

HILLTOPPER

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

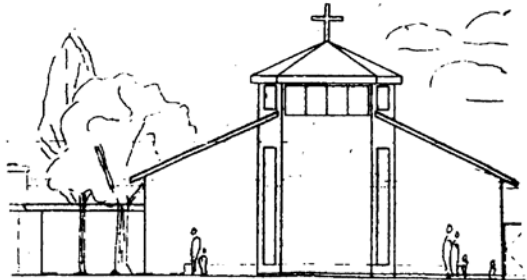
903 So. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054 (973) 887-4657

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

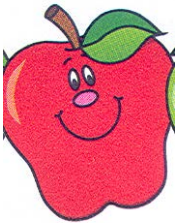
Sunday Worship Celebration: 10:30 a.m.

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"



NOVEMBER 2013



HAPPY APPLE BAZAAR – Saturday, November 2nd --- 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.

We're in need of lots of homemade bakery to sell --- cookies, cakes, cupcakes, pies, bars, loaf cakes, candies, etc. All varieties welcome.

We can also still use your gently used jewelry to sell. Please bring it to church as soon as possible and give it to Karen Wilk or Diane Anastasi.

Set up will be during the day and evening on Friday, Nov. 1st. Please let Barb or Connie know if you have any specific needs.

If you are available to help out that day, please speak to Barb or Connie.

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6:30 p.m.

Our **annual Church Conference** will take place **Tuesday, November 5th at 7:30 p.m.** in our sanctuary. Our district superintendent, Rev. Steve Bechtold will be on hand as we celebrate the ministry given to us by Jesus and elected officers for the coming year. All church members are encouraged to attend.

The Staff Parish Relations Committee meets before hand with Steve at

From the
PASTOR

A sermon preached on October 13, 2013 based upon Luke 17:11-19, entitled "Out in the Border Land."

17:11 "On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee."

Jesus travels through a no-man's land, the border between two separate people – the Samaritans and the Jews -- with a long history of hating one another. Their religious leaders taught them it was wrong to have any contact with the opposite group – neither was to enter each other's

territories.

But Jesus, rebel that he was, didn't obey such instructions. We hear of a time he sat by a Samaritan well and conversed with a woman from the village there. On another occasion, when he did not receive a welcome when passing through a Samaritan village, the disciples, heeding the ancient hatred, offered to call down fire on the Samaritans like the old prophet Elijah did in the 'good old days.' For such a suggestion, Jesus rebukes them like the time he rebuked Peter. On another occasion Jesus told a story in which a Samaritan travels through Jewish territory and unlike the Jewish religious authorities shows compassion on a man left beaten at the side of the road.

Despite their ancient hostility, the Jews and the Samaritans weren't so very different from one another. Centuries back, they had been one people. They were both descendants of the Hebrew people Moses led through the wilderness on the journey to the promised land.

But what united them seemed to pale in comparison to what divided them, and as is so often the case, their divisions were given the stamp of approval by their religion.

The ancient hostility of these people reminds us of other ancient hostilities. The Jews and Palestinians, for instance. Closer to home, Democrats and Republicans. What does God think of these walls – these long nurtured hostilities?

17:12-13 "As Jesus entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!'"

In this borderland, Jesus encounters a group of ten lepers. People were referred to as being lepers who suffered from a variety of skin diseases that could be quite painful, and thought to be contagious, rendering a person ritually unclean. The suffering caused by the disease was compounded by the fact that its diagnosis obliged a person to leave his or her family and village and go and camp out in the border land, as instructed by the Book of Leviticus. The disease made them outcasts, literally untouchable.

In these shadow lands, the lepers survived as beggars, crying out from a distance. It was an act of piety instructed in the Torah to give food to the lepers – but always from a distance. There could be no personal contact, for to touch a leper would render a person unclean as well.

