

The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

December 2020



Christmas Is Cancelled—NOT!

There is an animated program, Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer, that airs every Christmas season to the delight of children and adults alike.

You may recall that Santa enters a room where his elves and reindeer are waiting for instructions from old Saint Nick. Santa calls for their attention because he had an important announcement to make.

He then dropped a bomb on this celebrative group with three words:

“Christmas is Cancelled!”

The excitement was sucked out of the room like escaping air from a deflating balloon. Imagine such an announcement? Cancelling Christmas is beyond our wildest imaginations. But there is more...

The reason Santa cancelled Christmas was due to severe inclement weather that sidelined his sleigh from navigating across the globe to deliver the many gifts to anticipating children.

Then, low and behold, Rudolph’s nose lit up like a light shining on Broadway. A light also went off in Santa’s head that with a schnaze like that, Rudolph could lead the way through the long night. Thus, the story ends with success and mission accomplished.

Now, fast forward to Christmas 2020. I think all of us would agree that nothing could possibly surprise us this year.

If you go to an optometrist and he or she says that you have 20/20 vision—that means you can see perfectly with enormous clarity. Well, somehow, that didn’t translate into this calendar

year we have been experiencing. With all that has gone on with COVID-19, an economic downturn, social unrest, a contentious election—what else could possibly happen that would shock us? I would suggest nothing or at least very little. So here is one more.

Due to the tough pandemic protocols that we must follow in our communities and, yes, our church—we had to cancel this year’s Christmas Eve service. Yep, one more disappointment to chalk up to 2020.

Continued on Page 2

WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

Dec. 6— Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Mark 1:1-8

Dec. 13—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, John 1:6-8, 19-28

Dec. 20—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Luke 1:26-38

Dec. 24—Livestreamed service only. Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Luke 2:1-20

Dec. 27—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Luke 2:22-40

All services are COVID-19 compliant limited. Masks required, no choir, no congregation singing, live streamed services available at PatchogueUMC.org.



Circle of Concern

Grieving

The family of **Inci Mason**.
(Barbara Lyons)

Healing

Liz Smith requested prayers for healing. (Church Office)

Bruce Kirschner fell and is in a rehab facility (Carol Kirschner)

Diane Dain is undergoing extensive treatment for cancer.

Pam Queen's brother Ricardo had a stroke.

Jim Graham fell and broke his arm.

Anita Helfst has COPD, had surgery for 7 stents put in and is on oxygen. (Kathy Halliwell)

Dorothy Bock in hospital with COVID. (Kathy Halliwell)

Terry Ryan fell at church working the food pantry, spraining both ankles. (Michelle Ryan)

Richard will have angiogram (Brenda Klingel)

Gary suffered a stroke (Terry Ryan)

Justine Collisi's husband has tested positive for Covid. (Justine Collisi)

James Kelly is in rehab and has been suffering with COVID 19 for the past couple of months. His health is regressing. (Katie Weber)

Concerns

Our Nation during this very tumultuous time for all.

Our Communities that are suffering as a result of COVID 19 and shut downs

All those who are currently unemployed and underemployed

Continued Prayers

Kimberly Helfst, Fred & Mary Arita, Keeley Family, Grace Bohler, Heather Spagnoli. Trevor Haltalski.

Barbara Lyons, Bruce Bassett, Christine Cabrera, James Forsythe, Joyce Gabrinowitz, Pastor Dwight Wolther. Lee Hollowell, Linda Coleman, Elizabeth Beekman, Dwayne Scott, Monico Doctor, Suzanne Tierny, Kenneth Krygier, Travis Gentile, Tom King, Kevin Kearns, Angelo DeVito, Cori Mitchell, Bill Morgan

—Compiled by **Kathy Halliwell**

Please email Kathy—

keats1002@gmail.com with any additions or deletions.

These in Rehab or Nursing Care

Geri Sheridan, Robert Krawzak in Brookhaven Health Care Facility, 801 Gazzola Dr., East Patchogue, NY

For Healing

Father God, we come to you because the people of this nation and everything in it belong to you. We are not here by accident. You are the one who set us in this nation at this particular time for the glory of your name. But Father, people in this country are turning against each other. We no longer live like brothers and sisters. Brother has turned against brother and child against parent. But your word says that if we humble ourselves and turn from our wicked ways you will heal our land. Lord, heal our hearts, heal our land. Remove bitterness and resentment from our hearts and help us to live as brothers and sisters. In Jesus' name, Amen.

—Connrctusfund.org

December Birthdays

Dec. 8 Gavin Reese Bende

Dec. 10 Janet Alt

Dec. 14 Steven Rice

Dec. 19 Michelle Ryan

Christmas (From Page 1)

But notice that I didn't say, "Christmas is Cancelled" like Santa did. I said our Christmas Eve service is cancelled. And there is a big difference.

