



## The Beacon



WEST CHARLTON UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

882-9874

[www.westcharltonupc.org](http://www.westcharltonupc.org)

December, 2011

### Pastoral Reflection: *What Will The Future Bring?*

December brings a New Year in our Christian life and in the Church. The future, of course, is about what will happen tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow, or next week, or next month, or next year.

What are your feelings about the future? Do you think things will be better? Or will they get worse? Do you think that one day people will come to their senses and live together in peace and share what they have? Or will there be more wars and bombings, more hunger, and crimes?

Now, some people think that there will be terrible disasters and wars and everything; these people believe that the whole planet earth, as we know it will be destroyed. Other people think that things will get better in the future; that finally we will be able to solve all the world's problems; that no one needs to go hungry anymore; that there will be peace, and joy, and people getting along. And some people think that first things will get better ("thousand year reign of Christ"), but then they may get really bad again.

In Advent we see a strange variety of Scripture called "eschatological hope." It's the kind of writing that speaks of the end of the world. And constantly throughout its pages we are warned like a parent elbowing a child who is falling to sleep during the sermon-to stay awake and not to be troubled.

Woody Allen, once addressing a graduating class said, "We stand at a crossroads-one path leads to destruction, the other path to annihilation-let us pray to God that we make the right choice." Right—Some choice. But that is exactly the kind of choice we face, the doomsday clock tick tocks away toward the End. In the past two decades other voices have said some of the same kinds of things that Jesus uttered 2,000 years ago. Jonathan Schell in *Fate of the Earth* describes in vivid language what's going to happen to us if we don't stop the bomb. He goes back to survivors of the Bomb on that August morning in 1945. Then he moves back into our time and says that what happened at Hiroshima was less than a millionth part of a holocaust of what we have stockpiled today. And he observes that "an atomic bombs massive destruction and slaughter involves the sweeping breakdown of all order and existence—in a word, the collapse of society itself."

But this kind of morose thinking only leads to a dismal end—a feeling of helplessness and futility. Is that where Scripture leaves us? Is that all we have to look forward to? Some moments of life and then... and then the End—whether by Bomb or Beast?

That's why it's important to know the rules about eschatological hope. When we know why these words were written, these very words can give us great hope in a very bleak world. It's when we don't take time to learn the rules that we start to wonder who the antichrist might be and no, it's not your supervisor or some machine sitting in someone's basement in Europe called "The Beast." When we pick up eschatological words, the rules include mystery-numbers and obscure meanings, strange, cosmic things that happen. Behind eschatological hope is a cosmic battle between Chaos and Cosmos, between God and the forces of Evil—but God comes out the winner.

End-times passages give us hope! In fact, it's the very writing that moves us back toward the 23rd Psalm: it provides us with hope that no matter how bad and terrible the Middle East will get between the Israelis and Palestinians, no matter how dark our own world becomes, God will act decisively—God has and will, intervene in history.

*Continued...*

*Continued...*

The End will come all right, but God will be there for us to make the End a new beginning of God's Kingdom. To know these rules will enable us to make some sense out of the horrific upheavals that Scripture so vividly describes.

Does that kind of talk scare us, or does it worry us? Well, we should not let it worry us, because all through out Scripture there is a commonality that no matter what happens, God is in control of the future. And God promises that things will be better in the future—in fact, they will be a lot better.

Hear the Good News of the Gospel: Don't fear the End, just seek to stand hour by hour, day by day in the conscious presence of the One from whom your life derives. Jesus urges us to be doing the kinds of things for which we were designed to do, living our life the way that pleases God.

*The LORD will settle international disputes. All the nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. All wars will stop, and military training will come to an end. Isaiah 2  
Be up and awake to what God is doing! God is putting the finishing touches on the salvation work he began when we first believed. Romans 13*

How does that make you feel? Isn't it good to know that God is in our future and that God will take care of us, and that God will make things better?

*Prayer: Loving God, we thank you that you are in control of our future and of our lives. Thank you also that you have promised to make the world a better place. Thank you that we can know that whatever happens, we know that you are with us and that nothing can separate us from your great love. Amen.*

Peace in Christ, Pastor Tom

## *Friendly's*

### **Friendly's Giveback**

The Glenville Friendly's will contribute 20% of the receipt totals to our church. When you go to the Glenville Friendly's: save your receipt and bring it back to church, drop it in the Friendly's marked box in the chapel.

