

# HILLTOPPER

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

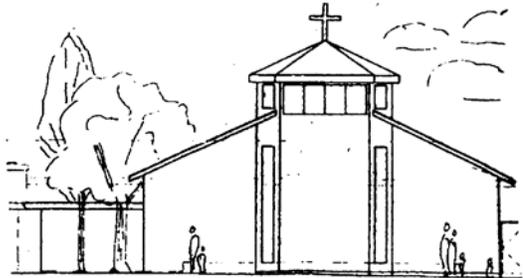
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*Sunday Worship Celebration: 10:30 a.m.*

*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"*



## OCTOBER 2013



**Ham Dinner - Saturday - October 19, 4 to 7 p.m.** We'll need help for this major fundraiser. Help is needed to set up, serve, work in the kitchen and clean up. Please see Barb Bradley or Connie Keller if you're interested in lending a hand. **We also need homemade CAKES to serve for dessert.**

Prices are:

Adults: \$14, Sr. Citizens: \$11, Children 6-12 - \$6

Doris Bradley has tickets you can buy, or tickets you can sell to your friends!

If you have any ideas for advertising and ways to get more people to our dinner, please speak to Barb or Connie.



**HAPPY APPLE BAZAAR – Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> --- 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.** We're planning to have our usual jewelry, scarves and hats, bakery, and books. **The rest will be garage sale, hopefully by a few members who would like to sell some stuff!** Our garage sale event in the spring was a big success, so we're hoping we can combine the best of both worlds. Look for further info at church and next month's newsletter. Speak to Barb or Connie if you would like to participate.



*“A sermon preached by Pastor on September 1, 2013 based upon Luke 14:1, 7 – 14 entitled, “The Place Where Everybody Belongs.”*

The society in which Jesus lived is referred to as having been an “honor and shame” culture -- the idea being, people were intensely aware of their status and reputation within the community. Beyond the concerns of simply surviving, the MOST IMPORTANT THING in peoples’ minds was the measure of respect they received from their neighbors. It was this aspect of their society that Jesus was observing when he took notice of all the attention that was given to the seating arrangements at dinner parties. Where a person sat – how far or close he (and in this case it was all men) was to the head table where the host sat – was an expression of his status.

This focus on honor created intense anxiety in such settings. The seating wasn’t all pre-set, so a man would try and take a respectable position at the table. But how high could he reach? He didn’t want to sit where people would look down on him -- especially people he felt had no right to look down on him. But the worst possible thing would be to take a seat that would lead to his humiliation – to have the host come and tell him to move to a lower seat. That would be devastating.

Two thousand years later have passed since Jesus made his observations. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Nobody knows this more than teenagers. You or I could walk into a high school and we’d see just a blur of kids, but a kid in that school would see clear distinctions. They’d know the various groups there were to belong to, and the status that belonging to these different groups could bring. They’d be able to tell you the status kids had within these groups, and their overall coolness rating in the school.



There’s the jocks, the smart kids, the band kids, the drama kids. One of the reasons kids turn to drugs is that it provides a place to belong – with the other druggies. You’ve got to have some group to belong to -- somebody to sit with at the lunch table.

And then there are the kids who end up not belonging anywhere -- the kids at the bottom of the social ladder. It can be really, really tough being one of these kids. It’s lonely, and it can make it near impossible to feel a sense of self-worth. And it’s kids such as these who are most often picked on and humiliated. “Who said you could sit at our table?!”

Why are kids so cruel to these kids at the bottom of the social ladder?

There’s probably a host of reasons. If they have somebody beneath them to humiliate, it can seem to bolster their sense of having a place on the status ladder. Maybe they have their own experience of rejection in the jungle that can be teenage social interaction, and resentments they feel they need to take out on somebody.

Whatever the reason, the capacity for cruelty in us human beings is pretty profound.

There was an article yesterday in the New York Times about something that took place in Greenwich, Connecticut. Greenwich is like Mountain Lakes – a community that would be

considered one of the best places in the world to live. There is no poverty, no homelessness -- little crime to speak of. Pretty much everybody in Greenwich is well off, economically speaking.



Seven years ago an eight year old boy named Bart Palosz moved from Poland to Greenwich with his family. From the start, Bart didn't fit in. Boys picked on him, taunting Bart for his accent. According to his older sister, they'd push Bart into bushes, or downstairs – smash his new Droid cellphone -- Stuff like that.

The bullying had been going on for a long time. His parents had notified the school numerous times, and certain actions had been taken. Bart told his parents things had gotten better.

