

# HILLTOPPER

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

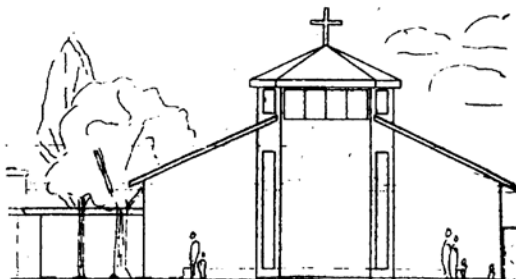
903 So. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054 (973) 887-4657

<http://www.parsippanyumc.com> E-Mail: [jedwards14@juno.com](mailto: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 2013



Hanging of the Greens --- **Saturday, November 30 – 10 a.m.**

**Pastor Jeff's Christmas Play, "Dreams: A Christmas Story" – Friday, Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 14, 7:00 p.m.; Sunday, Dec. 15, 7:00 p.m. ---**

The story of this year's Christmas play involves two quite different churches and deals with the themes of how religion can wound and exclude like King Herod as well as religion that can welcome and heal, shining the light of the One who came into the world in the Baby Jesus. See the flyer later in this Hilltopper.



Our Christmas Pageant and Cantata will be held during worship on **Sunday, December 22nd.**

Our **Christmas Eve** Candlelight Communion Service is at **7 p.m.** Join us as we celebrate the birth of our savior!



CANDLELIGHT  
SERVICE



This year Connie Kelelr will be taking orders for poinsettias **until Dec. 15**. Order forms will be included in the bulletins for the first 3 Sundays of Advent. The poinsettias are placed on the altar Dec. 22 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.



**This Christmas**, consider making gifts to loved ones of donations to some of the work of Jesus in our world... Sandy Recovery, Imagine No Malaria, and local church mission. After all, it is Jesus' birthday we're celebrating.

++++++



**A sermon preached on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013 based upon Luke 21:1 – 19, entitled "What Matters When Everything is Passing Away."**

From our point of view, the passage we just heard is pretty hard to penetrate. It sounds so very dark, indeed despairing: describing a world violently coming unhinged, full of catastrophe and war – a world where those who call Jesus "Lord" are persecuted, betrayed by family and friends. We recoil from this passage, and rightfully so. Where is the Good News in this?

In order to gain some insight as to where this passage comes from, it is necessary to try and imagine the world of the earliest Christians -- the first generation that lived immediately after Jesus' death and resurrection.



As portrayed by Luke in his sequel to his Gospel, the Book of Acts, the first years of the church was an incredibly dynamic time. They lived with a vivid sense of the Holy Spirit empowering them to live together in extraordinary community – one in which all the divisions and inequalities were overcome that separated and oppressed people: Men as more important than women; those considered slaves as being inferior to those who were free, the distinctions also of religion and culture, as in those separating Jews from Gentiles. All of these dividing walls, and forms of oppression were left behind, as the earliest Christians lived together as one, sharing everything they had in common.

The community the Holy Spirit created was one where love overflowed. As Luke describes it in Acts 2, the concept we take for granted of personal possessions simply disappeared. Sharing everything they had came easily, and so everyone was provided for, including the widows and orphans who in the larger society were often left destitute.

The abundance of love was powerful. The belief that would develop later on that it was Jesus alone who could do miracles, and that followers of Jesus shouldn't expect to be able to do the same, didn't exist. "Signs and wonders" were common place, as the sick were healed by prayer and the laying on of hands, and the lame walked.



The church grew in leaps and bounds, because there was no missing the fact that being a part of it changed lives profoundly, making people whole in unmistakable ways.



All of this was made possible in large part by the belief shared by all in the church that they were living at the very end of human history – that any day now Jesus would be returning in power and glory to establish His kingdom. In this context, it made perfect sense for them to give away all they had. To be attached to the things of this world when it was rapidly passing away was simply foolishness. And so in this context, the poor widow that Jesus praises for giving away all she has – her two copper coins – is simply doing what is in alignment with reality. It is the rich giving away only a small portion of what they have and clutching tightly to the rest who are being foolish, putting their attention and trust in something that isn't reality based.

There was no need to do “long range planning” – in fact, long range planning of any kind was seen as simply a distraction to living out the Gospel in the present moment. The focus was to live in simple trust of the Lord, giving love away with no thought for what they might receive in return, and every opportunity given to them to share the good news of the savior Jesus Christ.

In our passage, people marvel at the huge stones with their ornate masonry that made up the Temple, but Jesus predicts they will all one day come crashing down. From the point of view of the early church the idea of devoting time and energy into building a house of worship made no sense. This world was coming to an end, and so they simply met in one another's homes, or out in public, which worked fine and kept them from being weighed down with the anxiety that keeping up a building brings.

And so if we can imagine ourselves back in those times, perhaps we can see how the words Jesus spoke about the coming tribulations can be heard differently, not as doom and gloom, but simply stating the reality that it is foolish to become attached to the things of this world, and the necessity of staying focused on what matters – the things that truly give life.



