



The Messenger
Grace United Methodist Church
16 Hillcrest Drive
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www.graceumcravena.org
518-756-6688

Rev. David E. Smith
Pastor

December 2014

FROM THE DESK OF THE PASTOR

God is Here

God is here. The very presence of God has broken into this world of ours. That in essence is what we celebrate on Christmas Day. Jesus' birth answered in a powerful way questions about the very nature of God and God's relation to human beings'

He came to the Hebrew people even as their prophets and the psalmist had predicted. Our God hears the cries of those who believe in God.

Jesus was born not as a child of the Romans who controlled a vast empire but rather as the son of a carpenter who was the member of a very small nation under Roman rule. Our God is not a god of the rich and powerful but rather sides with the oppressed and those who have no power.

Generations of Hebrews had prayed for and anxiously looked for the coming of a Messiah or the Promised One who end their suffering and make them a great nation again. Our God does not respond according to our time table and understanding.

Christmas though is much more than a celebration of a historic event. The Church has divided the year into seasons that celebrate significant events in Christ's ministry and what they can teach us about our relationship with God. In Christmas we celebrate that God broke into our world in the past, is present in the world today through the Church, and will come again at the end of time.

In the Sundays before Christmas we look forward to God breaking into the world in the person of Jesus and what we are called to do to prepare for his coming. Advent looks forward not just to celebrating what happened in the past but the day when God's kingdom will be realized in all its fullness.

We hope you will join us on the coming Sundays as we prepare the realization of Christ's coming that we celebrate at Christmas and look for in the future.

In the seasons following Christmas we explore what Jesus life revealed about God and its implications for how we are called to live our lives.

Yours in Christ's Service,



David E. Smith

Pastor David



DECEMBER SUNDAY SERVICES

December 7 – Second Sunday of Advent - Communion

Scripture Isaiah 40:1-11; Mark 1:1-8
Psalter #806 Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
Sermon “Getting Ready”
Hymns #211 O Come, O Come Emmanuel
 #619 Now the Silence
 #666 Shalom to You

December 14 – Third Sunday of Advent – Christmas Pageant

Special music by Sons of Redemption – See article in newsletter

December 21 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Scripture Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38
Magnificat #199 Luke 1:46b-55
Sermon “Who Me?”
Hymns #234 O Come, All Ye Faithful
 #394 Something Beautiful, Something Good
 #375 Spirit of Gentleness

December 24 – **Christmas Eve** – Candlelight Service

Scripture Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20
Sermon “Love Came Down”
Hymns #228 He is Born
 #238 Angels We Have Heard on High
 #242 Love Came Down at Christmas
 #251 Go Tell It on the Mountains
 #239 Silent Night

December 28 – First Sunday after Christmas – 11:30 PM

Scripture Isaiah 61:10 – 62:3, Luke 2:22-40
Sermon “Called to Be a Blessing”
Psalter #861 Psalm 148
Hymns #203 Hail to the Lord’s Anointed
 #219 What Child is This
 #671 Lord Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing

December 31 – New Year’s Eve – Watch Night Service

Scripture Revelations 21:1-6a; John 15:5-12
Sermon “New Year’s Resolutions”
Hymns #428 For the Healing of the Nations
 #384 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
 #682 All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

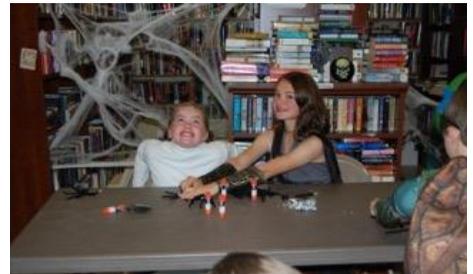
About 90 people came out for our Sunday School's Halloween party. It was such a fun evening and our Youth did a great job organizing it all. (See lots of pictures of the fun time below.)



In November the kids decorated brown bags for Thanksgiving and were brought to the local Food Pantry.

