

# HILLTOPPER

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

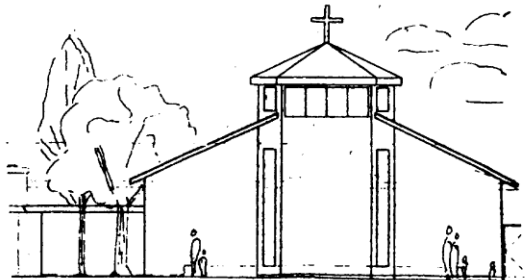
903 So. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054 (973) 887-4657

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"*



**JANUARY, 2015**



A sermon preached on November 23rd, 2014 entitled "Compassion" based upon Matthew 25: 31 - 45.

During World War II and the occupation of France a small town of only 5000 residents called Le Chambon hid an estimated 5000 Jews from the authorities. The townspeople did not know that the Jews were being exterminated; they simply knew that the Jews were being sent off to concentration camps, nonetheless they were moved to act compassionately in relations to the plights of the Jews on a scale not seen in other villages and towns throughout France.

The movement began when a young Jewish woman showed up at the door of the resident Protestant pastor. The pastor's wife, a woman named Magda Trocme called her in out of the snow with the words, "Naturally, come in, come in." As Magda later put it, "I do not hunt around to find people to help. But I never close my door, never refuse to help somebody who comes to me and asks for something."

"I was a stranger," Jesus said, "and you welcomed me."

Following his wife's lead, the pastor, Andre Trocme began to preach to his flock about the importance of hiding the Jewish refugees. His favorite text was the parable of the Good Samaritan. "We mustn't act like the priest who saw the man who had fallen among thieves and who passed by on the other side," he declared.

When the authorities came demanding a list of the Jews sheltered in the town, Andre replied that "I have no list (which was true) and would refuse to hand it over even if I had one."

On another occasion when asked where the Jews were, he said, "We do not know what a Jew is. We know only human beings." (Story recounted in "Help: The Original Human Dilemma, by Garret Keizer, pp. 150 -155) This is a remarkable story, but one that begs the question, why weren't there more towns like Le Chambon?

On NPR this past week, the story was told of an assisted living home in California that suddenly shut down last fall, leaving many of its elderly residents left behind with nowhere to go. The staff, no longer getting paid, simply left, all of the staff that is except for cook Maurice



Rowland and Miguel Alvarez, the janitor. Sixteen residents were left behind. Maurice and Miguel had a conversation in the kitchen. "What are we going to do?" Maurice asked. "If we left, they wouldn't have nobody," was how Miguel summed it up.



They worked 24 hours around the clock taking care of the residents, taking on roles they had never known before, such as handing out medications to the residents, many of whom suffered from dementia. "I just couldn't see myself going home — next thing you know, they're in the kitchen trying to cook their own food and burn the place down," Maurice said. "Even though they wasn't our family, they were kind of like our family for this short period of time."

For Miguel, the situation brought back memories from his childhood. "My parents, when they were younger, they left me abandoned," he says. "Knowing how they are going to feel, I didn't want them to go through that."

Maurice and Miguel spent several days caring for the elderly residents until authorities could step in and take over their care. (*You can listen to the story if you google NPR and "If we left, they wouldn't have nobody."*)

On the afternoon of January 2, 2007, Wesley Autrey, a 50 year old African American construction worker and Navy veteran was waiting for a subway in Manhattan with his two young daughters. Close by he noticed a young 20 year old college student began to have seizure. As the young man tried to get back up on his feet he stumbled from the platform onto the tracks between the two rails.

Wesley saw the lights of an approaching train and made an instant decision to jump onto the tracks, thinking he had time to drag the young man to safety, but quickly realized this would not be possible. He covered the young man's body with his own and pressed him down into a drainage ditch about a foot deep between the tracks. The train operator saw what was happening and tried to stop and the brakes screeched, but by the time the train had come to a stop five cars had already passed over the two men. It was a very close call; Wesley's cap was smudged with the train's grease, but they otherwise were not harmed by the train. Wesley heard onlookers screaming, and he called out, "We're okay down here, but I've got two daughters up there. Please let them know that their Father's okay." Then he heard cries of wonder and applause from the bystanders.

Why did Wesley do it? He told the New York Times, "*I don't feel like I did something spectacular; I just saw someone who needed help. I did what I felt was right.*" (Recorded in *One Mind*, Larry Dossey, pp. 3-4) We hear this story and we beg to differ with Wesley, he *did* do something spectacular; we can not likely imagine ourselves doing the same thing. We may also wonder if we would have done what the cook and the janitor did in that assisted living home, or what the good folks in Le Champon, France did.



