



The Messenger

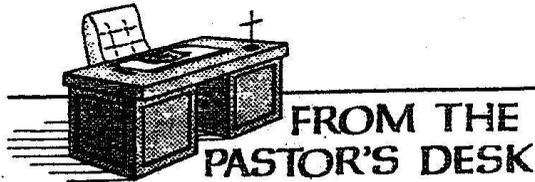
Grace United Methodist Church

16 Hillcrest Drive

Ravena, NY 12143-1409

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

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



January 2014

Dear Friends,

A new year often prompts people to make a new start at something that will improve their lives. People who have not been regular attendees at worship often try to make it a habit in the new year. The attempt is commendable, but the effort can be derailed by unhelpful assumptions that I found outlined in a little book titled *Rediscover Church. Ten Reasons Why People Leave, and Why They're Coming Back*, published by Outreach Publishing. Here are their ten reasons people sometimes give for not attending worship:

(1) I don't believe in organized religion.

Well, do you prefer disorganized religion? Churches are places where people gather to look for God in an organized way.

(2) I have my own way of connecting with God.

God designed us for community. We may feel religious by observing nature or watching a religious TV program, but unless we are confined to our residence or on a deserted island, worshiping alone on a regular basis deprives us of a shared experience.

(3) I don't want to be asked for money.

"We spend half our lives putting down cash or swiping our pieces of plastic for absolutely everything we consume. Yet, somehow we have this notion that church should be a place where we can be entertained, cared for, taught the Word of God, and served

when we have trouble - but it should all come free...A Church can't continue to thrive and carry out its mission without funding."

(4) My life situation changed.

"You (have) had to learn to shop at a different store, work out at a new gym, change jobs, make new friends, and find a new hairdresser, auto repair service, drycleaner, etc. So why did finding (your way to) church fall to the bottom of the priority list? ...church can help you manage these life changes far better than you could alone."

(5) I don't have to go to church to be a good person.

"Going to church will not make us good, but it will help us..grow...understanding just how much God loves you means going ..to church. Then maybe you won't just be good; you will be better-because God desires so much more for us than we settle for."

(6) Sundays are my only time to rest.

"Church can become just the relaxation and time-out that your soul longs for. Sunday is a day to tune in again to God, to refocus and to reprioritize all that we do and are, in the light of the reality of God."

(7) Church is boring.

"Church is not a one-way presentation where you come to be entertained. This expectation will almost always end in a ho-hum result, because few churches can achieve the level of entertainment or stimulation we have come to expect. When you last spent time with your parents or grandparents, did you go expecting to be entertained? A church is a gathering place where you come to engage with God and others. Church (can) get you excited about what God did and continues to do in the world, in people's lives, in your own life."

(8) I never fit in.

"Building new friendships at a church is no different than any other place in life. It takes stepping outside your comfort zone at first, and it takes effort. The church is full of all kinds of people. Chances are you will soon 'click' with a few of them and be able to connect in more meaningful ways."

(9) Christians are judgmental and hypocritical.

"You are going to run into judgmental and hypocritical people wherever you go. Be the bigger person and don't allow a few 'bad' Christians to deter you from a path toward God and God's truth for your life. Church will also include others who have a genuine desire to make a connection with you. The church is a whole bunch of ordinary people

committed to fulfilling an extraordinary mission – building Christ's church and the Kingdom here on earth...connection to people who could become lifelong friends is a real possibility - and it's what God hopes you find."

(10) I don't think I'd be welcome anymore - I've done some bad stuff.

Jesus, Himself, said 'I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.' (Mark 2:17) We're all going to mess up to varying degrees pretty much our whole lives. So choose to be forgiven, grow and learn every week, rather than trying to live on your own, licking your wounds and living in fear of being judged. God already knows anyway. So why wait?"

One of the gifts a new year gives us is the opportunity to make a fresh start. If worshiping at Grace UMC is a fresh start you would like to make, follow your inner prompting and join us Sundays at 10:30. You will be more than welcome.

Faithfully,
Pastor Judi





Pastor Judi and her family enjoy hosting a Parsonage Open House each year before they take down their Christmas tree. This season's Open House will be Sunday, January 5th from 2-4pm. Feel free to stop by for a while and enjoy parsonage hospitality. The Parsonage is the next house on the right after the church (20 Hillcrest Drive).

ATTENTION ALL COMMITTEE CHAIRS!

All information for "The Annual Report – 2013" should be submitted to Frannie Lobdell by January 30th.

This includes letters, committee reports, Board of Trustee reports, Bargain Shed and Book Nook reports, reports from the Choir Directors and a report from the Sunday School Superintendent.

Also, all financial reports, membership statistics, audit report, 2014 proposed budget, and the Report of Committee on Lay Leadership for 2014.

SUNDAY SCHOOL IN JANUARY

January in the Sunday School will focus on Jesus growing from a baby to a man. The Hands On time will have the following themes and helpers:

January 5 – Caring for the Vulnerable Among Us, Including Dogs with Bonnie Ginter

January 12 – Jesus at 12 in the Temple with Christine Frazee

January 19 – Jesus' Baptism with Sharon Phillips

January 26 – Jesus Preaching in the Synagogue with Tracy Harris

BOOK NOOK ANNOUNCES ADOPT A BOOKSHELF CATEGORY

The Book Nook needs your help. We are looking for several people to adopt a bookshelf category to organize and maintain for the 2014 year.