Elsewhere in the Gospel we hear of Jesus defying this particular teaching of the authorities when he does in fact reach out to touch a leper to heal him. For Jesus, compassion trumped the keeping of the Law.

As Jesus passes by the lepers that day, they cry out to him. Presumably they have heard stories of Jesus healing people, and so they call out to him – collectively – for mercy.

It strikes me as not an insignificant point that they do NOT cry out, "Master, have mercy on me." No, they cry for mercy on "us." Something has happened out there in that border land whereby their common plight has knit them together. "We're in this together."



What is particularly striking about this togetherness is that, as we will find out shortly, the ten lepers include at least one Samaritan.



17:14a “When Jesus saw them, he said to them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’”

The Law instructed that if a leper should experience healing, before they could be restored to their family and community they had to first go to see the priests who would inspect them. If the priests judged them to be truly free from their disease, they would give them a certificate that declared them no longer unclean, permitting them to return home.

So in a sense, what Jesus is commanding is “putting the cart before the horse.” They are not yet healed, but they are to go to the priest, *as if they were already healed*.

17:14b “And as they went, they were made clean.”

And so they obey Jesus, acting *as if* they were healed, and in doing so, they *are* healed. How did this happen? We don’t know for sure. Our first assumption is that Jesus healed them from a distance after they left him, and maybe that is what happened.



But in Luke’s Gospel, it isn’t just Jesus who has the power to heal. The seventy disciples he sends out to proclaim that the kingdom of God is near are also told to heal the sick, which, to their amazement, they find they can do. It’s as if Jesus is saying that God is more near – more willing to heal and bless – than any of us dare to believe.

And at the end of this story, as Jesus says what he said elsewhere to two other persons who received healing in his presence, “**Your** faith has made you well,” attributing the source of their healing within the people themselves.

Could there be more power within ourselves to claim healing than we realize?

17:15-16 “When one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.”



So all ten are healed, but only one of them in the discovery of his healing turns around and, overtaken with a powerful desire to praise God, falls on his knees to thank Jesus. The story doesn’t tell us what was going on in the minds of the other nine. We can only guess.

Presumably their focus quickly shifts to where they are going – first the priest – but then to their families, their villages. They are going back to their **old** life.

The Samaritan stops first. He is overtaken with the experience of gratitude. He needs to thank someone – thank God – thank this man who put him in touch with God.

We, too, have been blessed, in more ways than we can name and acknowledge. The story asks us, what is it that holds us back from experiencing the fullness of pure gratitude?

17: 17-18 “Then Jesus asked, ‘Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’”

Life has a way of taking us into that dark border land in which the ten lepers were living their lives until Jesus came along. The border land is that place in which – when we enter it -- the things we count on to feel secure in life suddenly fall away.

It is the place where we feel profoundly vulnerable. We can be lead there in many different ways. The sudden death of someone we love and count on... a diagnosis of a life-threatening illness for ourselves, or someone with whom we intimately share life... the loss of a job, or other kind of financial uncertainty... a major failure at something we invested ourselves heart and soul... a love relationship that becomes unhinged.

These are just a few of the paths to what I'm referring to as the borderland – the space inhabited by the ten lepers before they are healed.

No one would willingly choose to go into that space. It is too distressing.

But there are truths that are seen in the border land that are easily avoided when we're standing more firmly on familiar ground.

We see, for instance, how truly vulnerable, fragile, dependent we all really are. We like to think of ourselves as self-reliant, independent, in charge of our lives. But in truth, there is so much that is out of our control – things we rely on for our sense of security and stability. So much we take for granted – that is, until it is gone, or the possibility of its disappearance arises.

Here's something to think about. If you can't acknowledge your dependency and vulnerability, you can't experience gratitude.

And something else: The inability to acknowledge our vulnerability is related to the need we have to look down on other people – to consider oneself, and one's group – as superior to others.

Thrust into the borderland by the disease of leprosy, the distinction between Jew and Samaritan, and all other such distinctions, becomes meaningless. There is no mistaking the fact that they are all suffering the same way.

