

HILLTOPPER

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

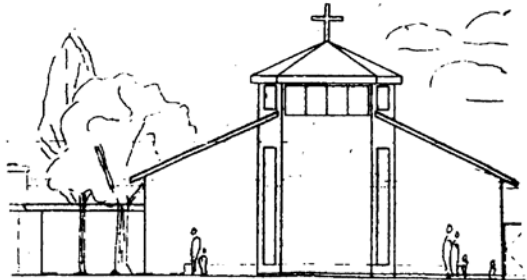
903 So. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054 (973) 887-4657

<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"



APRIL, 2014



Saturday, April 12 – Roast Beef Dinner and UMW Mini-Bazaar.

The UMW will be offering homemade bakery and gently used jewelry for sale from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The Roast Beef Dinner is from 4 to 7 p.m. Adults: \$14, Seniors: \$11, kids: \$5. We can use help the day of the dinner for serving and other tasks. See Connie Keller or Barb Bradley.

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Pastor Jeff has written and is directing a **play** in which Biblical characters describe what they experienced during the last days of Jesus' life. **The play will be performed Maundy Thursday, April 17th and Good Friday, April 18th at 7:30 p.m.** The



Thursday performance will be preceded by a service of Holy Communion and an anthem by our choir. The cast of the play includes Garrett Belanus, Tracy Booth, Kayla Christopherson, Jeff Edwards, Terry Germann, Amy Gripp, David Kinsley, Anita Laux, Anthony Miceli, Eric Roelofs, Garin Roelofs, Kevin Seaver, and Darryl Sokolowki.

On **Good Friday** our church will once again participate in the **Community Cross Walk** that **begins at 1 p.m.** with a service at St. Gregory's Episcopal Church at 480 S. Beverwyck Road. We process with the cross down Beverwyck Road, and conclude with a short service in our sanctuary.



EASTER FLOWERS – EASTER IS APRIL 20 - Orders for Easter flowers can be placed this year from April 1 thru April 13

Once again, Azaleas (6" and 8" pots), Tulips, Hyacinths, Daffodils and Lilies will be available for purchase.

2014 prices have not been confirmed yet, but should be very close to last year. Azalea 6" - \$7.00; Azalea 8" \$13.00; Tulips, Hyacinth, Daffodils (6" pots) - \$7.00 each

And each Lily plant is \$10.00 each.

Order forms will be available in the church bulletins on the first 2 Sundays of April or you can always order them directly thru Connie Keller by phone or email. Email (preferred) connie@mhmlender.com or cell 973-568-5404.

If you would like to beautify the altar by making a donation toward the purchase of Easter flower arrangements, instead of purchasing flowers, you can also do that.

Thank you to all of you that order regularly, it really makes the sanctuary beautiful on our special holidays!!

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A sermon preached on the first Sunday in Lent, March 9, based upon Matthew 4:1-12, and entitled, "The Temptation of Boredom."

The first question to ask is why did the Spirit drive Jesus out into the wilderness? Why would God want anyone to have some one-on-one time with the devil?

In order to answer that question we need to consider the nature of temptation. At a given moment, two paths open up before us. One is the **better** way. Temptation is the appeal of the **other** way – the path that will take us in the **wrong** direction.

More often than not, if we could see clearly the choices that are set before us and the consequences of those choices, we would choose the right path. So more often than not, the way the tempter works best is by distracting us from the fact that there **is** a choice before us, and from thinking through the consequences, like a used car salesman, trying to lead us to consider just one particular car (*the lemon he wants to unload*.)

A teenager gets in some kind of trouble. The parent confronts the teenager. "Why did you do it?!" the parent demands. The teenager answers, "I don't *know* why I did it." The answer frustrates the parent, but there is some degree of truth to the teenager's answer. Somehow the teenager was distracted from seeing that there was a choice to be made, or to consider the consequences therein. Maybe the teenager was simply carried along by her peers and the need to fit in. Maybe the teenager felt an unconscious, unexamined desire to rebel. Who knows?



The point is we lose track of the fact that there are choices to be made. For evil to get a foothold in this world, it requires that we choose without realizing we actually made a choice, because we somehow overlooked the alternative path.

So Jesus went out into the wilderness to get clear about some basic choices he will confront in his ministry. He does this **before** he begins his ministry, because once he begins, he knows things will happen very rapidly — he will be pressed by the endless needs of countless people. If he doesn't see clearly the choices that are before him, he will easily get led away from the path God has called him to.



The wilderness is the place without distractions – the place where the choices can more easily be recognized.



At the heart of Jesus ministry will be the conviction that God is worthy of our total trust, that we should love God first and put our trust in God. We are tempted of course to love a whole host of other objects more than God, and to put our trust in a whole bunch of other places.

There is an irony to the words on our money, “In God we trust,” because, one of the places we are tempted to put our trust rather than in God is our money.

