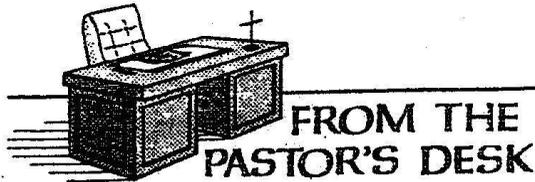




The Messenger
Grace United Methodist Church
16 Hillcrest Drive
Ravena, NY 12143-1409

Rev. Judith Johnson-Siebold, Ph.D.
Pastor

Rev. William F. Rogers, S.T.M.
Pastor Emeritus



December 2012

Dear Friends,

It was Election Day in this country. People had been up and voting since 6am. Tensions ran high as those with strongly-held positions tried to convince others of their point of view. Media kept the airwaves and cyberspace alive with updates and commentary focused on red states and blue states.

In our own state, people running for office experienced joys and frustrations as the voting numbers poured in. Spokespersons voiced plans and goals for their candidate. Everywhere people gathered, voices expressed hope and anxiety.

In our own towns, political banners and election day dinner signs attested to the importance of the issues and of the day, itself. No one could escape noticing the significance of the day.

In our own church there was much hustle and bustle as dedicated volunteers went about preparations for the election luncheon. At the appointed hour the doors were opened and people began to trickle in. The ticket seller began selling tickets. The take-out people started filling the take-out containers. I was showing people to their seats. We were focused on the job at hand. It was all about the election.

Then the door opened and a young woman appeared. I greeted her with a smile.

"Can people light candles here?" she asked. Her eyes were worried, her appearance somber.

There was nothing in our election day luncheon plans anticipating this possibility. But this young woman wanted to light a candle, and something in her upbringing had told

her that the Church was the place to do it. Her request suggested a Roman Catholic background, since Protestants only light candles in a worship service during Advent and Lent. Technically, she was in the "wrong" place. But my heart went out to her, and I quickly assured her that yes, she could light a candle here.

"Oh, thank you," she said. "My sister just died..." My arms reached out to her, and she embraced me. "I'm going to the car to get my mother," she added.

I raced into the kitchen where the warm aromas of ham and tomatoes attested to the food being carefully prepared. Opening a cupboard, I withdrew two ceramic saucers. Then I went to the kitchen closet and found two votive candles. Placing a candle on each saucer, I went back to the hall where the young woman had returned with another sister and their mother. The woman was overcome with grief. Tears poured from her eyes as she was helped into the Sanctuary where I placed the candles at the foot of the Communion Table and turned to express my condolences to her. She collapsed into my arms with sobs, as the young woman explained that another sister had been murdered several years ago, and now the mother had experienced the death of two of her children.

The woman let go of me and asked, "How much is it to light a candle?"

I assured her there was no cost, and I quietly left the three women alone with their grief.

Several minutes later they emerged from the Sanctuary. The woman embraced me again and said "Thank you so much for your caring and for letting us light candles." One of her daughters led her out the door, while the other daughter thanked me once more and asked me for my business card. I assured her that the church and I were available for her.

What could be considered a tiny, brief interruption in the much greater drama of Election Day 2012, was profoundly significant for these three women.

There was another great national drama over 2000 years ago when a country's leader announced that, for purposes of taxation, everyone must go to their hometown to be counted in the national census. In the leader's scheme of things, getting an accurate count was everything. He was not aware of a humble carpenter and his pregnant fiancé making the difficult trip to Bethlehem. It was not on his radar when the Savior was born. The national leader had much bigger fish to fry.

In our own time the loud, important, bright and shiny big events get so much play. Meanwhile, under the radar, God continues to speak in the obscure and seemingly trivial events of our lives.

May this Advent and approaching Christmastime be for you and yours a time of profound awareness that God is still speaking in the small, unscheduled events of our lives.

Faithfully,
Pastor Judi



On December 9th during Fellowship Time we'll be having a cookie swap for anyone looking for some sweet treats. Participants should bring two containers...one with 6 dozen cookies to swap and an empty one to put the 6 dozen cookies in that you'll be taking home with you.

While you are baking for the swap, we would love it if you would bake an extra dozen to provide refreshments after the Sunday School Christmas Pageant at 4pm on the same day. If you *do* plan to bring cookies for the pageant, please let Edna Rominger know.

LET'S WELCOME OUR GUESTS

To make it easier during the Advent season for visitors to get to know us, and to help all of us learn new names, the Evangelism Committee will be giving everyone a name tag to wear

during Church and fellowship time. We hope guests will be encouraged to come back again and again.

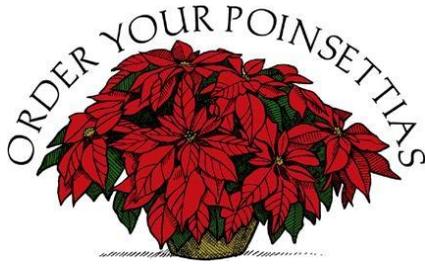


JUST A LITTLE CHRISTMAS

Each Sunday, the Sunday School will be having rehearsals in the Sanctuary after church services have ended so that the children will get a better idea of their surroundings for the upcoming Christmas program.

