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United Methodist Church of Parsippany

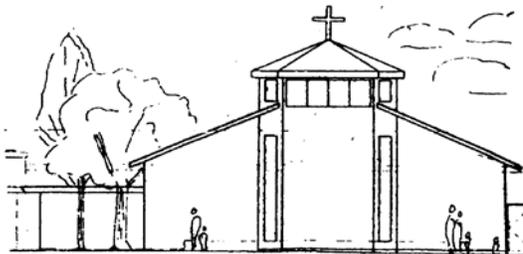
903 So. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054 (973) 887-4657

http://www.parsippanyumc.org E-Mail: jeffedwards1955@gmail.com

Sunday Worship Celebration: 10:00 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, gender identification, disability 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, 2018



Hanging of the Greens – Saturday, Dec. 1 at 10:00 am. Morning refreshments will be provided! If you have any questions, please reach out to Connie Keller 973-568-5404 or connie@mhmlender.com

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The **Allegro Music Academy** will once more bless us with the gift of their music during worship on **Sunday, December 2nd**, the First Sunday in Advent.

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For the tenth year our church will produce an **original full length play** written by Pastor Jeff with a cast of over thirty persons of all ages. Dates and times are: **Friday, Dec. 14th at 7 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 15th at 7 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 16th at 6 p.m.** (Flier is at the end of this Hilltopper.) Check out this article at Parsippany Life to find out more about our theater ministry: <https://www.mtolivelifelife.com/parsippany-life-oct-2018.html>

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During worship on **Sunday, December 23rd** during our 10 a.m. worship celebration our choir will present their **Cantata** and our children will perform a **Christmas pageant** and **ring bells**.

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On Christmas Eve at 7 p.m. join us for our traditional candle light family friendly service. Invite your friends as we celebrate the Light that shines in the deepest darkness with the birth of the babe of Bethlehem.



Christmas Eve Service



This year Connie Keller will be taking orders for poinsettias **until Dec. 9**. Order forms will be included in the bulletins for the first 3 Sundays of Advent. The poinsettias are placed on the altar Dec. 16 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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A sermon preached on November 11th, 2018 – Veterans Day – the week after the election – and the week before Stewardship Sunday, based upon Mark 12:38-44.



I want to begin by calling attention to something I love about our church. There are a lot of congregations in our country where everybody belongs to the same political party and have convinced themselves that God is either a Republican or a Democrat.

This isn't one of those churches.

On Election Day I posted on the Church Group a message encouraging you all to vote

Facebook

knowing that to some extent your votes would cancel one another's out. But that wasn't the point. Voting is an expression of care for our community and the larger world. This is a truth particularly worth noting on Veterans Day since so many gave their lives to preserve the freedoms that are ours in a democracy, and to fail to vote dishonors that for which they died.

In the psalm 146 is one of the readings for today, and it contains this line: *"Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help."* The verse is an exaggeration – a good leader can indeed provide help. But the point I would take this verse to mean is that as important as the issues are over which we may disagree, it is important to remember that no politician is ever going to be able to solve all our problems.

One of the reasons that political parties cycle in and out of office is that there is a underlying discontent that comes with being a human being. The remedy for this discontent ultimately lies in the spiritual rather than political realm. Nonetheless, we look to our political leaders to cure what ails us and regularly turn them out of office when they fail to do so.

A meaningful life is found in the quality of our relationships: Are we trapped in self-centeredness or do we have a faith that allows us be self-giving to our family, our church and our community. Similarly, the quality of our communal life is similarly based upon not on the political party in power but rather whether both the leadership and the citizenry truly care about the greater good of the community.

We celebrate diversity and inclusion in our church and in the present age one of the forms of inclusions that is becoming increasingly less common is an inclusion that encompasses people who disagree with us about politics. So I'm glad our "room in the circle" extends to differences of political opinions. It is a beautiful thing.



The story of the poor widow giving her two copper coins in the Temple treasury is a familiar one. The image we project on the wall each Sunday during our offering are intended to represent the poor widow's hands with her two coins.