On December 14th we will be presenting our Christmas Pageant, "Hay" during the church service with special musical guests. Rehearsal for this will be held after church on December 7th.







BARGAIN SHED NEWS

The shed closed for the 2014 season on Saturday, November 22, but will be re-opening in the spring of 2015.

One of the volunteers at the shop had a great idea—to use plain white plastic lids (such as those on coffee cans) as dividers on the clothes racks. We tried them on one rack and they worked great. So, if over the winter you have any of that type lid, we would greatly appreciate it if we could have them. Just give them to Edna Rominger. Thanks!!!!

Some time in January, the volunteers will have a meeting to review the past year and receive any suggestions for the coming year.

AND, a big thank-you to all our dedicated workers! It's a fun and rewarding mission endeavor.

YOUTH GROUP NEWS

The youth helped serve at the Fresh Ham Dinner in November. They did a great job in both serving and in representing the church. They also made 92 turkey centerpieces filled with candy and a Bible verse on the side for the Senior Center's Thanksgiving dinner on November 23rd.

On Saturday, December 13th, the Youth Group (grades 6 and up) will be meeting at the church at 1pm to make goodies for the cookie swap which will be held on December 14th. If you plan to attend or would like more information on making the goodies, please see Barbara Coryell.

Thanks again for all your donations and for your continued patronage. Sales for the Bargain Shed for 2014 are **\$6,034!** Great job everyone!



COOKIE SWAP

The cookie swap will take place during fellowship time on December 14th. There is a sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall. Typically, those participating would make 6 dozen cookies or other goody to swap. Some folks pre-wrap their cookies while others just bring them loose in a container. Remember to bring a separate container to bring your cookies home in!

SONS OF REDEMPTION PROVIDE SPECIAL MUSIC DECEMBER 14

The Sons of Redemption, led by Pat Patterson, are members of one of Bethlehem Community Church's worship teams. We have been prayerfully seeking opportunities to minister through music to other members of the body of Christ. We are joyfully anticipating fellowship with brothers and sisters in Faith for mutual uplifting

and edification to the Glory of our Lord who has called us by name.

They will be providing special music as part of worship service on December 14. On the 14th the Sunday School will also be presenting a Christmas Pageant which will be the message for that service.



Congratulations to those celebrating birthdays or anniversaries in November:

- 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
- 11 Marty Van Wie
- 16 Sarah Bliss
- 18 Druhan Gordon-Stacey
- 19 Jim & Devonna Quinn
- 22 Don Moon
- 22 Rick Robertson

23 Ray Bradshaw
28 Audry June
31 Al & JoAnne Burrill

NEWS FROM SPPRC

The 2014 profile has been submitted to the Conference! The profile will be used by Bishop Webb and District Superintendent Rich Weihing as a guide for the next appointment to our Church. I would like to thank everyone at Grace on behalf of the SPPRC for their comments, suggestions and input. However, our job is not done and we look forward to hearing more.

SUMMER CAMPING SEASON IS CLOSER THAN YOU THINK

Now that the weather is turning cold the summer camp season is starting to feel like a distant memory. However, while the memories start to feel distant as we prepare for snow and ice, the spiritual foundation set at camp lasts much longer than the summer camp season. In fact, the impact of Camp and Retreat Ministries can last a lifetime.

As the 2014 summer camp season was winding down some of the campers were asked to share about their experiences. Their answers have been

pulled together into a short video that remind us all about the importance of camp to the spiritual development of so many. The video is now available on Upper New York's [YouTube Channel](#).

Even as our minds turn to the winter holidays, let us not forget the impact that Camp and Retreat Ministries has on so many. Let's also not forget that the 2015 summer camp season will be here before we know it. In fact, registration for summer camp will open in just a couple of months!

Perhaps these thoughts will help us all to stay warm in winter's embrace.

