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United Methodist Church of Parsippany

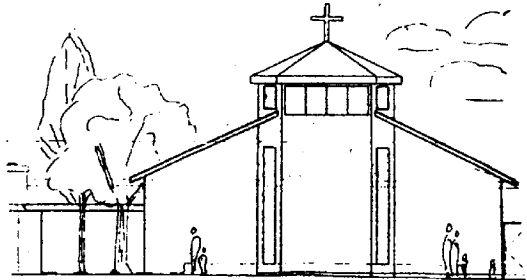
903 So. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054 (973) 887-4657

<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"



DECEMBER, 2016



Hanging of the Greens – Saturday, Nov. 26 at 10:00 am

Pastor Jeff's **Original Christmas Play**, "Beyond the Veil" – Friday and Saturday, **December 9th & 10th at 7:30 p.m.** and Sunday **December 11th at 6:30 p.m.** (See flyer in this Hilltopper)



Once again we will hold our **Christmas Pageant** (featuring our choir) during worship on the last Sunday in Advent, **December 18th**. Any child, teenager or adult who would like to be a part of the pageant is invited to the rehearsal on Saturday, December 17th at 10 a.m.

Our **Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service** will be held at **7:30 p.m.** Join us as we celebrate the birth of Christ as God comes among us as a homeless refugee baby.



Christmas Eve Service



Our regular Sunday morning worship service will be held on **Christmas morning at 10:30 a.m.** Feel free to come in your pajamas for a casual celebration of the gift of joy that is Jesus.

Remember those who are less fortunate



Once again we will be **gathering presents for local families** whose names have been provided to us by Social Services. Amy Gripp will have more information about this.

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This year Connie Keller will be taking orders for poinsettias **until Dec. 11**. Order forms will be included in the bulletins for the first 3 Sundays of Advent. The poinsettias are placed on the altar Dec. 18 for our Christmas pageant and traditionally stay on the altar until after the Christmas Eve service. If you would like to make a monetary donation (instead of ordering poinsettias), it will be used to provide flowers for the Christmas season. If you have any questions please call me. Connie Keller 973-887-4384.

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Operation Christmas Child: Tracy Booth reports another great collection of shoeboxes, toys and funding for shipping costs to send gifts to children in living in developing countries for Christmas as a witness to the great love of Jesus.



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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, December 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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Our local Muslim friends have once more invited us to a free luncheon at the Parsippany Hilton Saturday, November 26th from 1 to 3 p.m. entitled "**Finding Peace in Time of Chaos**." There will be four speakers, including Suzy Ismail who was our guest speaker last January, teaching us about Islam. You can register on line or speak to Pastor Jeff if you are interested in attending. This is a wonderful opportunity continue to build bridges of understanding with our Muslim neighbors.

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Our **Youth Fellowship** will be meeting every other Sunday evening. All youth 8th through 12th grade are invited to attend. Please speak to Pastor Jeff if you have any questions.



A sermon preached on November 13th, 2016 on the Sunday following the presidential election, based upon Luke 21:1 – 8.

It is a preacher's obligation to attempt -- as imperfect as the attempt is always bound to be -- to speak a word on God's behalf in the context of what is going on in the present moment of our lives. The context in which I speak this Sunday is a challenging one indeed, and it is the presidential election that took place this past Tuesday -- an election that has consumed our nation for well over a year; an election that has revealed a deep division in our country, deeper perhaps than we knew.



I speak this morning aware that among those of us gathered here there are a wide range of emotional states and reactions to the outcome of the election: some perhaps are simply glad the whole ugly business of the campaign is finally over; others are happy with the outcome of the election, some perhaps very happy, while others among us are disappointed -- indeed some of us have felt devastated, and are quite literally working through the stages of grief.

Some of us may feel like taking to the streets to protest like tens of thousands have already done; others among us may feel angry, perhaps frightened by those who have chosen to do exactly that.

So the context is not an easy one in which to speak from the pulpit.

Our church bulletin is printed by Connie on Thursday, and with Bob and Connie going out of town for the weekend, I had to choose a scripture to read by Thursday. Still reeling from the election myself, and consumed as I was by our Bishop's visit, I had little time to think about what I might say this morning. I chose the assigned lectionary Gospel lesson for this Sunday, making some adjustments to what Bill would read this morning. This being Stewardship Sunday, I had him back up some and include the story of the poor widow giving her offering in the Temple.

