

The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

December 2016

PEACE LOVE HOPE

What's So Special About Christmas ?

As I write this article for the December LINK, I am reminiscing how amazing it is that just days ago my wife and I stood over Shepherd's Field and visited the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem—the birthplace of Jesus.

Of course, as we descended into the lower parts of the church Queen Helena, Constantine's mother, commissioned to erect in honor of Jesus' birth—it looked nothing like the original place where Jesus was born.

Who could have possibly imagined that God would come the way He did? Born in a manger? Out in the cold of the night? A king is supposed to be born in a palace, right?

Could you imagine the newborn child of Mike Bloomberg or Donald

Trump or Mark Zuckerberg born in a cardboard box in an alleyway in the inner city?

Standing over Shepherd's Field where it was first announced that the Savior was born—I thought, isn't it interesting that the announcement was made to common everyday shepherds?

It wasn't announced amongst the religious elite, the rich or the powerful. It was an announcement that this Savior, named Jesus, was a savior for everyone—not just some. I find that very comforting.

Then, to fathom that God actually came into the world in the form of a person and not just a spirit. Jesus would cry because he needed to be fed by his mother, Mary.

He would need to be changed and cuddled

and sung to—just like any child born today. That thought shouted to me that this Savior named Jesus would understand and know what it is like to be human and to experience all of the human challenges and emotions each of us experience every single day.

Wow! When I sit alone and talk to Jesus in prayer, I am confident that he understands my fears, my anxieties, my frustration, pain, doubt and insecurities. And this relationship all started in a little town called Bethlehem.

Continued on Page 2

WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

Dec. 4—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Mark 1:1-8, *Bah, Humbug?*

Dec. 11—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Matthew 1:18-25, *Advent: A Time To Reflect On What Is Really Important—Relationships, Not Running Out of Energy*

Dec. 18—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Micah 5:2-5a, Hebrews 10:5-10, *Greatness In Smallness*

Dec. 24, 7:00 PM—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Isaiah 9:2-7, *Letting Our Light Shine In a Darkened World*

NO SERVICE ON CHRISTMAS DAY. MERRY CHRISTMAS

You are to give him the name **JESUS**, because he **WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE** from their sins.

M A T T H E W 1:21, NIV

Circle of Concern

For Joys: Kayla Donavan

Bereavement:

Family of Jim Miller, Dorothy Rinker, Mary, Katherine.

For Guidance and Healing:

Steve Rea, Ron Jones, Bruce Kirschner, Kathy Maier, Adrian Murphy's mother, Theresa Lindsay, Sean Abrams, Joy Kala, Eugene Cirulli, Eileen Austin, George Werner, Mamie White, Frankie Scott Jr., Joanne, Dot Fassel, Lee Hollowell, Henry Prince, Patricia Puk, Luke Gonzalez, Eleanor, Deb, Kayla Donovan, Bruce Koffman, Josh Jansson, Edward Collins, Marjorie Bates, Diane Peterson, Luke Sotis, Tim Jordan, Jasmine.

These Who are Hospitalized:

Frances Breen, Anthony Marmos, Michele Conrad, Juliana

These who are in Rehab or Nursing Care Facilities:

Geri Sheridan in Brookhaven Health Care Facility, 801 Gazzolla Drive, E. Patchogue, NY.

John Vander Zalm in Brookhaven Health Care Facility, 801 Gazzolla Drive, E. Patchogue, NY.

Alice Zahnd in Gurwin Jewish Nursing Facility, Commack, NY.

Ed Dew in Sunrise Assisted Living, Waverly Avenue, Holbrook, NY.

Pray for our church and her future directions!

Prayer cards are located at the usher's station in the rear of the sanctuary. Your joys and concerns are important to us; let us pray for you! Please put completed prayer cards in the offering plate. Or use the Prayer Request Form on our web page at www.PatchogueUMC.org.

