

The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

December 2017



A Miracle On Church Street

I cannot believe it is December already and we will be celebrating Christmas when we remember the miracle birth of our Savior.

There are also miracles happening in many lives and churches today. Last year I believe God touched our church with a beautiful miracle.

Do you remember this time last year? During a very cold winter our church furnace broke and could not be repaired. This caused us to move our worship services to the newer part of our building in Wesley Hall. With the extreme cold weather and the loss of our sanctuary, I didn't expect many people to come and worship. But that Sunday Wesley Hall

was filled with worshippers and God's presence. I felt all the love that we had for one another. It was confirmed that we were one love, one spirit and one body. We are the church.

On Christmas eve we still did not have a working furnace, but through so much hard work by some of our members we were able to heat the sanctuary with portable heaters. That night we celebrated a wonderful candlelight service—again, God showed up with a full congregation.

Through our generous church family, members of the community and donors across the country, along with Swezy Fuel Company, we were able to replace our boiler paid in full. This was a true miracle through the Grace of God. This was a sign from God that he is going to continue to do mighty works through our church going forward.

So let us continue to look for new acts of God and miracles as we prepare to celebrate the greatest miracle ever—the virgin birth of our Savior through whom our salvation comes.

WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

Dec. 3—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, *What Is Advent, Anyway*, Mark 24:36-44

Dec. 10—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, *Looking Through the Lens of that First Christmas: The Shepherds*, Luke 2:8-20

Dec. 17—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, *The Expectation of Advent is Love*, John 3:16-21

Dec. 24—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, *The Joy of Christmas*, Isaiah 35:1-10

Dec. 24—7:00 PM, Christmas Eve, The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, *The Greatest Gift is the Hope Found in Christ*, Luke 2:8-14

Dec. 31—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, *Moving Toward a New Life in the New Year*, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Have a blessed Advent and Christmas.

Love in Christ,

—Myong Cha



Circle of Concern

For Guidance and Healing:

Evertte Edwards, George Werner, Henry Prince, For Our Nation, Mary Smith, Dawn Rice, Our Military, Paul White, Ron Devellie, Donal, Paul Falvey, Terry Granto, Frank Carroll, Roxanne Randazzo, Joan Landman, Robin Jones, Liliy Healy, Len Ricchi, Marjorie Rice

These Who are Hospitalized:

Charles Martin, Sherry, Seth Greiner, Jean Miller, Frank Ricchi

These at Home:

Jeanna Moritz, Bruce Kirschner, Cheryl Keeley, Mario Conti, Lee Holwell, Viola Schwartz

These in Rehab or Nursing Care

Facilities:

Geri Sheridan in Brookhaven Health Care Facility, 801 Gazzola Dr, East Patchogue

Alice Zahnd in Gurwin Jewish Nursing Facility, Commack, NY

Ed Dew in Sunrise Assisted Living, Patchogue Holbrook Rd, Holbrook, NY

Len Ricchi, in Medford Multicare, Medford, NY

Pray for our church and her future directions!

Prayer cards are located at the usher's station at the rear of the sanctuary.

Make a prayer request at
PatchogueUMC.com

Jesus Doesn't Need

A Season

It's that time of year when too many Americans enter into a frenzy of conspicuous consumption, ostensibly to celebrate the birth of Jesus in a humble manger 2000 years ago. There's a certain irony in claiming to honor the Prince of Peace, the antithesis of materialism, by this crass display of commercialism. If you recall the popular phrase, "WWJD- what would Jesus do?" I suspect He would weep.

Also at this time, we often hear certain self righteous admonitions like, "say Merry Christmas, not Happy Holidays" or "Jesus is the reason for the season."

I feel compelled to point out the following: the word holiday is an elision of 'holy day'. Merry Christmas is a Victorian era phrase, not one the 3 wise men would have utilized. Many Biblical scholars believe that Jesus was not born on December 25th, but in the spring, and the winter date was chosen by the early church leaders to eradicate the ancient observations of the winter solstice. I'm going to pause, lest you think I'm a cranky female Ebenezer Scrooge, to point out that I love Christmas!

Yes, I enjoy the preparations, the decorations, the endless lists, the earnest searching to find just the right gift that suits each special person on the list. And the light in their eyes when they receive that gift, not just the item itself, but the gift of your time and thought and love. I can never get enough of hearing Christmas carols

and hymns. This is pretty much the only time during the year that I play the car radio when I'm driving. So many warm and loving memories from Christmas past. One of my favorites was when we would gather around the piano and my mother would play song after song, while we sang cheerfully, if not always tunelessly, together.