In the part Bill read, Jesus goes on to foretell the coming destruction of the beautiful Temple in Jerusalem that so impressed his disciples. In the part that extended beyond what Bill read, Jesus talks about the world as people knew it becoming unhinged. Scary times indeed. By the time Luke wrote his Gospel, a good deal of what Jesus had prophesied had already come to pass. In 70 AD a Jewish uprising had led to a Roman siege of the city. The holy city of Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple decimated and hundreds of thousands were killed.

Last week we heard about a sect of Jews known as the Sadducees who had challenged Jesus to a debate when he was teaching that last week of his life in the Temple. Their religion was all about the Temple, and not surprisingly, when the Temple was destroyed, the religion of the Sadducees disappeared from the face of the earth as well.

But Luke was writing to Christians, not Sadducees, and as much as we love our sanctuary, he would remind us that our faith isn't centered in beautiful buildings. Contrary to what certain popular television preachers like Joel Osteen might suggest, neither is our faith centered in any kind of worldly success. There are seasons of success and seasons of failure, and we are not to attach our heart to either. Jesus was saying that's not where our faith is centered.



In the passage Bill read, Jesus says, *"Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is near!' Do not go after them."* Which is to say, in spite of the promises or the threats associated with the election of -- or the failure to elect -- either of the candidates, neither of them represent the answer to all our problems, nor are they the harbinger of the end times.

In foretelling the falling apart of the world as we know it, the essence of what Jesus was saying was this: "Don't be afraid. Don't get caught up in worrying about success or failure. Just keep the faith. Like that poor widow giving all she had in the Temple that day, focus on giving your life as an offering to God."

The center of our faith is a humble savior named Jesus of Nazareth who died a complete failure in the eyes of the world, nailed to a cross because he refused to take up arms against his enemies, dying for not just some people, but for all people. A savior who was here to do what we couldn't do for ourselves, and that was reconcile ourselves to God and to one another. In his call to follow him, we are given the "ministry of reconciliation" -- to be, as the Apostle Paul puts it, "ambassadors for Christ." And our faith is in a savior whose death on the cross wasn't the last word -- a savior risen from the dead to be with us always as we would seek to be his ambassadors. So there is always hope, even when the world doesn't seem to offer much hope. This Savior we follow told us to love our enemies, a teaching that distinguished him among spiritual teachers. Peaceful protest is a constitutional right, and in some instances, a very faithful thing for Christians to do in the face of injustice, but violence and hatred of our enemies is never faithful.

For many of us this may seem like the most divided our country has ever been, but the fact is, it isn't. Some of us are old enough to remember the divisions of the Vietnam War era; it was worse back then. And well before that was the deep division of our country that was the Civil War. It was Abraham Lincoln himself who spoke at his first inauguration of the need to appeal to the "better angels of our nature." Lincoln understood that there is a struggle between light and darkness taking place inside all of us, and though he believed strongly in the causes for which he would go on to send troops into battle to die, he had the humility never to claim that God resided exclusively in the camp of the armies of the north.

Whenever we assume we are among those who have sole possession of the light and that those on the other side of the divide are the children of darkness, it is time for some soul searching. It is time for some humility.

We caught glimpses of those "better angels of our nature" in the hours following the election: Hillary Clinton, standing bravely before her supporters in all their disappointment and heartbreak and saying, "Donald Trump is going to be our president. We owe him an open mind and the chance to lead." And Donald Trump, seemingly humbled by the grave responsibilities that are now his, declaring in his victory speech, "Hillary Clinton has worked very long and very hard over a long period of time, and we owe her a major debt of gratitude for her service to our country. I mean that sincerely... For those who have chosen not to support me in the past... I'm reaching out to you for your guidance so that we can work together and unify our great country."



And then following the meeting that took place the next day, President Obama said to President-elect Trump that "we now are going to want to do everything we can to help you succeed -- because if you succeed, then the country succeeds." And President-elect Trump, taking note of the fact that this had been in fact the first time that he and the president had ever met face to face, (which is extraordinary in itself -- we all need to seek out face to face meetings with our adversaries), responded by saying, "Mr. President, it was a great honor being with you, and I look forward to being with you many, many more times in the future," going on to specifically mention that he would be turning to President Obama for his counsel.

