



The Messenger
Grace United Methodist Church
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Rev. David E. Smith
Pastor

Dedicated to building a strong Christian family for all of God's children, working together for the purpose of putting our faith and love into practice.

January 2016

FROM THE DESK OF THE PASTOR

A TIME OF SADNESS – A TIME OF JOY

As I reflect on the past month, it strikes me that it has been a time of incredible sadness and incredible joy. It has been a time of incredible sadness on a local and international level. There have been stories of the unexpected deaths, painful illness, individuals struggling with addiction, violence in so many places, civilians forced to flee their home due to conflict.

It has also been a time of incredible joy as we witnessed the overwhelming response to families needing assistance for Christmas, donations to the food cupboard, joy filled services of worship, individuals comforted through our prayer blanket ministry, increases in the level of giving, the addition of two new worship services, an inspiring Christmas concert, troubled individuals who have found individuals willing to listen to them, our youth and their advisors offering respite by providing free day care for six hours on a Saturday.

In so many ways in the midst of suffering and it has been a time of incredible joy as I have witnessed the Good News of God's incredible love being given and received. The words of the Apostle Paul have rung true that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:37-39). May it continue to be so for each of you during 2016.

Yours in Christ's Service,



David E. Smith

David E. Smith, Pastor



JANUARY WORSHIP SERVICES

1/03

Scripture	Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Revelations 21:1-6a; Matthew 25:31-46
Responsive Reading	#743 – Psalm 8
Theme	New Year's: A time to renew our commitment.
Sermon	A Fresh Start
Hymns	428 For the Healing of the Nations 2094 Carol of the Epiphany 383 This Is a Day of New Beginnings

1/10 – Epiphany Sunday

Scripture	Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12
Affirmation of Faith	#884 – Korean Creed
Theme	All are invited to be part of God's kingdom.
Sermon	The Chosen
Hymns	254 We Three Kings 245 The First Noel 249 There's a Song in the Air

1/17 – Human Relations Sunday

Scripture	1 Corinthians 12:1-11; John 2:1-11
Responsive Reading	#771 – Psalm 36:5-10
Theme	To each is given a talent for benefit of the whole.
Sermon	A Gift for Everyone
Hymns	114 Many Gifts, One Spirit 530 Are Ye Able 555 Forward Through the Ages

1/24 – Epiphany 3

Scripture 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a; Luke 4:14-21
Affirmation
of Faith #883 – “We Are Not Alone”
Theme We are called to serve the forgotten.
Sermon Called to the Fringes
Hymns 57 O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing
2223 They’ll Know We Are Christians
554 All Praise to Our Redeeming Lord

1/31 – Epiphany 4

Scripture 1 Corinthians 13:1-12; Luke 4:21-30
Responsive
Reading #794 – Psalm 71:1-12
Theme Love is the key to following Jesus.
Sermon Best of All
Hymns 578 God of Love and God of Power
408 The Gift of Love
585 This Little Light of Mine

THANK YOU FROM YOUR PASTOR

Thank you for your generous Christmas gift and the words of appreciation extended by your Lay Leader, Rodger Coryell, on your behalf. I also want to express my gratitude for all the ways that so many of you are involved in the ministry of Grace United Methodist Church. It is only through the partnership of laity and clergy that effective ministry happens. Thank you for supporting the ministry of the body of Jesus Christ, the Church, with your time, talent, and treasure.

TAPPING INTO GOD'S POWER Alternative Worship Sermon Series

Starting January 3rd we will begin a sermon series entitled "Tapping into God's Power" during our alternative worship services on Sunday morning at 8am and Thursday evening at 7pm. Each of these services will be a half-hour long followed by a half-hour discussion period. Music during the services will be of a contemporary nature.

Your opinions and questions are welcome. Differences of opinion are

welcome as long as you are willing to listen to others respectfully and avoid personally attacking those who disagree with you.

During the series we will discuss ways to listen for God's voice, seeking God's help, the question of prayers that seem to go unanswered, and the manner and extent of God's involvement in the events of daily life.



We will be hosting this year's Acoustic Doorways Concert on February 26th from 7-9pm. The name of the quartet that will be performing is Golfstrom. They will offer a very big mix of music featuring tangos, swing, waltz and two-step. The music will be highlighted with vocals in French, Russian, and Ukrainian. Their instrumentation is accordion, clarinet, upright bass, vocals and percussion.