In the ninth grade, Bart had his older sister there with him in school. She'd try to look out for him. But this year his sister had gone off to start college.

This past Tuesday at the age of 15 Bart started his sophomore year. After the first day back at school, Bart came home and killed himself.

As you would expect, the school and the town are devastated.

When somebody takes their life, there are always multiple factors that lead him to that point. But one thing is clear: bullying – a function of intense anxiety over honor and shame – was a significant factor in Bart deciding to take his life.

Kids like Bart are the proverbial canary in the coalmine – the extreme cases which call attention to the brutality that can be quietly present in the way students routinely treat one another.

But it's not just high schools, of course. This sort of brutality can be found pretty much anywhere people interact.

Jesus calls us to be an antidote to all this brutality. He says, in essence, that we should opt out of this whole business of worrying about how high a seat we can get without being humiliated. Take the lowest seat. Sit with the untouchables. Be the servant of others. He washed his own disciples' feet to give them a concrete example of what this looks like.



There is no status in the kingdom of God there is no status – we are all children of God, together.

When you enter a church community, you should be entering an alternate universe. Status as the world knows has no place in church. The person who has been here for ever doing all kinds of great stuff for



the church – although they are valued and appreciated, they hold no more status than the person who just walked in the door. And if the church isn't living in this alternative universe, it isn't being the Body of Christ.

Tony Campollo tells the story about a high school where some people recognized that a lot of students get left out of the circle on prom night.

It becomes a night when the kids who have always been put down and hurt are hurt and put down even more. So many kids are left home the night of the prom. They don't have dates. So much sadness.

Somebody came up with the idea of running a prom for people over the age of 65. They sent out an invitation to all the local old folks' homes and put it on the radio: *"Everybody over the age of 65 is invited to the high school for a dance."* The word went out the churches.

As expected, they got a lot more old ladies than old men. But they were prepared.

The place was packed with old ladies dancing with young kids. They danced, danced and danced until midnight. Then they said to the old ladies, "You have to go home." When it was all over, the young people agreed: This was the most fun they had ever had – the best dance and party they had ever attended. It was God's kind of party – a place where people stopped worrying whether they were good enough, and everybody felt like they belonged.

There was another story in the news recently that could have turned out horribly. A man with an AK 47-style rifle and 500 rounds of ammunition walked into an elementary school and fired shots at police officers as they surrounded the building.

The gunman was a 20 year old with a history of mental health issues named Michael Hill.

Antoinette Tuff works at that school as a bookkeeper, and somehow she ended up alone in the school office with Michael.

She has no special training – other than the training that comes from attending Church every Sunday and trying to follow Jesus.



Antoinette got on the phone to the police dispatcher and became the mediator between Michael and the police.



Over the course of a remarkable 24 minute conversation recorded on tape between Antoinette and the dispatcher, with Michael in the background, she goes from calmly addressing him as "sir" to tenderly calling him "baby." Michael tells her that he wants to die. She talks to him the way you might talk to a frightened child.

Antoinette talks to him about the hard times she's gone through in life, establishing a point of connection with Michael.

14:43 *"Well don't feel bad, baby. My husband just left me after 33 years. But – yes you do! I mean I'm sitting here talking to you about it. I got a son who's multiple disabled."*

Antoinette saw Michael as a human being, not a monster, and she tried to help him. Gradually, she managed to convince him not to take his own life, to put down his gun and give himself up.

19:37 *"It's going to be all right sweetheart, I just want you to know that I love you though, Okay and I'm proud of you. That's a good thing you did just giving up. We all go through something in life... No you don't want that -- I thought the same thing. You know I tried to commit suicide last year after my husband left me. But look at me now. I'm still working and everything is okay."*

I was particularly struck by these words of Antoinette's: *"We all go through something in life."* Somewhere in life, we all of us have been the people who get invited to the kingdom feast: the crippled, the maimed, the poor, and the blind. We've all been through something. We're all in this together.

When it was over, Antoinette admitted that she had never been so scared in her life. But she stayed. She told Michael she loved him, and that she would be praying for him.

Without her brave and tender compassion, there might well have been another Sandy Hook Elementary School. This not to say that all such tragedies could be averted if people were willing to do what Antoinette did that day. But in this case, her bravery and her compassion won the day.

In a little while we will be sharing Holy Communion. We come in response to the gracious invitation that Jesus extends. We come claiming no special privilege for ourselves, shoulder to shoulder with Antoinette, Michael and Bart, and everyone else whose hope is in the grace of God. We come to the place where everybody belongs.

