

The LINK



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PATCHOGUE

Since 1791

December 2019

Making Room For Christ In Our Lives

The month of December literally begins on the First Day of Advent. This is not only the official beginning of the new Church year, but it is also the launch of the Christmas Season.

Advent is a season of preparation—preparing ourselves to celebrate Jesus' first coming and preparing for his second coming when He returns. But, will we make room in our hearts and lives to receive Him anew?

We are reminded from Luke's gospel that when Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, Mary heavy with child, there was no room in an inn—so Mary ended up giving birth to Jesus in a stable or cave.

Now, let's place this account in a First Century Jewish context. In that time, hospitality to visitors

among the Jews was essential based on Jewish law. And, there are many examples of this all throughout scripture. Leviticus 19:33 states: "If a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him [or her]." In fact, throughout my many trips to the Middle East over the years, I would venture to say this is still a Middle Eastern practice.

I remember being in Jerusalem the morning of Christmas Eve 1985 when I encountered a friendly Palestinian Christian who asked where we were from. We told him we were Americans. He soon responded with an invitation to join him and his family for a Christmas dinner at his home in the Town of Bethlehem where he resided. We had a wonderful experience that evening when he took us to the Church of the Nativity to enjoy choirs

from all over the world singing praises over the birth of Jesus. This is just one example of my experiences in the Middle East.

In spite of Jewish law and even my experiences to verify its practice, Joseph and Mary could not find a place to rest their heads in that same town where my new friend was from. I like to equate the inn described by Luke to that of our heart. Will we make room for Christ to dwell therein? That is the real question—especially during this time of the year.

Continued on Page 2

WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

Dec. 1—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Matthew 24:36-44

Dec. 8—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Matthew 3:1-12

Dec. 15—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Matthew 11:2-11

Dec. 22—The Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Matthew 1:18-25

Dec. 24—7:00 PM—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Luke 2:1-20

Dec. 29—Rev. Dr. Charles Ferrara, Matthew 2:13-23



Circle of Concern

Bereavement:

Ralph Belmonte, Richard Schroder

For Guidance and Healing:

Bruce Kirschner, Lawrence & family,
Tyler Ferrari, Sabrina, Dick Ohlson,
Melissa Houston, Millie, Daniel, Brody
family, Carol Silva, Sobona's family,
Paul Rice, Joanie Yannotti, Elaine
Bohlers, Krystan & Nick Holtzham,
Helena Fallon, Richard Rubino, Sa-
mantha, Joe O'Neil, Lori Gerrardi,
Dennis Farrell, Eric Emerson, James

These in Rehab or Nursing Care:

Geri Sheridan, Robert Krawzak in
Brookhaven Health Care Facility, 801
Gazzola Dr., East Patchogue, NY
Alice Zahnd in Gurwin Jewish Nursing
Facility, 68 Hauppauge Rd.,
Commack, 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

December Birthdays

Dec. 8 Gavin Reese Bende
Dec. 10 Janet Alt
Nov. 10 Montana Queen
Dec. 14 Steven Rice
Dec. 19 Michelle Ryan

Christ In Our Lives

(From Page 1)

I pray that this Advent season would be a preparation for more than putting up Christmas ornaments, Christmas shopping, and listening to our favorite Christmas tunes. I pray we would use each day of this wonderful season to make room for Christ in our lives as we grow deeper in our faith and love of him and others.

Happy Advent and Christ,

—**Pastor Chuck**

SOS Campaign Update

The following is a brief summary of activities associated with the Save Our Sanctuary campaign and related improvements.

We awarded a contract to install new larger copper gutters at the northwest stair projection, commonly called the cold room, to Sandstorm Construction. That should keep the rain water from getting into the building. Those gutters were too small when the building was built back in 1889. There is over 2,000 square feet of roof feeding into a six inch gutter that's barely five foot long.

The repointing of exterior brick walls in needed areas will have to be postponed until the spring. The weather, the coldest November on record, would have allowed for only a couple of days that work could be done. The temperature needs to be at least 45 degrees day and night for the mortar to properly set up. Since we will need a man lift to do a lot of the work costing more than \$1500 per month, it would not have been economical to rent it for the month and using it only a couple of days.

When the large circular windows and crown moldings on the outside of the building were scraped, glazed and painted, the workers reported that the east window moved when worked upon. This is a concern since of the possibility of a northeast storm or hurricane could compromise its stability.

Henry Restoration has been at the church for a site evaluation and will be providing a proposal to repoint the wall inside around and near the large Rose "Let the Children Come to Me", window. Special thick strap retainers will be fabricated and extended down the wall face to stabilize the window frame. The existing brackets were screwed into the bricks around the perimeter of the metal window frame. They will be reinforced with long pins to further stabilize the window. The work will be done after the holidays, in January or February.

