

# HILLTOPPER

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

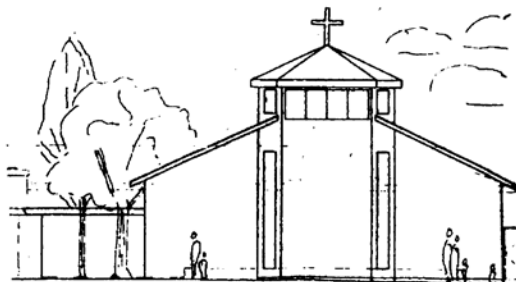
903 So. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054 (973) 887-4657

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"*



**MAY 2013**



*A sermon preached by Pastor Jeff on April 14<sup>th</sup> based upon John 21:1 – 19 entitled, "Try Again," on the occasion of the baptism of Russell and Amber Schnetzer.*



*After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. <sup>2</sup>Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. <sup>3</sup>Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. <sup>4</sup>Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." <sup>6</sup>He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. <sup>7</sup>That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was*

naked, and jumped into the sea. <sup>8</sup>But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. <sup>9</sup>When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." <sup>11</sup>So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup>Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup>Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. <sup>14</sup>This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.



<sup>15</sup>When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." <sup>16</sup>A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." <sup>17</sup>He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. <sup>18</sup>Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." <sup>19</sup>(He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me." (John 21:1 – 19)



Ten years ago Sarah and my now seventeen year old son Bobby started playing soccer. With his high energy level and his innate competitive nature, he took to the game like a fish to water. Before long Bobby settled in to the position of goalkeeper, and over the years soccer has been the consistent passion of his life. There have been times Sarah and I have regretted that we ever started down this youth soccer path with our son, particularly during those times when the game generated more heartache and frustration than fun and satisfaction. There have been numerous obstacles to overcome: the pain of defeat, felt personally by the goalkeeper who gives up the goals. There have been the setbacks caused by injuries, and conflicts with coaches and benchings to endure.

Through it all, perhaps the single most important character trait Bobby's pursuit of the game has brought forth has been the capacity to persevere in the face of the setbacks -- to get back up again when the game knocked him down. In the times of defeat when the initial urge was to simply give up, Bobby has repeatedly worked his way through to a place where he was able to choose to try again.



The capacity to persevere in the face of adversity is crucial because life itself is filled with countless setbacks – countless situations where the temptation to give up can arise. This wouldn't be the case if life were like a sprint. But it's not – life is more like a marathon.

Our Gospel story this morning got me thinking about such things.

At the end of the preceding chapter, the Gospel writer seems to wrap up his book. He tells three stories of Jesus making resurrection appearances, and then finishes off with a concluding statement about how all the stories he's recounted are intended to help the reader believe.

But here in the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter, we hear of yet another appearance made by the risen Lord. A lot is left unanswered in this story, leaving much room for our imaginations to roam. For instance, how much time has passed since the previous appearances? At the very least a couple

of weeks because the previous appearances happened in Jerusalem; this one occurs back in the region of Galilee where Jesus' ministry began. But since John's Gospel is believed to have been written at least fifty years after Jesus' resurrection, for all we know this final appearance could have occurred years later.



And why at the outset does Peter decide to go fishing? Again, the story doesn't tell us. In my imagination, enough time has passed for the apostles to have lost their initial burst of enthusiasm. Over time, things have once more returned to a sense of being routine – even mundane. Where at first the Christian life had seemed like a sprint to the finish line, now its beginning to feel more like a marathon. Perhaps they've encountered setbacks. Peter and the others wonder, *What exactly should we be doing now?* They don't really know. When all else fails, go back to what you know, which is fishing. After all, the community needs to eat. But Jesus had called them to leave their nets; from now on, he had told them, they would be fishing for people.

In certain ways it was easier when the Christian life felt like a sprint. The urgency of it all made for a compelling witness. During the middle ages, when the hardships of ordinary, mundane life were so brutal, young men would sign up to go fight in the Crusades in the hope of turning it back into a sprint. They actually hoped they would die as martyrs fighting the infidels, because they believed such a death would take them straight to the finish line of heaven.

