



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

www.graceumcravena.org
518-756-6688

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.

December 2016

FROM THE DESK OF THE PASTOR

A Time to be Thankful

As I reflect on recent events and Scripture, it strikes me that this is a time to be thankful. I am **not** thankful for the violence that has created so many refugees, the violence that some protestors have engaged, the individuals who struggle to provide their families with the necessities of life, or that our country seems so divided. I am though, thankful for the assurance that we have a loving God who reaches out to us in the person of Jesus Christ. I am thankful that because of Jesus I know I am loved and forgiven. I am thankful for the assurance that the very presence of God in the person of the Holy Spirit dwells within me. I am thankful that God can make all things in my life work together for good. I am thankful for the promise that nothing can defeat God's plans. I am thankful that there are people of faith who God is using to continue the ministry of Jesus Christ, to be the hands and feet of Jesus, to be his body – the Church.

I invite each of you to join me in church and in our Advent study as we celebrate the Good News of a God who came in the person of Jesus with Good News and promises to come again. The body of Jesus, the Church may be battered but it is still very much alive and at work in the world. There are new faith communities being formed outside the walls of traditional church buildings as the Gospel is proclaimed by innovative and dedicated individuals. The hungry are being fed in the name of Jesus. The Gospel message is being proclaimed within prison walls. Dedicated teachers are sharing the Good News with our children. The victims of disaster speak of volunteers who have helped them rebuild as angels, messengers from God. Programs are being developed that

invite people to become part of local congregations. The sick are being touched by the healing power of the Holy Spirit as they are lifted up in prayer.

Come and celebrate with us. Come and bring a neighbor, friend, or relative so they can experience the Good News of the Gospel.

NOW IS A TIME TO BE THANKFUL. NOW IS THE TIME TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS.

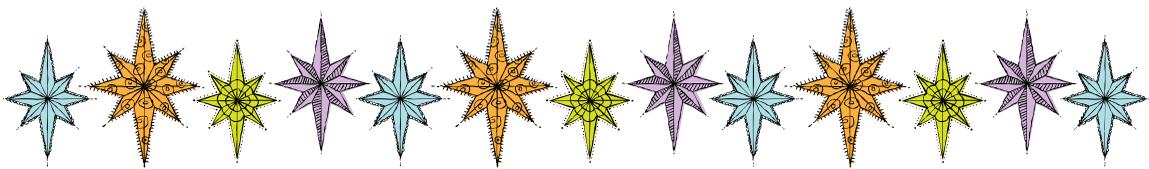
Your comments and questions are always welcome. Feel free to contact me by phone or text at 518-572-4051 or email at revdavid76@gmail.com.

Yours in Christ's Service,



David E. Smith

David E. Smith, Pastor



DECEMBER WORSHIP SERVICES

12/04 – Advent 2 - Communion

Scripture: Matthew 3:1-2; Romans 15:4-13
Theme: We need to make room in our hearts for God.
Meditation: Prepare the Way
Affirmation
of Faith: # 886 – World Methodist Social Affirmation

12/11 – Advent 3

Sunday School Advent Pageant

12/18 – Advent 4

Scripture: Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25
Responsive
Reading: # 801 – Psalm 80
Theme: God seeks to redeem all of creation.
Meditation: That We Might Be One

12/24 – Christmas Eve

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:8-20
Responsive
Reading: # 815 – Psalm 96
Theme: Love Came Down at Christmas
Meditation: Unbelievably Good News

12/25 – Christmas Day

Scripture: Hebrews 1:1-4; John 1:1-14
Affirmation
of Faith: # 883 – “We Are not Alone”
Theme: In Jesus we hear the very voice of God.
Meditation: God Speaks

1/01/17 – Second Sunday of Christmas

Scripture: Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23

Responsive

Reading: # 861 – Psalm 148

Theme: Jesus understands us and reaches out to us.

Meditation: He Understands

ADVENT / CHRISTMAS PROGRAMS

During this season of Advent and Christmas I invite you to receive a blessing as we celebrate the incredible Good News of a loving God who has, is, and will continue to reach out with an amazing life-changing love. Come, receive, and unwrap the greatest Christmas present ever given.

Our Advent and Christmas Schedule includes the following events:

Weekly Worship on Thursday at 7pm and Sunday at 10:30am – Come and hear again the promises God has shared with his children of freedom from guilt over past misdeeds, power to share God’s love with others, and an abundant life that not even the grave can end.