You choose a category that appeals to you. They include:

- Westerns
- The Arts (dance, music and art)
- Non-fiction
- Religion
- Crafts
- Gardening
- Health and Well-being
- Hardcover Mysteries
- Sports
- Cookbooks
- Science Fiction

There will be a sign up sheet in the church hall in January or you can see Joy Mayo or Jean Gordon to volunteer.

This ministry contributes so much to our church's financial well-being; not to mention the value it offers our young readers and community. Please prayerfully consider volunteering to help keep this important project tidy and well-stocked with the many donations that come in. A little work on the part of a few can make a huge task seem less daunting.

FOR EVERYTHING A SEASON

Wanting his sons to learn not to judge too quickly, a man sent each, in turn, on a quest to look at a pear tree far

away and report what he saw. The first son went in winter, the second in spring, the third in summer and the fourth in fall. Finally, the father gathered the young men together. "What did you see?" he asked.

The first son reported seeing an ugly tree, bent and lifeless. The second disagreed, saying it was budding with fresh new life. The third son reported finding a tree laden with sweet-smelling, beautiful blossoms, while the fourth insisted it drooped with ripe fruit.

The father said his sons were all correct, for they'd seen the same tree, though at different seasons of its life. "Don't judge a tree — or a person — based on just one season of life," he counseled his children. "Who they are can only be known at the end, when all life's seasons have been lived.

"Furthermore," he added, "don't give up on your own life if you experience a hard season, such as winter, or you'll miss out on the renewal of spring, the joy of summer, the fulfillment of autumn."

BARGAIN SHED RESULTS

\$7,373 of goods were sold by this ministry in the short 2013 season! Bravo to all who contributed in *any* way!



Happy birthday to everyone celebrating in January:

- 11 Amanda Wolfe
- 16 Lisa D'Arcangelis
- 15 Colin McTigue
- 18 Will Robertson
- 23 Adam Newton
- 24 Karin Beswick
- 29 Sonya Moss
- 31 Jeffrey Haslett

SUNDAY SCHOOL ACTIVITY

In December the Sunday School children baked bread and stuffed stockings for members of the congregation who are unable to attend church. A special thank you to the Roes, Frazees, McTigues, Canhams and Young families for taking the time to deliver them. Thank you Joy Mayo and the Book Nook for supplying the books and cards!

In January, Bonnie Ginter will be talking to the Sunday School children

about Peppertree, the rescue group she supports. We will be collecting canned dog food and blankets. Blankets can be gently used, but should be easy to wash. There will be a box outside the office to collect the donations.





never met someone so appreciative of hearing the Good News.

A key Epiphany theme is sharing the news of Jesus. “Ordinary” Christians can do that best by listening for an opening when visiting with someone and sharing part of their faith story in relation to something the other has said. There’s no need to accost strangers on street corners. Just be yourself, let the Holy Spirit guide you and invite your listener to follow Jesus, too.

BOOK NOOK UPDATE

As of 12/22/13, the Book Nook has brought in **\$10,507!** Amazing with a few more days left for more sales!

SHARING JESUS

The true story is told of two men sitting together on a train. When one shared with the other, a committed Christian, that he was heading home to donate a kidney to his father, the Christian listened intently. Sensing his seatmate’s genuine interest, the speaker confided that he didn’t know his life’s purpose.

Sensing an openness in his new friend, the Christian told him about Jesus and the purpose Jesus had given to his life. The Christian man said later that he’d

2014 OFFERING ENVELOPES AVAILABLE

Just before entering the Narthex, please feel free to pick up a box of offering envelopes for 2014. Be sure to use the sheet on the table to write your name next to the number on your box of envelopes.



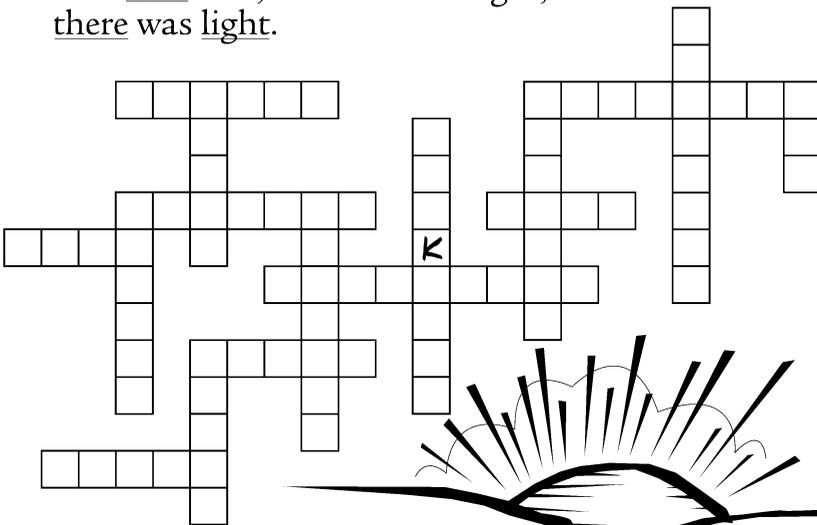


The Beginning

The start of a new calendar year is a great time to praise God for his amazing creation.

Directions: Read Genesis 1:1-3 (NIV), below. Place the underlined words into the crossword. One letter has been provided to help you start.

*I*n the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.



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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 **February** issue of *The Messenger* is **January 19th**. Please e-mail or fax articles to Barb Bullock at:

bbullock812@gmail.com

or

fax to: **731-8994**