

HILLTOPPER

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

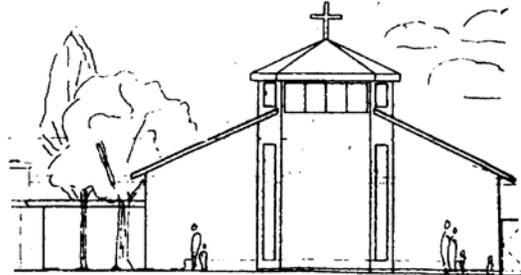
903 So. Beverwyck Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054 (973) 887-4657

<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 identity, 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"



APRIL, 2020

These are hard times we are going through, but together – choosing daily to open ourselves up to the grace of God -- we will make it. Although for the foreseeable future we cannot worship together in person, **we can worship together online Sundays at 10 a.m. if you enter “Facebook Parsippany United Methodist Church” in your search engine.** There will be opportunity to type in your joys and concerns. I am also offering **opportunities to connect through “Zoom.”** To date about thirty of us have connected this way, and if you haven’t yet joined us, I hope you will. Maintaining our contact with one another as the Body of Christ is essential to making it safely through the present valley. If there are specific needs we can help you with such as going to get groceries for you, please let us know.

We will miss having our traditional Easter celebration together on its scheduled day, but this is what I plan to have us do: **whenever it is safe for us to once more gather in worship we will designate our own Easter Sunday.** We will dress up in our Easter best clothes and get flowers and have the children hunt for Easter eggs. We will sing “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today” and claim Christ’s victory over the power of death.

Please note that **all of the usual meetings listed in this Hilltopper are cancelled until further notice** ---- hopefully, we will be able to resume our normal activities soon!

Church Offerings:

Due to these special circumstances where we cannot meet to worship in person, we are asking that, **if you are able, you keep up your pledge and send the money to the church.** The address is:

Parsippany United Methodist Church

903 So. Beverwyck Rd.

Parsippany, NJ 07054

You can also use our PayPal and Credit Card link --- see the information later in this Hilltopper.



A sermon preached on March 15, 2020 – the Sunday we turned to worship online because of the coronavirus. Our text is Luke 17:6-7, 11-17. A live version of this can be found at our website and at the Facebook page of the Parsippany United Methodist Church.

When I began looking for a scripture passage to preach on that arose from a time of crisis, I realized I had no shortage of choices. A great deal of the Bible arises out of times of crisis.

I landed on the 17th chapter of Luke's Gospel. Jesus and his disciples are making their way towards Jerusalem where in short order all hell with break loose. Jesus has told them that he personally will be killed, and the disciples are filled with terror. There's another level of crisis, however and that is the fact that Luke wrote his Gospel at a time with the Roman siege of Jerusalem was taking place, leading to hundreds of thousands of people dying by violence and famine. So the following cry expresses the fear that threatens to overwhelm both the original disciples as well as those attempting to follow him nearly forty years later:

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."

Jesus responds to their terror with a striking image: mustard seed faith. The thing about a tiny mustard seed is that it can live buried in the earth sometimes for years in a dormant state, waiting for the right moment when the rains finally arrive that would lead the seed to cease to be merely a seed – to crack open to sprout with new life, fulfilling its purpose for existence.

I hear Jesus speaking words of reassurance here. You may not realize it, but the faith you need is buried deep inside you, waiting for the right opportunity to break open and sprout.

Let me suggest to you that now is such a moment.

I once heard that the Chinese character for the word "crisis" was made by putting the characters for two other words together -- "danger" and "opportunity" -- which is to say, that in a crisis there is both danger and opportunity.

In the crisis we are in the danger is very real. Many, many people will get sick before this is through. The majority – perhaps 80% only – we experiences symptoms not much worse than a cold. But others – many others – will get very sick. Many people are likely to die before this is through.

The danger to our bodies is pretty evident, but what might be less evident is the danger to our souls. Our "soul" is that deepest, truest part of who we each are – the part made in the image and likeness of a merciful God – that profound capacity for love that is inside each of us. The danger here, as Jesus says elsewhere is that we might lose our souls in the midst of trying to assure our physical survival.