In the kindness of Jesus,  
Pastor Jeff

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If you've been collecting change over the summer for the sake of the church, now is the time to bring your collection in to church. And thanks! Every bit helps!



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United Methodist  
Women

Looking back...Betty Polen led us through an evening of fun with her stash of many challenging puzzles. Some (like me) left them unsolved. They were really fun.

All women of the church family are invited to our programs. Join us and bring a friend.....

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2<sup>nd</sup> – 7:00 PM**

**Program – Speaker From  
Heartfelt Home Care of Denville  
Refreshments will be served**

Oct. 14 – Columbus Day  
Oct. 19 – Ham Dinner

Oct. 30 – Pie Day – Morris View NH  
Oct. 31 – Halloween

Get well wishes to those of you who are ill, and  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY to those of you celebrating this month with Diane Anastasi.

God Bless,  
Doris Bradley

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



Looking ahead, our **annual Church Conference** with our district superintendent, Rev. Steve Bechtold will be **Tuesday, November 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m.** All members are encouraged to attend. The Staff Parish Relations Committee meets before hand with Steve at 6:30 p.m.

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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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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.

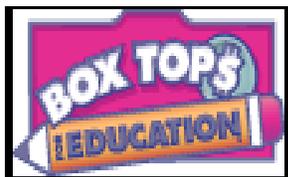
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The Cogan's are couponing! We are collecting coupons to help purchase food for the Parsippany Food Pantry. We also have a book of coupons that any church member is welcome to browse and take any coupons that they could use. We plan on getting to church at 10am on Sundays to cut and organize, helpers welcome. Please save your extra Sunday coupons for us!

On the second Thursday of every other month our congregation provides dinner for the families at **Homeless Solutions**. Our next scheduled dinner is **October 10th**. If you would like to take a turn in helping with this outreach, or if you would like to donate money towards the expenses, please speak to Laurie Wilken or Connie Wallace.

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The local schools collect both Box Tops and Labels for Education. Anyone interested in saving these off of your general purchases can bring them to church, and one of the families with kids will be GLAD to hand them in. The closest elementary school, Troy Hills, uses the money earned from Box Tops to purchase new books for the school library. Bring them in and give them to Alison Cogan if you have no other school to donate them to.

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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.

## Thoughts on Stewardship, by David Turner

*“Share Everything”*

One of my favorite books is *“All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten”* by Robert Fulghum. In the first chapter he sets forth his “Credo,” his personal statement of belief. It begins this way:

*Share everything.*

*Play fair.*



*Don't hit people.*

*Put things back where you found them.*

*Clean up your own mess.*

His Credo goes on from there. But I want to go back to his first two words: “share everything.” If you think about it, this is a radical statement. It sounds like something Jesus might say.

The truth of it struck me afresh this morning when I got up this morning. I shuffled over to the bathroom sink, turned the cold water handle to wash my face, and... Nothing. No water. ...Not good.

A little later it occurred to me how grateful I would have been if someone had knocked on my door with a basin of water in their hands and offered it to me.

“Share everything.” ...You know, when I look at my life, I realize I'm not very good at that. Yet I am convinced that one of the reasons God has put us on this good earth is to learn this very thing.

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The mayor of Parsippany proclaimed September 17<sup>th</sup> Harold Gantert Day, honoring the man we have known and loved for so many years. At the age of 91 Harold is an inspiration, with a humble, funny, gentle spirit.

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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.



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.

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**Christmas Play**

Pastor Jeff is once again in the process of writing a Christmas Play. If you would like to be a part of the production which will get busy with rehearsals in November, please let Pastor Jeff know.



**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 OCTOBER**

<u>Oct. 6<sup>th</sup></u> Lamentations 1:1-6 2 Tim. 1:1-14 Luke 17:5-10	<u>Oct. 13<sup>th</sup></u> Jeremiah 29:1,4-7 2 Tim. 2:8-15 Luke 17:11-19	<u>Oct. 20<sup>th</sup></u> Jeremiah 31:27-34 2 Tim. 3:14-4:5 Luke 18:1-8	<u>Oct. 27<sup>th</sup></u> Joel 2:23-32 2 Tim. 4:6-8,16-18 Luke 18:9-14
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**OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS**

