before to help set up, and workers the day of the bazaar. Please remember that we need the following.....

- Gently used jewelry – please get your jewelry to Karen or Diane as soon as you can
- Baked Goods – be thinking about what you can bake to be sold
- Themed Baskets – fill a basket with themed items for us to put in a silent auction. Or, if you have items you want to donate toward

a basket, please give your items to Barb Bradley as soon as possible.

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Our annual **Church Conference** will be held on **Monday, October 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:30 p.m.** Our district superintendent, Rev. Steve Bechtold will be on hand to lead us in worship together as we celebrate the ministry Christ has given us. Officers of the church will be elected. Every member of the church is encouraged to attend. The Staff-Parish Relations Committee will meet before hand at 6:30 with Rev. Bechtold.



The **Watoto Children's Choir from Uganda** have been scheduled for an appearance at our church on **Wednesday, November 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:30** p.m. Admission is free- A love offering will be taken to support their mission. Watoto Children's Choirs have traveled internationally since 1994 as advocates for the estimated 50 million children in Africa, orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS, war, poverty and disease. 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 7th. If you can are interested in hosting, please speak to Amy Gripp or Bob Keller.



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Hold **October 20<sup>th</sup> for our Annual Ham Dinner** --- we'll need help to set up the night before and day of, and we will need serving and kitchen help the day of. Please see Connie Keller or Justin Cogan is you can assist --- and don't forget to come and eat! More info next month. Tickets will be available for sale and to sell.

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Six of our youth and Pastor Jeff spent five days in August at the Heifer International Farm in Rutland, Mass. There they took part in daily chores, learned about world hunger and what Heifer is doing to combat it, and lived for a night in the Farm's Global Village. They are excited to share their

experience and what they learned with their church family, and so early in the Fall they will host a dinner at the church. They hope that as many people as can make it will join them for the dinner. More information will come forth shortly.



*“Living in the Light”* sessions with Pastor Jeff continue informally throughout the summer on Wednesdays beginning promptly at 11 a.m. and ending precisely at 12 noon. Join us for spiritual conversation and guided meditation and prayer.

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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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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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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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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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**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@mhlender.com](mailto:connie@mhlender.com)

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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



**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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**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 (973-585-7634).



**SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR SEPTEMBER**

Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Song of Sol. 2:8-13  
James 1:17-27  
Mark 7:1-8,14-15

Sept 9<sup>th</sup>  
Proverbs 22:1-2,8-9  
James 2:1-10,14-17  
Mark 7:24-37

Sept 16<sup>th</sup>  
Proverbs 1:20-33  
James 3:1-12  
Mark 8:27-38

Sept 23<sup>rd</sup>  
Proverbs 31:10-31  
James 3:13-4:3,7-8a  
Mark 9:30-37

Sept 30<sup>th</sup>  
Esther 7:1-6,9-10  
James 5:13-20  
Mark 9:38-50



**SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS**

|                  |                     |                  |                 |
|------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup>  | Anna Larsen         | 16 <sup>th</sup> | Ray Steen       |
| 5 <sup>th</sup>  | Emma Crowningshield | 17 <sup>th</sup> | Sandy Bostwick  |
| 6 <sup>th</sup>  | Anita Laux          | 19 <sup>th</sup> | Pat Winz        |
| 8 <sup>th</sup>  | Connie Keller       | 27 <sup>th</sup> | Keith Anastasi  |
| 8 <sup>th</sup>  | Michael Krisa       | 28 <sup>th</sup> | Ben Chauhan     |
| 9 <sup>th</sup>  | Greg Elbin          | 28 <sup>th</sup> | Glen Post       |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> | Jim Steen, Jr.      | 29 <sup>th</sup> | Vincent Bianchi |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> | Karina Barreto      | 29 <sup>th</sup> | Mariahna Suzan  |
|                  |                     | 30 <sup>th</sup> | Sarah Wink      |

**SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES**

|                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|
| 8 <sup>th</sup>  | Ann & George Hawkins |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> | Ann & Charles Nye    |
| 28 <sup>th</sup> | Susan & Nick Valcoff |