So part of this getting clear exercise for Jesus involves putting his money where his mouth is, figuratively speaking. He goes where his trust in God will be tested. And trust is tested only where there is some sort of real vulnerability on our part.

There’s that old joke about the clown going on and on to the ringmaster about how confident he is in the tight-rope walker abilities. “That’s great,” says the ringmaster, “tonight you’ll be on his shoulders.” Trust in theory is a whole different thing from trust when our lives are on the line.



So Jesus goes out into the wilderness alone, empty handed, without food, exposed to the threat that lurk there. He embraces the basic vulnerability that is part of being a human being. It will be hard, painful even, and there will be some danger. He goes there because it is a setting where his trust in God will be put to the test.

I think there was some similarity later on when Jesus sends his disciples out two by two without money or weapons or pretty much anything else. How can you know that God is trustworthy until you’ve been in a situation where you were forced to trust God?

Now there are two other great temptation stories that are behind this story.

The first, of course, is the one about **Adam and Eve**. Their temptation is about trust. The serpent sows the seeds of doubt: “*God has lied to you. God isn’t really trustworthy. God is holding back the good stuff from you. Take things into your own hands.*”

The other story is of the **Hebrew people** wandering in the wilderness for forty years, where their trust in God was tested. At first they aren’t very good at it. They murmur and complain; they’re afraid they will die because they won’t find enough food or water.

They wish they were somewhere other than where they are. In particular, they long to be back in Egypt once more living as slaves to Pharaoh. Interestingly, when they had been in Egypt, they had also wanted to be somewhere else.



The same was true for Adam and Eve. They lose the contentment they had felt up until their encounter with the serpent; they reach for the apple in a desire to inhabit some other life from the one they have.

So the inability to put our trust in God is closely related to **the desire to be somewhere other than where you in fact are.**

Think about it: *you are the only person who gets to live your life. If you don’t; nobody will. And you have to consciously choose to live your life.* This choice is at the very core of what it means to live our lives well: *We need to embrace the life we have, rather than lose ourselves yearning for a fantasy life we don’t have.* And this requires the trust that God is with us in the life we have in the present.

The same theme shows up in the temptation stories of Jesus. You’ll notice, in all three temptations, the devil plays the part of the used car salesman, presenting Jesus with a single choice. He doesn’t spell out the alternative to the offered choice. It is up to Jesus to see and claim that alternative choice, which in each instance is putting his trust in God and embracing the life he has been given by God to live.

When we think of temptations, we usually think of being tempted to do something that is clearly wrong; the temptation to steal, or lie, or cheat on your spouse – breaking one of the commandments.

That's not really happening here. The temptation is more subtle; again, it involves rejecting the life Jesus has been called to embrace.

In the first temptation, the devil offers Jesus the choice to use his special powers as the son of God to turn stones into bread.

What is wrong with getting something to eat when you're hungry? Well, normally nothing.

But this is a special situation. Jesus has gone out into the wilderness having made a promise to fast in order to practice trusting in God. He is consciously embracing the human condition, which means accepting the fact we have these bodies that wear down and get tired and hungry, even die. Is this life good, or no? Can Jesus trust God in the midst of his hunger, his frailty, his weakness? If he can't, how can he call others to trust God?



To accept the bread would be to reject the present moment he has chosen to be in.

The second temptation is for Jesus to throw himself off the pinnacle of the Temple so that the angels can catch him.

There are a lot of ways to interpret these temptations but the way I'm hearing this temptation this week is that it is the temptation to do something spectacular. Man, what an adrenalin rush that would be!

It makes me think of the people who jump off mountain cliffs with mini-parachutes soaring down into the abyss below. There is nothing wrong with doing that; unless, of course, the people who enjoy such extreme sports end up wishing they were jumping off cliffs when they are back home washing the dishes and all the other ordinary tasks of life.

I once met a man whose job was heading up wilderness rescue operations. He loved his job; it was a real adrenalin rush. But he had a wife and child, and his wife ended up divorcing him because he simply wasn't present when he was at home with the wife and the child. He needed an adrenalin rush to hold his attention.

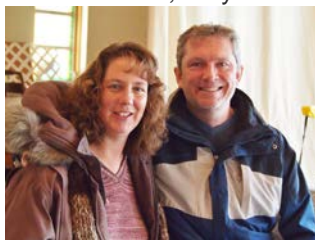


Now if you or I went out into the wilderness for 40 days to pray and reflect, and let's say we weren't fasting, what would likely be our biggest challenge?

BOREDOM.

The essence of boredom is the desire to experience something other than what I'm experiencing in the present moment. It's intolerable here, I want something more interesting, more exciting. At least something that can hold my attention, because I don't seem to be able to hold my attention in the present moment.