50th ANNIVERSARY NEARS

As our 50th anniversary of a combined church approaches, please reach back into your memories and memoirs for items, pictures and stories that can be shared during our celebration.

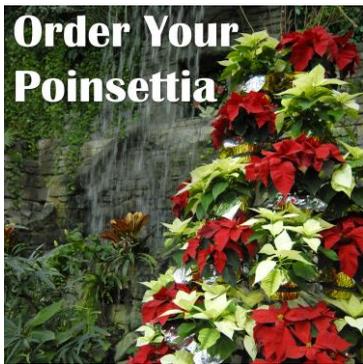
Anything you'd like to share can be left or mailed to the church office by January 31st. Or, you can email them to graceumcravena@statetel.com.

Items are being collected to be used in the Anniversary Booklet and other church-related publications. Please fill out and include a submission form (available at the church office or from

pages 13 & 14 in this newsletter) with your material granting permission for the use.

BOOK NOOK UPDATE

The Book Nook ministry is doing great this year. The year-to-date sales have reached **\$10,610!** Keep up the good work!



If you would like a beautiful poinsettia plant for Christmas, please contact Dotty Backlund in person or call her at 756-2510 no later than December 14th.

ADOPT-A-FAMILY RETURNS TO GRACE UMC

This year the Sunday School is coordinating the wonderful holiday tradition of adopting a family for Christmas. This year we will be providing gifts for two families. Both

are in need of our assistance this holiday season.

As in past years, this involves purchasing gifts as well as gifts of cash or check which will be used to provide a grocery gift card for the families' Christmas dinners.

All the necessary information such as names, ages, gift ideas and clothing sizes will be placed on ornament tags and placed on a Christmas tree in front of the church office. Please consider taking an ornament tag (or two) and bringing the gift back to church no later than December 14th. All gifts should be wrapped with the ornament tag taped securely on the package.

There will be a sign-up list on the tree's table as well. Please be sure to give us your name along with the name(s) of the child/children you have decided adopt.

As always, we thank everyone for the generosity that this church has shown in the past years and look forward to the same spirit of generosity this holiday season as well!



EVANGELISM NEWS

Many thanks to all who brought crock-pots of chili and for the "tasters" who helped us decide the winners of Grace UMC's 1st Annual Chili Cook-Off held on November 2nd.

We had eleven entries and collected donations in the amount of \$119.00. The proceeds will be used to further the ministries of the Prayer Blankets and the Nail Cross necklaces.

Congratulations to our first place winner, Edna Rominger. Her certificate is now proudly displayed in the Fellowship Hall near the kitchen. It will remain there until our 2nd Annual Cook-Off in November of 2015, when Edna will have to defend her title. Second place went to Sharon Philips.

A special thank you to our Committee and to Barbara Coryell and Liz Spence who gladly helped us pull it off.

A SPECIAL BABY

Mark Lowry, who wrote the lyrics to the Christmas song "Mary, Did You Know?" says he's always been amazed by Mary's silence at the cross, as her son was being crucified. Maybe she was remembering back to that first Christmas, he wonders, when she counted Jesus' fingers and toes.

"I wonder if she realized then that those were the same fingers that had scooped out the oceans and formed the seas. I wonder if she realized those were the same feet that had walked on streets of gold and been worshiped by angels. Those little lips were the same lips that had spoken the world into existence. When Mary kissed her little baby, she wasn't just kissing another baby; she was kissing the face of God."

Mary silently watched her son die 33 years later, Lowry notes – not just for the world but also for his own mother. "The baby boy she had delivered on that first Christmas was now on a cross delivering her."

A CHRISTIAN SYMBOL



The Cedar Tree – A species of ever-green used to decorate for Christmas, the tall cedar tree symbolizes Christ's majesty year-round. Cedars of Lebanon, which have grown to 130 feet, were known to Old Testament people. "The trees of the LORD are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted" (Psalm 104:16, NIV).

