

# HILLTOPPER

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

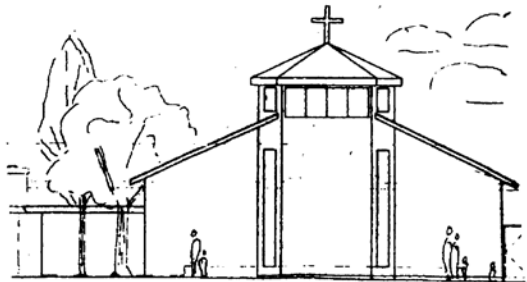
903 So. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054 (973) 887-4657

<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"*



**SEPTEMBER, 2015**

**REMINDER – WORSHIP RETURNS TO 10:30 A.M. ON SUNDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup>**



**BACKPACK BLESSING – Sunday, August 30th**

The unofficial end of summer is near. For many families that means school is just around the corner. Shopping for school supplies, books and fall outfits becomes a part of everyone's schedule. Here at Parsippany United Methodist Church we want to celebrate and bless the beginning of the new school year.

Students, preschool through adult, bring your backpacks to worship service on **August 30th** 10:00 a.m. At the service we will lift up students of all ages as we bless the beginning of the new school year. We also want to recognize teachers, aides, secretaries... anyone who is helping others learn. You are asked to bring your briefcase or lunch box to church that day to be blessed and affirmed in your job as we encourage and thank you as you for serving families in your daily work.

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**New members** will be received during worship on Sunday, September 27<sup>th</sup>. Anyone interested in becoming a member is invited to speak to Pastor Jeff. A meeting for people interested in becoming members will be held after worship on Sunday, September 20<sup>th</sup>. We rejoice as the circle grows wider.



**UPDATE YOUR PLEDGE** - As we return to our fall schedule, we ask that you remember to bring your pledge up to date after the summer months.

**SPARE CHANGE CAMPAIGN** - During July and August, you have been searching in your couch, under your chairs, and in all your nook and crannies for that precious spare change. We thank you for all the coins that you have discovered and are putting into your "first class spare change campaign baggie". You can begin turning in your spare change donations on September 7. Please remember to put your name on the bag, if you want credit on your annual giving statement. You can give your bags of change to the ushers when you come into church for Sunday worship or drop it off to the church office during the week. If you have any questions, please speak to Bob Keller.

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*A sermon preached on June 21, 2015 based upon Mark 4:35 - 41. It was the occasion of the baptism of Amanda and Christina, and the Sunday following of the massacre at the AME Church in Charleston, SC.*

It takes a village to raise a child. Tuesday evening I went to the home of Mary and Donna where a portion of the family that will be on the front lines of the raising of Amanda and Christina were gathered. We talked about the meaning of the baptisms we celebrated this morning.

We talked about the vows that they would make on behalf of Amanda and Christina -- how they would "*renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of their sins.*" Life is a great struggle between good and evil and how it is easy to miss this fact. The struggle between good and evil goes right down the center of every person's heart.

What are the "spiritual forces of wickedness?" It is that power at work in the world in so many ways in this world that would harden our hearts to one another. First and foremost, it is **hatred**.

Hatred isn't just out there somewhere; hatred lurks in the darkness waiting for an opportunity to take hold of our hearts. Hatred can seem **benign**. "What does it matter if I hate somebody? It's not like I'm going to kill somebody." Hatred can even **feel righteous**.

Hatred is never righteous, though many lost souls have been badly mistaken about this.

We talked about the best gift we can give Amanda and Christina is to attend to the health of our own souls; that they may absorb light and not darkness from us.

We talked about the **symbolisms of water**: How water represents life, reminding us that life is a precious gift that only God can give. How water is used for baths, and that the water of baptism reminds us of the forgiveness that God offers us that cleanses our souls when they are stained, and how we must live out forgiveness with one another.

And then we talked about the **harshes meaning of water**, and that is that it represents death -- death by drowning. The ancients realizing how dangerous water is. They had to send folks out on water to fish in order to bring food home for the families, but often their boats would not return.



So here in this lovely ritual of baptism, so full of life, there is death -- there is **Jesus' death.**



And although Amanda and Christina and you and I will all one day undergo a physical death, our baptisms proclaim that we are already one with Christ, and we share in his death, and also in his resurrection. Having been baptized, we have, in a sense, already died. And so we need not fear death.