It promises to be lots of fun. (Think French black and white movie soundtracks.)

There will be an intermission with refreshments provided by Grace UMC, as we have in the past. Ticket pricing hasn't been learned yet. More information will be coming in the February newsletter.



FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Sunday School put on their pageant “Christmas Missed” on Sunday, December 13th. The pageant revolved around three modern day individuals; Alice (played by Ginny), Polly (played by Elizabeth) and Grant (played by Jason). They each have excuses for not following God’s call to action, saying they’re “too old”, “too busy” or “too young”.

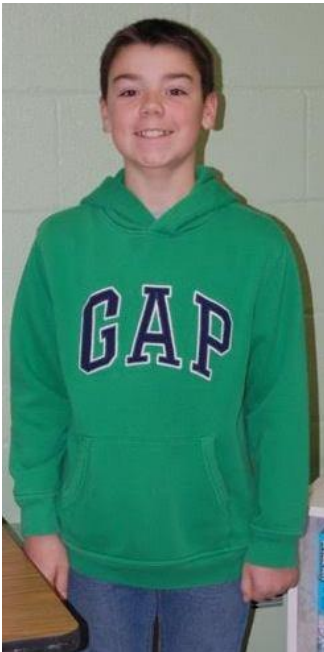
An angel (played by Annie) takes them on a journey to meet Mary (played by Chloe) and Joseph (played by Ethan) to see what would have happened to the Christmas story if they had each said they were “too young” to be parents to

baby Jesus. They visit the shepherds in the field (Will and John, with Sam as the sheep) who didn’t want to follow the angels because they were “too busy” watching their sheep. Finally the angel takes the three to see the three kings (Sophie, Grant and Evangeline) who were “too tired and old” to go traveling after a star to see the baby Jesus.

By the end, the three have realized that they, like Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds and three kings, would miss out on wonderful opportunities that God has blessed them with if they don’t say “Yes” to his plans.

A special thank you to the parents of the Sunday School for hosting a delicious coffee hour following the performance and to Barbara Coryell for spending the time sifting through numerous church pageants to find this play!









YOUTH GROUP UPDATE

Thanks to everyone who helped with donations for the Youth Group's Outreach activities. On Saturday, December 12th, we held a free day of babysitting offered to anyone in the community. Annie led the children with some craft activities, watched Christmas movies and had a great time outside.



On Saturday, the 19th, we assisted the Senior Center with gift wrapping for their Christmas party. Over 100 gifts were wrapped in time for the day's events. They are looking forward to our assistance with future events.



EVANGELISM NEWS

As always, we had a generous response to our Giving Tree ministry! We adopted three family's from the CHOICES Program this year. We had an eight-year old boy who likes Star Wars, a teenage girl who loves books, a 1-year-old boy, 2-year-old girl and a teenage boy who asked for a skateboard. In addition to the gift requests for the children, we also included Hannaford gift cards for their Christmas dinner as well as gifts for mom and dad.

What a privilege it is to serve these families during the holidays. I encourage you to pray for them into the New Year. God Bless.

– Phyllis Shook



BOOK NOOK NEWS

The Book Nook YTD total sales figure is **\$15,626!** And the final year-end figure is yet to come!



Happy birthday to everyone who is 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

TAX INFO

If you would like a statement of your donations to Grace UMC for 2015, please see Harriet Marple and she will be happy to supply that for you.

NEWS FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

We had a good turnout for our December meeting. The hard stop time of 9pm is making it easier on folks, it seems. Our Adopt-a-Family program is now called "Giving Tree". Thanks to all who participated.

There are now two new services each week; Thursday evening and early Sunday morning. Our Choir Director position is still open despite heavy advertising. Adrienne is filling in temporarily, but does not wish to be in the position permanently. The adult Sunday school will be focusing on forgiveness in the coming weeks. We discussed fireplace cleaning and repair, our sound system and acoustic issues, and creating more space at the front of the church near the piano.

The Trustees will now be meeting on the third Sunday of each month after church. A roofer will attend the next Trustee meeting – our roof needs repair and we need solid direction on how to

proceed. Our financial report is encouraging, although attendance is down. A new church directory is in the works. Acoustic Doorways will be here on February 26, 2016. The date of our next meeting is **January 12th**. Come and be heard!