Until Jesus returns, Christmas will never be cancelled. There are Christians around the world who have to meet secretly in small groups to celebrate Christmas under the threat of imprisonment or even death. Thank God we don't have those restrictions placed upon us.

So, although we may not be worshipping together this Christmas Eve—we should still worship and celebrate the greatest gift ever given to humankind—Jesus.

In the story of Rudolph, Santa delivered. Well, so did Jesus. Not only was he born in a stable or cave in the Little Town of Bethlehem, but he also grew up to carry out his ministry and mission so each of us could be set free from sin and death if we choose to accept him as our Lord and Savior. Now, that's a gift that Santa could never deliver, even with Rudolph's help.

I encourage each of you to take time out with your families to remember and celebrate the true meaning of Christmas—the birth of our Savior, Jesus the Christ.

Friends, we'll get through this and very soon we will turn the page on 2020 and move into a brand-new year with brand new opportunities. Let us rejoice in that.

Amen and MERRY CHRISTMAS!
In His Grip,

—**Pastor Chuck**

United Methodist Church of Patchogue

December 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 10:00 a.m.- Noon—Food Pantry 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7:00 p.m.—AA	2	3 7:00 p.m.—AA	4	5
6 10:00 a.m.— Worship 11:30 a.m.— Pentecostal MF Wesley Hall	7 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA	8 10:00 a.m.- Noon—Food Pantry 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7:00 p.m.—AA	9	10 7:00 p.m.—AA	11	12
13 10:00 a.m.— Worship 11:30 a.m.— Pentecostal MF Wesley Hall	14 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA	15 10:00 a.m.- Noon—Food Pantry 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7:00 p.m.—AA	16	17 7:00 p.m.—AA	18	19
20 10:00 a.m.— Worship 11:30 a.m.— Pentecostal MF Wesley Hall	21 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA	22 10:00 a.m.- Noon—Food Pantry 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7:00 p.m.—AA	23	24 7:00 p.m.—AA	25	26
27 10:00 a.m.— Worship 11:30 a.m.— Pentecostal MF Wesley Hall	28 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA	29 10:00 a.m.- Noon—Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.—AA	30	31 7:00 p.m.—AA		

Jesus Still Doesn't Need A Season

Three years ago, in December 2017, I wrote a **Link** article entitled, "Jesus Doesn't Need a Season."

The title was in reaction to the often repeated admonition that "Jesus is the reason for the season", which is sometimes followed by a scolding that we should say Merry Christmas, instead of Happy Holidays.

At the time, I felt compelled to point out the following:

1. Most Biblical scholars agree that Jesus was not born on December 25th, but in the spring. The early church leaders chose the December date to eclipse and override ancient celebrations of the winter solstice.

2 The word 'holiday' is an elision of the words holy and day. So, to wish someone Happy Holidays is not a repudiation of Christianity, but a thoughtful way to extend good wishes to those of different faiths.

3. Merry Christmas is a Victorian era phrase. It is doubtful the three wise men, the shepherds, or the choirs of angels, would have used those words at Jesus' birth.

So, here we are in 2020, in the grip of a viral pandemic that has not only caused over a quarter of a million deaths in this country, but also economic stress, emotional anxiety, great uncertainty.

Heap onto all that, ugly political and social strife, not to mention the various ups and downs we face in our individual lives, and one could understand the desire of hermits to hide

away in some deep cave until things get better.

One thing we do not need is to fuss with each other, to twist ourselves into knots, over whether to say Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas, or even Season's Greetings.

What we do so desperately need is to treat each other with loving kindness, mutual respect, and to encourage one another.

Christmas is the symbolic celebration of the incredible mystery of Divinity come to earth. Of Emanuel — God with us. And of Hope—the hope that in spite of often terrible human behavior, God loves us and accepts us with all our flaws.

As Paul Tillich wrote, "We are accepted by That which is greater than ourselves." I find that comforting.

We need to remember that the message of Jesus, the message of God through Jesus, transcends seasons, time, place. It should not be confined to particular times of the year, because it is eternal. To love God, love one another, to cherish all life, to act justly, and to be humble, these are the behaviors that connect us and allow us to be in harmony with the Divine.



The Patchogue Arts Council, as part of its November downtown MoCA Lights display used our church to display this animated creation by artist Nick Gracie of Viper Studios.

So, no matter what greeting you choose this month, say it with a loving and cheerful heart. Let Jesus' teachings manifest themselves through our behavior. Then like the the hymn, "They will know we are Christians by our Love."