Daily Devotions for Advent – Each week during Advent I will be producing a series of daily devotions. They will be included in the bulletin, on our Facebook page, and by email upon request.

Friends Around the Fireplace – 9am – noon on Tuesdays– A time for fellowship and food in front of the fireplace in Fellowship Hall.

Advent Study - Wednesday evening at 7pm - “Down to Earth” by Mike Slaughter as we explore the dramatic implications of Jesus’ birth. It is an event that has transformed our world in so many ways. It was and continues to be an event that has changed the individuals, communities, and nations.

Coffee House – Friday evening, December 9th from 7-9pm. Celebrate the Advent/Christmas season by sharing your talent or coming and enjoying the performance of others. There will also be refreshments.

Christmas Pageant – Sunday, December 11 at 10:30am – You won’t want to miss the Sunday School’s presentation of the Christmas message. It will be followed by a luncheon hosted by the Sunday School.

Ecumenical Christmas Concert – Sunday, December 11 at 4pm – Under the direction John Vasto, Pastoral Associate for Music & Liturgy an ecumenical choir drawn from area churches will present a varied program of Christmas music. The program will be followed by a pot luck supper.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service – 7pm – This service will feature several Christmas favorites, readings from Scripture, a Christmas message, selections by the choir, and candlelight.

Christmas Day – 10:30am – Join us as we celebrate the greatest gift ever given.

REACHING OUT AS A CARE GIVER

Do you have a desire to reach out with Christian care to a shut-in or a troubled acquaintance? If this is you, you will want to attend a Lay Servant Course being offered in January called Lay Pastoral Care Giving. The course will be held Monday evenings from 7-9pm for five weeks beginning January 2nd.

Taking the course doesn't commit you to being part of a Lay Pastoral Care Giving team but gives you skills to extend a ministry of care to those in need.

To sign up for the course or for more information, contact the pastor by phone or text at 518-572-4051 or email revdavid76@gmail.com.

BARGAIN SHED

The shed closed for the year on November 19th. We finished the season with a bag sale which is always a favorite of our customers. Our receipts (including Fall Fair day) totaled about

\$6,400. Thank you to all who donated or purchased treasures from our stock.

Our tentative opening date for 2017 is April 1st – no fooling! We hope you will save your donations until then.

Many thanks to our dedicated volunteers: Fran Hoffman, Alice Ross, Cindy Bliss, Fran Lobdell, Dottie Backlund, Jan Bradshaw, and Kate Robertson. What would we do without you all!!!

Visit us in the spring,

Edna Rominger

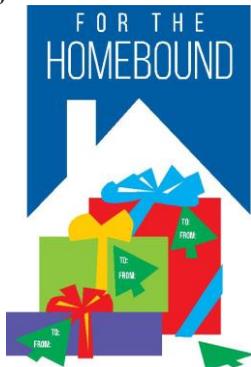
SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our latest outreach projects. I know there were quite a lot of donation requests in a relatively short period of time and I appreciate our congregation's willingness to jump in and act quickly!

We collected 25 lbs. of candy and several toothbrushes that we donated to Operation Gratitude, which will send care packages to our deployed troops. That's over double what we collected last year!

The congregation also donated 34 shoeboxes to Samaritan Purses'

Operation Christmas Child project. The monetary donations received from members of the church allowed us to purchase additional items for shoeboxes and to help defray costs of shipping. As a result, each box that we donated had the \$7 shipping cost covered. These shoeboxes will be delivered to children worldwide in more than 100 countries where people may not know Christ. Some boxes are given to children in orphanages or other at-risk areas. Often the children are given a Gospel story booklet in addition to the shoebox and invited to participate in a discipleship program that can transform communities. Thank you for being a part of such a worthwhile project!



In December the youth will once again be visiting our homebound members with a Christmas gift. If you know of a member of our church, or another individual who could use a “pick-me-up” please contact Kate Robertson.

Mark your calendars! We will be having a breakfast buffet and pajama

day on Sunday, January 22nd to benefit UNICEF as we try to reach our \$500 goal. A pancake and waffle breakfast will be offered at 8:30 that morning with a good-will offering. Pledges will be taken the week before as Pastor David has agreed to preach in his PJ’s if we’re able to raise \$200 towards our goal!

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Happy birthday to all those celebrating a birthday or anniversary in the month of December!