Christmas is about hope and love and peace and relationships. Christmas is about the promise of Jesus' birth, regardless of the date—a promise that if we live a life of faith, if we welcome the Holy Spirit into our lives, if our actions reflect our faith, then we will experience the joy of God's awesome peace. Even in this turbulent, often difficult world.

So, let's not twist ourselves into knots arguing whether to say Happy Holidays or Merry Christmas. If you say either with a loving and cheerful heart, it is a blessing either way. Let's not fret about how much money to spend on gifts; give from the heart and it will be a joy. And let's not confine Jesus to a particular time of the year. Jesus' message, His ministry, His life, death and resurrection are a beacon for every day of every year. Blessings and love to you all.

—Barbara Becker



United Methodist Church of Patchogue December 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	2 3:00 p.m.— Women's Tea 7:30 p.m.—AME
3 10:00 a.m.—Communion Worship Hanging of Greens/Lunch 11:40 a.m.—Bible Study 12:30 a.m.—Pentecostal MF 3:00 p.m.—Ruth Brenner Memorial Service 5:00 p.m.—AME	4 7:00 p.m.—AA	5 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	6 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	7	8 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	9 7:30 p.m.—NA
10 10 a.m.—Worship/ Sunday School 11:40 a.m.—Bible Study 11:30 a.m.—Finance 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 5:00 p.m.—AME	11 7:00 p.m.—AA	12 930 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	13 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	14	15 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	16 7:30 p.m.—NA
17 10 a.m.—Worship/ Sunday School 11:40 a.m.—Bible Study 12:30 p.m.—Pentecostal MF 4:00 p.m.—Shepherd Singers 5:00 p.m.—AME	18 7:00 p.m.—AA	19 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	20 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	21	22 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	23 7:30 p.m.—NA
24 10 a.m.—Worship/ Sunday School 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 5:00 p.m.—AME 7:00 p.m.—Christmas Eve Service	25 MERRY CHRISTMAS Home For The Holidays Party 7:00 p.m.—AA	26 930 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon—Food Pantry 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	27 7:30 p.m.—AME Service	28 5:00 p.m. Wesley Dinner	29 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:30 p.m.—NA	30 7:30 p.m.—NA
31 10 a.m.—Worship/ Sunday School 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 5:00 p.m.—AME						

What Is Advent?

The season of Advent, which comes from the Latin word *adventus* meaning "coming" or "visit," begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. Advent is the beginning of the church year for Christians.



During Advent, we prepare for and anticipate the coming of Christ. We remember the longing of Jews for a Messiah and our own longing for and need of forgiveness, salvation and a new beginning. Even as we look back and celebrate the birth of Jesus in a humble stable in Bethlehem, we also look forward anticipating the second coming of Christ as the fulfillment of all that was promised by his first coming.

Although we are accustomed to celebrating Christmas on a single day, in both Christian tradition and on the church calendar, the Christmas season lasts from sundown on Dec. 24 (Christmas Eve) through Epiphany of the Lord (Jan. 6). This is sometimes referred to as "the 12 days of Christmas."

Advent begins with the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day. In 2017, Christmas falls on a Monday, and Christmas Eve on Sunday night. Thus, in 2017 Advent begins Sunday, Dec. 3, and ends at sundown on Sunday, Dec. 24, three weeks plus a portion of an additional day.

—Interpreter

Bishops: Be Respectful In Difficult Times

As the denomination faces an uncertain future, bishops urge their fellow United Methodists to address their differences with respectful conversations.

"We are hearing of and observing angry words now escalating to actions that are resulting in fear, anxiety, loss of security and even physical harm," said the bishops in a letter signed by Bishop Bruce R. Ough, Council of Bishops president. "These actions are repugnant to us as your bishops."

Instead, the bishops call on church members to heed the advice of Ephesians 4:1-3: "Live as people worthy of the call you received from God. Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness and patience. Accept each other with love, and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together."

Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, who leads the West Ohio Conference, told fellow episcopal leaders that the letter responds to growing animosity and acrimony they are witnessing both in civil and church life.

Recent U.S. polls have shown continuing political polarization around immigration, sexuality and race. Other nations with a strong United Methodist presence, including Liberia and the Philippines, are contending with their own charged political debates. Countries around the globe are also dealing with record-level migration as people flee violence, poverty and environmental degradation in their home countries.

United Methodist leaders are trying to speak to all these challenges and welcome new neighbors, even as they cope with differing views within the denomination.