But there is more going on in this story than is typically recognized. In the first portion of our passage we hear Jesus go on a rant against certain scribes – the religious authorities involved in administrating the Temple. "Beware of the scribes," he said. They are all about

themselves. They don't truly care about their community. In fact, they "devour widow's houses." They take everything these poor, vulnerable widows have and they will be severely judged for doing so.

The fact that the story of the poor widow giving her last two cents to the Temple treasury occurs immediately after this condemnation leads some scholars to wonder about the whole notion of lifting up this poor widow as an example of good stewardship. Perhaps Jesus' point is to say, "See? *These scribes have convinced this poor widow that in order to be right with God she has to turn over to them every last cent she possesses. They should be ashamed of themselves.*"



And yet just a few verses before this Jesus has had a positive interaction with a very honorable scribe – one who was impressed by the answers had given to others who had been trying to trip him up. This scribe asks Jesus a sincere question: *Of all the 524 laws in the Torah which is the most important one?* Jesus responds by giving not one but two commandments: We are to love God *and* love our neighbors. The scribe praises the answer Jesus has given declaring that such love *"is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."* To which Jesus declares, *"You are not far from the kingdom of God."*

So it would be wrong to conclude that when Jesus condemns some scribes he is condemning all scribes, or that he is condemning wholesale the religious institution that centered on the Temple. When Jesus drove out the money changers he wasn't trying to destroy the Temple but rather to reform how it was administered.

Jesus recognized the need for institutions, imperfect though they always will be to organize our communal life. The institution centered on the Temple – just like the institutional church -- should be about the business of helping people grow in their love of God and neighbor.

I think this passage is about stewardship, though perhaps not so much in the way we usually think of it.

In ancient Israel religion provided the only "safety net" there was. The Torah commanded that to be faithful to God we must care for the widows and the orphans – the poor and the strangers -- the most vulnerable among us. The poor widow gives what little she has trusting that this institution whose mission statement is to follow God's commands will be faithful to its calling – that it will be there for her in her time of need. So the question raised in this passage is whether we will be good stewards of the institution passed on to us.

Our reading this morning calls attention to the dangers of turning our religion into a kind of public performance that is ultimately about calling attention to ourselves rather than to God. After calling out the pretenses of certain scribes, Jesus takes a seat across from the treasurer to watch as people dropped their offering. In those days there was no paper money; it was all coins of various size and density. The two copper coins would have barely made a sound as the widow dropped them into the metal bin. In contrast, heads would turn at the loud sounds made when the rich dropped multiple bronze, gold and silver coins. People knew who gave a lot, and who didn't.

Of course, they didn't know the level of sacrifice involved in the offerings. Only God knows that.

In our church the only person who knows for sure what somebody has given is the Financial Secretary, thereby lessening the potential for making our giving a public performance by which to attain praise and status.

The poor widow gave sacrificially, mirroring the sacrificial giving that Jesus will shortly demonstrate when he offers his whole life on the cross. Beyond the gaze of those who might praise us, we are each called to give sacrificially – both those of us who are better off financially and those less so. To those to whom much is given, much is expected, but something is expected of all.



We offer our gifts in the trust that in the future the church will be there for us in our times of need in all its forms, whether financial, emotional or spiritual. We recognize that life is fragile,

and we can't make it alone, and if we have the good fortune in the present moment to be stable in all these ways, unless we are fools we know a time will come when we too will be in need of our faith community's support.

In the end, this story is a reminder that God sees what we overlook. Jesus – God incarnate -- sees the poor widow who is so easily overlooked. God calls us as the church to see such people as well and to hear their cries. Immediately after this story, the gaze of the disciples will be captured by the sight of the beautiful huge stones that make up the Temple. The point the Gospel writer would seem to be making is how easy it is for us to get distracted from what truly matters – to be dazzled by that which glitters and overlook the suffering of the least among us.

But God sees us and God truly cares. God knows our struggles and God knows our gifts. There is reassurance and grace in this knowledge, but there is also a great challenge put to us as well. God is calling us to be faithful with our gifts, our time and our talents, that the church that was passed on to us may be passed on to others. Our calling is to love God and neighbor because in the end that alone is what matters.

In the kindness of Jesus,
Pastor Jeff

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Our neighbors at **Temple Beth Am** are welcoming **Rabbi Andrew Sklarz** with a special installation Shabbat service on Friday, November 30th at 7:30 p.m. You are welcome to join Pastor Jeff in welcoming our new clerical neighbor.