Why exactly John (or somebody from his community) decided to add the extra chapter may never be answered, but following the line of conjecture I've staked out above, perhaps he wanted to encourage people to keep on keeping on in running the marathon. He describes a long night of fishing in which no fish are caught, which means frustration, fatigue, and perhaps a desire to give up. And so Jesus appears on the shore and says, "Try again." Cast your nets down on the other side. And lo and behold, this time they catch so many fish the nets are near to bursting. It's a little like the story Jesus told (*Luke 18:1-8*) of the widow who kept knocking at the door of the unjust judge for justice, and after a very long period of being ignored, the judge finally opens the door and gives the widow the justice for which she has persevered.

I've always appreciated the fact that Christianity so readily acknowledges basic human frailty. Simon Peter is the character whose personality is most developed, and with whom we are invited to identify. Although he has his shining moments, they always seem to be followed with him getting knocked down as a result of his own personal shortcomings. He gets praised for first putting forth the notion that Jesus is the messiah, and then gets rebuked by Jesus when he tries to convince Jesus he doesn't have to suffer and die. When Jesus comes walking on the water, Peter is the only one who is willing to risk stepping out of the boat in faith. But it's also Peter who quickly thereafter nearly drowns when his doubts overtake him.



And then, of course, there is the story that all four Gospels take the time to tell of how shortly before Jesus was arrested, Peter declared that he would never leave Jesus' side, come what may, only to deny ever knowing him three times when hell broke loose.

So at that point, having failed so miserably, the temptation to give up must have been pretty strong for Peter. So maybe Peter's decision to go fishing expresses his conclusion that his past failures prove he just doesn't have what it takes to be an apostle of the Lord. If that's the case, the scene that takes place by the charcoal fire can be seen as Jesus tenderly healing Peter in regard to his memories of



past failures. The only other place that a charcoal fire is mentioned in the Bible was from the night of Peter's betrayal – it was by such a fire that Peter was trying to get warm when the question was put to him three times if he was one of Jesus' followers.

It's clear that Peter doesn't want to go back into those memories. But Jesus takes him there because they live inside him, sabotaging his capacity to move forward in his life – in his ministry in Christ's name.

The message is the same for us as well. The failures of our past need not define who we will be and what we will be about in the future. The living Christ wants to undo the damage such memories have done to our souls.

The metaphor of the Christian life being a marathon is an imperfect one, because the point really isn't to get us somewhere, such as heaven, even though that's how Christianity is presented. What happens along the way is as important as where we end up. And the story that John added on to the end of his Gospel suggests that it's the little things that we do along the way that matter. Jesus gives one example in the hospitality and kindness he shows in preparing breakfast for his tired disciples after a long, frustrating night of fishing. The things Jesus asks Peter to do out of love for Him aren't extraordinary, like getting martyred on his behalf. Jesus asks Peter to feed his sheep, and tend his lambs. Little acts of kindness and caring for human beings who are innately frail and fragile, like sheep.



We find the same truth expressed in the testimony of many who have undergone Near Death Experiences, and experienced what is commonly called the "life review." In the presence of the divine loving presence, as they review their life what stands out is not what we commonly think of as being significant; instead, it is the simple acts of kindness (or lack therein) with which we treated one another along the way.



This morning we baptized Amber and Russell. As their parents, Jahn and Marguerite know, parenting is a marathon, not a sprint. No one does parenting perfectly. What matters though, is not perfection, but persistence. Persistence in being there for our children throughout all the twists and turns of the lives, feeding and tending to them in such a way that they will come to rest in our

love, even as they would learn to rest in, and bear witness to the greater love of God revealed in the risen Lord.