Christmas (From Page 1)

What we know today perhaps was not fully known to the shepherds on that first Christmas—that is, the baby in the manger would become a King who would thirty some-odd years later lay down His life on a cross so we could have life eternal with Him.

Christmas is not so much about chestnuts roasting on an open fire or a spectacular Christmas performance at the Patchogue Theatre. It is more significant than giving and receiving decoratively wrapped Christmas presents—though I love watching my grandchildren open their gifts.

None of these practices are bad or wrong in and of themselves. However, Christmas has a much deeper meaning and significance, doesn't it? Christmas represents a promise made by God that He would make a way for everyone to return to a right relationship with Him through His son, Jesus.

If it wasn't for Christmas, we wouldn't have Easter. And if it wasn't for Easter, we would have no means of redemption and reconciliation.

Thank God for Christmas—for it is Christmas that introduces hope to the world.

I pray that each of us will walk in that promised hope—knowing that we are King's kids and very special to God. I so look forward to celebrating Advent and Christmas with each of you—and my wife and I sincerely wish each of you a Merry and blessed Christmas.

In His Grip,

—Pastor Chuck

December Birthday

Dec. 14 Steven Rice

Seven Week Bible Study

Starting Sunday, Jan. 15, this study, 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM will be led, in the Library, by Myong Cha.

7 STEPS

TO ANSWERED PRAYER

Have you ever struggled with maintaining a regular and effective

prayer life? Most people do. This short seven-week course will help an individual develop a prayer life with a powerful spiritual impact. Plan to come and be touched by God.

Jan. 15 Session I: *"Decide What You Want From God"*

Jan. 22 Session II: *"Find the Scriptures that Promise It"*

Jan. 29: Session III: *"Meditate on those Promises Until You Believe Them"*

Feb. 5: Session IV: *"Ask God for it and Believe that you Receive It"*

Feb. 12: Session V: *"Make every Subsequent Prayer a Prayer of Faith"*

Feb. 19: Session VI: *"Keep your Thoughts and Attitude in Alignment"*

Feb. 26: Session VII: *"Continually Thank God for the Answer"*

Not Only Christmas

I long to hear the same words That welcomed home Your Son, "Come, good and faithful servant," Your Master says, "Well done."

And may heaven welcome others Who will join with me in praise Because I lived for Jesus Christ Not only Christmas Day.

—Mary Fairchild

United Methodist Church of Patchogue December 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2 9:30 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	3 3:00 p.m.—Holiday Tea 7:30 p.m.—AME Service
4 10:00 a.m.—Communion Worship 12:30 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 5:00 p.m.—AME Service	5 7:00 p.m.—AA	6 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10 a.m.—Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	7 4:30 p.m.—Learning Center 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	8	9 9:30 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	10 11:00 a.m.—Church Tours 7:30 p.m.—AME Service
11 10 a.m.—Worship/Sunday School 11:30 a.m.—Finance 12:30 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 5:00 p.m.—AME Service	12 7:00 p.m.—AA	13 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10 a.m.—Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	14 4:30 p.m.—Learning Center 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	15	16 9:30 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	17 7:30 p.m.—AME Service
18 10 a.m.—Worship/Sunday School 11:30—Council 12:30 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 5:00 p.m.—AME Service	19 7:00 p.m.—AA	20 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10 a.m.—Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	21 4:30 p.m.—Learning Center 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	22	23 9:30 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	24 7:00 p.m.—Christmas Eve Service 7:30 p.m.—AME Service
25 NO WORSHIP SERVICE 12:30 p.m.—Home For The Holidays 12:30 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 5:00 p.m.—AME Service	26 OFFICE CLOSED 7:00 p.m.—AA	27 OFFICE CLOSED 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10 a.m.—Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—AA	28 OFFICE CLOSED 4:30 p.m.—Learning Center 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	29 OFFICE CLOSED	30 OFFICE CLOSED 9:30 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	31 NEW YEARS EVE

Eleventh In Our History Series

It's A Wrap

Last month we talked about crosses. One more cross should be recognized. It is a cross plaque that is below the larger hanging cross on the Organ pipes.