**New Members were received on Pentecost Sunday, May 27<sup>th</sup>.**

**Claudia Bartek** was born in Berwick, Pa, and moved to Clifton NJ when she was two and stayed there into 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. She moved to Succasunna in the middle of 2nd grade and spent the rest of her youth there graduating from Roxbury High School in 1973. Her first adult move was to Parsippany where she stayed for a few years, before buying her first home in Landing. She later lived in Fairlawn before moving back to Parsippany. She has worked for insurance, manufacturing and consulting firms over the past 38 years, with her primary responsibilities being in new business development, systems development, and client service/support. The most important people in Claudia's life are her four children: Sydney, Zachary, Nathan and Shane; her mother, Toni, and her Dad, Len, and her brother Greg and sister Linda. Her favorite thing is to be outdoors. She enjoys yard work as well as going on walks. She enjoys sports (golf, swimming, softball) as well as reading and spending time with friends. The words Claudia uses to describe our church are open, accepting, supportive, loving, inclusive, caring, and peaceful. Her advice for a young person would be, *"Know and like yourself first and foremost. Then find your passion and pursue it in work, family, faith and community service. This will keep you upbeat, honest, enthusiastic and dedicated. Then remember to share. This is what will provide a meaningful and fulfilling life."* Claudia's birthday is December 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Vijaya Kumar Dasari** was born in India and came to the United States six years ago at the age of 25 to study in New Hampshire for a master's degree. Since 2008 he has been working for ToysRus as a systems manager. The important people in Vijaya's life are his wife, their new baby, his father, grandmother and many more. In his free time he enjoys watching movies, football, playing cricket and bike riding. What Vijaya like's best about our church are the *"friendly people and that Pastor Jeff's Biblical explanations are*



*easy to understand with real world examples.*” His advice for a young person would be to “just believe in Jesus in every step of your life.” Vijaya’s birthday is April 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Donald A. Gatto** was born in 1936 in Scranton, Pennsylvania, where he grew up. He served in the Marine Corp for four years, and worked for the Post Office for 27 years, and UPS for seven years. Don is now retired, and occupies himself with working around the house. The important people in his life are his wife Maryann, and his three children Suzy, Chris and David. Don is transferring to us from the Morristown United Methodist Church, where for many years he served as greeter and usher. We are pleased that Don has offered his services in these same capacities for our church. He enjoys the friendly people he has met at our church. Don’s advice for young people would be to *“have respect for all others, and to listen to good advice when others offer it.”* Don’s birthday is May 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Anita Laux** was born in Englewood, NJ and grew up in Ridgefield. She has lived in Parsippany for 17 years. The important people in her life are her husband, Bob, her children, Ryan, Brendan, and Briana, her Mom Joan, and her Mother-in-law Lucy, as wells as two sisters and one brother and many nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins (*one big Italian family!*) She is a graduate of the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York City, and has been the owner of her own dance school called “A Dance Place” in Ridgefield for 32 years. She enjoys doing choreography for numerous community theater groups and schools, stage performances and singing telegrams! She enjoys being with her family, especially at the beach. She also enjoys entertaining, the theater, shopping and volunteering for the PTA. Anita appreciates the wonderful people at our church, who, no matter what can be counted on to be there in times of need. She also appreciates the music and Pastor Jeff, who she says inspires us all; she loves the plays Jeff produces. Anita’s advice for young people would be, *“Have respect for yourself and for others who care about you, get a good education, believe in God and in yourself, and follow your dreams.”* Anita’s birth day is September 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Robert E. Laux (Bob)** was born in Jersey City and grew up in Palisades Park, NJ. He went to Montclair State College where he received a degree in accounting, and then graduated from Seton Hall University Law School, after which he was admitted to practice law in New Jersey. He has worked in private law practice, as well as having been employed in several public positions in law and management. When Bob married Anita they first lived in Fort Lee, moving to Parsippany in 1994. The important people in his life are his wife Anita of course, his children Ryan, Brendan and Briana, and his extended family. He enjoys traveling on family vacations, entertaining family and friends, carpentry and local sports teams. Bob’s community involvements include coaching youth sports, serving as the Vice-President of the Bergen County Bar Association and as a member of the NJ Attorney fee arbitration committee.