I want to finish this morning by telling me a story my wife Sarah told me about something that happened to her in what was for her the darkest days of her life. Over twenty years ago, following eight years of marriage to her first husband, she found herself alone with her five year old daughter Kate, after her husband walked out on her for another woman. She was devastated, crushed, feeling tempted to give up. One night as she laid upon her bed she suddenly saw two circles of light in the corner of her room. She felt a sense of terror, as is the case throughout the Bible when angelic beings make an appearance to mortals. A message was given to her consisting of two words. Can you guess what they were? "Try again." When the circles of light disappeared she went first to check on her daughter sleeping in her room. Finding her safe and sound, she began roaming about her house calling out loudly, "Try WHAT again?!"

A month or so later Sarah and I met, which would suggest that the thing to be tried again was the sort of love that leads to marriage. But I suspect it meant more than that. Try love in all its forms again. Try life again. Try trusting God again. Feed and tend to the various sheep God has given us to care for in every arena of our lives. Try again, knowing we'll never be perfect in this life when it comes to this thing called love, and knowing that we'll repeatedly stumble and fall. No matter what setbacks and adversity may come, get back up and try again to follow Jesus as best you can.

In the kindness of Jesus,  
Pastor Jeff



**Our next Spaghetti Dinner will be Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup> from 4 – 7 p.m.**

The dinner provides many things: 1) an opportunity to demonstrate the warm hospitality of our church good, hearty, inexpensive dinner that demonstrates the warm hospitality of our church, bringing people from the larger community into our church home; 2) an opportunity for forging friendships within our church family for those who share in the meal, as well as those who work

to present the meal; 3) fund raising for both our church **AND** a mission project of the month. A schedule of volunteers to work on the dinners each month is being developed, and if you haven't already expressed your willingness to serve this way (as 30 people already have) you are invited to speak to Barb Bradley, Connie Keller or Pastor Jeff.

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Anyone interested in becoming a member of the church is invited to share your interest with Pastor Jeff. New members will be received on Pentecost Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup>.

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United Methodist Women

Looking back...our group enjoyed fellowship and food at the Crusin' Diner, with 50's candies in goodie bags by Denise. Next, join us, and bring a friend.....

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 1<sup>st</sup> – 7:00 PM**  
**Program – To be announced**  
**Refreshments will be served**  
**Come join us!**

May 2 – National Day of Prayer  
May 12 – Mother's Day

May 27 – Memorial Day  
May 29 – Cakes for Morris View Nursing Home

Get well wishes to those of you who are ill, and  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY to those of you celebrating this month with Anna Weiss, Lyn Krisa, Doris Bradley and Lois Kelshaw.

God Bless,  
Doris Bradley

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



The Youth Group is taking up a collection of small camp items and/or monies to donate to the boys at St. Peter's Orphanage in Denville. The boys go to a summer camp session every summer and are need of specific items to bring with them, especially water shoes and rain jackets. If you are interested in helping out, please see a youth member at the table they will have set up during coffee hour and enjoy a mini s'more! You can donate

items or money. Deadline is May 26<sup>th</sup>.

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**A day time men's discussion group** with Pastor Jeff meets **Fridays at 1 p.m.** at the church. We read together short readings and discuss them during the 90 minute sessions. Any men available in the day time are invited to join us.

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**Pastor Jeff** will appear on the cable television program **"Mountain Views" on Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m.** on WMBC which is channel 20 on cablevision and channel 18 on Verizon. He preaches and then discusses his sermon with the host.

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On the second Thursday of every other month our congregation provides dinner for the families at **Homeless Solutions**. Our next scheduled dinner is **June 13th**. If you would like to take a turn in helping with this outreach, or if you would like to donate money towards the expenses, please speak to Laurie Wilken or Connie Wallace.

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**"Living in the Light"** meets on **Wednesdays** promptly at **11 a.m.** in Pastor Jeff's office. Pastor Jeff leads a Bible Study of the scripture lesson he will preach on the following Sunday, followed by a guided mediation and prayer. Anybody who is available at that time of day is warmly invited to attend.