In the waiting room of an oncology doctor's office, all the ways people use to distinguish themselves – race, religion, age, socio-economic status – they all fall away. The thing that they all share in common suddenly is seen as far more significant than everything that divides them.

Out on the border land, we suddenly see that we really all are in this thing called life together.

And this too: Out in the borderland simple acts of kindness that previously seemed insignificant are now recognized as profoundly important. Nothing matters more than kindness.

17:19 “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.’

The suggestion here is that the one Samaritan who turned back to give thanks has been made whole on a deeper level than the other nine. They have all received a physical healing. But the gratitude of the one suggests that his soul has received a healing of his soul as well.

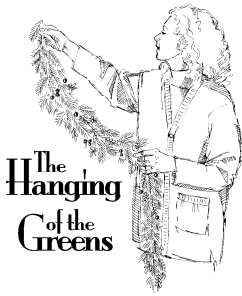
Perhaps, having received their physical healing, the focus of the nine is now on the return to their “old” life. There is much to be done to re-establish their places in their families and community. To some extent, however, this means leaving behind the truths they saw so clearly out in the border land -- to convince them selves once more that they are the masters of their lives. They will come to feel “entitled” again, and entitlement is the enemy of gratitude.

Before long, perhaps they will be sharing with their family and friends in the old familiar diminishing of the group to which they don't belong. They'll convince themselves again that they are superior: “Those Samaritans – they're not like us, good, hardworking, honest folk who love their families.”

Perhaps the one who turned back won't go back to his “old” life. He will go instead to a “new life” – one that keeps before him the truths he saw out there in the border land. There will be no limits on what kind of people he is allowed to feel compassion for. Having once been in the depths, he will feel compassion on any other person when they descend to the depths, no matter what it was that brought them there. He will walk in the world lightly, gently, kindly.

And although it will require him to acknowledge how fragile he is, he will experience gratitude day by day for the gift of life, and all that sustains it.

In the kindness of Jesus,
Pastor Jeff



to Connie Keller.

We will be gathering on **Saturday, Nov 30** to decorate the Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall and Narthex for the Christmas season. We'll get started at **10 am**. Coffee and donuts or bagels will be supplied and Christmas music will be playing! Everyone is welcome. Children are welcome too, as long as they are old enough to help.

Please come and join us if you can, even it's only for an hour. We usually are busy for 2 ½ - 3 hours. If have any questions or decorations you may want to donate to the cause, please reach out

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Christmas Play

Pastor Jeff has written another **original Christmas play** and rehearsals will begin on November 11th. The performances are scheduled for **Friday, December 13th at 7:30 p.m.**, **Saturday, December 14th at 7:30 p.m.** and **Sunday, December 15th at 6:30 p.m.** If you would like to help with the production, please speak to Pastor Jeff.

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United Methodist Women

Looking back...Polly, from Heartfelt Home Care in Denville, was an interesting speaker, providing important information concerning our health, the elderly, living wills - and even more current information about that – and about home care.

All women of the church family are invited to join us... and bring a friend.....

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6th – 7:00 PM
Program – Budget/Pledge/Program
Planning/Nominations
Refreshments will be served

Nov. 1 – World Community Day
Nov. 3 – Daylight Savings Ends
Nov. 5 – Election Day

Nov. 11 – Veteran’s Day
Nov. 28 – Thanksgiving
Nov. 30 – Hanging of the Greens

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

God Bless,
Doris Bradley

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

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 **December 12th**. 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.

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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.

Thoughts on Stewardship, by David Turner

“Enough”

I've been speaking to you more directly than usual about some of the financial strain our church is experiencing. And I got to tell you: I'm not entirely comfortable doing that. I imagine myself sitting among you, listening to this news. And I think, *“Wow. There's never enough!* How many people on our planet don't have what they need: food, water, medicine, a place to call “home”—whatever. And then there's our church. We may not be destitute but, like so many others, we're struggling to pay our bills.”