Bob’s expertise has been put to use at our church where he serves as a Trustee. He writes this about our church: *“Our church is a special place. It has a very comfortable environment for worshipping; sharing the highs and lows of life with a supportive and*

*loving church family; guiding our children in understanding Christian life without the 'fear factor' of generations past; contemplating what our true priorities need to be; and of course a place to hear thought-provoking sermons."* His advice young people would be, *"learn how to be good listeners, feel confident to challenge authority, and to question the conventional reasons why things are the way they. But do so with respect. Also, much can be learned about the world from history, as it always seems to have a way of repeating itself."* Bob's birthday is November 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Samuel Lloyd Newberry (Lloyd)** was born in Washington, DC in 1928 in a family that included seven sisters and six brothers. In the course of Lloyd's life he has lived in New York, St. Louis, and New Jersey. He is long time friend of Fred Coleman whom he refers to as his brother. Lloyd worked as a neuro-biochemist, having taught at three medical schools. He also spent six years doing research at the National Institutes of Health. In his spare time he enjoys reading. He enjoys the sharing and discussions that take place in the Friday afternoon men's group, and in general, the outgoing personalities of this congregation. Lloyd's advice to a young person would be *"get a good education."* Lloyd's birthday is April 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Diana Walker** grew up in New Mexico where her mother is a physician. She went to college in Albuquerque. The most important people in Diana's life are her husband Doug, (who, like Pastor Jeff recently suffered the loss of his mother) and her twins, Nathan and Edy. The most important animal in their life is their dog, who had a starring role in our Christmas play.

### **A Moment of Gratitude – Claudia Bartek (May 27, 2012)**

I am so happy to be here in front of you today. I have thought about this for a long time admiring all those that have gone before me for their courage to stand here and speak so eloquently from their heart. I wasn't sure I could do it. I'm still not quite frankly. However, when Jeff asked me if I would consider it I decided to write down what I would want to say and once that was done, the happiness I felt in my heart gave me the courage to come up here and speak with you.

I don't have the long history of most of you but in my short tenure here, I have grown to love this place. When I think of this church and each of you there are three words that come to my mind. They are acceptance, hugs, and support. I will tell you what those words mean to me but first I want to explain that each and every one of you make me think of them. It is not one specific person or one specific event – it is the aggregate of who this church is and what you stand for that is unique and special in this world. Jesus is here everyday in every way and I am beyond thankful for finding you.

So let's talk about these words and why they come to my mind.

**Acceptance** – this word comes to mind because no one, not one single person regardless of age, gender, nationality or any other diversifier has ever made me feel anything but welcome here. As a gay, single working mother of four small children that has gone through a difficult time in my personal life, I come with a lot of baggage that could be viewed as different or non-conforming. None of that has mattered. I have been accepted into this family by everyone and for that I am truly grateful and in many instances humbled by your openness. And, the love, acceptance and support you have shown my children mean more to me than anything you could have done for me – I sincerely thank you for that.

Some pictures from the summer ---- You can share your own summer memories on our newly named bulletin board.



**GREATER NEW JERSEY ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
**May 31-JUNE 2, 2012**

Once more I represented you at the Greater NJ Annual Conference. About 1400 clergy and laity from about 600 churches gathered in Valley Forge Pennsylvania. Although the facility now has casino gambling, we were in totally separate areas on different floors from the gaming. In those 35 waking hours I attended all of the Worship Services, Bible Studies, and plenary sessions. You can watch the conference activities at home by on-line feed, twitter or face book. The theme of the conference was “Making Disciples for the Transformation of the World: Building the Church Through our Service and Witness—Developing Leaders.”

Bishop Devadhar is at the end of his second four year term. Our Committee on the Episcopacy has moved and Conference approved a request that July’s Jurisdictional Conference reappoint him to the GNJAC. His Episcopal Address highlighted the fact that our/conference is growing in membership for the first time in 45 years.

This year marks the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Annual Conference (no, I was not at the first one.) Although we have had different names over the years, we have always included the NJ area.

The Conference Preacher and Teacher Was Bishop J. Michael Lowry. He spoke three times and said” It is not enough not to care and claim you are a Christian.” He also believes that North America is one of the largest mission fields in the world and that we need to be unashamed to speak in Jesus’ name to the hungry and the hurting. Actually, Bishop Lowry graduated from Earlham College a few years before Pastor Jeff.

This year the Delegates to General Conference, held in April and May, reported on those proceedings. One change is that guaranteed appointments were eliminated. This decision will be reviewed by the Judicial Council.

We had a preview of Jurisdictional Conference from that delegation. Our Conference has the opportunity to nominate candidates for Bishop. Those chosen were Rev. Vicki Miller Brendler and Rev. Sung H. Ahn. Rev. Dr. Heasun Kim was also nominated by The National Federation of Asian American United Methodists.