Donations in memory and honor of loved ones are listed. Our chairs in the choir loft were purchased by these donations. Donors in memory of loved ones included : Connie and Al Halliwell, Ethel King, Ed and Marion Blum, Mae Seifering and Gail Devery. Donors In memory of Paul and Wilamina Bassett by Bill Howe; and A. Smith Petty by Margaret Meany; In honor of sons Fred, Ray and Dave by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Henson; Frances Waehler by the Leonard Ricchi family. In memory of Hazel King by Norman King; Earl Graves by Art Oneill and Mrs. Graves; Betty Paduano and Conda Diehl by Al and Barbara Bonfe; James Boyd by the Boyd family; Richard Bishop and Orville King by Al King; Herbert Smith by Emma Fechter, and George and Viola Bennett by Phyllis and Robert Monaco.

Tidbits from our history

Nov. 24, 1845—Some delinquent members of our church.

Two females are reported to have recently attended dancing schools and balls in this village and two male members are reported to be making too free use of spirituous liquors and are frequenting taverns for this purpose. Three females have been appointed to wait upon the two females mentioned and report the facts in the case. The

Pastor will converse with the males on the subject of straying.

1871—Our sexton was paid \$75 for the year's work. Besides serving his regular duties, he had to pay his own assistant, ring the bell, take up collections, and keep order in the gallery. His name was William Andrus.

Jul. 8, 1912—At the close of the official board meeting, the entire board rode to the bay and back on South Ocean Ave. on the new trolley.

All of our history has been collated and written in three volumes by Sarah Bransford. I have simply been sharing her wonderful collection of history with you. We do have a fourth volume in progress.

—Wendy Hollowell,
Church Historian

If you would like to place flowers on the altar to honor a person or in memory of someone



Altar Flowers

or to honor God, please notify Eleanor Prince or Gail Hoag. Or, you can

also speak to Camille in the church office at 631-475-0381.

Please select the date and type of flowers. An arrangement is \$40. If you prefer, a bouquet without a vase (the church will supply a vase for altar use) can be purchased for \$15.

If you would like something special, such as all roses, we will price for you.

—Gail Hoag

Chuck, The Artist



Pastor Chuck is, among other things, an accomplished artist. But he has never put his work on public display. Until now. His paintings, including this Pt. Jefferson scene, will be on exhibit for the month of December in the second floor Loft at BrickHouse Brewery and Restaurant. A free Artist's Reception will be held there on Thursday, Dec. 8, 7:00–9:00 PM. Everybody is invited.

U.S. Church Sees Numbers Slide In 2015

The United Methodist Church in the United States continued to see its membership and attendance slide in 2015. However, those numbers don't tell the whole story of what's happening across the denomination.

The denomination has 7,067,162 professing members in the United States, according to 2015 data released Nov. 17 by the General Council on Finance and Administration.

That marks a decrease of about 1.6 percent from 2014, the same percentage decrease seen between 2013 and 2014. The number does not include clergy, nor does it include children who are baptized but not yet confirmed.

Average weekly U.S. worship attendance stands at about 2.7 million, a drop of about 2.9 percent from 2014.

"It's a decline, but it's not as much as projected," said Lauren Arieux, statistician and research fellow of U.S. data for the denomination's finance agency.

"What we're seeing is a stable decline," she told agency board members.

The agency is still collecting 2015 data from central conferences — church regions in Africa, Asia and Europe. As of 2013, the central conferences had a total of 5,525,924 professing members. Based on consistent growth in Africa, the finance agency expects that number is higher today.

The United Methodist Church remains the third largest religious body

in the United States — behind Catholics and Southern Baptists, but ahead of Mormons.

Arieux pointed out that United Methodists are not alone in seeing declines, and in fact are faring better than fellow mainline Protestants. Most Christian denominations, including the Roman Catholic Church and Southern Baptist Convention, have seen their U.S. numbers drop in recent years.