The better angels of our nature were on display in all these words.

I am under no delusion that these "better angel moments" won't soon give way to the darker impulses of our nature. And in many instances, they already have. But the thing is, "the better angels" are still there, though at times their voices get silenced.

And as Christians, we're called to follow Jesus, the great reconciler, the one who gave his life for all people, not some people. Though we each may have political convictions that we would like to see prevail, we are failing in our discipleship if we give into the impulse to demonize our political opponents.

I came across an article with suggestions of how we can faithfully move forward from the election as individuals and as a nation. The first was to make amends with loved ones.

I got an email this morning from Maidie that I want to read to you:

I am flying out to Seattle this morning and then San Francisco on Tuesday and ask for you to pray for me and this trip. For some reason I am very uneasy about this, mostly because of all the political unrest and protests/ riots in the country, especially in San Fran. This is also the very first time I'm leaving Ryan and it's for 4 whole days! I'm extremely anxious and on edge. Pray also for the friends and families (including my own) that have literally disowned each other over this election and this nation that is in such divide. My heart goes out to both sides to stop this hate, fear, and violence.

Maidie



Second, find a way to help those who might feel most vulnerable at this point in time. This might mean Muslims, or Black people, Hispanic immigrants, or Gay and Lesbian people, but it might also, in some instances, mean Trump supporters.

My brother-in-law, a Trump supporter, visited us yesterday. He was wearing a safety pin, which has been adopted since the election by many as a sign that the person wearing it offers themselves as a safe refuge for anybody who might feel threatened, particularly in light of the often hateful rhetoric of the campaign.

A while back this brother-in-law, a retired colonel, who as I said has conservative political views, found himself disturbed by what was happening in his little Presbyterian Church in south Jersey. He was an elder, a member of the governing body of his church, and a motion was on the table to withdraw from the national Presbyterian Church because it had adopted a more welcoming policy towards Gay and Lesbian people. Everybody was on board with the motion to withdraw -- that is until my brother-in-law stood up and said he could not abide what they were doing -- that Gay and Lesbian people were beloved children of God every bit as much as they were -- and he announced that he and his wife were withdrawing their membership from the church.

Third, get to know your neighbor. One of the things this election has pushed into our faces is that we don't know our neighbors very well. We need to step out of our echo chambers and listen to the people whose points of view, and whose pain, is different from our own.

Fourth, practice forgiveness. That's pretty central. You can't be a Christian and not practice forgiveness.

Fifth, write a list of things for which you are grateful. There is so much in life that blesses our lives that has absolutely nothing to do with the results of this election. Remember these things, and give thanks.

Sixth, connect with nature. Seventh, remember there is always a bigger picture than we can see.

I'll add another. Look for people whose lives, particularly in the face of adversity, give you inspiration. Last Sunday evening, Sarah, Anna Christal and I went to a local synagogue to hear a doctor tell his story of surviving fourth stage lymphoma. Central to his life was his commitment to be of service to others. As long as he could he went to work and offered himself as a healer for others, even as he was seeking healing for himself.

I thought of Hwa. We shared with our Bishop the story of how fifteen years ago, before we even had the certificate of occupancy, we brought Hwa into this sanctuary to lay hands on her in prayer. She went forth from that prayer session to receive the transplant of a liver. Every three months Hwa goes to the Mayo Clinic to have her numbers checked, mindful that each time she goes there is the possibility that her numbers may show the liver is failing. And each time she comes back she has stories to tell of all these persons -- fellow patients, nurses, complete strangers she met in dining halls -- that she befriended, listening to their needs for healing, inviting us to pray for them with her. I believe that as she does this, her own immune system is enhanced.



I think of Bob Keller, away this Sunday celebrating a birthday in his extended family. You may know that Bob was forced to retire early and go on disability because of severe diabetes and failing kidneys. Profoundly grateful, several years back he received the gift of life in the form of a kidney from his wife Connie. A couple years back he survived a bout with cancer. (Bob will need a new kidney before much more time passes, so anyone who has a kidney to share that could be a match might consider speaking to him.) The thing I admire about Bob -- the thing I believe has sustained him through all the uncertainty of his physical health -- has been his ongoing commitment to get up each morning and find some way of being of service in this world.

