

HILLTOPPER

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

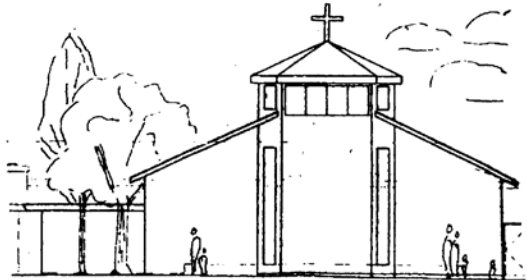
903 So. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054 (973) 887-4657

<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"



OCTOBER, 2015



HAM DINNER - Saturday - October 17, 4 to 7 p.m. We'll need help for this major fundraiser. Help is needed to set up, serve, work in the kitchen and clean up. Please see Barb Bradley or Connie Keller if you're interested in lending a hand. **We also need homemade CAKES to serve for dessert.**

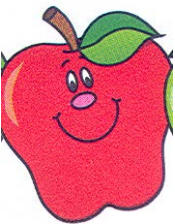
Prices are:

Adults: \$15, Sr. Citizens: \$11, Children 6-12 - \$6

Doris Bradley has tickets you can buy, or tickets you can sell to your friends!

If you have any ideas for advertising and ways to get more people to our dinner, please speak to Barb or Connie.

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HAPPY APPLE BAZAAR - Saturday, November 14th --- 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. We're planning to have our usual jewelry, scarves and hats, bakery, and books. **The rest will be garage sale, hopefully by a few members who would like to sell some stuff!** Our garage sale event in the spring was a big success, so we're hoping we can combine the best of both worlds. Look for further info at church and next month's newsletter. Speak to Barb or Connie if you would like to participate. **We'll need homemade bakery for this event as well.**

From the
PASTOR

A sermon preached on September 6th, 2015 based upon Mark 7:24 - 37.

A Gentile woman comes to Jesus in desperation seeking help for her very sick child, and Jesus initially rejects her, using a racial slur. He tells her that she and her kid are dogs in contrast to children of Israel. This story has troubled the church all the way back to the first century. We know this to be the case, because Mark recorded

the story first, and then who Luke typically incorporated all of Mark's stories into his Gospel cuts this one out altogether. Matthew seems obliged to record the story, but he edits it such a way as to soften the harshness with which Jesus comes across.



More recently commentators have tried to get Jesus off the hook by suggesting that he had "a twinkle in his eye" as he spoke to the woman, as if he intended to heal the child all along – he just wanted to call forth the woman's determined faith. But this is nonsense – there is no way to read this story without concluding that Jesus has been downright cruel to this woman in her hour of desperate need.

It seems to me that this story is a problem only if we feel the need to hold onto a belief we picked up perhaps way back in Sunday School that Jesus was this embodiment of perfection, floating above the rest of humanity – that he didn't have to engage the often pain struggle of discovery by trial and error that is a part of being a human being.

But I think this is a mistaken and unhelpful belief. The truth was that even as Jesus had a unique connection to the divine, he was still fully human, embroiled in the same human condition with which you and I grapple daily. And understanding this is good news for us, because it means that Jesus shares the same life as we live, and as such, is here to help us.

So in this story Jesus has closed down his heart and mind to the woman. He does this because this is what we human beings do when we become tired and stressed out, which is how we find Jesus at the outset. He has been through this stretch of time in his ministry in which thousands of people have come to him with their pain seeking help, and on top of this, he has had to fend off the attacks of the scribes and Pharisees who have called into question the legitimacy of his ministry.



So, exhausted, he retreats into Gentile territory with the hope that he can be anonymous there. He enters a house, Mark tells us hoping that no one would know he was there. He is looking to be left alone for a time that his soul might be restored.

And then this woman shows up.

We really know just two things about this woman. We know she was a Gentile which means she was a member of a race with a longstanding animosity with Jews. Gentiles were considered unclean by Jews, and direct contact was to be avoided. Jesus and his disciples were all Jews.

The second thing we know is that she was a mother. We don't know whether by the standards of the day she was a "good" mother or a "bad" mother. She was simply a mother, a parent.

There is no such thing as a perfect parent. Parenting always involved a mixture of what I would call the sublime and the profane. By profane I am referring the way it involves repetitious, mundane tasks that over time inevitably wear us down. The adorable baby grows into a child who at times displays distinctively brat tendencies. They seem to demand everything from us and give little in return. We devote ourselves to our kids, and oftentimes they don't even give us the respect we deserve. They don't appreciate all we do for them. All of this has the effect of tempting us to close down our hearts and minds.

