

HILLTOPPER

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

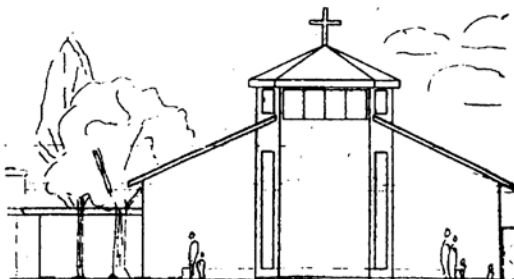
903 So. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054 (973) 887-4657

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

Sunday Worship Celebration: 10:30 a.m.

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

"Making Room in the Circle"



DECEMBER 2012



Hanging of the Greens – Saturday, Dec. 1 - Please come and help decorate the church for Christmas. We'll begin at **9:30 a.m.** There's lots to do, and lots of help makes the time go quickly. There'll be coffee and donuts/bagels for the helpers. Come and sing Christmas Carols with us as we spruce up the place for the Christmas season.

If you have any questions, please talk to Connie Keller 973-568-5404.

Everyone is welcome!!

Friday, Dec. 7 at 7:30 and Sunday, Dec. 9 at 6:30, our church will be putting on Pastor Jeff's annual Christmas Play, this year entitled "**Flashpoint: A Christmas Play**". See the flyer inserted later in the Hilltopper for more information.



On **Sunday, December 16th** our Choir will perform a **Cantata** and children and adults of our church will perform a **pageant**. The **rehearsal** for the Pageant will be held on **Saturday, December 15th at 10 a.m.** Anyone who would like to be a part of the pageant is invited to come to the rehearsal.

On **Sunday, December 23rd**, our service will feature our bell choir and special music.



Our Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service will be at 7 p.m. Join us as we worship the God who was born into a homeless refugee family two thousand years ago.



Christmas poinsettias - This year I will be taking orders for poinsettias until Dec. 9. Order forms will be included in the bulletins for a few weeks. The poinsettias will be placed on the altar Dec. 16 and traditionally stay on the altar until after the Christmas Eve service. If you would like to make a monetary donation (instead of ordering poinsettias) that will be used to provide flowers for the Christmas season, please call me. Connie Keller 973-887-4384.



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

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This year our church will again **adopt families for Christmas** who are living in poverty in our community. The names and ages of family members and their requested presents will be placed on our church's Christmas tree, and you are invited to sign up to provide presents for either an entire family, or for individual members of a family.

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Looking back...the business meeting went right along – 2013 budget approved – 20123 nominations announced and 2013 programs planned. Next...All women come and bring a friend....



United Methodist Women

Tuesday, December 11th – 7:00 p.m.
Pot Luck Supper
Program: Installation of 2013 Officers
Christmas Gift Game
(Bring a wrapped gift – put your name on it – and the recipient will pray for you all year)

Dec. 1 – World AIDs Day

Dec. 21 – First Day of Winter

Dec. 1 – First Sunday of Advent

Dec. 25 – Christmas Day

Dec. 7 – Pearl Harbor Day

Dec. 31 – New Year's Eve

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

God Bless,
Doris Bradley

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



**A sermon preached on November 18th, 2012 based upon Matthew 6:24
- 34**

These very familiar words of Jesus come from the Sermon on the Mount, which is recorded in chapters five through seven of the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus didn't give this sermon to the whole world – rather, it was delivered specifically to those who would be his disciples. In three chapters Jesus describes what being a Christian looks like, and it's a challenging picture he paints indeed.

It's interesting to note Jesus gives no required doctrine to believe in order to be his disciple. He doesn't say, for instance, that we must believe that he is the Son of God who dies for our sins, or that he is God incarnate, born of the Virgin Mary.

No, Jesus describes a quality of life we are to live in this world. He begins by saying we are to be the "light of the world" and the "salt of the earth." We are to be a redemptive presence, whose manner of living provides light in a world where people are so prone to get lost in the darkness. We are to be light salt, preserving the world from its innate drive towards destruction.

It is a challenging path – to say the least – that Jesus calls us to follow in the Sermon on the Mount. We are to live a distinctly different sort of life from that which is common to the world. Perhaps the most striking example of this is what he has to say about love. He recognizes that what is considered "normal" in this world is to love only those who love us. We, in contrast, must love everybody, including our enemies. Hard stuff indeed.

Mahatma Gandhi was very impressed by this particular sermon of Jesus, seeing in it the essence of Christianity. He had explored becoming a Christian, only to give the idea up when the one time he tried to attend worship in a church, he was turned away because of his brown skin. Gandhi was once asked what he thought of Christianity. He said he thought it was a good idea, and that somebody should give it a try some day.

The part about loving our enemies is tough for sure, but there might be something even harder – or at least more fundamental – about what Jesus has to say in the words we heard this morning. Jesus tells us, "Do not worry about your life."