The Conference approved a resolution calling for September 30, 2012 to be a Conference-wide Day of Prayer and Healing for those who have been hurt through divisive conversations about human sexuality, particularly the issue over the status of LGBT persons in our denomination.

More information on the Annual Conference may be found in the June/July *Relay* and on line. A Journal of Annual Conference will be published in the fall. Jeff and I will have DVD copies. In 2013 Conference will be held from May 30 to June 1 at the Valley Forge Conference Center. The Sessions Committee will look into other options for 2014 and 2015. The Conference voted to permit a return to Valley Forge if that would seem to be the best option.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Polen, Lay Member

# September 2012

## United Methodist Church of Parsippany

| Sunday   | Monday    | Tuesday                                 | Wednesday  | Thursday   | Friday   | Saturday  |          |    |    |    |    |    |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |  |          |
|--|-----------|---|--|--|--|-----------|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|---|---|----|----|----|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--|--|--|----|----|----|--|--|----|----|----|--|--|--|----------|
| <table style="margin: auto; border: 1px solid black;"> <tr> <th colspan="7" style="text-align: center;">Aug 2012</th> <th colspan="7" style="text-align: center;">Oct 2012</th> </tr> <tr> <th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th> <th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td> <td>7</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td> <td>14</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td> <td>21</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td> <td>28</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td> <td></td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td><td></td> </tr> </table> |           |   |  |  |  | Aug 2012  |          |    |    |    |    |    | Oct 2012 |  |  |  |  |  |  | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 14 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 21 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 28 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |  |  |  | 29 | 30 | 31 |  |  | 29 | 30 | 31 |  |  |  | <i>1</i> |
| Aug 2012   |           |   |  |  |  |           | Oct 2012 |    |    |    |    |    |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |  |          |
| S  | M         | T                                       | W  | T  | F  | S         | S        | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S        |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |  |          |
| 5  | 6         | 7                                       | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4         | 7        | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6        |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |  |          |
| 12   | 13        | 14                                      | 8  | 9  | 10   | 11        | 14       | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13       |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |  |          |
| 19   | 20        | 21                                      | 15   | 16   | 17   | 18        | 21       | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20       |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |  |          |
| 26   | 27        | 28                                      | 22   | 23   | 24   | 25        | 28       | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27       |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |  |          |
|  |           |   | 29   | 30   | 31   |           |          | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |    |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |  |          |
| <i>2</i><br>Worship 10 AM  | <i>3</i>  | <i>4</i><br>7:15 AM Men's<br>Breakfast  | <i>5</i><br>11:00 AM Living in the<br>Light<br><br>7:00 PM UMW | <i>6</i><br>7:00 PM Bell Choir<br><br>7:45 PM Adult Choir  | <i>7</i><br>1:00 PM Men's<br>Discussion Group  | <i>8</i>  |          |    |    |    |    |    |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |  |          |
| <i>9</i><br>Ad Council after<br>Worship<br><br>Worship 10:30AM   | <i>10</i> | <i>11</i><br>7:15 AM Men's<br>Breakfast | <i>12</i><br>11:00 AM Living in the<br>Light                   | <i>13</i><br>7:00 PM Bell Choir<br><br>7:45 PM Adult Choir | <i>14</i><br>1:00 PM Men's<br>Discussion Group | <i>15</i> |          |    |    |    |    |    |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |  |          |
| <i>16</i><br>Worship 10:30AM   | <i>17</i> | <i>18</i><br>7:15 AM Men's<br>Breakfast | <i>19</i><br>11:00 AM Living in the<br>Light                   | <i>20</i><br>7:00 PM Bell Choir<br><br>7:45 PM Adult Choir | <i>21</i><br>1:00 PM Men's<br>Discussion Group | <i>22</i> |          |    |    |    |    |    |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |  |          |
| <i>23</i><br>Worship 10:30AM   | <i>24</i> | <i>25</i><br>7:15 AM Men's<br>Breakfast | <i>26</i><br>11:00 AM Living in the<br>Light                   | <i>27</i><br>7:00 PM Bell Choir<br><br>7:45 PM Adult Choir | <i>28</i><br>1:00 PM Men's<br>Discussion Group | <i>29</i> |          |    |    |    |    |    |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |  |          |
| <i>30</i><br>Worship 10:30AM   |           |   |  |  |  |           |          |    |    |    |    |    |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |    |    |    |  |  |  |          |