So, I'm just about done. When we sing this last hymn, you are invited to come forward to place your pledge card on the altar. You have written down the pledge of your financial gifts to the church, but let it express more: the very offering of yourself to be an ambassador for Christ in this broken world, a reconciler, a peacemaker, a witness to the kingdom of God where all are welcome, and all are valued, and there is always room in the circle.

In the kindness of Jesus,
Pastor Jeff

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Looking back... our Budget, Program Planning, etc. meeting went well.

Next -- bring a friend and come to the December Program....



United Methodist
Women

Wed., Dec. 14th -- 6:30 p.m.
PROGRAM: Pot Luck Supper Christmas Party
 Bring a dish to feed 8. Inform Karen Wilk 973-386-9889
 - Installation of 2017 Officers
 - Christmas Gift Exchange Game -- Bring a wrapped gift (approx. \$5) with Your Name on the outside -- and the recipient will pray for you all next year.

Dec. 1 -- World AIDs Day
 Dec. 7 -- Pearl Harbor Day
 Dec. 21 -- First Day of Winter

Dec. 24 -- Christmas Eve
 Dec. 25 -- Christmas Day
 Dec. 31 -- New Year's Eve

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

God Bless,
 Doris Bradley

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

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Interfaith Furnishings - Once every three months our church provides volunteers to assist **Interfaith Furnishings** in transporting donated furniture to people living in Morris County who would not be able to otherwise furnish their homes. **Our next Saturday to serve is Saturday, January 14th.** Please speak to Claudia Bartek or Maidie Erickson if you would like to volunteer



On Stewardship Sunday we dedicated our pledges for 2017. I want to express my gratitude and thanks to all those who have already turned in their pledges. Your pledges help our church plan for the coming year. For those who have not yet turned in a pledge for 2017, fear not! You can still turn in a pledge card, declaring your financial support of our church. Please bring your pledge to church or

send it in the mail.

Do some of you remember the radio commentator, Paul Harvey? He once told a story about a woman who called the Butterball Turkey Company and asked if a 23 year-old turkey she had found in her freezer was any good. The answer was that if the turkey had been kept frozen at 0 degrees it would be safe to eat, but would have very little flavor or nutrition. She said, "That's what I thought. I'll just give it to the church."

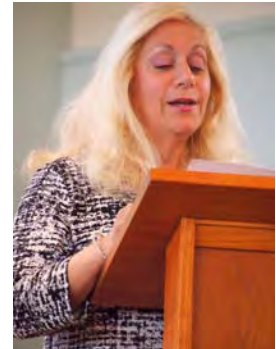
When we need a teacher or coach for our children, when we need a doctor for a serious medical problem, when we need a lawyer for a legal issue, do we seek out the BEST, or the cheapest? When we give to God, who has given us life, do we seek to give generously and sacrificially, or just enough to get by?

In the coming weeks please continue to reflect on why you give to support our church; Relationship, Vision, Need, Obedience, Education, or maybe you have another reason. Remember the impact that our church has had on members and friends, some of which you heard about on Sunday mornings during the stewardship moment. If you have not done so already, please pledge for 2017 and give generously to the financial support of the church for the coming year. And to those who have already turned in their pledges, many thanks for your support.

Paul Adams
Stewardship Chair



Thanks goes to all those who returned their stewardship pledge cards for 2017. If you haven't done so, it's not too late. Just drop it in the offering plate or mail it to the church. We are grateful for the wonderful support of our members as well as for our Stewardship Chair, Paul Adams, and the three persons who gave powerful stewardship witnesses in regard to what this church means to them: Terry Germann, Tom Miceli, and Amina Judge-Jones. We will be looking forward to hearing from others



about what our church means to them in the weeks to come, so if you would be willing to speak, please speak to Paul Adams.



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

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 or Pat Winz if you would like more information. Our next service is **Dec. 15th**.

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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.

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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@mhlender.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. 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.