- 1 Jacob Black
- 2 Reggie Porterfield
- 4 Jim Sherman
- 6 Adrienne Seymour
- 9 Edna Rominger
- 10 Louis Newburg V
- 11 Catherine Bradshaw
- 11 Pdraig 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
- 25 Hailey Maurer
- 28 Audry June
- 31 Al & JoAnne Burrill

BOOK NOOK

Don't forget our 13th Annual HUGE Book Sale on December 1st and 2nd (9am-3pm) and (6-8pm), and Saturday, December 3rd (9am-3pm).

Set-up that week will be on Monday through Wednesday – all day (9am-3pm) and (6-8pm) until finished. We welcome your help for any amount of time you can offer.

Just a reminder...while the Book Nook will not be open on Thursday evenings for the winter months, it will remain open (weather permitting) on Tuesday and Saturday mornings.

(YTD total sales was not available at the printing of this issue of *The Messenger*.)

DECEMBER COFFEE HOUSE

Don't miss the December 9th event of Grace's Coffee House. Sign-up begins at 6:30pm and the show will start at 7pm. Hope we see you!



YOUTH GROUP EVOLVES

Our Youth Group has expanded its arms to reach out to the local youth. The group is ecumenical so anyone can join. Now known as **Ravena Adventure Youth, (RAY)** it started through Grace UMC but is growing to include other youth in the area.

RAY recently welcomed Senator George Amedore to speak with the group on Saturday November 12th.



The Senator shared his thoughts on faith, government and responsibility an individual has in his/her own community. The group enjoyed listening to the Senator's thoughts on growing up in a small community and his own experiences with success and defeat.

We want to thank Senator Amedore for taking the time from his busy schedule to join our group and have a discussion

in regard to the future of our community.



PRESENT POSSIBILITIES, FRONTIERS OF FAITH

Brazilian theologian Rubem Alves called hope “the suspicion ... that the frontiers of the possible are not determined by the limits of the present.” Who among us doesn’t sometimes imagine our future based solely on present-day obstacles? Even biblical heroes did so.

Abraham and Sarah laughed at God’s promise of a child, seeing only their present circumstance of old age. Only in hindsight could Joseph see how God turned slavery in Egypt into great good.

At first another Joseph, learning his fiancée was pregnant, believed his world was limited to two possibilities: shame Mary publicly or divorce her quietly. But his heart was open to God’s message: “What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. [Her] son ... will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20-21, NIV). How exceedingly far this future must have seemed from the limits of Joseph’s present.

Christmas is a reminder that God calls us all into frontiers of the future we never could have dreamed!

JESUS IS THE WORD

To say that Jesus is the Word is another way of saying he is God speaking to us. While we struggle with our clumsy words, God needs only one Word to perfectly communicate the depth and mystery, the passion and the overwhelming grace of who he is. By that Word, Light became a living being. Manna became man. Wisdom became a person. In him, Life came to life; all that God is came to us in that One Final Word we call Jesus.

– Michael Card,
*Immanuel: Reflections on the
Life of Christ*

GIFT-GIVING SOLUTIONS

Trying to find gifts for certain people – or letting others know what *you* want – can be quite challenging. After all, most of us don’t need anything.

Realizing that the best gifts aren’t material items offers a new perspective on giving and receiving. Consider these insights from author Charles Swindoll:

“Some gifts you can give this Christmas are beyond monetary value:

Mend a quarrel, dismiss suspicion, tell someone 'I love you.' Give something away – anonymously. Forgive someone who has treated you wrong. Turn away wrath with a soft answer. Visit someone in a nursing home. Apologize if you were wrong. Be especially kind to someone with whom you work. Give as God gave to you in Christ, without obligation, or

announcement, or reservation, or hypocrisy.”

“Have a Merry Christmas everyone!”





The greatest gift

Gift-giving is a fun Christmas tradition.
 What very special gift has God given to you?

Directions: Write the words from each puzzle piece on the matching blank piece of the gift-shaped puzzle.

life in

but the

our Lord.

Romans 6:23, NIV

gift of God

For the

of sin is

Christ Jesus

is eternal

wages

death,

Answer: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23, NIV

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
16 Hillcrest Drive
Ravena, NY 12143-1409

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 18th**. Please e-mail or fax articles to Barb Bullock at:

bbullock812@gmail.com

or

fax to: **731-8994**