Do not worry? Are you kidding me? To be human is to worry. We worry about money, about the problems we have at work and at home, and all the things we need to get done. We worry about our health and our loved ones. And if we have any energy left over, we worry about the state of the world.

We teach our kids to worry, to be "careful" – meaning full of care. We figure that if we can get them to worry they'll turn into responsible adults. To a large extent, anxiety and fear is what motivates us to get stuff done. We're not sure what we would do without anxiety and fear to drive us.

Jesus recognizes that worry is the normal way of living in the world. He says it's what the Gentiles do – who for Jesus represents everybody who isn't following in his way. The only people that Jesus rebukes with the expression, "O ye of little faith," are disciples. He has no expectation that people in this world would have more than "little faith."

But we're to be different. It is love, not fear that is to motivate us -- which is why I said this particular teaching is in a way more fundamental than the others. Unless we can begin to move away from the way of worry and fear, we won't be able to get very far in the love department.

At the outset of our passage, Jesus lays out a basic choice that is the key to whether we will be able to live by faith or not. He says we can't have two masters. The choice is



between God and money. Money represents all the ways in which we try to be the master of our lives, of which having money is a big part.

But if money is our master, we will always have a scarcity mindset, because how much is enough? As John D. Rockefeller said, "Always a little more." Worshipping money means we will be in a constant state of anxiety, because in the end, we can never truly be the masters of our lives.

But if it is God we worship, we enter into an abundance mentality. We are in the care of God who knows what we need. And God's grace is always more abundant than we can imagine.

I find it interesting that Jesus refers twice in this passage to sights that are found only out in nature: the lilies of the field, and the birds of the air. Solomon represented the richest of men, and yet, he was not adorned as beautifully as the lilies of the field.

Spending time in nature is more important than we know, because it is there that we learn to embrace the fact that we are not the master of the universe. And it is there that we behold the abundance of God's creativity, and a beauty we can never purchase, but, as a child of God, possess with all God's children.

There's a serious problem arising in our age, and it has been coined "Nature Deficit Disorder." Children are growing up these days without spending time in outdoors. The electronic devices keep them stuck inside. It's not much different for us adults. Souls are damaged when significant time is not spent in nature.

This past Friday after our men's group, Len, Lincoln, David and I went to see the 3:40 showing of Steven Spielberg's new movie, "Lincoln." It's a hard movie to watch, dealing, as it does with what was possibly the hardest time in our nation's history. But I found it beautiful and stirring.

Abraham Lincoln was a fascinating man. There has been a great deal of debate about his religious life. As a young adult, there was a period of time in which he identified himself as something of an atheist. He journeyed far from that place, but he never became an orthodox believer. He joined no denomination, though he attended his wife's Presbyterian Church while he was in Washington.

He wasn't orthodox in his doctrine, but he came closer than most people in living by the sermon of the mount. He forgave readily, forming a cabinet that has been called a "team of rivals," putting aside bygones with old adversaries to bring the best talent he could assemble. And Lincoln never demonized the enemy – the confederacy.

The thing that most moved me from the movie was the way Lincoln, as portrayed so masterfully by Daniel Day Lewis, seemed to be able to embody such calm in the midst of what was the worst storm this country has endured. He was a man who had battled depression throughout his life, and carried the capacity for empathy that goes hand in hand with depressive personalities. There are leaders who could send their soldiers into war and not be touched by the suffering this order wrought in lives, but Lincoln was not such a man. He carried the weight of the suffering of his age on his shoulders. And his home life brought his suffering as well. While in the White House, a young son died of illness, bringing an inconsolable grief to both his wife and himself.

And yet, he came over time to a clarity of vision regarding what his moment in history required, and that was to abolish the evil of slavery. Calmly and deliberately he proceeded forward. While his cabinet members and others would often be overtaken by a sense of panic, Lincoln remained unshaken, and the steadiness of his presence provided reassurance to those around him.

I found myself awestruck by this quality of Daniel Day Lewis' Lincoln. How could carry such a peaceful bearing in such a violent and troubled time? I really don't know. Lincoln had a hard life. Perhaps the travails he had been through in some sense prepared him to offer such a sense of calm in a time when it was most needed. It's a mystery of grace.

Jesus is calling us in this same direction. We are to be the antithesis of Chicken Little. In a world where anxiety is so contagious, we are to be a non-anxious presence that brings calm to those around us. If you think about, this may well be the greatest gift we have to offer the people with whom you live your life. A whole slew of loving actions done anxiously may be less significant than what we might offer by simply being a calming and reassuring presence to others.

But again, how do we move in this direction? Perhaps there is some guidance once more in the life of John Wesley. In his early thirties he'd come to the colony of Georgia with the intentions of molding a more rarified expression of Christian community, only to fail miserably. After two years, he caught a boat back to England, his heart full of despair. There happened to be some Moravian Christians on that ship who seemed to have manifested this quality of calming reassurance to which Jesus calls us. In the midst of a storm at sea, that had Wesley terrified for his life, he was amazed that the Moravians were calmly praying and singing hymns, like Paul and Silas in the book of Acts.