It has been said that there *are two kinds of people in this world* -- those who divide people into two kinds of people and those who don't. The Gospel writer Matthew is one of those people who does. Matthew tells this story that he puts on the lips of Jesus shortly before he died in which Jesus returns as King at the end of history to judge all the people of the world, dividing them into two kinds of people, the sheep and the goats, those who showed compassion to people in need, and those who didn't.

Here's what I think is true. Jesus did say, "When you did it to one of the least of these my brothers or sisters, you did it unto me." And then Matthew in his with his unique fondness for gnashing of teeth, etc. decided to reinforce the teaching by having those who didn't do it sentenced to eternal torment.

But here's the thing. When we hear this little story, who among us can confidently place ourselves in one group or the other? We all know that in the course of our lives we've passed by countless people in need, consciously or unconsciously, and hopefully we also know that there have been instances, when by the grace of God, we have been able to be a help to others.

We are sheepy goats, or goaty sheep. This, I'm sure is the case even for Wesley Autrey, Maurice and Miguel, and Andre and Magda Trocme. This is the human condition. We all, like the priest in the story of the Good Samaritan, routinely get so preoccupied with our own stuff that for whatever reason we can't truly see and feel the pain of the person at the side of the road.

The point that Jesus was getting across in what was essentially his last teaching before undergoing his passion was that compassion and acts of kindness really are the most important thing. That every single person matters and is worthy of care -- there are no invisible people.

In a strange way, Matthew ends up contradicting this basic point that Jesus was making when he portrays at the end of the story that there are people who no longer count, the people who are going to burn in hell. As Matthew describes it, these are not necessarily people who went out of their way to be cruel; they simply did not extend themselves to be kind to people in dire need. But Jesus is the Shepherd King who, as Jesus said in another parable, who seeks the lost sheep until, not if he finds it. The good shepherd never gives up on the sheep.

But how could we be happy in heaven knowing there are people suffering in eternal torment?

It is striking to me that what Wesley Autrey did became a national sensation. There weren't very many people unmoved by his story. He stirred something deep inside us. He was expressing in that brave act of compassion who we all really are in the depths of our souls. We are made in the image and likeness of God, which is to say we are designed for love, for compassion. Plenty of stuff gets in the way of our expressing who truly are. But stories like these awaken our truest identity.

Part of what is so striking in these examples is the fact that the compassion they experienced and acted upon wasn't to people of their own family or tribe. They contradicted the principles of evolutionary biology that say ultimately we human beings are only concerned with passing on our own genes. They instinctively got it that the differences of culture, race, belief, politics -- none of this ultimately matters.

But what are we to make of this theme of judgment that seems so important to Matthew? As you probably know, I have a continued fascination of the accounts of people who have what is called "Near Death Experiences," because I think they are glimpsing something real regarding what awaits us on the far side. Typically people experience a love beyond anything they have known here on earth. Sometimes they describe undergoing something that has come to be called "the life review" in which their entire life, everything that ever did, every interaction they ever had with other people, including much they have forgotten, is suddenly laid out in a panoramic view.

It's all there, and as they see it, they experience what people felt in relationship to what did or didn't do. When they were compassionate, they felt the impact of their actions on others. But when they were thoughtless, inconsiderate, petty, or cruel, they felt the impact of that as well.

There is a kind of judgment that takes place, but it isn't from beyond themselves. Their experience of God is always described as being one of love. The judgment comes from themselves, as they feel what they have done to others, and it gets to be excruciatingly painful. But the experience isn't one of being rejected by God.



The truth they suddenly see is that all of us human beings truly are one, that if I hurt you, I'm hurting me. We go through life feeling as though we are these all together separate beings, but on the deepest level of reality this is an illusion. "No man is an island," the poet John Donne said. And I think that this is what Jesus was getting at when he said, "When you did it unto one of the least of these my sisters and brothers, you did it unto me."

This truth is there inside us, which is why stories like the ones I've told can move us so deeply. It's not a matter of us beginning to act in manner contrary to our nature -- this is our nature, to care about one another. I notice that when I am anxiously hurrying about, preoccupied with my personal agenda, compassion -- the capacity to feel the pain of others -- does not arise within me. But when I sit in stillness, becoming quiet within

when I think about others compassion naturally arises within me. I realize that this is who I really am.

Jesus is saying that compassion is the pathway to experiencing the Kingdom of God, not just at the end of our lives, but right here now, in this world. I want to finish by reading a lovely story that expresses that truth beautifully.