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Some Sunday following worship in early December Mehmet and his family and their families will bring *Ashure* – “*Noah's Pudding*” – as a treat for us to enjoy during coffee hour.



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We are grateful to Betty Polen for faithfully volunteering her time in the church office on Mondays. With Betty's recent move she has to retire from this position. Anyone interested in serving our church by spending a couple of hours on Monday, Thursday or Friday in the office to answer the phone and do particular simple office tasks as they arise are invited to speak to Pastor Jeff or Betsy Adams.



Looking back... All business for 2019 is completed. And next ... All women are invited.....and if you're bringing a friend, let us know.....

Wednesday, December 5 – 6:30 p.m.
PROGRAM: Annual Christmas Party – Pot Luck Supper
Bring a dish to feed 8 – let Karen Wilk know what your dish is. The evening will have officer Installation and the Christmas Party Gift Game (**Bring a wrapped gift – approx. \$5 – \$10**) **with your name on it.** The recipient will pray for you all year. The annual group photo will be taken.

Dec. 1 – World AIDS Day	Dec. 21 – 1 st Sunday in Winter
Dec. 1 – Hanging of the Greens	Dec. 25 – Christmas Day
Dec. 2 – 1 st Sunday of Advent	Dec. 31 – New Year's Eve
Dec. 7 – Pearl Harbor Day	

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

God Bless,
 Betsy Adams

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At our recent Church Conference our congregation unanimously voted to officially affiliate ourselves with **The Reconciling Ministries Network**, and in doing so renew our commitment to being in loving Christian ministry with all people without prejudice, to truly have “open hearts, open minds, and open doors,” to work toward the time when our congregation, our denomination, and our society live the all-inclusive love that our faith demands. We are now the tenth “Reconciling Congregation” in New Jersey. Our mission statement declares that “*We provide a community of support and healing where all are welcomed and valued regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability or economic status.*”

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CHURCH CALENDAR and SCHEDULING EVENTS

The church calendar on our website www.parsippanyumc.org 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.



Anyone aware of a **Prayer Concern** is invited to contact Doris Bradley at 973-887-3219 who will put the **Prayer Chain** into action. If Doris 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.

A NOTE FROM THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE...

“Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you have been faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities.”- MATTHEW 25:21

God expects us to nurture and develop the gifts He has given us and then generously return a portion with increase. He doesn't want us to waste or hoard the gifts He has given us; He expects us to grow our gifts, use them wisely and be generous with them.

On Stewardship Sunday we dedicated our pledges for 2019, demonstrating our faithfulness in the matter of financial support for God's mission through our church. 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 2019, 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. Your financial support is an essential part of continuing the mission of our church.

In closing, I want to again thank all of the generous and faithful givers at PUMC who supported me and the mission of our church during my six years as chairperson of the Stewardship Committee.

Sincerely,

Paul Adams
Chair Stewardship

“Giving is not a debt you owe; it is a seed you sow.”—Unknown

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Our church website has recently been updated by Pastor Jeff, Justin Cogan and Eric Christiango. Check it out at ParsippanyUMC.org. There you can find all of Pastor Jeff's sermons and eulogies, as well as the sermons of Bob Keller. You can also find all the newsletters, as well as a calendar that gives the times of events held at the church. You can also find a little church history, a listing of all the plays we've produced at the church, and a summary of the various church fellowship and mission groups.

If you aren't presently on **Facebook**, consider joining with a secret identity so you can be a member of the Parsippany United Methodist Church Congregation Group and received day by day prayer concerns and announcements and other postings regarding the life of our church.

FACEBOOK LIVE – Pastor Jeff has recently done a few Facebook Live broadcasts of the service. We are looking for someone interested in helping with this endeavor. If you are interested in furthering the ministries of our church through Live broadcasts, please reach out to Pastor Jeff.



Parsippany United Methodist Church is now on Instagram. To find us, search - Parsippany_umc

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On the second Thursday of every other month our church provides a meal for the people living temporarily at **Homeless Solutions**. If you would like to volunteer as a server, please speak to Laurie Wilken or Connie Wallace. If you would like to help cook speak Tom Albert or Justin Cogan. Our next opportunity to serve is **Thursday, December 13th**.