During a time in our nation's history that was probably the greatest crisis our country ever faced – the civil war – Abraham Lincoln spoke of the need to call forth "our better angels." Our capacity to love – to care for one another – to be clear about what really matters and what doesn't. Let the better angels arise -- not the demons of self-centeredness that feed on panic.

So let's focus on the opportunities hidden in the present crisis – that together we may actually discover a profound capacity within us to trust God and one another – that we may follow the winds of the Spirit to love in new ways.

As Luke's 17th chapter continues, we are reminded where Jesus is headed and the path he chooses to get there:



Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

Ah, the border between Samaria and Galilee. That's where you always find Jesus – on the borderline – in that space where the choice is presented to us to whether we will call forth our better angels or our demons.

You probably know of the ancient hostility that existed in those days between the Jews of Galilee (*which is what Jesus was*) and the Samaritans of Samaria. For generations the Jews and the Samaritans had taught their children from a very young age to hate and demonize one another, to see each other as less than fully human.

Human nature hasn't changed from those days. The wall that separated the Jews and the Samaritans continues to separate us in our inclination to divide ourselves into warring tribes. We all have our "Samaritans" – those we cut ourselves off from and see as less than fully human.

Who are your "Samaritans?"

As Jesus was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

Perhaps you can see why this particular Bible story came to mind. It involves a dangerous contagious disease, and it includes this strange concept we've been hearing so much about lately, "social distancing."

In those days, when a person first began to show the signs of the disease of leprosy, they were compelled by the authorities -- in those days the priests -- to leave their homes, leave their families, to go and live outside of the borders of their villages where they couldn't infect others. When non-infected people happened to draw near, they were required to warn them to keep a safe distance. Out on the borderlines, they survived by begging, always from a distance.



But here is a part of the story that may not be obvious – the part that contained "opportunity." Thrown together by their common plight, because they are on the borderline between Galilee and Samaria a peculiar little community of ten lepers arises that includes both Jews and Samaritans.

For the first time in their lives, these Samaritan and Jewish lepers got to really know people they had always been taught to dehumanize in their minds, and as they did, they realized they had far more in common than that which separated them: "This Jew – this Samaritan -- is homesick, misses his family, just like me. He misses the little routines of daily life that he once took for granted – just like me. He is frightened regarding whether he'll ever get to live with his family again, whether this disease we soon take his life, whether there will be enough food to survive, just – like -- me."

They saw what they hadn't seen before: the tribal "truths" they had been taught were actually lies. They saw the truth, "We are in this together. We are each other's family now."

Seen or unseen, Jesus is always present in the borderlines of life.

When Jesus saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

In obedience to Jesus the ten go to the authorities – the priests in those days – the medical authorities of our day – who can validate that they no longer need to be quarantined. I would suggest to you that inside each of these ten, a mustard seed of faith broke open because they trusted Jesus and obeyed his command to go, even though at first they had no assurance. It was only as they went that -- to their astonishment -- they discovered they were healed.



One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

It isn't easy to make sense of this part of the story. All of the ten obey Jesus' orders to go to the priests, but only one -- a Samaritan -- defies Jesus' orders and instead turns back to give thanks to the Jewish healer who has restored him to health. Jesus seems disappointed the other nine didn't do the same.

Perhaps the meaning of this is that the focus of the nine quickly become returning to their old lives, and in doing so to leave behind the truth they had glimpsed out there on the borderline. Perhaps in returning to the Jewish rabbi to give thanks, the Samaritan expresses his commitment to not forget the truth he has come to know. He dwells deeply in gratitude – a gratitude awakened from having endured this crisis. In a deeper sense, his faith has made him whole.

The last time in my life time we had a crisis as a nation of this magnitude was 9/11. If you are old enough, you will remember the days immediately following the terrorist attacks – if we weren't first responders at the towers we all slowed our lives down -- we stopped rushing about chasing the things we suddenly realized didn't really matter. We saw what truly does matter in life. We were gentle and kind with one another, including complete strangers. Love moved among us like the wind in powerful ways.