Palmer said he has heard that in a few cases, people even have disrupted worship services to expound on what direction they believe The United Methodist Church should take on homosexuality and immigration. "And they are not even members of those congregations," he added.

The letter comes as United Methodist leaders are discussing how the church might stay together amid deep differences on how the church should include LGBTQ individuals. The bishops have appointed the 32-member Commission on a Way Forward to find a way through the impasse and spent much of their fall meeting in closed session discussing the group's recommendations.

The bishops' letter said the episcopal leaders renew their commitment "to do no harm, do good and stay in love with God."

"We renew this covenant within the Council of Bishops to engage in holy conversation and Christ-like behavior especially when we do not agree with one another," the letter said. "We call upon all United Methodists, even in the midst of disagreement and uncertainty about our future as a church, to do the same, and to love each other as Christ loved us."

—Heather Hahn, UMNS

Bishops Consider Methodist Way Forward

United Methodist bishops are exploring three possible models for how the church should handle LGBTQ inclusion.

The models come to the bishops from the Commission on a Way Forward, which has the task of trying to find a way for the church to stay together despite deep divides over homosexuality.

The bishops have been meeting in closed session Nov. 6-9 to discern whether the commission is heading in the right direction. The bishop-appointed commission has three more meetings planned early next year, and the bishops do not plan to develop any final recommendations until May 2018.

The possibilities under consideration:

- Affirm the current Book of Discipline language and place a high value on accountability. The church policy book says the practice of homosexuality “is incompatible with Christian teaching” and lists officiating at a same-gender union or being a “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy member as chargeable offenses under church law.
- Remove restrictive language and place a high value on contextualization. This sketch also specifically protects the rights of those whose conscience will not allow them to perform same-gender weddings or ordain LGBTQ persons.
- Create multiple branches that have clearly defined values such as

accountability, contextualization and justice. This model would maintain shared doctrine and services and one Council of Bishops.

Each possibility includes a way to exit for those church entities that feel called to leave the denomination. In a [press statement](#), the Council of Bishops said, each possible model represents values within the council and across the church.

In its interim report, the commission did not express a preference for any of the models. The bishops, likewise, are not expressing a preference at this time.

Bishops, like the United Methodists they lead, have different interpretations of Scripture and different views of how the church should minister with LGBTQ individuals.

Among those participating in the discussions were bishops whose home countries have outlawed same-sex activity and bishops who advocate for eliminating church restrictions, including Mountain Sky Area Bishop Karen Oliveto — the denomination’s first openly gay episcopal leader. Still, a number of bishops told United Methodist News Service of feeling a good spirit in the room as they prayerfully considered the church’s future.

“Operate with a heart of peace and an openness,” Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball, one of the moderators, told her fellow bishops, according to the release.

She added that all three models grew out of the commission’s mission, vision and scope.

“Each one of these models connects to a story and experience that is

represented in this body,” said Steiner Ball, who also leads the West Virginia Conference.

The commission will process the bishops’ feedback from this week’s discussions. The press statement said the commission also will continue to welcome further input about the possible models from church members, shared through their respective bishops.

The commission plans to share the resources used by the bishops in their conversations at this meeting on its website.

Ultimately, whatever the bishops propose will go before the lay and clergy delegates of a special General Conference on Feb. 23-26, 2019, in St. Louis, Missouri.

Throughout the meeting, the bishops’ worship services have focused on unity.

Bishop Samuel Quire Jr., who leads the Liberia Conference, invoked the power of the Holy Spirit to make a “vibrant church,” “an open church” and “a tolerant church,” during the Nov. 8 service.

“We know that when your Holy Spirit is in control, you will land the ship called United Methodist into safe harbor.”

Bishop Bruce R. Ough, the Council of Bishops president, also asked all United Methodists to pray.

“Pray for the work of the commission and for the bishops as they continue to discern God’s plan for the future of the UMC,” Ough said in the press statement, “a future that shows love for all of God’s people and a future with hope.”

—Heather Hahn, UMNS

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The deadline for the January issue
of **The Link** is December 22
Please email your copy to gbhoag@optonline.net.



"At least they saved themselves a co-pay."



December Birthday

Dec. 14 Steven Rice

Waiting For The Light

Advent done well helps us center ourselves and counterbalances that consumerism, that drive, that frantic nature of activity that is all around us in the culture. And one of the primary symbols is light overcoming darkness, dispelling the things that, that tear us down and welcoming in the light of God.