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR DECEMBER

<u>Dec. 4</u> Isaiah 11:1-10 Romans 15:4-13 Matthew 3:1-12	<u>Dec. 11</u> Isaiah 35:1-10 James 5:7-10 Matthew 11:2-11	<u>Dec. 18</u> Isaiah 7:10-16 Romans 1:1-7 Matthew 1:18-25	<u>Dec. 25</u> Isaiah 52:7-10 Hebrews 1:1-4 John 1:1-14
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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 Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. All children and youth in 3rd grade and up (including junior and senior high school) are welcome. Directed by Aimee Letsch (973-585-7634)



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS			
4 th	Fred Coleman	20 th	Marissa Raier
5 th	Andrew Edwards	24 th	Linda Winz
6 th	Niken Patel	24 th	Deana Larsen
9 th	Sean O'Grady	25 th	Keith Sakelakos
14 th	Gloria Gounaud	26 th	Jean Sakelakos
14 th	Claudia Bartek	31 st	Flora Dierbach
16 th	Jessica Colletto	31 st	Kassie Dadian
20 th	Jennifer Savarin		

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES	



On Thursday, November 10th Bishop John Schol, the United Methodist bishop who oversees all the United Methodist churches in New Jersey stopped by our church for a brief visit with three district superintendents. He witnessed our children rehearsing for the Christmas play, met with 14 members of our congregation who able to be on hand and heard about the warmth and the strong sense of inclusion of our congregation. Afterwards he mentioned our theater ministry in an email to the entire conference and in a personal email to Pastor Jeff wrote, "I had a great visit and came away blessed by the congregation and your leadership. I believe in what you and the congregation are doing."



The Parsippany United Methodist Church

presents

Beyond the Veil

An original Christmas play written and directed by Pastor Jeff Edwards

Choreography by Anita Laux

Performances:

Friday, December 9 @ 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, December 10th @ 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 11th @ 6:30 p.m.



Cast: Austin Atkinson, Sophia Atkinson, Garrett Belanus, Tracy Booth, Andrea Christiango, Kayla Christofferson, Ryan Christofferson Beth Cogan, Marissa Cogan, Jeff Edwards, Terry Germann, Amy Gripp, Kadi Jones, Amina Jones-Judge, Anna Larsen, Maggie Letsch, Karissa Deeks, Frances DiPietro, Coleen O'Grady, Kelly O'Grady, Jake Matheis, Abby Matheis, Kaia Mihalko, Katie Mihalko, Mary Mihalko, Chris North, Spandan Patel, Sydney Petzinger, Zachary Petzinger, Garin Roelofs and Maya Roelofs.

Production Crew:

Anthony DiPietro, Greg Elbin, Anna Gripp, Monica Hawkins, Eric Roelofs, Darryl Sokolowski



In the midst of the culture's increasingly frantic and commercialized version of what this season of the year of is all about, we invite you to come and be reminded of the true meaning of Christmas. Be ready to laugh and to cry and to come away deeply inspired, having caught a glimpse "beyond the veil" of the true meaning of Christmas, and of life itself.

The church is located at 903 S. Beverwyck Road.

The public is invited and admission is free.

There will be a free will offering to support the ministries of the church.

December 2016

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																											
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<p><i>4</i></p> <p>10:30 AM Worship</p>	<p><i>5</i></p>	<p><i>6</i></p> <p>7:15 AM Men's Breakfast</p>	<p><i>7</i></p>	<p><i>8</i></p> <p>7:00 PM Bell Choir 7:45 PM Adult Choir</p>	<p><i>9</i></p> <p>1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group 7:30 PM Christmas Play</p>	<p><i>10</i></p> <p>7:30 PM Christmas Play</p>																																																																																											
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<p><i>18</i></p> <p>10:30 AM Worship Christmas Pageant During Worship</p>	<p><i>19</i></p>	<p><i>20</i></p> <p>7:15 AM Men's Breakfast</p>	<p><i>21</i></p>	<p><i>22</i></p>	<p><i>23</i></p> <p>1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group</p>	<p><i>24</i></p> <p>7:30 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Service</p>																																																																																											
<p><i>25</i></p> <p>10:30 AM Worship Merry Christmas!</p>	<p><i>26</i></p>	<p><i>27</i></p> <p>7:15 AM Men's Breakfast</p>	<p><i>28</i></p>	<p><i>29</i></p>	<p><i>30</i></p> <p>1:00 PM Men's Discussion Group</p>	<p><i>31</i></p>																																																																																											