"Gate A-4" By Naomi Shihab Nye. *(Nye is a poet, songwriter, and novelist. She was born to a Palestinian father and American mother.)*

*Wandering around the Albuquerque Airport Terminal, after learning my flight had been delayed four hours, I heard an announcement: "If anyone in the vicinity of Gate A-4 understands any Arabic, please come to the gate immediately." Well— one pauses these days. Gate A-4 was my own gate. I went there.*



*An older woman in full traditional Palestinian embroidered dress, just like my grandma wore, was crumpled to the floor, wailing. "Help," said the flight agent. "Talk to her. What is her problem? We told her the flight was going to be late and she did this."*

*I stooped to put my arm around the woman and spoke haltingly. "Shu-dow-a, shu-bid-uck, habibti? Stani schway, min fadlick, shu-bit-se-wee?" The minute she heard any words she knew, however poorly used, she stopped crying. She thought the flight had been cancelled entirely. She needed to be in El Paso for major medical treatment the next day. I said, "No, we're fine, you'll get there, just late, who is picking you up? Let's call him."*

*We called her son, I spoke with him in English. I told him I would stay with his mother till we got on the plane. She talked to him. Then we called her other sons just for the fun of it. Then we called my dad and he and she spoke for a while in Arabic and found out of course they had ten shared friends. Then I thought just for the heck of it why not call some Palestinian poets I know and let them chat with her? This all took up two hours.*

*She was laughing a lot by then. Telling about her life, patting my knee, answering questions. She had pulled a sack of homemade mamool cookies— little powdered sugar crumbly mounds stuffed with dates and nuts— from her bag and was offering them to all the women at the gate. To my amazement, not a single traveler declined one. It was like a sacrament. The traveler from Argentina, the mom from California, the lovely woman from Laredo— we were all covered with the same powdered sugar. And smiling. There is no better cookie.*

*Then the airline broke out free apple juice and two little girls from our flight ran around serving it and they were covered with powdered sugar too. And I noticed my new best friend— by now we were holding hands— had a potted plant poking out of her bag, some medicinal thing, with green furry leaves. Such an old country traveling tradition. Always carry a plant. Always stay rooted to somewhere.*

*And I looked around that gate of late and weary ones and thought, This is the world I want to live in. The shared world. Not a single person in that gate— once the crying of confusion stopped— seemed apprehensive about any other person. They took the cookies. I wanted to hug all those other women too.*

*This can still happen anywhere. Not everything is lost.*



In the kindness of Jesus,

Pastor Jeff





United Methodist  
Women

Looking back...First – we had a delicious Pot Luck Dinner, plus ice cream cake. Then, we were entertained by Anita Laux’s peppy song and dance girls. Eight from the middle school – they had cute red shirts with snowmen. Thanks girls. We met our 2015 officers and posed for our annual group photo. We played our Christmas Gift Game and all received great gifts. We relaxed over dessert, enjoying the Christmas table settings and going over all we did and the fun we had.

**NO MEETING IN JANUARY**



Jan 1 – New Year’s Day  
Jan 6 – Epiphany

Jan 19 – Martin Luther King Day (obs)

GET WELL wishes to those of you who are ill, and  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY to those of you celebrating this month.

God Bless,  
Doris Bradley

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

++++++

We will be **taking down the Greens** in the church on **Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:30** a.m. Lots of hands makes lighter work, so come on out and help!

++++++

On the second Thursday of every other month our congregation provides dinner for the families at **Homeless Solutions**. Our next scheduled dinner is **February 12<sup>th</sup>**. 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.

++++++

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

+ + + + + +

**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.

+ + + + + +

**WARMTH IN THE WINTER, HOT WATER AND WARM NOSES**



We are launching a capital fundraising project over the next year to **replace the 60 year old boiler in our church**. It's running on prayers and patches and we are keeping our fingers crossed that it will be a faithful provider of its services for one more Winter. It will be replaced by a cost and energy efficient model, 1/3 the size of the current boiler that is projected to reduce to our current heating bills.

In the next few months, we will be providing **RED** envelopes for any donations that you would like to make. Red is to help you remember that your "hot" donation is going to this one specific project. Any donation you make over the course of this fund raising campaign will be recorded on your giving statement along with your offering towards the general budget. We will accept any amount, big or small, a single donation, or many over the next year.

In the Fall there will be a chart posted in the narthex showing all of the \*HOT\* donations to date. We'll be able to watch the thermometer heat up over the Winter and hopefully get us to our **goal of \$40,000 by July 2015**.

Thank you for your consideration and help on this project!!