As time passed, however we gradually returned to our old ways of living in this world. Like the nine, we slowly got back to business as usual.

And here we are again. Will our better angels or our demons prevail?

It remains to be seen.

This crisis is different, of course. There is a balance we must find. Though it may seem



hard to recognize it as such, but at the present moment choosing to social isolate is an act of love. If we are among those who – should we be infected – are not at great risk to life experiencing threatening illness, we still have the capacity to transmit the virus to others and in doing so increase the likelihood that the most vulnerable among us will be seriously harmed.

And yet even as we practice "social isolation", we need to find ways to stay connected and offer support, especially to those less fortunate than ourselves. As a faith community, we need to be connected in order to experience the grace that allows our better angels arise – to encourage the buried seeds of our mustard seed faith to go ahead and break open in a deeper sense of trust.

And in relation to our larger communities, we need to remember that we truly are all in this together: Democrats and Republicans, people of different races, ethnicities and religions. Everybody.

If we are following Jesus, we follow him into the borderlines of this world to bring down the walls that separate us and witness to the width and breadth and depth of the love that holds us all together.

In the kindness of Jesus,

Pastor Jeff

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Some of you have experienced the "guided meditations" I have offered in the past as a way of entering more deeply into a place of stillness before God with our mind, body and spirits. If you would like to be a part of such a guided meditation session through a scheduled or Zoom or conference call please let me know at jeffedwards1955@gmail.com.

Also, some of us have been [writing a story together on line](#) – a kind of improve activity to keep our minds occupied if we are isolated at home. If you would like to receive email updates of the progression of the story please let me know.



Looking back in March - Last month we had our Pastor Jeff and his travels to Ireland with his family to visit Bobby. Our next meeting is:

Due to the corona virus, this meeting will be cancelled.

Wednesday, April 1st, 7 p.m.
PROGRAM: Bible Study
We will be studying one lady from the Old Testament and Mary Magdelene from the New Testament
Bring your own refreshments

April 1 – April Fool’s Day	April 5 – Palm Sunday
April 9 – Maundy Thursday	April 10 – Good Friday
April 12 – Easter Sunday	

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

God Bless,
Betsy Adams

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Anyone interested in becoming a member of the Parsippany United Methodist Church *where there's always room in the circle* is invited to speak to Pastor Jeff.

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A **small group experience** entitled "**Twenty Touchstones for Traveling the Road of our Soul's Journey**" has been extended through April. Meetings are held in the prayer chapel on **the first and third Tuesdays of each month from 7:30 to 9 p.m.** The program is developed by our own Fred Mendez invites a deep level of intimacy as fellow pilgrims share the challenges of their lives in an attempt to grow as followers of Jesus. Fred leads the group with assistance from Pastor Jeff.

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The **Youth Group** is back up and running! A joyful organizational dinner/meeting was held on February 9th and enthusiasm was shared for **meeting approximately every other Sunday evening** with a



combination of fun, service project planning and spiritual nurture. **Meetings will begin at 6:30 with a light shared meal and end at 8:30 p.m.** **Meetings are on hold until further notice.** There is room in the circle for other youth grades 7 through 12.

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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.

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.

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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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Our church website is 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.

Anyone interested in taking a turn videotaping our anthems and sermons for Facebook Live is invited to speak to Pastor Jeff.



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

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.

Our Outreach to Those in Need

Our Sunday morning **Children's Offering** is going to support various mission outreaches. In recent weeks we've raised money for the Parsippany Food Pantry, Morris Habitat for Humanity, our church's outreach to Homeless Solutions, a local family in desperate straits, and to support Dawn Kiemel in her medical mission trip to help 500 children in the jungles of Peru who have never been to a dentist before. *If you have ideas regarding mission projects to support, please speak to Tracy Booth, Anna Christal or Pastor Jeff.*



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 **TBD**.



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 TBD**. Please speak to Bruce Letsch or Pastor Jeff if you would like to volunteer.

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.

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, Andee Mihalko or Charlie Kinsley if you would like more information. Our next service is **TBD**.