I suspect that every parent among us feels some gratitude this week that their kids are headed back to school, because being around them all these extra summer hours, we surely witness a lot of the bratdom, am I right? When they get older, hitting the teen years, and the cuteness factor seems to fade to altogether away, well, it can feel at times like being a parent amounts to being little more than being an unappreciated, unpaid chauffeur, and one that our kids are embarrassed to be seen with in public. And a part of us starts counting the days until the brats go off to college, or move out on their own.

This is what I mean by the profane part of parenting.

But there is also a sublime part, and one of the places this is revealed when something frightening happens that threatens our child. Our child gets sick, or in danger, and our heart breaks open and suddenly the child is no longer the little brat, no, he or she is our heart walking around on legs, the preciousness for whom we will go to the very ends of the earth if necessary. Suddenly nothing matters but the astounding, powerful love that arises up within us, that river of love that was always there inside us, but which gets buried under all the profanity of parenting.

And this is the place where the woman in our story is when she comes to Jesus. Her daughter's very life is threatened by evil powers she is helpless on her own to overcome, and so she throws herself at his feet to beg him to heal her.

It is interesting to note that we only hear about two women in the Gospels who approach Jesus in order to receive a healing. The other one came not on behalf of a child but for herself -- she had been hemorrhaging blood for twelve years. We don't get the feeling in that story that the woman felt particular worthy as she approached Jesus. The rules of the day said that women like her don't belong out in public among men, so she tries to avoid public humiliation by being inconspicuous in her approach to Jesus. Hidden in a crowd, she hopes to receive a healing by quietly touching the hem of his garment.

I suspect there would have been the same desire for anonymity for the woman in our story if the healing she sought had been for herself. But it wasn't -- she comes for her daughter who is in deep trouble. And where she might have felt unworthy herself, there is no question in her mind at this moment of her daughter's worthiness. As she comes to Jesus she can expect humiliation, but she doesn't care, because her ego has left the building, so to speak, to make room for the pure river of love for her child that flows through her.

She throws herself at the feet of Jesus and begs on behalf of her daughter, and sure enough, Jesus treats her in a manner that would typically bring humiliation, rejecting her and insulting her, but with no ego to bruise or pride to lose she is incapable of humiliation. She will not be deterred.

(There is a similar state of mind describe in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son when the father comes running out to greet his wayward son who is headed home. By the standards of the day, a father would have been absolutely humiliated to be seen running out to greet a son who had disrespected him so, but like the mother in our story, this father has lost his capacity for humiliation, because of all-consuming love that runs through him for his broken son come home.)

So this absolutely determined mother takes the insult Jesus hurls at her and turns it around. "My daughter and I may well be "dogs" as you say, but whereas your people may view dogs as unwelcome scavengers, in our tradition dogs are members of the family, welcome to sit beneath the table, where they trust the children will share with them their scraps.

If you are a parent you know something of what that mother is feeling at this moment. And if not a parent, perhaps you've experienced something similar for a friend, a sibling or a parent in trouble. The love experienced at such moments is as close as we will ever be to experiencing the love God has for each one of us -- a love willing to suffer death on a cross for each and every one of us.



There is a kind of faith that goes along with this pure love, and it is the conviction that behind the seeming indifference of this world, deep down there is a grace that can make us whole, and we will persist until that grace is revealed.

The love and faith of this woman awakens the ocean of love inside Jesus that has been blocked when his human heart closed down in fatigue. His heart is opened up, and he gladly heals the woman's daughter.

But it's not only Jesus' heart that is opened up, but his mind too. The woman changes the way he understands the world and his mission. He sees that he was wrong in when he thought, as his tradition had taught him, that his ministry was limited to the "chosen people," to the Jews. He sees now that he is a gift to all people.

Our egos tend to be attached to the idea that we are "right," but Jesus in this story shows he has that same attachment. He is open to the truth, wherever it is revealed.

So this is why in this story Jesus models something for us that is different from what we see in all the other stories about him, and that is his willingness to change his mind through an encounter with another person. It shows him having, in the end, an open mind.