Please remember your SOS pledges to help keep the campaign going. New pledges are needed and always gratefully welcomed. Thanks to all for their contributions and hard work.

—**Jim Graham**

Clothing Corner

With winter, comes a need for winter clothes. Needed are gloves, hats, socks, blankets, coats, hoodies, and men's sweat shirts. Adult socks and gloves are a special need. Please save your summer clothes donations for later.

—**Wendy Hollowell**

United Methodist Church of Patchogue December 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:15 a.m.—Choir 10:00 a.m.— Communion Worship 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	2 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA	3 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon —Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:00 p.m.—AA	4	5	6 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	7 4:30 p.m.— Patchogue-Medford Library Lantern Church Tour (UMC first stop.)
8 9:15 a.m.—Choir 10:00 a.m.— Worship/Sunday School 12:00 p.m.— Charge Conference 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	9 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA	10 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon —Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:00 p.m.—AA	11	12	13 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	14
15 9:15 a.m.—Choir 10 a.m.— Worship/Sunday School 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	16 Office Closed 7:30 p.m.—AA	17 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 10:00 a.m.— Noon —Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:00 p.m.—AA	18	19	20 10:00 a.m.—ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	21
22 9:15 a.m.—Choir 10 a.m.— Worship/Sunday School 11:00 a.m.— Trustees 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	23 Office Closed Until Jan. 2 10:00 a.m.— Noon —Food Pantry 7:30 p.m.—AA	24 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon No Food Pantry 7:00 p.m.— Christmas Eve Service 7:00 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:00 p.m.—AA	25	26	27 No ESL 7-9 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	28
29 9:15 a.m.—Choir 10 a.m.— Worship/Sunday School 12:30 p.m.— Pentecostal MF	30 10:00 a.m.— Noon —Food Pantry 7:30 p.m.—AA	31 No Food Pantry 9:30 a.m.—Al Anon 7:00 p.m.— Pentecostal MF 7:00 p.m.—AA				

Churches Balance Safety and Piety

One Sunday morning during worship at Antioch United Methodist Church, someone pushed the “panic button” in the church office. Police rushed to the sanctuary.

“I saw the police come in and wondered what in the world’s going on,” said the Rev. James Cole, pastor at the Nashville, Tennessee, church. “I went out and asked them what was happening, and they were all business.”

It turned out a child had wandered off, found the button and pushed it. However, with deadly shooting incidents at another area church and a nearby Waffle House in the recent past, Cole said that the professionalism and speed of the police response was reassuring.

“They were energized (because of recent shootings),” he said. “I appreciate that, honestly. So I think the police are doing their jobs real well.”

Cole is among pastors and church officials thinking about church security precautions in light of the acceleration of mass shootings — some of them at churches. Some think that measures like employing armed guards threaten the very atmosphere churches want to

provide — an open place for worship, fellowship and prayer.

Can security be achieved without disrupting the purpose of church? “Definitely,” said Patrick Fiel of PVF Security Consulting LLC and a security expert with 35 years of experience, including safety consultations with 3,000 churches. “It doesn’t have to be a prison-like concept. Just don’t allow an intruder to walk right in.”

For a fee usually ranging from \$500 to \$3,000 — the more time he devotes to a project, the more it costs — Fiel will evaluate churches and rec-

ommend security improvements.

Fiel said most churches are “soft targets” — easy to attack.

Hiring armed guards or relying on church members with guns is not always necessary, Fiel said.

“If a church is very isolated and you won’t get a response from law enforcement for 20 or 30 minutes, you might have to consider arming some of your staff members,” Fiel said.

Some church leaders oppose aggressive security measures — especially use of firearms — saying it would interfere with their mission.

The Rev. Larry Homitsky is pastor of Calvary United Methodist Church in Pittsburgh, the city where the Tree of Life or L’Simcha synagogue was

attacked on Oct. 27. Eleven people died and seven were injured in the attack.

Despite the nearby attack, Homitsky said he has no plans to increase security at Calvary.

“We’re not in a war zone, and I think this particular concern or battle ... needs to be resolved by peaceful and different measures rather than increasing armaments,” Homitsky said.

Calvary greeters position themselves at the multiple entryways before Sunday services, but they are there primarily to welcome people, not for security.

“We are an open and welcoming congregation and that is our purpose and our call,” Homitsky said.

The United Methodist Book of Resolutions in “Our Call to End Gun Violence” spells out what the church believes about gun violence and has a list of recommendations, including displaying signs that prohibit carrying guns on church property.