Wesley realized they had the faith he was missing. In the months that followed, Wesley turned to a Moravian by the name of Peter Boehler to mentor him through this dark period of his life. Acutely aware of the absence of faith in his own heart, Wesley seriously considered giving up preaching, and asked Boehler for his opinion. In his journal, Wesley reports the following:

He answered "By no means." I asked, "But what can I preach?" He said, "Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith." -- John Wesley, Journal, March 4th, 1738

Boehler's response reminds me of an expression they use in AA: "Fake it to make it."

It was two and a half months later that Wesley had his "heart strangely warmed." From that point on, although there still would be times of darkness yet to navigate, he knew what it was to have faith. His acting job had become the real thing.

As Daniel Day Lewis prepared to play the part, what was it like for him to "become" Abraham Lincoln? Maybe there is something akin to this for us as we would try to become the sort of person who resists the Chicken Little anxiety of this world, and brings instead the gift of peace.

Maybe all of us who would be followers of Jesus are, in some sense, taking on an acting job. What would it look like, feel like if in this moment I were to play the part of Jesus?

Perhaps slowly but steadily, the acting job takes hold, and we become the person we aspire to be.

In the kindness of Jesus,
Pastor Jeff

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Our **Youth Group** hosted a Spaghetti Dinner where they gave a slide show about their five days at the Heifer International Farm. About 70 members of our church family were lead by the youth through exercises that helped us understand the concerns of people who need a hand up in developing countries. \$388 dollars was raised to go to Heifer International. Check out the Heifer International Website for great Christmas gift ideas.

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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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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In spite of stormy weather, we were once again blessed by the **Watoto Children's Choir**. They sang and danced for about 40 people who came out in spite of warnings to stay off the roads. Seven host families got to share in their first experience of snow. We were greatly blessed.

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"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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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.



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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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.



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).



Change Under Cushions: Our children continue to search for lost coins under seats and to bring them forward for their time with Pastor Jeff. We are collecting coins to send flocks of baby chicks to poor families in Tanzania.



SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR DECEMBER

<u>Dec. 2nd</u> Jeremiah 33:14-16 1 Thess. 3:9-13 Luke 21:25-36	<u>Dec. 9th</u> Malachi 3:1-4 Philippians 1:3-11 Luke 3:1-6	<u>Dec. 16th</u> Zephaniah 3:14-20 Philippians 4:4-7 Luke 3:7-18	<u>Dec. 23rd</u> Michal 5:2-5a Hebrews 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-45	<u>Dec. 30th</u> 1 Samuel 2:-18-20,26 Colossians 3:-12-17 Luke 2:41-52
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2 nd	Fred Davis	20 th	Marissa Raier
3 rd	Ann Hawkins	24 th	Linda Winz
4 th	Fred Coleman	24 th	Deana Larsen
5 th	Andrew Edwards	25 th	Keith Sakelakos
8 th	Tom Zibura	25 th	Helen Miller
14 th	Gloria Gounaud	26 th	Jean Sakelakos
14 th	Claudia Bartek	31 st	Flora Dierbach
16 th	Jessica Colletto	31 st	Kassie Dadian
20 th	Jennifer Savarin		

**Keep
in Christ
Christmas**



**Flash Point:
A Christmas Play**

*another original drama
arising out of the strange
imagination of Pastor Jeff*

**Parsippany
United Methodist
Church**

903 S. Beverwyck Road

**Friday, December 7th @ 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, December 9th @ 6:30 p.m.**

*Admission is free. A free will offering
will be received to support the
Parsippany UMC and to fund
water projects in Rwanda through
Help@CharityWater.org*













*Starring Garret
Belanus, Earl
Christofferson,
Kayla Christofferson,
Ryan Christofferson,
Arianna Urban,
Carlee Urban,
Beth Cogan, Cassie
Cogan, Marissa
Cogan, Vijay Dasari,
Joe Dente, Bobby
Edwards, Jeff Edwards,
Jennifer Eng, Josie
Fortes, Terry Germann,
Amy Gripp, Anna Gripp,
Erika Gripp, Maggie Letsch,
Katie Mihalko, Mary Mihalko,
Lloyd Newberry, Betty Polen, Eric
Roelofs, Garin Roelofs, Julia Sklow,
Eleanor Soriano, and Alexa Taylor.*

Go Tell It!

Shepherds Tell Others

—Luke 2

What is the good news from the angels and shepherds? Find the picture in each group that is different from the others and circle the letter below it. Then write the circled letters in the spaces at the bottom to find the good news. Then, go tell it!

		
C J N	R O E	S B T
		
U E A	D S V	H J I
		
V Q S	A B Y	P F O
		
U E R	N C M	? ! ;

December 2012

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																				
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