The PUMC Board of Trustees

+ + + + + +

**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. 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 Thursday night at 6:15. 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 JANUARY**

Jan. 4  
Isaiah 60:1-6  
Ephesians 3:1-12  
Matthew 2:1-12

Jan. 11  
Genesis 1:1-5  
Acts 19:1-7  
Mark 1:4-11

Jan. 18  
1 Samuel 3:1-10  
1 Corinth 6:12-20  
John 1:43-51

Jan. 25  
Jonah 3:1-5,10  
1 Corinth 7:29-31  
Mark 1:14-20


  
**BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES**  
**JANUARY BIRTHDAYS**

3 <sup>rd</sup>	Barbara Bush	22 <sup>nd</sup>	Heather Weiss
5 <sup>th</sup>	Barbara Anderson	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Joseph Dente
5 <sup>th</sup>	Gene Lange	25 <sup>th</sup>	Jennifer Trica (Rychlicki)
11 <sup>th</sup>	Jim Sakelakos	25 <sup>th</sup>	Chris Salink
13 <sup>th</sup>	Olivia Evans	25 <sup>th</sup>	Kathryn Montecucollo
16 <sup>th</sup>	Marissa Cintineo	25 <sup>th</sup>	Mary Keller
19 <sup>th</sup>	Dominick Pesquera	27 <sup>th</sup>	Darryl Sokolowski
20 <sup>th</sup>	Jim Cochrane	29 <sup>th</sup>	Michael Weiss
		30 <sup>th</sup>	Chris Payne

**ANNIVERSARIES**

12 <sup>th</sup>	Fred & Grace Schlosshauer
25 <sup>th</sup>	Ruth & Charles Faulend



The **Great Christmas Pageant** was performed with great joy on December 13<sup>th</sup> with cast of thousands: Earl Christopherson, Kayla Christopherson, Ryan Christopherson, Cassie Cogan, Edward Cogan, Anna

Gripp, Erika Gripp, Brendan Laux, Julia Sklow, Kaitlyn Sklow, Karissa Bramley, Beth Cogan, Marissa Cogan, Frances DePietro, Maggie Letsch, Colleen O'Grady, Kelly O'Grady, Garin Roelofs, Maya Roelofs, Abby Matheis, Jake Matheis, Jesse McClay, Kathryn Montecucollo, Garrett Belanus, Maidie Erickson Terry Germann, Eric Roelofs and Jolie Rajasekaran, with a crew of Anthony DePietro, Monica Hawkins, Amy Gripp, Anita Laux, and Greg Elbin



Fred Coleman is now residing at Troy Hills Center at 200 Reynolds Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054. 973-463-4002 In December Anita Laux brought a troop of dancers to entertain Fred and the other residents.



# January 2015

## United Methodist Church of Parsippany

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																																		
<table style="margin: auto; border: 1px solid black;"> <tr> <th colspan="7">Dec 2014</th> <th colspan="7">Feb 2015</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> <tr> <td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td> <td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td> <td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td> <td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td> <td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td> </tr> <tr> <td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td><td></td> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td> </tr> </table>				Dec 2014							Feb 2015							S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	28	29	30	31											<b>1</b> 	<b>2</b> 1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group	<b>3</b>
Dec 2014							Feb 2015																																																																																																	
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S																																																																																											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7																																																																																											
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	8	9	10	11	12	13	14																																																																																											
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	15	16	17	18	19	20	21																																																																																											
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	22	23	24	25	26	27	28																																																																																											
28	29	30	31																																																																																																					
<b>4</b> 10:30 AM Worship	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> 7:15 AM Men's Breakfast	<b>7</b> 11:00 AM Living in the Light	<b>8</b> 6:15 PM Kids Bells  7:00 PM Bell Choir  7:45 PM Adult Choir	<b>9</b> 1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group	<b>10</b> 10:30 AM Take Down Greens																																																																																																		
<b>11</b> 10:30 AM Worship	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 7:15 AM Men's Breakfast	<b>14</b> 11:00 AM Living in the Light	<b>15</b> 6:15 PM Kids Bells  7:00 PM Bell Choir  7:45 PM Adult Choir	<b>16</b> 1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group	<b>17</b>																																																																																																		
<b>18</b> 10:30 AM Worship	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> 7:15 AM Men's Breakfast	<b>21</b> 11:00 AM Living in the Light	<b>22</b> 6:15 PM Kids Bells  7:00 PM Bell Choir  7:45 PM Adult Choir	<b>23</b> 1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group	<b>24</b>																																																																																																		
<b>25</b> 10:30 AM Worship	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 7:15 AM Men's Breakfast	<b>28</b> 11:00 AM Living in the Light	<b>29</b> 6:15 PM Kids Bells  7:00 PM Bell Choir  7:45 PM Adult Choir	<b>30</b> 1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group	<b>31</b>																																																																																																		