I think it's important to remember that we as adults may become a bit jaded. But for children, there is a new excitement every year. And just like we start and think about the new year with January 1, as Christians we start thinking how am I going to meet with Jesus again in this season in a way that I might not have last year or may not next year. We have been building that tradition now over decades and it has become a very meaningful part of who we are as United Methodists.

There are certain things that help us stay centered in Advent. One is, who do you see or who have you come in contact with who needs to know God's love for them? If you think about that, you can recast something as simple as sending Christmas cards, a practice that we might be doing anyway but becomes enriched because we are asking the question, who needs God's message of love this week?

There are several things that we can do to bring Advent into the home. One of those is the Advent wreath. Most are in a circle and represent that unending love of God for us. We have evergreen showing that

there is no ending to God's presence, it's always alive. Then we use the four candles, to represent the coming of the light of Jesus into the world, breaking apart the darkness. We then use colors to represent that season of Advent. We are either going to use purple or dark blue.

This is a time of reflection, and those colors keep us in a place that is not that pure brightness that Christmas is going to be. And that building of light week by week is just such a reminder of how one act becomes another act becomes another act that does break through darkness with kindness, with mercy, with peace, with love, with joy, to say yes, there is something bigger and better than just simply getting pressed down with the cares of the world. God's love is bigger than that.

—Mary Pierce Norton,
UMC Discipleship Ministries

How Can This Be?

Gracious and loving God, we come before you today—heartbroken.

We grieve whenever we hear of violence, over loss of life we can hardly comprehend.

This time, it all happened in a church.

How can this be?
Going to church is our respite from a chaotic world.
In our sanctuaries, we worship you, and receive a dose of your Holy Spirit
to energize our hope for the week ahead.

In this place where we sing, "Let there be peace on earth,"
there was violence.
Near the table where we have found healing
through Christ's body broken and blood poured out for us,
we have experienced hurt.
On Sundays, we come to feel your presence around us,
yet, on this Sunday, evil came through the door.
We cry out with the psalmist, How long, O Lord,
must we bear pain in our souls and sorrow in our hearts?
What do we do now, O God?
How do we choose life, choose peace, choose you?
We hear your call to wait for you, but fear we may be lagging behind.
Show us your way, O God.
Lead us through this valley.
Comfort us with your presence.
Take us to the table you have set before us
where we might find healing and peace.
Show us your way through the darkness,
from suffering to healing,
from cross to resurrection.
In the name of Jesus, our guide, we pray. Amen.

This prayer was written in response to the tragic mass shooting at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs on Sunday, November 5, 2017.

—Joe Ivino and Ryan Dunn, UMNS

10 Church St., Patchogue, NY 11772

The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Pastoral Minister
 Camille Flynn, Administrative Assistant
 Office Phone: 631-475-0381 | Fax: 631-475-3132
 Email: PatchogueUMC@Yahoo.com

Worship Video Live Streaming at PatchogueUMC.Org

Sunday Worship—10 AM | Sunday School—10 AM
 Fellowship Coffee Hour—11 AM
 Hearing assistance provided



There is no evidence of any kind regarding the date of Jesus' birth. His nativity began to be celebrated on Dec. 25 in Rome during the early part of the fourth century (AD 336) as a Christian counterpart to the pagan festival, popular among the worshippers of Mithras, called Sol Invictis, the Unconquerable Sun. At the very moment when the days are the shortest and darkness seems to have conquered light, the sun passes its nadir. Days grow longer, and although the cold will only increase for quite a long time, the ultimate conquest of winter is sure. This astronomical process is a parable of the career of the Incarnate One. At the moment when history is blackest, and in the least expected and obvious place, the Son of God is born..."

—Frederich Borsh & David Napier

Not Only On Christmas Day

Lord, this is my **prayer**
 Not only on Christmas Day
 But until I see you face to face
 May I live my life this way:
 Just like the baby Jesus
 I ever hope to be,
 Resting in your loving arms
 Trusting in your **sovereignty**.
 And like the growing Christ child
 In wisdom daily learning,
 May I ever seek to know you
 With my mind and spirit yearning.
 Like **the Son** so faithful
 Let me follow in your light,
 Meek and bold, humble and strong
 Not afraid to face the night.
 Nor cowardly to suffer
 And stand for truth alone,
 Knowing that **your kingdom**
 Awaits my going home.

Not afraid to sacrifice
 Though great may be the cost,
 Mindful how you rescued me
 From broken-hearted loss.
 Like my risen Savior
 The babe, the child, the Son,
 May my life forever speak
 Of who you are and all you've done.
 So while this world rejoices
 And celebrates **your birth**,
 I treasure you, the greatest gift
 Unequaled in your worth.
 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