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, February 16th.** Please speak to Bruce Letsch or Pastor Jeff if you would like to volunteer

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Newton Barreto offers **free math tutoring to elementary school children** on Thursdays at 5:15 p.m. at the Lake Hiawatha Library and on Wednesdays at 5:45 p.m. at the Van Buren Branch Library in Newark. Please speak to Newton if you would to join him in serving young people in need.

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On the fourth Sunday of every month at 3 p.m. **Fred Mendez** leads a **worship service in a Nursing Home in Montclair.** Please speak to Fred if you would like to accompany him.

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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, Pat Winz or Andee Mihalko if you would like more information. Our next service is **Thursday, December 20th.**

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 gathering of men from our church meet together **every Tuesday at 7:30 a.m. at the Empire Diner** with Pastor Jeff for breakfast, conversation, and a concluding prayer. All men are welcome.

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To make it easier for the Congregation to keep up with their financial pledges to the Church, a **PayPal and Credit Card 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.

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BORROWING CHURCH FURNITURE

We are very fortunate to have an honest and trusting congregation, and we are fortunate to be able to loan some tables and chairs to our church family as needed. Our supply of chairs is getting smaller and smaller and it is now necessary to keep a more accurate count of our equipment. Going forward if you would like to borrow chairs or tables from the church, please speak to one of the trustees. You will need to tell them what you are borrowing, how many of that item and when you will return the items. Our trustees are: Amy Gripp, Bob Laux, Connie Keller, Steve Blake, Tom Albert, Bill Gripp, and Ian Crawford. Thank you for your cooperation.



Parsippany Emergency 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.

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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@mhmlender.com

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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.

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR DECEMBER

<u>Dec. 2</u>	<u>Dec. 9</u>	<u>Dec. 16</u>	<u>Dec. 23</u>	<u>Dec. 30</u>
Jeremiah 33:14-16	Malachi 3:1-4	Zephaniah 3:14-20	Micah 5:2-5a	1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26
1 Thess. 3:9-13	Phil. 1:3-11	Phil. 4:4-7	Hebrews 10:5-10	Colossians 3:12-17
Luke 21:25-36	Luke 3:1-6	Luke 3:7-18	Luke 1:39-45	Luke 2:41-52



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

Holiday Tunes

- Away in a Manger
- Choir of the Bells
- Dominick the Donkey
- Frosty the Snowman
- Holly Jolly Christmas
- Jingle Bell Rock
- Jingle Bells
- Let it Snow
- Little Drummer Boy
- Little St Nick
- O Holy Night
- Rudolph
- Santa Baby
- Silent Nigh
- Silver Bells
- The Christmas Song
- The First Noel
- Winter Wonderland



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Chicken Scratch NY



The Theater Ministry
of the
Parsippany United Methodist Church
presents

I'll Be Home for Christmas

an original play written and directed by Jeff Edwards

Friday, December 14th @ 7 p.m.
Saturday, December 15th @ 7 p.m.
Sunday, December 16th @ 6 p.m.



Starring:

Austin Atkinson, Sophia Atkinson,
Garret Belanus, Tracy Booth,
Karissa Bramley, Andrea Christiango,
Liz Cogan, Marissa Cogan,
Abigail Dadaian, Kassie Dadaian,
Marilynn Dadaian, Nicole Dadaian,
Jeff Edwards, Maidie Erickson,
Ryan Erickson, Terry Germann,
Amy Gripp, Anna Gripp,
Anna Larsen, Maggie Letsch,
Abby Matheis, Jake Matheis,
Kaia Mihalko, Katie Mihalko,
Mary Mihalko, Spandan Patel,
Conrad Roelofs, Eric Roelofs,
Garin Roelofs, Maya Roelofs,
Jean Sakelakos, Amber Schnetzer,
Jahn Schnetzer Jr., RJ Schnetzer,
& Darryl Sokolowski.

Admission is free. There will be a free will offering.
The church is located at
903 South Beverwyck Road in Parsippany, New Jersey

December 2018

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																											
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