David's palace and both Solomon's palace and temple were built of cedar wood. The word cedar is found 75 times in the Bible. Due to its evergreen nature and longevity, this tree is associated with eternal life and thus sometimes used in cemetery landscaping.

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Although Americans celebrate the holiday with candlelight services, piles of gifts, large feasts, lights and trees, people in other countries mark Jesus' birth in many interesting ways:

- Nine days before Christmas in Mexico, Las Posadas processions reenact Joseph and Mary's search for a place to stay in Bethlehem.
- Instead of decorating trees, Italians place fruit on small wooden pyramids.

- On Christmas Eve, the streets of Caracas, Venezuela, are blocked off so people can roller-skate to church.

- Ukrainian Christmas trees often feature an artificial spider and web. According to a folk tale, a poor woman who couldn't afford decorations awoke one Christmas morning to find that spiders had "trimmed" her children's trees with delicate webs.

- In Brazil, the gift-bringer is known as Papai Noel (Father Noel), who lives in Greenland, according to legend. When he arrives in Brazil, he wears silk clothing because of the summer heat.

- It's considered bad etiquette to send red Christmas cards in Japan because funeral notices are customarily printed in red.



Merry Christmas Everyone!



Barn king of the Jews

Matthew 2:1-2 says that after Jesus was born, wise men came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?" Complete the puzzle to discover what they found in Bethlehem.

Directions: In the grid below, draw lines by starting at the first number in each list and stopping at the last.



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| 16-17 | 28-17-6 | 61-50-39 | 8-7-18 | 106-96-85-97-107-106 | 42-41-52-63-64-53 |
| 3-14-25 | 36-47-58 | 104-105-106 | 38-49-60 | 89-100-111-123 | 107-108-109-120-130 |
| 2-3-4 | 5-16-27 | 19-18-29-30 | 69-79-89 | 80-92-103-104 | 125-135-134-124-123-133-134 |
| 40-51-62-39 | 37-47-59 | 105-95-84-96 | | 124-125-126-127-128 | 69-80-91-102-103 |
| | | | | 129-130-142-141-129 | 141-140-128-129 |

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Solution is on Page 15

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SHARING OUR HISTORY

As our fiftieth anniversary approaches we are collecting stories for inclusion in an Anniversary Booklet. **Stories of your experience at Grace UMC are a vital part of our history; we hope you will share them with us.** The following are some questions designed to help you in the process. Please submit your stories by email, postal service, or drop them off at the church office.

What is your earliest memory in the church?

Share a humorous incident from church life.

Share a story of when the church touched you in a powerful way.

Who was your favorite pastor? Tell us why.

What is your favorite activity in the life of the church? Tell us a little but about why it is.

What are your hopes and dreams for Grace United Methodist as it moves into the future?

Tell us about one person you would describe as a pillar of the church.

The editor of the Anniversary Booklet reserves the right to edit, combine related stories, and make selections. **Please submit your stories by 1/31/2015.** Submission of your stories grants permission for their use in the Anniversary Booklet and other church related publications. **Please fill out the submission form on the reverse and submit it with your stories.**

**Stories for 50th Anniversary
Submission Form
(Please type or print)**

Name _____.

Address _____.

City _____ . State _____ . Zip _____ .

Email _____.

Phone # _____ . Cell Phone _____.

I hereby grant Grace United Methodist Church permission to use my story in its Fiftieth Anniversary booklet and other church publications including those published by Upper New York Annual Conference.

Signature _____.

Date _____.



Born king of the Jews

Matthew 2:1-2 says that after Jesus was born, wise men came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?"

Complete the puzzle to discover what they found in Bethlehem.

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OR VISIT US ON THE WEB:

www.graceumcravena.org



Deadline for articles for the **January** issue of *The Messenger* is **December 28th**. Please e-mail or fax articles to Barb Bullock at:

bbullock812@gmail.com

or

fax to: **731-8994**