I take a look around the sanctuary, wondering what the rest of you are thinking. And that's when I see him. Jesus is standing at the back of our church, smiling and handing out bulletins to latecomers. I can't believe it. Jesus is ushering this morning! As I stare at him transfixed, he turns and looks at me. ...And he knows exactly what I'm thinking.



Jesus whispers something to Wes, hands him the bulletins, walks straight down the aisle, and sits down next to me. And he says, “O you of little faith. Why, David, do you fret about such things? Have you forgotten that your Father in heaven knows and cares about the needs of all his children—including you?” Why are you thinking: `There's never enough'? Of course there's enough! God has provided for the needs of every living creature ten times over!

“You're not in charge here, David. It's not your job to fix the needs of the world—or even those of your church. Your job is to care about them...do what you can...and walk with me... Do that and it will be more than enough.”

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CHURCH CALENDAR and SCHEDULING EVENTS

The church calendar on our website 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.

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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



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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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 NOVEMBER

Nov. 3
Habakkuk 1:1-4;2:1-4
2 Thess. 1:1-4, 11-12
Luke 19:1-10

Nov. 10
Haggai 1:15b-2:9
2 Thess. 2:1-5,13-17
Luke 20:27-38

Nov. 17
Isaiah 65:17-25
2 Thess. 3:6-13
Luke 21:5-19

Nov. 24
Jeremiah 23:1-6
Colossians 1:11-20
Luke 23:33-43



**BIRTHDAYS
&
ANNIVERSARIES
NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS**

1 st	Andrew Letsch	18 th	Joshua Gropper
2 nd	Marvin Labis	19 th	Ann Nye
2 nd	Richard Dierbach	19 th	Dawn Barhite
3 rd	Trudy Hunt	20 th	Rachel Elbin
4 th	Bob Scherzer	20 th	Bob Laux
4 th	Ken Barhite	22 nd	Janet Chauhan
7 th	Tom Smith	23 rd	Shawn Beckler
7 th	Maya Baretto	24 th	Dan Kinsley
9 th	George Hawkins, Jr.	24 th	David Kinsley
13 th	Carolyn Pasqua	26 th	Anita Baldwin
14 th	Bart Routhier	29 th	Garret Belanus
16 th	Pastor Jeff Edwards	30 th	Russ Schnetzer
17 th	Joanne Rich	30 th	Marissa Cogan



A Future with Hope Mission Fund Goal

Here's a way to celebrate the birthday of Jesus that would please the Birthday Boy

In early December Pastor Jeff will be inviting each of us, if we are able, to make Christmas gifts in honor of friends and family that will go to the Future with Hope Mission fund.



The people of the United Methodist Church are called to mission – A Future with Hope Mission Fund Campaign is a conference wide effort to raise more than \$12 million for local church mission, Imagine No Malaria, and Sandy Relief. People need us more than ever right now:

- 650,000 people will die of malaria this year alone;
- more than 22,000 of our neighbors are still displaced
- from their homes nearly a year after the storm; and;
- our local community has needs that only we can fill.

United Methodists are responding to the call.

Every family is unique. When a loved one needs care, family dynamics can change. Some families become stronger. Many others struggle with trying to agree on a multitude of decisions related to health, finances, legal issues, and day-to day responsibilities. This can lead to tension, additional stress, and emotional hurt.

Please join United Way Caregivers Coalition in Morris County for a Conference filled with information, resources, and education. Learn about legal considerations for families, how to identify communication patterns, and appropriate interventions that keep you and your loved one's best interest in mind.

Place: Arboretum on East Hanover Av, Morris Township

Date & Time: Saturday, November 16th; 8:30am to 1pm

Space is limited, to register or for questions call Stephanie Howland at 973.993.1160, x 139, or email to Stephanie.Howland@unitedwaynj.org



November 2013

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

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