At the same time, the religiously unaffiliated—that is, "nones"—have grown into the U.S.'s second largest religious category, according to Pew's 2014 Religious Landscape Study.

The need for membership data The United Methodist Church uses professing membership and clergy figures to determine just how many delegates each conference can send to General Conference, the denomination's top lawmaking assembly.

The 2016 General Conference approved legislation that specifies the secretary of the gathering will make delegate calculations based on the most recent conference journals submitted to the General Council on Finance and Administration. The legislation would apply to General Conference starting in 2020.

Any called General Conference before then will use the same allocation of delegates used for the 2016 assembly.

Staff from the finance agency plans to lead training sessions in Africa in 2017 that will, in part, help African United Methodists supply the needed data to the General Council on Finance and Administration.

Where the U.S. church is growing

While the topline U.S. numbers show declines, there are bright spots in the data.

U.S. churches saw 114,685 new members join last year by profession of faith or faith restored. That figure includes people who completed confirmation or were previously unchurched for some time. Another 40,918 new members joined by transferring from another denomination.

Sixteen of the denomination's 56 U.S. conferences also reported increases in their professions of faith between 2014 and 2015.

The church, which still is 90 percent white in the United States, also is seeing slow but noticeable growth in its ethnic diversity. In 2015, the denomination added 205 more Hispanic/Latino and 106 more Pacific Islander members.

"The increases are small, but they're there," Arieux said. "We attribute some of that to better reporting, but we also know that there are parts of the country where The United Methodist Church is not as white as it used to be."

More than half of last year's losses — 181,587 individuals — resulted from churches removing long inactive members from their rolls or correcting previous data. Another 95,343 were removed from the rolls because of death, or as United Methodists would say, they joined "the church triumphant." Churches report only 25,405 members withdrew because of joining another denomination.

Continued on Page 7

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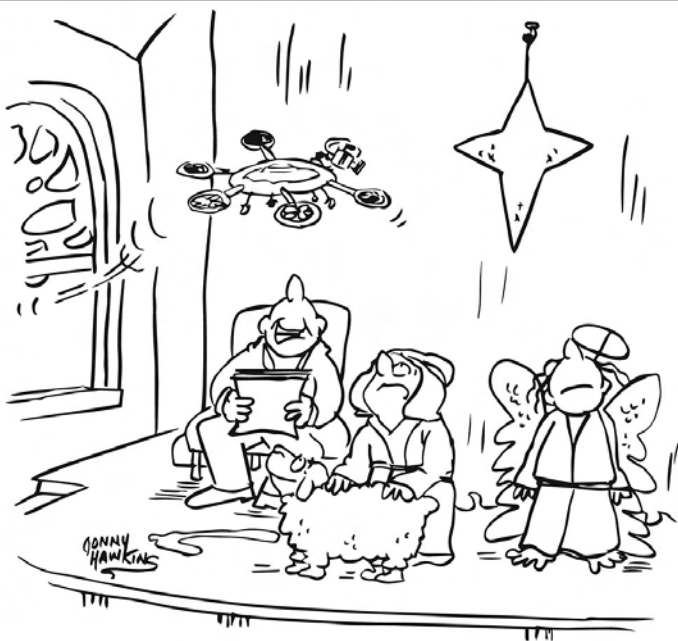
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The deadline for the January issue
of **The Link** is **December 16**.
Please email your copy to gbhoag@optonline.net.



A Note About Restoring Hope

Our Restoring Hope capital campaign was completed several years ago but funds may continue to be contributed. All Restoring Hope contributions go to the Trustees who have continuing building expenses but no other revenue source. \$500 a month in Trustee funds go to pay off our boiler loan. Contributions can be made to either "Restoring Hope" or "Trustees".

Membership (From Page 5)

Looking ahead

The numbers do not surprise the Rev. Steven D. Court, a board member of the General Council on Finance and Administration. He is also director of connectional ministries in the East Ohio Conference.