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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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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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### **CHURCH CALENDAR and SCHEDULING EVENTS**

The church calendar on our website [www.parsippanyumc.com](http://www.parsippanyumc.com) has been updated. The calendar in the church office is no longer being updated.

If you want to schedule an event, you need to look at the website calendar to see if the date is available. All requests for use of the church facilities need to be approved by the trustees, Connie Keller or Amy Gripp.

**WHY THE UNITED METHODIST WOMEN SELL SHOPRITE GIFT CARDS**

If you could make a safe investment and get 200% interest, would you so that? Of course you would. At the beginning of each year the UMW buys \$1000 worth of ShopRite gift cards for \$950 and sells them over and over each week. By the end of the year, we have made and given the church budget about \$2000 and have our original \$1000 back. That's 200% interest for the year. If you shop at Shoprite and pay by cash or check, you can help us do all this by buying the cards for your use or for the Food Bank. 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,  
Betty Polen, Treasurer, 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@mhmlender.com](mailto: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 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).



1 <sup>st</sup>	Beth Cogan	15 <sup>th</sup>	Leigh Colletto
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Alison Cogan	15 <sup>th</sup>	Garin Roelefs
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Anna Weiss	17 <sup>th</sup>	Don Gatto
4 <sup>th</sup>	Norma Aragon (Owens)	18 <sup>th</sup>	Kayla Hook (Beckler)
5 <sup>th</sup>	Joshua Christian	19 <sup>th</sup>	Doris Bradley
6 <sup>th</sup>	Henry Isaacks	19 <sup>th</sup>	Lyn Krisa
7 <sup>th</sup>	Dawn Colletto	20 <sup>th</sup>	Susan Elbin
8 <sup>th</sup>	David Brodock	22 <sup>nd</sup>	Zak Jernstrom
10 <sup>th</sup>	Michael Smith	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Georgia Zibura
10 <sup>th</sup>	Paul Larsen, Jr.	25 <sup>th</sup>	Darlene Miller
11 <sup>th</sup>	Erika Gripp	26 <sup>th</sup>	Lois Kelshaw
12 <sup>th</sup>	George Hawkins, Sr.	29 <sup>th</sup>	Darren Yacenko
12 <sup>th</sup>	Katie Rose Milhalko	29 <sup>th</sup>	Lois Pongo
14 <sup>th</sup>	Kaitlyn Sklow	31 <sup>st</sup>	Diane Anderson
14 <sup>th</sup>	Michelle Hess	31 <sup>st</sup>	Nichole Raier
		31 <sup>st</sup>	Jessica Maclay

**MAY ANNIVERSARIES**

20<sup>th</sup> Ted & Bekki Schnetzer





**SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR MAY**

May 5<sup>th</sup>

Acts 16:9-15  
Revelation 21:10,22-22:5  
John 14:23-29

May 12<sup>th</sup>

Acts 16:16-34  
Revelation 22:12-14,16-17,20-21  
John 17:20-26

May 19<sup>th</sup>

Acts 2:1-21  
Romans 8:14-17  
John 14:8-17

May 26<sup>th</sup>

Proverbs 8:1-4,22-31  
Romans 5:1-5  
John 16:12-15

**MOTHER'S DAY BULLETIN INSERT**



Mother's Day is right around the corner, and the UMW will be sponsoring their annual special Mother's Day insert to appear in the bulletin on May 12th. The UMW offers you the opportunity to honor or memorialize your mother, grandmother, aunt, etc. by placing her name on a special bulletin insert. \$1.00 donation per name is requested. Please use the form below and give it, together with your donation, to Doris Bradley by May 5<sup>th</sup>.

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In HONOR of:

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\_\_\_\_\_

Placed by:

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In Memory of:

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Placed by:

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\_\_\_\_\_

Total Names \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Bishop John R. Schol  
New Jersey Area  
Greater New Jersey Annual Conference  
The United Methodist Church  
1001 Wickapecko Drive, Ocean, NJ 07712  
Office: (732) 359 - 1010 / Fax: (732) 359 - 1019  
bishopjohnschol@gnjumc.org

To a people called United Methodist. Grace and peace in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
October 29 -- December 14 -- April 15.