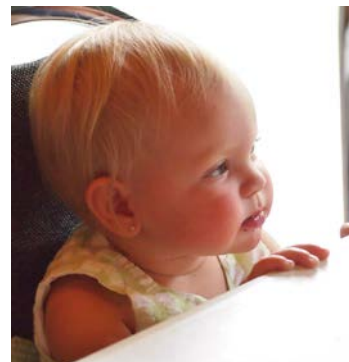
He realizes he thought he knew what was true, but in this case his thinking was wrong. Perhaps it was this experience that was part of what he was drawing upon when he said on the cross, "Father, for they know not what they do." There had been times in his own life -- this being one such time -- when he had not known the harm he was doing.

Jesus' changed thinking changes his behavior as well. No longer does Jesus refuse to minister to Gentiles. In the story that follows, he is still in Gentile territory, and it was Gentiles who brought to Jesus the deaf and mute man, presumably also a Gentile, and this time there is no hesitation on his part. He puts his fingers into the man's ears and says, "*Ephatha*", which means, "be opened."

The United Methodist Church has a slogan we don't always live out: "Open hearts, open minds, open doors." The openness of both heart and mind that Jesus demonstrates in this story is something that can often be missing these days in Christians. Christians can live in such a way that we convey the impression that we are utterly unwilling to entertain the thought that the way we are seeing things just might be wrong. That we alone are the possessors of truth and we refuse to listen to a point of view that challenges our own -- refuse to listen to what others might be able to teach us. We lack the humility and openness Jesus displays here.

And we can do a lot of harm in this world when we close our minds in this way. But I want to tell you a story about Christians who were willing to be changed.

There is an organization within conservative Christianity known as Exodus International that for 37 years felt themselves called to help gay and lesbian person stop being gay and lesbian. They promoted something called conversion therapy which claimed to be able to help people change their sexual orientation; to move from same sex attraction to heterosexual attraction. They claimed to have helped thousands of people do exactly that.



But the fact of the matter was that these so-called conversions didn't hold up. There were thousands of gay and lesbian people who felt obliged to try as hard as they possibly could to act like straight people, when in fact their sexual attraction remained primarily homosexual. They were forced to live as frauds to the truth they knew deep inside them.

The staff of Exodus International was largely made up of such persons, but in the end, had to admit their ministry had failed – they it was, in fact, altogether misguided.

And so three years ago, the leader of Exodus International, a man named Alan Chambers, made a public apology. It is a remarkable statement some of which I would like to quote:

Please know that I am deeply sorry. I am sorry for the pain and hurt many of you have experienced. I am sorry that some of you spent years working through the shame and guilt you felt when your attractions didn't change. I am sorry we promoted sexual orientation change efforts and reparative theories about sexual orientation that stigmatized parents. I am sorry that there were times I didn't stand up to people publicly "on my side" who called you names like sodomite—or worse. I am sorry that I, knowing some of you so well, failed to share publicly that the gay and lesbian people I know were every bit as capable of being amazing parents as the straight people that I know. I am sorry that when I celebrated a person coming to Christ and surrendering their sexuality to Him that I callously celebrated the end of relationships that broke your heart. I am sorry that I have communicated that you and your families are less than me and mine.

More than anything, I am sorry that so many have interpreted this religious rejection by Christians as God's rejection. I am profoundly sorry that many have walked away from their faith and that some have chosen to end their lives. For the rest of my life I will proclaim nothing but the whole truth of the Gospel, one of grace, mercy and open invitation to all to enter into an inseverable relationship with almighty God.

As part of the statement, Chambers announced that Exodus International was hereby closing down. He expressed his intention to begin a new ministry that would focus on reducing fear within churches.

This Gentile woman demanding to receive the crumbs that fell from the Master's table opened up the heart of Jesus, and changed his mind. Insofar as most of us here are Gentile by birth, we have a debt of gratitude to this woman, for she called forth the ocean of love with which we are welcomed this morning at the table we will shortly approach, as together we share the grace revealed in the Lord's Supper.

In the kindness of Jesus,
Pastor Jeff

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As we begin a new year, we are very grateful for our **Sunday School teachers** who share their time on behalf of our children: Lynn Barbarite, Arlene Sklow, Carolyn Pasqua, Newton Barreto, Lynn Agre, Deana Larsen and our youth helpers: Kaitlyn Sklow, Julia Sklow and Cassie Cogan.

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Our **Annual Church Conference** will be held on **Sunday, October 18th at 6:30 p.m.** Our district superintendent, Rev. Steve Bechtold will be on hand to lead us in worship and celebration of our shared ministry here in Parsippany. Officers of the church will be elected. All members of the church are encouraged to attend.