Please join us at 4:00 on December 9th for the Sunday School Christmas play entitled "Just a Little Christmas." This production is sure to put a smile on your face this holy season.

After the pageant all are invited to join us in Fellowship Hall for refreshments. Cookies and beverages will be served.



Poinsettias will once again be available for Christmas this year. If you are interested in ordering one to gift, or for yourself, please see Dotty Backlund.

DECEMBER IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Dec. 2nd – *Bible Event:* The Prophet Isaiah promised the coming of a peaceable kingdom

Theme: God sent a baby king

Drama Rotation: Barb Bullock and Marlene McTigue lead the pageant rehearsal

Dec. 9th – *Bible Event:* Elizabeth and Zechariah prepare for the birth of John

Theme: God can be counted on

Drama Rotation: Barb Bullock and Marlene McTigue lead the pageant rehearsal

Dec. 16th – *Bible Event:* Mary and Joseph learn they will have a baby

Theme: God breaks into comfortable lives and turns them upside down

Craft Rotation: Christmas Tree making with Sue Eccleston

Dec. 23rd – *Bible Event:* Jesus was born

Theme: God is with us

Craft Rotation: Christmas crafts with Kate Robertson



ADVENT/CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES

Thanks to the dedication and involvement of so many volunteers, the Advent-Christmas season at Grace is full of wonderful activities designed to fill us with the Christmas Spirit. There is truly something for everyone, and all are invited to enjoy what we have to offer. Take a look:

November 30th – 6pm- Greening of the Church with Pizza at 6:30pm – all are welcome

December 2nd – First Sunday in Advent: Nightingales Children's Choir sings

December 9th – Second Sunday in Advent: Cookie Swap during Fellowship Time. Sunday School Pageant at 4pm

December 16th – Third Sunday in Advent: Bell Choir plays; Nightingales sing; Christmas Concert at 4pm

December 23rd – Fourth Sunday in Advent. Live Nativity at 4pm

December 24th – Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service at 7pm



The Evangelism Committee has once again adopted a local family in need this holiday season. We are counting on the generosity of our congregation to fill those needs in the spirit of God's command to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Soon you will see a Christmas tree decorated with special ornament/tags. On each one, you will find a specific item from the child's wish list. Be sure to put your name on the list next the child you have adopted and take the special ornament/tag as a reminder to shop for that person. Please shop early and bring the gift wrapped item back and place it under the tree.

We are truly blessed to be part of a church family that seeks to embody Jesus' command to love our neighbor. Be thankful as you add one more item to your Christmas list this year and

pray for the child. May you be blessed in your giving.



December Birthdays & Anniversaries

Wishing the best to all those who will be celebrating a birthday or an anniversary in the month of December:

- 1 Jacob Black
- 2 Reggie Porterfield
- 3 Joseph Mancini
- 4 Jim Sherman
- 6 Adrienne Seymour
- 9 Edna Rominger
- 10 Louis Newburg V
- 11 Catherine Bradshaw
- 11 Padraig McTigue
- 18 Druhan Gordon-Stacey
- 19 Jim & Devonna Quinn
- 22 Don Moon
- 22 Rick Robertson
- 23 Ray Bradshaw
- 26 Sarah Bliss
- 28 Audry June
- 31 Al & JoAnne Burrill



Christ is Born!



**NEW MEMBERS-TO-BE
TO LIGHT ADVENT
WREATH CANDLES**

On Sunday, December 23rd, eight people plan to join the Church, and in recognition of their new status among us they have been asked to share in lighting this year's Advent Wreath candles according to the following schedule:

Dec 2nd – Mark and Amy Young, assisted by daughter Sidney

Dec. 9th – Aaron June, assisted by brother James and parents George and Audry

Dec. 16th – Curtis and Stephanie Canham, assisted by daughter Chloe

Dec. 23rd – Reggie and Quaniesha Porterfield, assisted by parents Bobby and Kathy

Dec. 24th – Devin Whitney, assisted by grandparents Alan and Wanda

We appreciate this act of service and look forward to celebrating Advent with them.

LIVE NATIVITY

At 4pm Sunday, December 23rd there will be a Live Nativity right here at Grace UMC. We are in need of people interested in being in the cast (the holy family, angels, shepherds, three magi and a couple of narrators).

There will be one dress rehearsal at 4pm Saturday, December 22nd.

Following the Live Nativity, refreshments of tea, coffee, hot chocolate and cookies will be available. If you are interested in taking part in the presentation or providing cookies please contact Barbara Coryell at rbcoryell@yahoo.com.



**ACOUSTIC DOORWAYS
SPONSORSHIPS**

The Administrative Council is pleased to announce that Grace UMC is now a co-presenter of the, “Acoustic Doorways Concert Series”, along with the RCS Library and Brian Melick.

The Concert Series sponsors world-class musicians through grants and private donations to perform in small venues at an extremely low admission price of \$8 per show at the door, or \$5 per show when you purchase a season pass for all four shows. We have had the pleasure of being one of the venues for each season over the past four years; all of them a great success... wonderful music and many new faces giving our Church and our hospitality exposure.