“We need to use numbers as sticky notes,” he said. “They tell us where to look. What I look for are places that have seen an upturn.”

He noted that increasingly Americans are participating in church in different ways than sitting in a pew on Sunday morning.

He and other board members are excited that in coming years Arieux plans to ask congregations to note any online worship attendance in the information they submit.

Among those board members is the Rev. Sandra Olewine, who leads First United Methodist Church in Pasadena, California. Her congregation regularly gets views of its livestreamed services by military members serving overseas.

Her congregation also recently did a rigorous cleaning of its rolls, after years of neglect. The resulting membership figures dropped from about 600 to 475. At the same time, the church’s percentage in worship is higher.

“We now know who we are,” she said. “There is an excitement about that because we not only can tend to who we have, but we know who we need to activate to be outside in the world.”

—Heather Hahn, UMNS

After Divisive Election, Pastors Can Help Heal

Anxiety, grief, hopefulness, hopelessness or elation are surely the mixed bag of emotions that fill United Methodist pews these days. In the aftermath of the most contentious presidential campaigns in recent memory, pastors will play a crucial role in healing the deep divide in this country. There is real grief due to the divisive nature of this campaign.

We should be reminded, however, that our church is a big tent filled with Republicans, Democrats, conservatives and progressives, often within the same local church. How do we intentionally begin the process of healing in our communities as we remain faithful to proclaiming the Gospel?

In the days ahead, we must speak to the anxiety and fear that this presidential campaign produced throughout our country. The rhetoric of racial politics, threats of deportation forces, and the promise of banning Muslims from our country has left many Americans terrified of what lies ahead. While many have applauded the election night remarks of President-elect Trump as gracious, one speech will not eradicate the “demonization of the other” based politics of the past 18 months. The words of faithful leaders who ignore this reality or pretend it does not exist will fall on deaf ears.

In the midst of this painful reality, we do have a unique opportunity to remind people that our mission as a church to make disciples transcends

racial, ideological and political lines. We betray our mission when we make politics or any political candidate our idol.

God invites us to live, love, worship and work together. Despite our different backgrounds, histories, and political preferences, we are called to operate in unity as part of the family of God. In order to do that, we have to embrace Paul’s admonition to “accept one another.” There is no time like the present to live into the true image of the beloved biblical community.

The ultimate hope for our world does not lie in a political election, nor a political platform. It lies in Jesus Christ. In the midst of distress, we offer Christ as the ultimate source of our salvation. Our constant hope is not found in Democrats or Republicans, liberals or conservatives, but in the power of Jesus Christ to change lives and transform community. We must help people remember that God is still sovereign and that God is still in control.

We can help our nation heal by reminding people that regardless of their political party affiliation, Jesus calls us to stand with the marginalized, the poor and the oppressed. This means that there is work to do in our communities. There are people who have simply given up on all institutions including the church. These are the very people who desperately need to see a church unified in its resolve to offer hope in the midst of a broken world.

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10 Church St., Patchogue, NY 11772

Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Pastoral Minister
 Camille Flynn, Administrative Assistant
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 Fellowship Coffee Hour—11 AM
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Post Election Healing (From Page 7)

I did not vote for President-elect Trump. As a person of color, I am personally grieved by the way he conducted his campaign. I am offended by the birther movement he led that questioned the legitimacy of the first African-American president.

Yet, he is now my president. We are called to pray for our leaders. We pray that they make good decisions that honor God and respect the dignity of all human beings.

Finally, we can begin the process of healing by calling our nation to revival. “If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from

their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14). The only sustainable movement for change and transformation will be fueled by prayer and earnestly seeking the face of God. God invites us to a life of faithfulness in the midst of the problems and contradictions that the world produces for our faith.

These are turbulent times, but like the Apostle Paul, “I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

May God use you as instruments of healing and ambassadors of hope in the days to come.

—The Rev. Junius Dotson, UMNS



Holy
 IS HIS
NAME.

LUKE 1:49