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We are grateful for our **two volunteers serving in the church office**. On Tuesdays Betsy Adams is there from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and on Wednesdays Pat Winz is there from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. If you have a question about the church, feel free to call them at these times. **Anyone interested in serving** our church by spending a couple of hours on Monday or Thursday in the office to answer the phone and do simple office tasks as they arise are invited to speak to Pastor Jeff or Betsy Adams.

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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.



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. 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. 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 APRIL

<u>April 5</u>	<u>April 12</u>	<u>April 19</u>	<u>April 26</u>
Isaiah 50:4-9a	Acts 30:34-43	Acts 2:14a,22-32	Acts 2:14a,36-41
Phil 2:5-11	Colossians 3:-14	1 Peter 1:3-9	1 Peter 1:17-23
Matthew 26:14-27:66	John 20:1-18	John 20:19-31	Luke 24:13-35



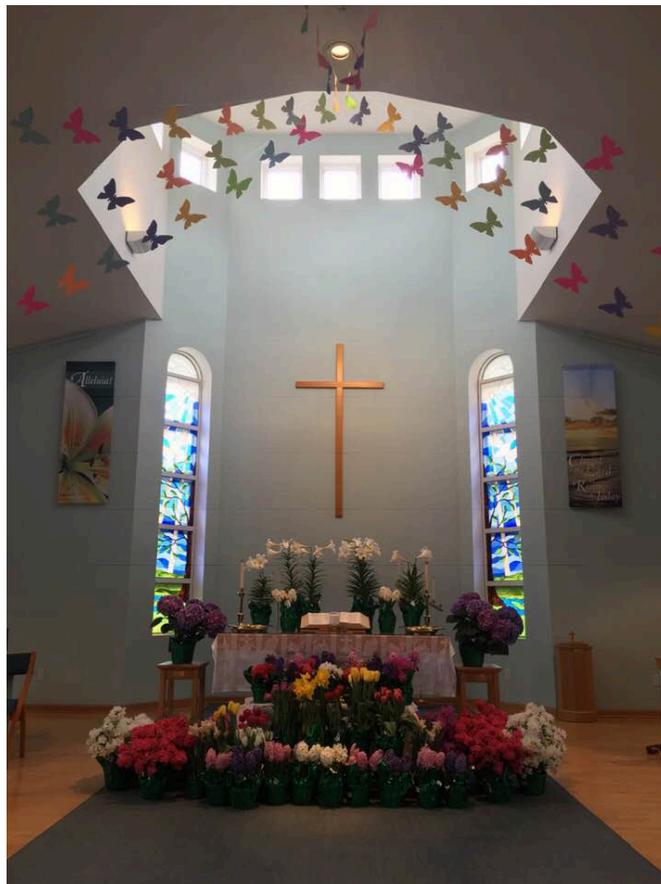


APRIL BIRTHDAYS

2 nd	Tracy Booth	14 th	Charolette Rose Bryant
4 th	Cheryl Judge	15 th	Esther Chun
7 th	Charley Bruxgulis	15 th	Arianna Cintenero
7 th	Vijaya Desari	16 th	Melissa Tribuna
8 th	Gail Lingerman	17 th	Gail Booth
8 th	Annabelle Vance	18 th	John Sedlak
9 th	Carlee Cintenero	20 th	Ruth Davenport
11 th	Lloyd Newberry	23 rd	Bob Krisa
11 th	Margarette Bryant	23 rd	Bob Vance
12 th	Steven Chun	24 th	George Haddad
12 th	Kylie Morgan	26 th	Kathy Andersen
13 th	Jon Keller	27 th	Gina Trezza
13 th	Eddie Abbott	28 th	Ryan Mortensen
14 th	Betty Davis	29 th	Debbie Gantert
14 th	Art Sakelakos		

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

13th Lynn & Bob Barbarite



Easter Word Search



Angel

Cross

Crown of Thorns

Easter

Empty Tomb

Good Friday

Holy

Hope

Jesus

King

Love

Mary

Messiah

Resurrection

Risen

Sacrifice

Salvation

Sunday

Savior

Third Day



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April 2020

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

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