—Barbara Becker

The Faith Of Joe Biden

He carries a rosary in his pocket, one that belonged to his dead son, Beau. On election day, he went to mass, as he does every Sunday.

In his victory speech, the president-elect quoted from Ecclesiastes: "The Bible tells us that to everything there is a season—a time to build, a time to reap, a time to sow. And a time to heal. This is the time to heal in America."

For only the second time in US history, a Catholic will occupy the White House when Joe Biden is sworn in as the country's 46th president. A man of profound faith, he has pledged to re-

store the “soul of the nation” after four years of rancor.

At his side will be a vice-president who, as well as being the first woman of color to hold the position, comes from a family that has embraced the Baptist church, Hinduism and Judaism.

Catholic bishops in the US were quick to congratulate the president-elect, acknowledging that he will be only the second president to be a Catholic, John F Kennedy being the first.

“At this moment in American history, Catholics have a special duty to be peacemakers, to promote fraternity and mutual trust, and to pray for a renewed spirit of true patriotism in our country,” said José Gomez, archbishop of Los Angeles and president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Biden’s Catholicism is at the core of his life and is likely to shape the way he governs as president.

“I’m as much a cultural Catholic as I am a theological Catholic,” he wrote in his book, *Promises to Keep: On Life and Politics*. “My idea of self, of family, of community, of the wider world comes straight from my religion. It’s not so much the Bible, the beatitudes, the Ten Commandments, the sacraments, or the prayers I learned. It’s the culture.”

Just before the election, in an article for the *Christian Post*, Biden wrote: “My Catholic faith drilled into me a core truth —that every person on earth is equal in rights and dignity, because we are all beloved children of God.”

As president, he added: “These are the principles that will shape all that I do, and my faith will continue to

serve as my anchor, as it has my entire life.”

Several of Biden’s campaign ads featured footage of his meetings with Pope Francis. In a 2015 interview, Biden said Francis was “the embodiment of Catholic social doctrine that I was raised with. The idea that everyone’s entitled to dignity, that the poor should be given special preference, that you have an obligation to reach out and be inclusive.”

At the Democratic convention in August, when Biden was formally adopted as the party’s candidate in the presidential race, his friend and successor as a Delaware senator, Chris Coons, said Biden’s faith was not “a prop or political tool”.

“Joe’s faith is really about our future, about a world with less suffering and more justice, where we’re better stewards of creation, where we have a more just immigration policy and where we call out and confront the original sins of this nation, the sins of slavery and racism. Joe knows these are central issues in this election. And for him, they’re rooted in faith,” Coons said.

Some conservative Catholic organizations urged followers not to cast their votes for Biden because of his pro-choice stance on abortion—although a majority of US Catholics say abortion should be legal in all or most cases, according to the Pew Research Center.

Biden has said he personally believes life begins at conception but recognizes others do not share his view. “What I’m not prepared to do is impose a precise view that is borne out of my faith on other people,” he said in a 2015 interview with *America* magazine.

Biden has not always been a champion of LGBT+ rights, but he now supports same sex marriage and has pledged to enact the Equality Act within 100 days of becoming president. He will be the “most pro-equality president we have ever had”, according to LGBT rights campaigner Chad Griffin.

His Catholicism and Irish roots appear to have appealed to voters in strongly culturally Catholic rust belt states such as Pennsylvania. Just over half of US Catholics (51%) voted for Biden, compared with 45% who voted Democrat in 2016; and 47% voted for Trump this time, compared with 52% in the previous election, according to exit polls.

Biden has frequently said his faith had helped him cope with personal tragedies, including the death of his first wife and daughter in a 1972 car crash and again in 2015 when his son, Beau, died from cancer.

Anthea Butler, professor of religious studies at the University of Pennsylvania, said Biden’s language of hope and healing “speaks a lot to his Catholic faith”. She told BBC Radio 4’s Sunday program “I think he wants to set a tone that is not simply conciliatory but that is faith-based.”

Kamala Harris, who will be Biden’s vice-president from January, identifies as a black Baptist, with a family background of Hinduism and Christianity. She is married to a Jewish man.

“This speaks to the ways in which religion is fluid in America, and the ways in which people are holding things together in interfaith marriages and interfaith families,” said Butler.

—The Guardian

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"That's why I say, 'Fleece Navidad!'"

Don't Forget Your Pledge

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The deadline for the January issue of **The Link** is December 18.
 Please email your copy to gbhoag@optonline.net.

My Soul Cries For a Peaceable Family of God

Fear grips me when I turn on the news. An unspoken plea bursts within my soul: “God, let the news be free of yet another killing of a Black male or female!”