“Do not be anxious about tomorrow... Seek ye first the kingdom of God...”

In short order this world of violence will be replaced by God's blessed Kingdom. Now although Luke is writing with those first years of the church in mind, describing wonderful dynamic quality of that earliest church, he actually wrote his two New Testament books 60 or 70 years after Jesus' death and resurrection, and so he is several years removed from the time of which he is describing. The initial glow of the church with its extraordinary spiritual power transforming community has begun to fade. The church of the time of which he is writing finds it tough to hold onto the idea that Jesus is returning any day now. By necessity the church finds itself compelled to plan and to worry about tomorrow. There are procedures and rules and contingency plans to put in place and then to tweak that will sustain communal life for the long haul. Like Martha hosting Jesus in the story found only in Luke's Gospel, it is hard to avoid becoming “anxious and troubled about many things” rather than, like Martha's sister Mary, choosing the “one thing needful.” The Church is becoming an “institution” rather than a living, breathing Christ-Body.



So, how do you regain that original dynamic, in-the-moment experience of the earliest Church? Perhaps you try to rev up the belief that Jesus is indeed still about to return any day, which is perhaps partly what Luke is trying to do in this passage, and what Christians have attempted to do throughout two thousand years of Church History. Think, most recently of Brother Camping. Convinced of what he told them, they gave away all they had, and in certain ways lived for a time in a manner that resembled the first century Church. But then the date that was supposed to bring the end of the world came and went and they were left with the likelihood of many years left to live on this earth, the fact they had given away their savings meant in all

likelihood that those remaining years would be spent with a great deal of anxiety over simple financial survival.

Although it is foolish, as Jesus himself said, to try and calculate when the world will come to an end, what is for certain is that the personal worlds of each one of us are coming to an end soon. It might be today, or it might be in fifty years, but either way, time is limited for sure. How do we live mindful of that fact so that we don't fritter away the time given to us with anxiety and resentment and all the other things that block love, which is the one and only thing that matters?

I remember watching a program about World War II veterans who had served in combat. They talked about a certain freedom from anxiety they had known in the years since the war. They were able to take risks in business, for instance, without being terrorized at the thought that the business might fail and go bankrupt. From their point of view, *hey, nobody's shooting at me*, so failing at a business was no big deal.



Rachel Naomi Remen similarly talks about how oftentimes people living with a life-threatening diagnosis describe that instead of feeling as though their stress level has gone up with the addition to their lives of all the work that had to be done to try to get well, they actually felt their stress level go down. A clarity came to them as to what truly matters and what doesn't matter. They left behind the stuff that didn't matter and life became simpler -- more focused on what was real. Similar to what Jesus conjures up in our passage of a future time of persecution for one of his followers, a certain peace can be found when the world's foundations are shaken, because one discovers a clarity that comes and the ability so clutching and all the stuff that is passing away.

Regarding our own lives, one thing is certain: so much of what the world puts forward as the key to happiness doesn't really make for happiness. It just provides more opportunity for stress. Buy a big house or a fancy car and you will end up spending a great deal of time worrying over your new possession. After the initial thrill fades, which takes, say, maybe a week, the house or the car is becomes something that is slowly fading away.

Spend money, however, helping someone less fortunate in an act of love, and there are riches stored up in heaven where nothing passes away.

In the kindness of Jesus,  
Pastor Jeff

+ + + + + + +

On October 27<sup>th</sup> we rejoiced in the baptism of both Heather Ann Weiss and her infant daughter, Charolette Rose Bryant. Heather was also received into the membership of our church as she affirmed her faith in Christ. Welcome Heather and Charolette!



+ + + + + + +

**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.





United Methodist  
Women

Looking back...the Business Meeting was well attended. The 2014 Budget was accepted and the 2014 slate of officers also accepted, and all other business quickly completed.

Next --- just fellowship and fun. Join us.....

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4<sup>th</sup> – 7:00 PM**

**1. Christmas Pot Luck Supper -**

**Bring a dish to feed 8**

**RSVP who & what dish to Karen Wilk (973-386-9889) or  
Doris Bradley**

**2. Installation of 2014 Officers**

**3. Christmas Gift Game - Bring a WRAPPED (~\$5) gift  
with YOUR NAME on the OUTSIDE so the recipient can  
pray for you all year.**

Dec 1 – World AIDS Day  
Dec 1 – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent

Dec 24 – Christmas Eve – Service 7 p.m.  
Dec 25 – Christmas 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 Terri Ferriss and Helen Miller.

God Bless,  
Doris Bradley

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

+ + + + + + +

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.

+ + + + + + +



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.



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.

+ + + + + +

**“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 meditation and prayer. Anybody who is available at that time of day is warmly invited to attend.

+ + + + + +

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.

+ + + + + +

**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.

+ + + + + +



**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)

+ + + + + +



Anyone aware of a **Prayer Concern** is invited to contact Grace Agre at 539-3855 who will put the **Prayer Chain** into action. If Grace cannot be reached, please contact Pastor Jeff. If you would like to add your name to the people who receive the prayer chain, please speak to Betty Polen.