We have now increased our involvement to help the Library with some of the administrative duties with hopes that in the future some additional dates may be added to the season which currently stands as 4 shows in the late Winter into Spring. We will be hosting the third concert in this year's series on Friday, March 8th.

If you would like to help with sponsorship, advertising in the program for all four shows is available ranging from \$50 - \$400. If you would like more information on Sponsorship you may call Judy Felsten at the Library at: [\(518\) 756-2053](tel:5187562053) or visit www.rcscommunitylibrary.org or ask Jay Ingraham.

A special thank you to Dotty Backlund and the "Friends Around the Fireplace," for all their help with the sponsorship promotion.

TIS THE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS

*'Tis the week before Christmas and
snow's gently falling,
Our tree is now up. Friends and family
are calling.
The stockings I've hung by the chimney
with fear,
Because I'm far from ready, and
Christmas is near.
But at moments like this when some
panic besets,
I stop for a time so that I won't forget
That the reason we celebrate this time
of year
Is the gift of our Lord – above all gifts,
most dear.
It's the coming of God-in-the-flesh to
this earth,
His pure, sinless life; His foretold
virgin birth.
His life here of service, His death on
the tree;
Then His rising again so that we can
be free
To turn from our pride and
acknowledge our need,
Accepting His grace, not ignoring His
plea.
For that is the gift He would cherish
from us –
Not this buying, and spending, and
holiday rush;
Just hearts that would love Him and
serve Him today,
Resting in Him and seeking His way.
– By Lisa DeVinney*



BARGAIN SHED CLOSED FOR SEASON

Saturday, November 17 was closing day for the Bargain Shed. During the last week a \$3/bag sale was held. This sale was advertised in the newspapers and brought in many new customers.

Final week tales:

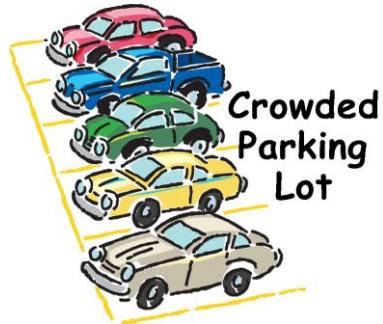
- A new customer came in and purchased several items. After checking out she mentioned that the items were going to be sent down to her old church in Queens to be used for disaster relief.
- A familiar customer came in during the week and purchased several bags at \$3 each. She returned on Saturday and said that the family she had given the clothes to were so happy she decided to get some more for them. With that she purchased 6 more bags of items to donate.
- Several items of clothing, as well as blankets, were donated to the Super Storm victims downstate.

One of the missions of the Shed (in addition to providing funds for the Church budget) is to serve our com-

munity. We are so blessed to be able to do both.

Thank you all for your donations and patronage. We look forward to reopening in the spring.

(As of its close on November 17th, the Bargain Shed made **\$6,888!** That's an awesome season thanks to the hard work of everyone who pitched in for this ministry.)



The Trustees are happy to announce that the bulletin board displaying a parked car for every \$20/month for a year donation is getting full! Nearly half of our goal has already been reached, and anyone who has yet to prayerfully consider contributing their part to the repayment of our parking lot loan is asked to do so. To pledge \$20/month for a year please contact Ken Bliss, Trustee Chair, at 756-3663 (h), 487-1145 (cell to speak or text) or, kmcdbliss1@aol.com. He will be eager to hear from you.

Many thanks go out to all who have already contributed. It will be good to pay back the money we owe to this gracious donor.



Holiday OPEN HOUSE

The congregation is cordially invited to the annual Holiday Open House at the Parsonage on Sunday, January 6th from 2-4pm.

BOOK NOOK UPDATE

You'll notice that the Book Nook has days and times posted on the Calendar. Please note however, that with the inevitable inclement weather brought on by winter, look for the sign to be out if you want to be sure the doors will be open.

As of November 18th, the Book Nook has brought in **\$9,235!**

DEADLINE FOR ARTICLES GOING IN JANUARY EDITION

Because of the Christmas Holiday, the deadline for the January newsletter will be December 30th; one week later than normal. Publication will be a little later than usual. Thank you for your understanding.

ELECTION DAY BAKED HAM

Results for the day's sales of baked ham and sides are in. \$695 (minus expenses) was brought in and a hearty thank you to all those who worked to make this annual event such a big success.



EDITOR'S NOTE

I'd like to wish each of you a blessed and merry Christmas. Please take time out from the busyness that comes with this time of year to reflect on the true miracle of the season. Stay safe everyone!



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JOIN US ON FACEBOOK

If you are on Facebook, please join the church page by *liking us* at Grace United Methodist Church, Ravena, NY. Find out what's happening each week from Sunday's Service sermon title and hymns to meetings and special events.

OR VISIT US ON THE WEB:

www.graceumcravena.org



Deadline for articles for the **January** issue of *The Messenger* is **December 30th**. Please send or e-mail articles to Barb Bullock at:

bbullock812@gmail.com

or

fax to: **731-8994**