Yet, this fervent petition too often goes unheeded. As the critical details and video unfolded in the May 25 murder of George Floyd under the knee of a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, there was no holding back the piercing yell, “No! No! No!”

My own body went limp. My own breath became labored and seemed to stop. Spoken words stopped. But a cascade of thoughts gushed forward that moment and has continued to this day: Why? He was a human being. He was a child of God. His life mattered. We as Black people matter. Will there be no end to hate? Too many gone because of hate. How many more?

A flood of memories came of those whose lives had been violently snuffed out—the names of a few, yet well short of the many: Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Alton Sterling, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Trayvon Martin, Freddie Gray, members of the historic Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, Amadou Diallo, 12-year-old Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Philando Castille.

Oh, too many more. There should be none.

My mind went back in history. I recalled the murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till, who was disfigured, murdered and dumped in the Tallahatchee

River in Mississippi in 1955; the 4,400 Black men, women and children who were lynched by white mobs between the years of 1877 and 1950, with more to succumb to this atrocity in the 1960s. This number included Mary Turner, who was 21 years old and pregnant when she was lynched in 1918 for protesting her husband’s lynching the day before. She was set on fire and riddled with bullets. Her abdomen was split causing her unborn child to fall to the ground whereupon the child was stomped and crushed.

The memories are too heavy and bring tears. No! Wailing comes that builds from images and stories of the human toll of injustice heaped on Black enslaved forbears and for living Black souls today whose lives have been touched, changed and maimed by racially motivated brutalities, beatings, dehumanizing treatment, insults and personal indignities. To these, my own experiences could be added. I confess to a deep anguish and impatience for the stop to all of it.

I am not alone in my feelings, remembering, grieving and impatience. There is a deep, penetrating collective anguish in the Black community. Multiple types of disparities now being highlighted in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black people and dehumanizing indignities have, in fact, evoked deep within the collective soul the piercing words of the psalmist, “How long, O Lord?”

Yes, the unfolding of time and circumstances is bringing together people across races, religions, social sta-

tus and age in locked arms, resounding footsteps of protest, a unified chant of “I can’t breathe,” and firm insistence that “Black Lives Matter!” But truthfully and painfully, the reality of racism remains.

There is a crucial question for the church in this current era of racial crisis and tribulations that frankly brings dehumanizing injury, harm and death to all people of color — Black, Hispanic, Native American and Asian: Does the church as a whole really see, hear, and care? In what ways does our United Methodist Church:

- Grieve with the anguished.
- Weep for what has happened and what has not been done to rectify it.
- Probe ways the church body and members knowingly or unknowingly contribute to the dehumanization of others.
- Uncover and confess its shortcomings, and
- Commit to making “justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24)?

Nearly three decades ago, the poignant question, “Can’t we all get along?” was voiced by Rodney King, an unarmed Black male, who was brutally beaten by four Los Angeles Police officers. The beating and subsequent lack of indictment of the officers resulted in immense racial unrest. At the center of Mr. King’s poignant words is the plea for a relational human household—a hospitable place of human connection.

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Racism (From Page 7)

For Christians, it points to God's peaceable community of righteousness and equity that appears in Isaiah 11 and to God's extended family in Ephesians 2:19-22, where dividing walls of hostility are broken and Christ's peace makes possible people joining together and growing together as God's dwelling place. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. called it the beloved community that necessarily has personal, religious, public and political dimensions centered on God's requirement of justice. There is the requirement of action. This action starts with courage to name the reality of white racism and its effects on others' lives.

Making concrete the peaceable family of God is a spiritual matter

based on love of God and love of neighbor. The ethic of God's love for all and Jesus' reconciling love is the central image and guide without which it is impossible to dismantle racism and live in peace with justice.

Moving beyond yearning for the peaceable family of God is about practicing this love. Truthfully, it means that God's people are willing to be together, move together and act together on behalf of peace with justice. It is daring to open spaces for calling the names of victims of atrocities, lamenting with hurting people, inviting and hearing stories of hurt, and exploring and confessing missed steps in averting hurt and what steps for peace with justice will yet be taken. It means bringing forth empathy or endeavoring to see through the

eyes of the other. It centers on the "somebodiness" of others.

Making concrete the peaceable family of God recognizes the struggle inherent in moving from troubling ways of being and acting in everyday life to transformed lives that assure peace, justice and wholeness. It requires strategic action that engages the church and members across racial ethnic groups to speak and act together for peace and justice in the prayer room, the polling place, the pulpit and the pew, the protest line, the privacy of home through what we teach and model before our children, and in every form of public and private life.

Such a family builds from our hope that it will, in fact, become so.

—Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, UMNS