We talked about how on a practical level baptism reminds us day by day to **raise our fears up to God**, because fear gets in the way of love, and when we are raising up these beautiful children, we want to be led by love, not by fear.

But there sure is a lot to fear in this world.  
That was Tuesday evening.

Wednesday morning we had our usual Wednesday morning Bible Study down at the church. We felt pretty safe as we talked about the story Bob read for us, which talks about the fear evoked by the deep, dark waters. As the sun was setting, Jesus commanded his disciples to get into the boat to cross the sea of Geneseret, to go to the Gentile territory on the far side. He must have known what he was doing. There's a lot of danger to go out on that deep, dark water, especially at night. The weather would change so quickly out there.

And sure enough, a storm blew up, and the disciples were terrified as the waves were crashing into the boat. They were afraid they were going to die, and their fear led to anger, as fear will do, and they lashed out at the sleeping Jesus, who was sound asleep on a pillow in the stern of the boat. "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing!"

Jesus awakened, stood up, and addressed the wind and the waves: "Peace! Be still!" And suddenly the winds stopped blowing and the sea became very calm. And then he turned to address the twelve disciples, saying, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

Now that question would seem to be the perplexing piece of this story. What did Jesus mean? He seemed to be placing faith and fear as opposites. Instead of being afraid, why didn't they trust?

Trust **what** exactly?

Trust that nothing bad was going to happen to them out there on that boat in the storm at night? But sailors died in such conditions all the time in those days.

Trust that nothing bad would ever happen as long as they were in the company of Jesus?

Well the problem with that is that we know how the story carries out. Some people full of fear and hatred arrest Jesus, torture him, and nail him to a cross. So apparently the trust goes to a deeper place. The trust would seem to mean: whether they live or whether they did, they are in the hands of the Lord.

Trust because when evil comes our way because God has the power to take what the evil does and bring forth good from it.

We talked about fear at our Bible Study Wednesday morning, but we felt pretty safe. After all, we were at church. What harm could come to us here?

And **then that very evening**, you know what happened. Down in an African American AME church in Charleston, South Carolina a group of Christians -- twelve in fact, the same number of disciples who were in that boat with Jesus -- gathered to hold their weekly Bible Study.

A young white man came in, asking for the Pastor. The pastor greeted him, and invited him to stay for the Bible Study.

**There was, after all, always room in the circle.**

Clearly, the young man was agitated, and must have appeared to be something of a **lost soul**, and that is what he was. He was searching for what these folks already had, a strong sense of purpose and belonging. They knew themselves to be God's children, followers of Jesus who had a mission of love in this world. Even though the young man was argumentative through the course of the Bible study, they were real nice to him -- even the young man would say so



afterwards. They discussed the same passage that Bob preached on last Sunday, about the Kingdom of God being like a mustard seed planted in good soil that grows up to be a tree large enough to provide shelter to all the different birds of the air.

And then as the Bible Study was coming to an end, the young man took out a gun and began firing. He imagined himself to be claiming his mission in life, that he would be the hero who began a new civil war between whites and blacks. His heart was full of hate, and he imagined his hatred justified.

But he was just a lost soul, utterly clueless. He knew not what he did.

Nine of Jesus' followers would die by the bullets the young man fired.

We might be inclined to ask the same question that those disciples on the boat asked in the midst of the storm: **"Lord, do you not care whether we perish?"**

Even a church, it seems, is not a safe place.

**But here is the truth that is claimed in the baptisms we celebrated this day.** In death, as in life, they were in the hands of the Lord. These beautiful souls were ushered directly into God's blessed kingdom, where a place had been prepared for them, and it is more beautiful there than we can imagine, because there is nothing but love there. **No hatred, no fear, no guilt, just pure love.** Our faith declares we need not feel sorry for those beautiful souls whose lives on earth ended that night. They are safe and secure from all alarm.

**The ones we need to pray for are** those whose hearts are now broken with grief, who have lost these exceedingly beautiful people they loved so dearly. We are to pray for the young man who lost his way, and so many others like him in this world, and to pray for these two little children, and all such children in this world, because it will be so easy for them to lose their way in this world -- to lose track of what matters. To forget that love is the thing. Love alone is why we are her.