One of the marks of our culture is that we have a very low threshold for boredom. We collectively suffer from attention deficit disorder. And it's getting worse and worse. These smart phones we carry around have such appeal because they are at hand to distract us everything we experience boredom.



"No," says Jesus, "I will not succumb to the temptation to go for the spectacular to avoid the mundane. Neither will I be about entertaining the masses with magical powers in order to capture their attention."

In the third temptation, the devil shows him all the kingdoms of the world and offers them to Jesus — all he has to do is worship him. It's about **power**. Again, on the surface there is significant appeal to this: think of how much Jesus could accomplish in this world if he had all that earthly power.

And once more, there are a lot of things that could be said of this temptation, but what it's making me think about this week is the pull of those "to do" lists we all carry around in our heads. The most important thing in life becomes to get things done, and you need power to get things done. The more power you have, the more you can get done.

And think about those "to do" lists. They're not a bad thing, unless they get in the way of being fully present to what you're doing at the moment. You're not really thinking about what you're doing now — you're thinking about what you need to get done later.

But the love of power gets in the way of love of people. Power is not at the heart of Jesus' ministry – love is, so once more he turns down the devil's temptation, choosing instead to put his trust in God and to love people, even knowing that his love more often than not won't be returned.

At the Ash Wednesday service I read a quote from Blaise Pascal: "The sole cause of (peoples') unhappiness is that we do not know how to stay quietly in our rooms." I don't think he meant literally staying in our rooms. He's speaking of the inability to be at peace in our own skin – unable to keep our attention present because our minds races ahead of us.

All the people who have the quality we call holiness have had the capacity to be full present to whatever they are doing at a given moment. They were less inclined to succumb to boredom than the rest of us.

Brother Lawrence, the 17th century cook in a monastery in France whose words have been passed down because he embodied a remarkable capacity to be as present to God while working in his kitchen as he was when he received the blessed sacrament.



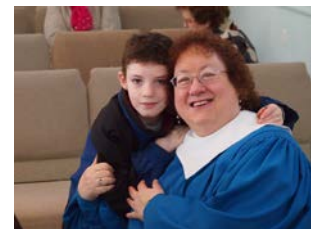
Naomi Remen describes meeting the Dalai Lama. She was skeptical that she would be impressed by the man, but found herself awestruck when she observed the gentle, loving attention he gave to her friend who wanted to show him some pictures she had brought with her describing a project she was working on. There was a long line of people waiting their turn to meet him, but he was completely unrushed and attentive, and at the end when she dropped the bag in which she had carried the pictures, he humbly stooped down to pick it up, assisting her with the mundane task of putting the pictures back in the bag. Naomi said the task became more than just a task, it was a moment for their spirits to commune.

Mother Theresa also had that sense of presence, and she expressed it well when she said, *"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."* It reminds me of what Jesus says in Matthew 25 about how our lives will be judged not by big things but by the little acts of compassion: giving food to someone who is hungry, a welcome to a stranger. Oftentimes the act of compassion that matters most is simply the willingness to give someone your full, undivided attention as they share the story of their lives.

So this week, try and **be aware of how often** you find yourself wanting to be somewhere other than where you are. You'll probably find it happens rather often. (Perhaps you're feeling it right now!) Maybe it will occur while you're waiting in line at the store, or talking to someone in whose company you feel either anxious or bored, or perhaps when you are doing some mundane task like washing the dishes.

When you realize you are longing to be elsewhere, see if you can't identify a different response. Remember that the tempter tries to get us to think there is only one choice in any given moment, and in these instances, the tempter wants us lose our sense of presence.

If you are in a setting that seems all too familiar to you, see if you can't notice something that you've overlooked. There are probably countless such things. I heard a story about a woman who came to see a priest because she had lost the capacity to sense God's presence when she prayed. He told her to go home and sit in her room where she prayed and to simply sit there and take in the room, and see what there was to see. She came back later to thank the priest. The blockage was resolved. "What a wonderful room it is, and I had never really noticed that before!"



In the presence of someone who you are anxious with, ask yourself the question, what exactly is it about this person that leads me to respond with anxiety? If the person bores you, try and delve deeper to ponder the person's life. What is it you're missing?

When you feel bored, the desire is to flee. Is there a difference choice possible; instead of fleeing, to go deeper?

In the kindness of Jesus,
Pastor Jeff]



A Memorial Service for Helen Miller will be held on Saturday, April 5th at 1:00 p.m.

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United Methodist Women

Looking back...sorry if you missed Kelsey Gripp's program about her joining many near and far Youth Group girls and boys who made house repairs and helped people in need. A wonderful group of Christian Kids. We were impressed by all of her program.

We hope you can join us this month, and bring a friend....