**Parsippany Food Pantry** - Wes Sitgreaves has called to our attention the ongoing need of the Emergency Food Pantry in Parsippany in these difficult economic times. There are more and more families turning to the food pantry for help. You can bring your donations of non-perishable food items to the church any Sunday. Wes 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)



**SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR DECEMBER**

Dec 1

Isaiah 2:1-5  
Romans 13:11-14  
Matthew 24:36-44

Dec. 8

Isaiah 11:1-10  
Romans 15:4-13  
Matthew 3:1-12

Dec. 15

Isaiah 35:1-10  
James 5:7-10  
Matthew 11:2-11

Dec. 22

Isaiah 7:10-16  
Romans 1:1-7  
Matthew 1:18-25

Dec. 29

Isaiah 63:7-9  
Hebrews 2:10-18  
Matthew 2:13-23



2 <sup>nd</sup>	Fred Davis	20 <sup>th</sup>	Marissa Raier
4 <sup>th</sup>	Fred Coleman	24 <sup>th</sup>	Linda Winz
5 <sup>th</sup>	Andrew Edwards	24 <sup>th</sup>	Deana Larsen
8 <sup>th</sup>	Tom Zibura	25 <sup>th</sup>	Keith Sakelakos
14 <sup>th</sup>	Gloria Gounaud	25 <sup>th</sup>	Helen Miller
14 <sup>th</sup>	Claudia Bartek	26 <sup>th</sup>	Jean Sakelakos
16 <sup>th</sup>	Jessica Colletto	31 <sup>st</sup>	Flora Dierbach
20 <sup>th</sup>	Jennifer Savarin	31 <sup>st</sup>	Kassie Dadian

**Dreams: A Christmas Story**  
*An original drama by Pastor Jeff Edwards*

**Performances: Friday, Dec. 13 @ 7:30 p.m.,  
 Saturday, Dec. 14 @ 7 p.m. & Sunday, Dec. 15 @ 7 p.m.**

The Parsippany United Methodist Church, 903 S. Beverwyck Rd.  
 Admission is free -- A free will offering will be received.

**The cast includes** Garret Belanus      Justin Cogan  
 Beth Cogan      Cassie Cogan      Bobby Edwards      Maidie Erikson  
 Mark Chauhan      Frances DiPietro      Terry Germann      Anna Gripp  
 Kayla Christopherson      Erika Gripp      Lois Kelshaw      Kelsey Gripp  
 Arianna Urban      Jessie Maclay  
 Marissa Cogan      Briana Laux      Maggie Letsch      Carlee Urban  
 Alexa Taylor      Kevin Seaver  
 Anthony Miceli      Katie Mihalko      Mary Mihalko      Betty Polen  
 Eric Roelof      Garin Roelof      Eleanor Soriano      Jean Sakelakos



# December 2013

## United Methodist Church of Parsippany

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																																		
<b>1</b> 10:30 AM Worship	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> 7:15 AM Men's Breakfast	<b>4</b> 11:00 AM Living in the Light  7:00 PM UMW Christmas Meeting	<b>5</b> 7:00 PM Bell Choir  7:45 PM Adult Choir	<b>6</b> 1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group	<b>7</b>																																																																																																		
<b>8</b> 10:30 AM Worship	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> 7:15 AM Men's Breakfast	<b>11</b> 11:00 AM Living in the Light	<b>12</b> 7:00 PM Bell Choir  7:45 PM Adult Choir	<b>13</b> 1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group  7:30 PM "Dreams: A Christmas Story"	<b>14</b> 7:00 PM "Dreams: A Christmas Story"																																																																																																		
<b>15</b> 10:30 AM Worship  7:00 PM "Dreams: A Christmas Story"	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> 7:15 AM Men's Breakfast	<b>18</b> 11:00 AM Living in the Light	<b>19</b> 7:00 PM Bell Choir  7:45 PM Adult Choir	<b>20</b> 1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group	<b>21</b>																																																																																																		
<b>22</b> 10:30 AM Worship  Pageant and Cantata	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> 7:15 AM Men's Breakfast  7:00 PM Christmas Eve Service	<b>25</b>  	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group	<b>28</b>																																																																																																		
<b>29</b> 10:30 AM Worship	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> 7:15 AM Men's Breakfast	<table style="margin: auto; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #ffffcc;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="7">Nov 2013</th> <th colspan="7">Jan 2014</th> </tr> <tr> <th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th> <th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td> <td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td> <td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td> <td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td> <td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Nov 2013							Jan 2014							S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S						1	2				1	2	3	4	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	27	28	29	30	31	
Nov 2013							Jan 2014																																																																																																	
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S																																																																																											
					1	2				1	2	3	4																																																																																											
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	5	6	7	8	9	10	11																																																																																											
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	12	13	14	15	16	17	18																																																																																											
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	19	20	21	22	23	24	25																																																																																											
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	27	28	29	30	31																																																																																												