The Rev. David Wesley Brown, a retired pastor associated with First United Methodist Church of Germantown in Philadelphia, said a better response to mass shootings is to campaign for commonsense gun law reform.

“If our sense of security requires us to have guns, it reduces the likelihood of seeking other, non-violent solutions to conflict,” Brown said. Brown is also the chair of the Philadelphia committee of Heeding God’s Call to End Gun Violence.

“The best way for a church to increase its security is to work in the

The Church's Position

The United Methodist Church’s Book of Resolutions includes a lengthy statement on gun violence, which calls for background checks and waiting periods for gun purchases. It also calls on the church to advocate for the eventual reduction of the availability of guns.

neighborhood to reduce gun violence,” Brown said. “One problem with the ‘good guys with guns’ solution is that it only creates an arms race. Trying to harden soft targets only hardens the hearts of everyone involved.”

Both Cole and the Rev. Dean DeFino of Trinity United Methodist Church in Salisbury, Maryland, acknowledge that there is a good chance that some of their flock carry guns to Sunday service. They neither encourage it nor ban guns.

“There’s no ban on firearms, and I guess if a person has a permit for a concealed weapon that wouldn’t be a problem as far as them coming,” DeFino said.

Maryland endured fatal church shootings last year and 2012. The local sheriff did a presentation for Trinity staff and ushers.

“We haven’t taken any steps like arming anyone as far as our sanctuary is concerned,” DeFino said. “We did have training on how to spot somebody who is suspicious.” Ushers look for people who are not familiar churchgoers and are “shifty looking around, not having a worshipful attitude and kind of casing the place,” DeFino said.

“I hate to say it, but it’s like profiling,” DeFino said.

The sheriff also told church members to be aware of members of a family going through any sort of separation, because that is when some people turn violent.

Technology is the first line of defense at First United Methodist Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, said Emil Jensen, business director at

the church. The 100-year-old facility is equipped with security cameras and a key card system to gain entrance. Like the churches in Tennessee and Maryland, church officials believe some church members bring guns to services, but the church has not expressed a policy on guns.

“Really, we shouldn’t have any guns in the church,” said Jensen, who noted that a police station is four blocks away. “But we’re not sure what good it would do if we started saying ‘no guns’ at this point.”

The Grand Rapids church is bordered by a college neighborhood, the city’s downtown area and an area with many homeless and low-income residents.

Jensen thinks church programs that cater to the needs of the poorer residents in the area are one of First United Methodist Church’s best defenses against crime.

“We engage in ministries during the week and we know many of them,” he said. “We’re comfortable knowing that they’re invited to the church and some do come to church on Sunday.”

Relationships are also an important aspect of security at the First United Methodist Church of Pittsburgh. Many of that church congregation live in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood, where Tree of Life Congregation is located.

Some members of the United Methodist congregation heard the shots fired at the synagogue and saw SWAT teams running across their yards to Tree of Life, the Rev. Tracy Cox said.

“Our building maintenance manager has built tremendous relationships with some of the homeless around the building,” Cox said. “Other staff follow his lead and keep the building secure and welcoming.”

Cole thinks it may be time to preach on the subject of church security to the whole congregation, instead of keeping it the purview of a select number of church leaders.

“We need to do this as a congregation one Sunday morning,” he said. “We should just say, ‘Look, in the world we live in, we’ve got to think about this stuff.’”

“These discussions don’t need to be particularly disruptive to worship or the sacredness of this space. They are just commonsense things that we have to be aware of in this day and age.”

—Jim Patterson, UMNS

Methodists Are Question Mark People

I am the question mark. At the simplest level, this symbol (?) is a punctuation mark that indicates a question. It can also be used to express doubt or uncertainty about something, or as in my case... someone. A question mark symbolizes mystery.

Earlier this year, I travelled through the U.S. talking about Fresh Expressions at three different United Methodist annual conferences. I spend a great deal of time in prayer and preparation for these opportunities to spread the word about the international movement of missionary disciples cultivating new kinds of church alongside existing congregations to more

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

Don't Forget Your Pledge

The deadline for the January issue of **The Link** is December 20.
 Please email your copy to gbhoag@optonline.net.

For security purposes, the Church St. entrance is now locked as soon as Sunday services begin. If you are running late, be sure to use the Sanctuary entrances.

Question Mark People

(From Page 5)

effectively engage our growing post-Christian society.

This year was also a year when annual conferences voted on who would represent them at the upcoming 2020 General Conference.