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2 – 6:30 p.m.
PROGRAM: Ladies' Night Out
At IHOP – Route 46, Parsippany
Please reserve with Denise White
Or Doris Bradley

April 1 – April Fool's Day

April 13 – Palm Sunday

April 5 – Memorial for Helen Miller

April 18 – Good Friday

April 12 – UMW Mini Bazaar and Roa Beef Dinner

April 20 – Easter Sunday

April 30 – Cakes for Morris View N.H.

Get well wishes to those of you who are ill; and HAPPY BIRTHDAY to those of you celebrating this month with Blake Rutherford (our sponsored CCF Child, and Grace Schlosshauer.

God Bless,
Doris Bradley

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

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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.

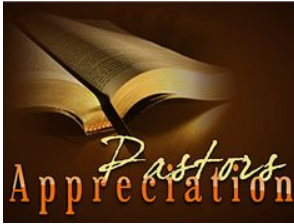
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On the second Thursday of every other month our congregation provides dinner for the families at **Homeless Solutions**. Our next scheduled dinner is **April 10th**. If you would like to take a turn in helping with this outreach, or if you would like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

Anyone interested in taking the vows of membership is welcome to speak to Pastor Jeff.

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UPCOMING EVENTS.....



Our Pastor, Jeff Edwards, is celebrating his 25th anniversary with us this year. We're planning a celebration in honor of this occasion on **Saturday, May 17th from 6 – 11 p.m.** Hold the date! More information will be coming soon!



Joe Mohan, the young pianist of extraordinary talent who has graced us with three performances in our sanctuary is graduating from Julliard. We will once again be hosting Joe in concert at our church on **Friday, May 9 at 7:30 p.m.** He performs a family-friendly concert, so bring your kids as well.



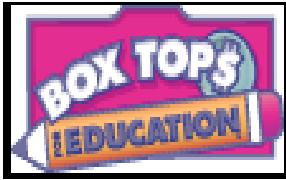
Saturday, May 31 – Garage Sale and Shred Event – 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (shredding until noon). Church members will be selling their own wares – garage sale “stuff”, crafts, and other goodies. Table price is \$25. See Barb Bradley or Connie Keller if you would like to participate.

The **Shred Event will be from 9 a.m. to noon.** The shredding company will shred paper and electronics. There are separate prices for different items – see Connie Keller for a list of prices.

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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!



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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A day time men's discussion group with Pastor Jeff that meets on Fridays at 1 p.m. **will resume following Easter.** We discuss short readings or videos during the 90 minute sessions. Any men available in the day time are invited to join us.

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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.

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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. 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)

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SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR APRIL

April 6
Ezekiel 37:1-14
Romans 8:6-11
John 11:1-45

April 13
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Philippians 2:5-11
Matthew 26:14-27:66

April 20
Acts 10:34-43
Colossians 3:1-4
John 20:1-18

April 27
Acts 2:14a,22-32
1 Peter 1:3-9
John 20:19-31



2 nd	Tracy Booth	15 th	Esther Chun
7 th	Charley Bruxgulis	15 th	Arianna Cintenero
7 th	Vijaya Desari	16 th	Melissa Tribuna
8 th	Gail Lingerman	17 th	Gail Booth
8 th	Annabelle Vance	18 th	John Sedlak
9 th	Carlee Cintenero	20 th	Ruth Seaman
11 th	Lloyd Newberry	21 st	Chick Deeks
12 th	Steven Chun	23 rd	Bob Krisa
12 th	Kylie Morgan	23 rd	Bob Vance
13 th	Jon Keller	24 th	George Haddad
13 th	Eddie Abbott	26 th	Kathy Andersen
14 th	Betty Davis	27 th	Gina Trezza
14 th	Art Sakelakos	28 th	Grace Schlosshauer
14 th	Charolette Rose Bryant	28 th	Ryan Mortensen
		29 th	Debbie Gantert

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

13th Lynn & Bob Barbarite

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The **Skylands District Day of Service is Saturday, April 5th**. Volunteers will travel to the Jersey shore to assist in rebuilding homes damaged from the Hurricane. If you are interested in attending, please take a moment to visit the website: www.afuturewithhope.org. If you click on the "volunteer" tab, there is more information regarding sending a team of volunteers to serve with **A Future With Hope**. Please see the attached volunteer forms that we need filled out by each volunteer. Volunteers asked, though not required to contribute \$25 towards materials. Please note youth medical/release forms must be **notarized**. All adults accompanying youth must have verified **backgrounds checks** prior to arrival. No one under 14 is permitted on work sites.

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Part-time position available in the nursery located in the Church. The hours are from 7:00am until 9:00am daily. The individual would be responsible for the welcoming of parents and their babies into the room each morning. Responsibilities include feeding and playing with the babies. Qualified individual should be able to lift babies of 30 lbs. or less. Hourly salary of \$10.00
Interested individuals should contact Hilary Barletta, Director at 973-515-3654.