New Jersey/New York -- Sandy Hook -- Boston.

Superstorm -- Shootings -- Bombing

One could add other dates, sites and events to these where fear, death and destruction changed lives, landscapes and the way we think about our times.

I call upon each of us to pray for the victims and their families who suffered death and injury at the Boston Marathon. This senseless killing is not of God but a sign of a fallen world where evil rises against the force of God's beloved community. Our hearts and love go out to all of the families who have suffered in this tragedy.

In my prayers for the victims, I meditated on Psalm 121 – *I lift up my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from? My help comes in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. Say to those with a fearful heart, be strong, your God will come and save you.*

Recently, a pastor asked me if the tragedies we are experiencing are signs of the end times. *The end times* is a metaphor for when the world will come to end as some read in the scriptures. It is clear to me that we are living in *end times*. The world as we know it is coming to an end. Parts of creation that we have taken for granted for so long are fragile. Areas we once saw only for our enjoyment are calling for creative care that respects and works with nature rather than only seeing nature for our own enjoyment.

Liberties and security that we once took for granted are at risk. We have vacillated between dialogue and entrenchment, peace and war to settle deep division in our society and world and find that neither resolves the ageless question of good and evil.

For me it all became clearer as I watched the images on the news of the blasts in Boston. After the third or fourth time I watched it, I noticed a pattern. At the time of the blasts I saw people running from the blasts AND I saw other people running toward the blasts. I saw some people shrink in a crouching motion and I saw a police officer who actually made his body bigger to shield people from the blasts. Which are you?

In life, I watch some people run from the great challenges of our time and I watch others with faith, daring and courage step into the breach. Today, I watch some people shrink before challenges to our faith and creation while others rise up with faith.

Today is a day for prayer and healing. I invite you today and in your churches this weekend to pray for people who are suffering and mourning. But tomorrow is a day for you to ask yourself, will I move toward the challenge or run from or even just stand by and watch while our world groans with pain? Will your faith shrink when tested or will the God in you become larger so that the world sees and experiences a faithful witness.

This I can assure you, the world as we once knew it is no more. A way of life for the church, our society and creation itself has changed. Christian faith and experience today is more like the first century church experience. It calls for disciples to move toward the great challenges and to allow God to rise up within us. Our help is in the name of the Lord!

Keep the faith!

John Schol, Bishop

The United Methodist Church

Greater New Jersey Conference

# May 2013

## United Methodist Church of Parsippany

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																																								
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<p><b>5</b></p> <p>Worship 10:30AM</p>	<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p>7:15 AM Men's Breakfast</p>	<p><b>8</b></p> <p>11:00 AM Living in the Light</p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p>7:00 PM Bell Choir</p> <p>7:45 PM Adult Choir</p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p>1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group</p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>Spaghetti Dinner 4-7 pm</p>																																																																																																								
<p><b>12</b></p> <p>Worship 10:30AM</p>	<p><b>13</b></p>	<p><b>14</b></p> <p>7:15 AM Men's Breakfast</p>	<p><b>15</b></p> <p>11:00 AM Living in the Light</p>	<p><b>16</b></p> <p>7:00 PM Bell Choir</p> <p>7:45 PM Adult Choir</p>	<p><b>17</b></p> <p>1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group</p>	<p><b>18</b></p>																																																																																																								
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<p><b>26</b></p> <p>Worship 10:30AM</p>	<p><b>27</b></p>	<p><b>28</b></p> <p>7:15 AM Men's Breakfast</p>	<p><b>29</b></p> <p>11:00 AM Living in the Light</p>	<p><b>30</b></p> <p>7:00 PM Bell Choir</p> <p>7:45 PM Adult Choir</p>	<p><b>31</b></p> <p>1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group</p>																																																																																																									