This morning I asked those of you who brought these children to the altar the following question: **"Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations and races?"** And you responded, **"I do."**

The Lord we would put our trust into brings good out of evil.

And it is important this day to take some time to witness to the goodness that has come out of the terrible evil that showed its face in Charleston this past week.

On Friday, there was a bail hearing for the young man, and South Carolina allows the victims of crimes to address the one charged with the crime.

And so the family members of the nine people killed addressed the young man. They sought to put their whole trust in Jesus, just like their beloved had done. And they sought to be obedient to their Lord, who tells us to love the enemy.

And so the granddaughter of Daniel Simmons Sr. said,

*"Although my grandfather and the other victims died at the hands of hate, this is proof, everyone's plea for your soul, is proof that they lived in love and their legacies will live in love. So, hate won't win,"*

The daughter of Ethel Lance said, *"I just wanted everybody to know, to you, I forgive you. You took something very precious away from me. I will never talk to her ever again. I will never be able to hold her again. But I forgive you."*

*"And have mercy on your soul,"* she continued. *"You hurt me. You hurt a lot of people. May God forgive you. And I forgive you."*

Another victim's family member, Anthony Thompson, said,





*"I forgive you and my family forgives you, but we would like you to take this opportunity to repent. Repent, confess, give your life to the one who matters the most, Christ, so that he can change it. Can change your ways no matter what happens to you, and you will be OK."*

Rev. John Paul Brown, another AME pastor in Charleston, and a close friend of the pastor who was murdered, said in an interview with the New York Times,

*"I know for a fact it only serves to make things better. Always in tragedy the creation of God has instilled in man... a redeeming quality. And here, this fellow named Dylan Roof, who sought to wipe out -- created an unrealistic explosion of warmth, love, caring, sharing. Clearly you begin to see the opposite of what he wanted to see happening."*

*Dylan, what was your intent? To create a divide? While we pray for your soul, and that you come to reality and join the human race again, we also thank you that you allow people to see what evil looks like. And then you allow us to show them why good triumphs over evil."*

And so this day we pledged ourselves to be there for Amanda and Christina. This is what we must remember: **whatever is in our hearts, our children will absorb.**

The struggle between good and evil runs right down the middle of all our hearts.

Jesus said that there is **no essential difference between harboring hatred** in our hearts, and being a murderer, and so let us, day by day, take a fearless inventory of our hearts, to acknowledge where hatred is trying to make a home, and repent.

Let us also take an inventory of the fear that would take hold in our hearts, because fear blocks love.

Jesus said to those disciples terrified out there in the boat in the midst of the storm, afraid they might sink into the deep dark water: *"Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"* It took them some time in their journey of faith to begin to learn how to hand over their fears. They certainly couldn't put their whole trust in Jesus, when Jesus was being arrested – they fled in terror.

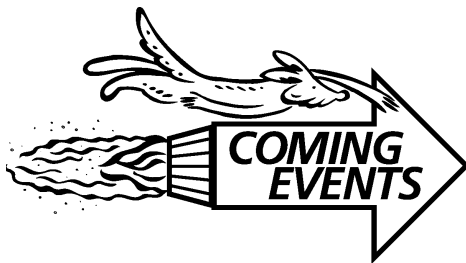


But what we do know is that over time they did learn how to trust and let go of their fears. The disciples could face down the lions and those who would do to them what they had done to their Lord. Death no longer frightened them. They knew where they were going.

We also are on a journey. God is not done with us. But if we continue to own up to the fear and the hatred that would try to take hold of our hearts, God's grace will transform us. We will learn to walk like Jesus.

In the kindness of Jesus,  
Pastor Jeff

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**Annual Ham Dinner – Saturday, October 17 from 4-7.** Come out and enjoy a wonderful fall dinner! If you would like to help out, please contact Barb or Connie.

**Happy Apple Bazaar and Garage Sale – Saturday, November 14 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.** If you are interested in a garage sale table, contact Barb or Connie.

On the **third Thursday of every month** Pastor Jeff leads a **worship service at Troy Hills Center at 10:30 a.m.** If you would like to share in this ministry to the people living in a nursing home, please join us. Speak to Pastor Jeff, Pat Winz, or Greg Elbin who brings along his guitar if you would like more information. Our next service is September 17<sup>th</sup>.