3 <sup>rd</sup> Linda Routhier	16 <sup>th</sup> Mark Chauhan
6 <sup>th</sup> Diane Anastasi	18 <sup>th</sup> Donroy Gounaud
8 <sup>th</sup> June Schnetzer	19 <sup>th</sup> Brenden Laux
9 <sup>th</sup> Jean Montecuollo	21 <sup>st</sup> Gordon Routhier
9 <sup>th</sup> Charles Nye	24 <sup>th</sup> Carrie Correale
10 <sup>th</sup> Keith Hawkins	25 <sup>th</sup> Kathy Isaacks
10 <sup>th</sup> Mae Lange	27 <sup>th</sup> Jeanne Weintraub
11 <sup>th</sup> Bert Morris	30 <sup>th</sup> Alyssa Letsch
14 <sup>th</sup> Jahn Schnetzer	

**OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES**

9 <sup>th</sup> Gordon & Linda Routhier
10 <sup>th</sup> Kathy & Henry Isaacks
19 <sup>th</sup> Jim & Karen Steen

## Hunger in America by Pastor Jeff

Recently I watched a powerful documentary on hunger in America with a remarkable Gospel inspired title: “A Place at the Table.” Jesus invited the outcasts of his day – poor people whose lives didn’t measure up to the standards of those who were well off – to have a place at his table with him. The Pharisees stood aloof and passed judgment.

I heard some challenging statistics. Over a million people in New Jersey are “food insecure” which means that on a regular basis – perhaps every month when their money is spent on basic bill survival – they have no money left over food. A large portion of these food insecure people are children, who are forced to go to school hungry.



To qualify for Federal Assistance Programs, a family of four with two pre-school children must make less than \$22,000. A study commissioned by the United Way concluded that in New Jersey, where the cost of living is much higher than most other parts of the country, such a family would actually require \$58,000 to survive. (You can find the report at [UnitedWayNNJ.org/ALICE](http://UnitedWayNNJ.org/ALICE).) In order to make that much it would require two full time incomes in which \$15 an hour is earned.

Who makes less than \$15 an hour? To name a few -- the average retail salespersons, cashiers, janitors, stock clerks, food prep, waiters, receptionist, teacher assistants, packers, home health aides, landscape workers, and child care workers.

Morris County is the 7<sup>th</sup> wealthiest county in America. There is an estimated 38,000 persons in our county who fall under the definition of “food insecure.” Consistently people who need such assistance describe experiencing feelings of shame, failure, loss of worth.



PROVERBS 25:21

At the viewing of the documentary representatives of the Interfaith Food Pantry of Morris County were on hand. They said that last year they provided assistance to 5000 families. Over half of these families had at least one full time income. Increasingly in recent years they have seen persons coming for assistance who formerly held middle management positions providing comfortable incomes. With the downsizing of their companies, they found themselves forced to reach out for help to feed their families.

If we aren’t “food insecure,” we would be aware that it is “there but for the grace of God go I.”

I want to cast a vision to our congregation. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if somewhere in the future our church could host a monthly dinner that would be free for anyone who needs it. We could offer it towards the end of the month when the money a family has to pay the bills with runs out.

If this vision touches something in the imagination of your heart, please let me know.

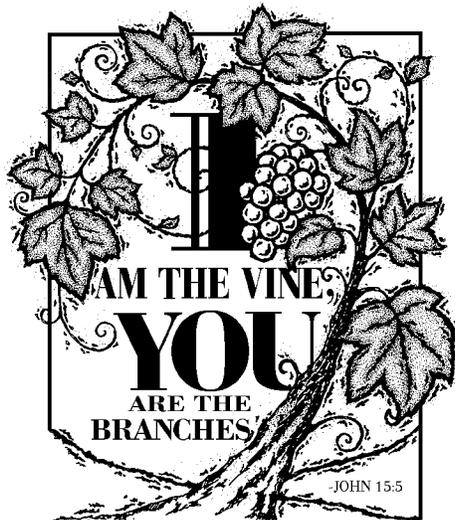


### A Future with Hope Mission Fund Goal

The clergy and lay representatives from our 580 congregations in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference approved a campaign at our meeting in June to raise \$12 million dollars for critical and urgent mission. This includes:

- \$7 million for Sandy relief and recovery. The total budget \$21.8 million to restore 300-500 homes of low income, elderly and disabled people. Our ministry will work with the people who do not have insurance or do not have enough funding from other sources. These are the most vulnerable in our society.
- \$2 million for Imagine No Malaria. A child dies every 60 seconds from malaria. Our fund will save an estimated 50,000 children.
- \$3 million for local church mission. Twenty-five percent of every dollar our church raises will stay in our congregation to be used for to start a new mission project in our community.