When I arrived back at my own home conference in Florida, I was greeted by friends sporting black “UMC Next Florida” T-shirts displaying rainbow-colored United Methodist baptismal vows. “We will resist evil, injustice, and oppression, in whatever forms they present themselves,” the rainbow writing said. Most of my centrist friends seemed to have found a home in this group. Also, lists of “approved progressive candidates” with their corresponding identification numbers to “help” the voting process were provided.

Then there were my other friends. They didn’t have T-shirts or rainbow stickers, but they had lists. These lists named the “approved traditional candidates,” also associated with “easing along” the voting process.

Some generous person or group even took the time to create a “master list” of all the candidates. On the master list, beside each name was an “association” with organizations like Wesley Covenant Association or Reconciling Ministries Network.

Beside my name, there was a question mark.

This felt to me like two groups embroiled in a battle. Some of my friends feel that their opponent weaponizes the Scriptures to exclude persons based on their sexual orientation. The other group felt their opponent

weaponized the baptismal vows of The United Methodist Church.

Some of my traditionalist friends felt like the very baptismal vows through which they entered the church were now highlighting them as the evil oppressors of others. Some of my progressive and centrist friends felt like they were only returning the favor for the oppressive stance of traditionalists that has marginalized and labeled LGBTQ people for decades.

When voting began, I was struck by the irony that in one session I had a progressive friend on one side, voting for the approved progressive candidates. On the other side, a traditionalist friend was voting for those on the traditionalist list.

One by one, progressive candidates were elected in a clean sweep of delegates elected to General Conference 2020.

Sometimes in annual conferences, I have felt as if I entered into the domain of another’s Lordship. It’s as if we are leaving the Lordship of Jesus and entering the Lordship of Robert — Roberts Rules of Order, that is. An annual conference can feel more like a political rally than a gathering of the Body of Christ.

One annual conference actually threw me out of the gathering as I livestreamed the day’s opening worship with my phone. I do look kind of sketchy. My arms are covered in tattoos, and I probably don’t fit the typical stereotypical image of a clergyman. I didn’t have my colored nametag, so the security folks in red vests escorted me out. I returned later as one of the speakers.

Are we fundamentally missing something when any gathering of people in Jesus’ name becomes exclusionary? If we are so entrenched in political camps and getting the right people voting for our agenda that we forget what witness we may be to a not-yet-Christian, we have lost our way.

What does this mean for The United Methodist Church? What have we come to when people vote for candidates based on their affiliations, rather than their character and effectiveness in ministry? Is “leadership” about voting the way a list created by behind-the-scenes organizations tells us to?

What I see is a church that is actually “united” in very few things. There are a multitude of question-mark people out there, who sense this “battle” is founded in a false dichotomy. Being the question-mark people is not about neutrality; it’s about having the humility to live in the mystery. It’s about embodying the change we want to see in real local communities. It’s about standing with Jesus. Jesus is our “position.” Jesus is our “camp,” our “association” and the lens through which we view reality.

Conservatives are right to value Scripture, and to see it as authoritative.

Progressives are also right that all people should be fully included in the life of the church — and those two things are not mutually exclusive. Each position contains a part of the truth of Jesus —but only a part of the “way, truth, and life” that is Jesus.

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



Question Mark People (From Page 7)

The future of the church has very little to do with traditionalists, centrists or progressives. There is a “UMC Next,” but it’s not being convened in boardrooms with hand-selected candidates.

The new Methodism is springing up where the first Methodism did — from the ground, out in the fields, with people who don’t go to church.

The Fresh Expressions movement is one way this is happening. We are finding ways to be church with people outside the church, returning to the heart of our radical tradition.

Remember, we don’t need denominational permission to be a radically missional church. It is in our Wesleyan

DNA to disobey unjust rules and improvise to meet the missional imperative. That’s part of what it means to be Methodist. To challenge the status quo. To take it to the fields where the people are. To release the whole people of God. To spread Scriptural holiness. To reform the nation and the church.

United Methodists are question-mark people, whose theology was born from a missional imperative — not a doctrinal distinction.

The people of the question mark out there, who feel like perhaps the church is embroiled in a battle founded in a false dichotomy, who see Jesus at work in all the various tribes, should remember that Jesus was the question mark in his day. In, but not of, excluded from the theological

camp of the religious leaders. He was not of the Pharisees or Sadducees, nor did he retreat to the desert with the Essenes. Even Jesus didn’t have all the answers (Matthew 24:36). He was comfortable living in the mystery.

Christians are question-mark people. We put question marks where others have put periods. We walk by faith, not by sight. Not in the arrogance of certitude but in the humility of mystery. We confess we don’t have all the answers, but we know the one who does. Have faith, my question-mark friends. Keep loving every person you encounter, until more is revealed.

—The Rev. Michael Beck, UMNS