United Methodist  
Women

Looking back...July & August Ladies' Nights Out were very well attended, and all enjoyed good food and fellowship – and thanks to Karen Wilk for hosting both.

Since our summer break is over, please join us at our next program --  
- All women of the church are invited, and bring a friend.....

**Wed., September 2<sup>nd</sup> – 7:00 p.m.**  
**PROGRAM: Jolie Rajasekaran (via Skype)**  
**Speaking about M.S.**

Refreshments will be served

Sept. 7 – Labor Day  
Sept. 11 – Patriot Day

Sept. 13 – Grandparent's Day  
Sept. 3 – 1<sup>st</sup> Day of Autumn

GET WELL wishes to those of you who are ill, and  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY to those of you celebrating this month with Connie Keller, Betsy Adams and Pat Winz.

God Bless,  
Doris Bradley

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

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Pastor Jeff helps facilitate a monthly **“Death Café”** at the Parsippany Library. The next Café will be held **Tuesday, September 1<sup>st</sup> from 2 to 4 p.m.** This is an informal gathering of mindful people, dialoguing about their feelings, thoughts, and experiences about death with a view of helping to make the most of life. Cake and coffee is provided. To register please call 973 887 5150 ext. 209

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A new ministry opportunity is available at **“Table of Hope”** located at the Bethel Church of Morristown, 59 Spring Street. TOH provides a free meal to 90 – 100 people each weeknight from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., and they are looking for groups of six volunteers who will sign up online to come serve one of the meals. If this interests you, please speak to Pastor Jeff.

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To make it easier for the Congregation to keep up with their financial pledges to the Church, a **PayPal link has been added to the PUMC Homepage**. If you've never used PayPal before, it's an easy and secure way to send a payment over the Internet. You can use your bank account or a credit card to make your payment, and PayPal takes a small transaction fee. For more information or a quick demonstration on how to use this new tool, please speak with Justin Cogan.

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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 Thursday, October 8<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 mediation and prayer. Anybody who is available at that time of day is warmly invited to attend.

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**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.

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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](mailto:connie@mhmlender.com)

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

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**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.



**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)

**BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES**  
**SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS**

1 <sup>st</sup>	Anna Larsen	12 <sup>th</sup>	Karina Barreto
1 <sup>st</sup>	Carissa Bramley	16 <sup>th</sup>	Ray Steen
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Amanda Piccolo	17 <sup>th</sup>	Sandy Bostwick
5 <sup>th</sup>	Emma Crowningshield	19 <sup>th</sup>	Pat Winz
6 <sup>th</sup>	Anita Laux	22 <sup>nd</sup>	Jennifer DePietro
7 <sup>th</sup>	Paul Adams	27 <sup>th</sup>	Keith Anastasi
8 <sup>th</sup>	Connie Keller	28 <sup>th</sup>	Ben Chauhan
8 <sup>th</sup>	Michael Krisa	28 <sup>th</sup>	Glen Post
9 <sup>th</sup>	Greg Elbin	29 <sup>th</sup>	Vincent Bianchi
9 <sup>th</sup>	Betsy Adams	29 <sup>th</sup>	Mariahna Suzan
12 <sup>th</sup>	Jim Steen, Jr.	30 <sup>th</sup>	Sarah Wink

**SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES**

15<sup>th</sup> Ann & Charles Nye  
 28<sup>th</sup> Susan & Nick Valcoff

**SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR SEPTEMBER**

Sept. 6

Proverbs 22:1-2,8-9, 22-23  
 James 2:1-10, 14-17  
 Mark 7:24-37

Sept. 13

Proverbs 1:20-33  
 James 3:1-12  
 Mark 8:27-38

Sept. 20

Proverbs 31:10-31  
 James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a  
 Mark 9:30-37

Sept. 27

Esther 7:1-6,9-10;9:20-22  
 James 5:13-20  
 Mark 9:38-50



# September 2015

## United Methodist Church of Parsippany

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																																								
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<b>6</b>  10:30 AM Worship	<b>7</b>    <i>Labor Day</i>	<b>8</b>  7:15 AM Men's Breakfast	<b>9</b>  11:00 AM Living in the Light	<b>10</b>  6:15 PM Kids Bells  7:00 PM Bell Choir  7:45 PM Adult Choir	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>																																																																																																								
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