In the near future, each of us will be given the opportunity to contribute to this noble cause. It would be a wonderful way to celebrate the birth of Jesus – to give gifts towards helping those less fortunate than ourselves.



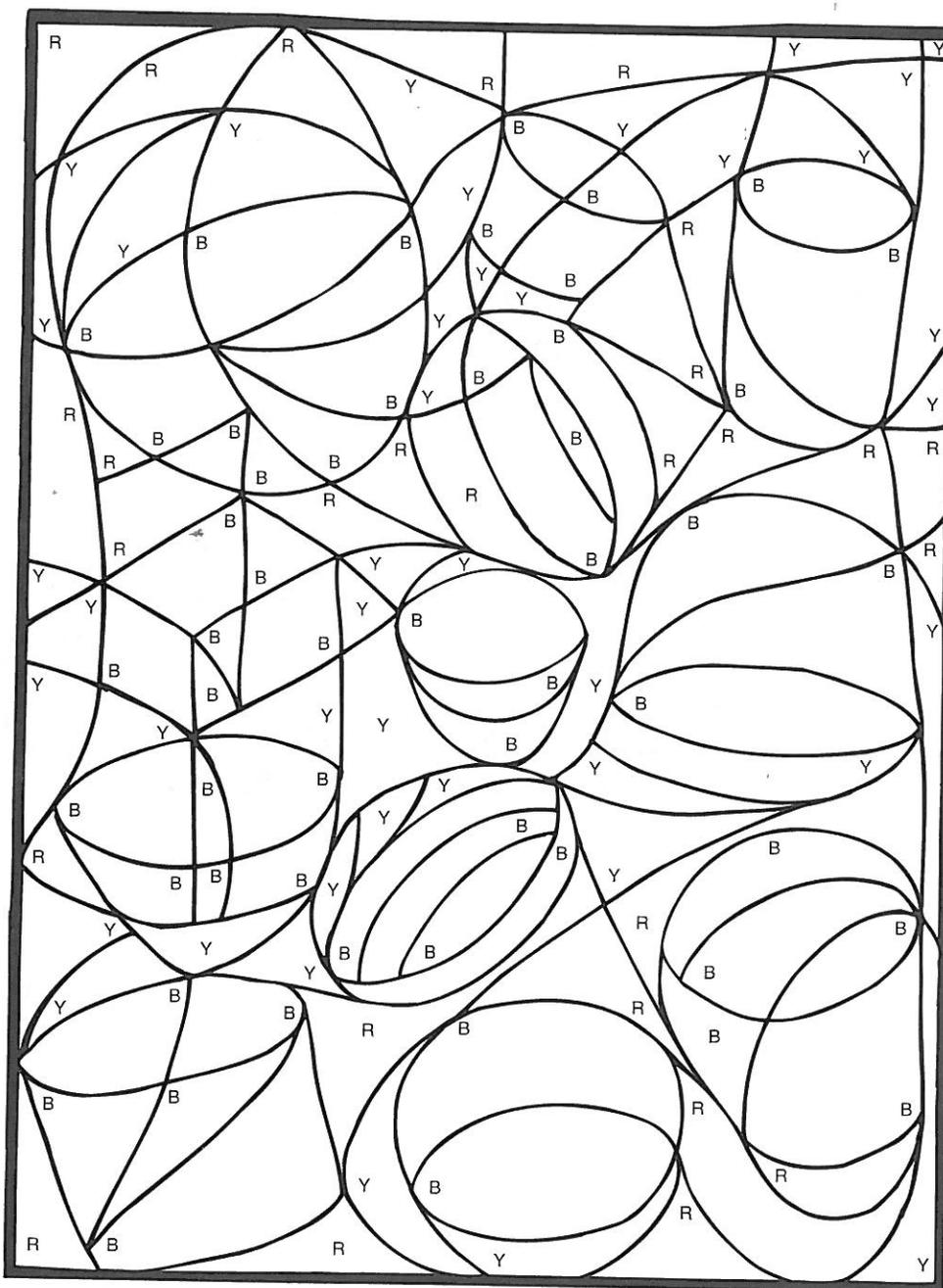
# More Than Enough

Jesus Feeds  
5,000

—John 6

When Jesus fed the great crowd of people starting with only two little fish and five loaves of barley bread, God provided more than enough food. After everyone had eaten all that they wanted, Jesus' followers gathered up the leftovers. How much extra food was there?

Color each space that contains a "y" yellow. Color each space that contains a "b" brown. Color each space that contains a "r" red. Count how many baskets full of food were left over.



# October 2013

## United Methodist Church of Parsippany

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																	
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