THE MEANING OF EPIPHANY

Epiphany, which comes from the Greek word *epiphaneia*, means “an appearance” or “a revealing.” Centuries ago, the church set aside January 6, the 12th day after Christmas, to mark the revealing of Jesus as Christ to the wise men, who were Gentiles. Jesus’ first followers were Jewish, so the revelation of the divine Christ to the non-Jewish magi reminds us that Jesus came to earth to save the whole world.

Symbols of Epiphany include light, a star, a crown (or three crowns) and a globe or stylized portrayal of the world. The color of Epiphany is green to symbolize life, growth, hope and eternity.

On the church calendar, the Epiphany season lasts until Ash Wednesday, which is determined by the date of Easter.

FEED MY SHEEP

When Katie Davis traveled to Uganda in 2006 to do missions work during her senior year of high school, she didn’t expect to fall in love with the people and culture. She also didn’t expect to return after graduation – or to adopt 13 orphans within a few years.

Davis, who details her adventures in *Kisses From Katie* (Howard Books), helps bring food, medical care, education and Jesus’ love to hundreds of children while raising her 13 daughters. Yet she insists she’s not particularly brave or strong. “I’m just doing what God called me to do as a follower of him,” Davis says. “Feed his sheep, do unto the least of his people.”

Although she’s been exposed to diseases and deplorable conditions in Uganda, Davis willingly accepts the risks. “I’m much more terrified of living a comfortable life in a self-serving society and failing to follow Jesus than I am of any illness or tragedy,” she writes. “I have yet to find where [Jesus] warned us to be safe.”

BEFORE ALL ELSE FAILS...

In *Too Busy Not to Pray* (InterVarsity Press), Bill Hybels cites reasons that prayers may seem to go unanswered (unconfessed sin, selfishness and so

on). The most common cause, though, is prayerlessness:

“People often tell me how they have attempted to address a pressing need,” Hybels writes. “They have gone to counselors, read self-help books, claimed biblical promises, practiced self-discipline, confided in Christian friends, practiced assertiveness or submission or self-denial or positive thinking, even read books about prayer – and their need is still not met.” But when asked if they’ve prayed “fervently and regularly” about the matter, the answer is usually no.

James 4:2 says, “You do not have because you do not ask God.” So instead of thinking “When all else fails, pray,” try this: “Pray before all else fails.”



GUIDING LIGHT

Make this flashlight to remember that God, our light, always shows us the way.

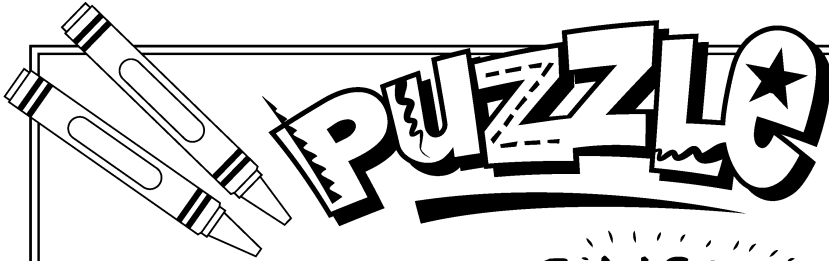


What you need:

- Flashlight with handle strap
- Yarn (6 to 8 inches)
- Colorful pony beads
- Stickers (including foam letters)
- Batteries

What you do:

1. Tie the yarn through the flashlight's handle strap so two equal lengths hang down.
2. String the pony beads onto the two yarn lengths, and secure the ends with knots.
3. Decorate the flashlight with stickers. Use letters to spell "God is light."
4. Keep the flashlight by your bedside as a reminder of God's guidance. Use the flashlight to read a Bible verse before bed each night!



LET THERE BE LIGHT

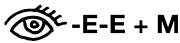
In a world of darkness, God guides us so we can walk in his ways.

Directions: Write the name of each picture, subtracting and adding letters as indicated. Then fill in the blanks to complete 2 Samuel 22:29, NIV.

“ Y O U , _____ , A R E

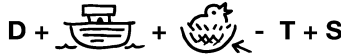


_____ ; T H E



_____ M Y





I N T O _____ .”



2 SAMUEL 22:29, NIV

Answer: “You, LORD, are my lamp; the LORD turns my darkness into light.” 2 Samuel 22:29, NIV

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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 24th**. Please e-mail or fax articles to Barb Bullock at:

bbullock812@gmail.com

or

fax to: **731-8994**