This year we rejoice in having **Sabitha Kanukolanu** a second year M.Div student at **Drew Theological School** working among us. We are grateful for a grant arranged by our district superintendent, Rev. Steve Bechtold that provides the funding for Sabitha's work. Sabitha has an extensive educational background that includes an MA in English Literature. She has worked as the administrator in a public high school as well as in three colleges. Sabitha's husband Swaraj is still living in India where he works at an accountant. Sabitha and Swaraj have three and son-in-law children spread across the globe: Hana, Danile, Moses and Abhinav, two of whom are medical doctors.



Sabitha arrived in the United States in January, 2014 in order to attend Drew. In India she was commissioned as a deacon and served in a wide range of capacities in the Church, including preaching, teaching Bible studies as well as in local church Christian Education, Stewardship, and Vacation Bible School, and with Youth for Christ. Sabitha has also served as the president of the All India Council of Christian Women, the vice-president of the Asia Pacific Diakonia of the World Federation, and as the executive secretary of the Council of Women's Work. She works for the "glory of God, wherever He sends."

Sabitha enjoys painting, cooking, and reading. She also enjoys singing and playing the sitar and the guitar. Her favorite Bible verse is Philippians 1:21: *"For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain."*

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United Methodist
Women

Looking back... Jolie moved to Seattle, WA, but she was still able to present her scheduled program to us via Skype. Well done Jolie! – with the help of Connie at church.

Next --- All women are invited to attend the next program, and bring a friend.....

Wed., October 7th – 7:00 p.m.
PROGRAM: Sabitha Kanukolanu
Our new student pastor
 Refreshments will be served

Oct. 12 – Columbus Day (obs)
 Oct. 14 – Ham Dinner

Oct. 28 – Pie Day – Morris View NH
 Oct. 31 - Halloween

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."



In worship in the two Sundays before the start of **school backpacks were blessed** and tags given to the children and teachers to remind them that when they are at school, God is with them, and Jesus is there to open up their hearts and minds for learning and positive relationships.

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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 17th.

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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 8th.** If you would like to take a turn in helping with this outreach, or if you would like to donate money towards the expenses, please speak to Laurie Wilken or Connie Wallace.

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"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.

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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.

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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.



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

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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 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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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 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 OCTOBER

Oct. 4

Job 1:1; 2:1-10
 Hebrews 1:1-4;2:5-12
 Mark 10:2-16

Oct. 11

Job 25:1-9, 16-17
 Hebrews 4:12-16
 Mark 10:17-31

Oct. 18

Job 38:1-7 (34-41)
 Hebrews 5:1-10
 Mark 10:35-45

Oct. 25

Job 42:1-6, 10-17
 Hebrews 7:23-28
 Mark 10:46-52



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

1 st	Betsy O'Grady	12 th	Abigail Dadaian
1 st	Tyler Mortensen	12 th	Madilynn Dadaian
3 rd	Linda Routhier	14 th	Jahn Schnetzer
5 th	Spandan Patel	16 th	Mark Chauhan
6 th	Diane Anastasi	18 th	Donroy Gounaud
8 th	June Schnetzer	19 th	Brenden Laux
9 th	Jean Montecullo	21 st	Gordon Routhier
9 th	Charles Nye	24 th	Carrie Correale
10 th	Keith Hawkins	25 th	Kathy Isaacks
10 th	Mae Lange	26 th	Muriel Christal
11 th	Bert Morris	27 th	Jeanne Weintraub
12 th	Nicole Dadaian	30 th	Alyssa Letsch

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

9 th	Gordon & Linda Routhier
10 th	Kathy & Henry Isaacks
17 th	Rev. Jeff & Sarah Edwards
19 th	Jim & Karen Steen

Jesus' First Followers

—John 1

Follow Me

When Jesus chose some of His followers He said to them, "Follow me." Follow the paths to find the four men who followed Jesus. When you reach each name, unscramble the letters. All four paths begin at START.

Start

TANALENAH DWEARN MISNO TEREP PPLIHH



October 2015

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																				
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<p style="color: red; font-size: 24pt;">25</p> <p>10:30 AM Worship</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 24pt;">26</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 24pt;">27</p> <p>7:15 AM Men's Breakfast</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 24pt;">28</p> <p>11:00 AM Living in the Light</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 24pt;">29</p> <p>7:00 PM Bell Choir</p> <p>7:45 PM Adult Choir</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 24pt;">30</p> <p>1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group</p>	<p style="color: red; font-size: 24pt;">31</p> 																																																																																				