All purchases are eligible

Any questions see Ann Weaver Lachtrupp 583-9682



## SUNDAY SCHOOL CONTINUES IN ADVENT with some Changes

### **Sunday School for children returns to 10:30 a.m. on 12/4/11**

Workshop Rotation Sunday School: grades K-6<sup>th</sup>

Jesus' Birth through the Eyes of Joseph

Bible Story Matthew 1:1-24; 2:13-15, 19-23; Luke 2:1-7

Key/Memory Verse—Matthew 1:21: *"She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."*

Objectives for Rotation

After completing this rotation, children will be able to:

Locate the story of Joseph in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

Explain some of the ways that prophecy was fulfilled in this story.

Tell that Joseph was a man of moral character and integrity who was obedient to God.

Discuss how God spoke to Joseph and how God speaks to us.

Recognize that Joseph was Jesus' earthly father.

Realize that Jesus is part of our families, too.

Life Lessons:

God honors integrity.

Social position is of little importance when God chooses to use us.

Being obedient to the guidance we have from God leads to more guidance from Him.

Feelings are not accurate measures of the rightness or wrongness of an action.

### Changing the SS time for Children & No SS on Praise Worship Sunday's

We are getting more children at the worship time than at the education time.

Therefore Sunday school for children will go back to 10:30 beginning on December 4.

Children will leave right after children's message and come back in on days we have Communion.

On Communion Sundays, children's message will be early in the order of worship and Communion will be as close to the end of the worship service as possible.

We will not have Sunday school on Praise Sundays since the children enjoy it immensely and want to be a part of it.

Also since there have not been many children in the nursery either during worship time and none during Sunday school time. We have several congregation members willing to step up to the plate if someone comes into worship with a small child (they will not sit in the nursery waiting for children) but if someone does come in, they will offer their services. If the parents express the desire to have their child upstairs then one of these congregation members will take them up and stay with them.

Education class for the adults will remain at 9:30 as it is now.

We are still discussing the possibility of the teens having a time of education, once a month instead of coming to worship and a regional teen program is still in the works.

We also are hoping that fellowship time from 10:00 – 10:30 will continue.

Through all of these prayerful decisions, we all felt that we had given it our best – we tried, it isn't working. There is no right or wrong answer/decision, the numbers just don't justify the continuation at 9:30 for children's education.

Any questions of concerns please see Holly McConchie (Nurture & Action chair) or Pastor Tom

### Adult Sunday School

#### **Sunday School for adults remains at 9:30 a.m.**

Advent Study—From Longing to Receiving

From the Old Testament and the Gospel lectionary texts—four weeks, tracing important Advent themes of longing for God's help, anticipating God's presence among us, recognizing God's work among us, and receiving God's new gifts to us.

Each week's handout is filled with important information about the texts, yet written for personal devotional use for group discussion.

Each of the Old Testament lessons in the Revised Common Lectionary is thematically related to the Gospel text with which it is paired. The passages from the Old Testament were originally written for circumstances and times very different from those of Jesus' story, and each is an amazing bit of theological poetry in its own right. Though the Christian church has not traditionally acquainted itself with the Old Testament as thoughtfully as it has the Gospel stories, our earliest Christian leaders chose to retain Jewish Scriptures as part of the Christian collection (or canon), and to use them liberally in the New Testament and early church writings, because they perceived that the God portrayed there is the God Jesus worshiped, the same God Christians serve. Exploring these passages in their own scriptural contexts and in their relation to the Gospel passages will broaden and deepen the theological riches available to us.

### More Opportunities for Celebrating Advent

Mohawk Valley Chorus—We Need a Little Christmas

*see attached article*

Dec. 4<sup>th</sup> 3pm at United Presbyterian Church Amsterdam

(Instead of going home after decorating the church you are invited to the manse, please bring food to share and then travel together to concert.)

Pre-purchase tickets from:

Tickets: \$12 (general admission) and \$9 (senior citizens and students)

Free for children, 12 and under, when accompanied by an adult

Free-Will Collection for Flood-Ravaged *Schoharie Colonial Heritage Association*

Home of Depot Lane Singers, Children's Theatre, Railroad Museum

Christmas Dinner followed by Lessons and Carols at Christ Episcopal Church in Ballston Spa

Dec. 19<sup>th</sup> 5pm dinner at Augie's Restaurant

7:00pm Lessons and Carols

*see attached article*

### Advent Activities

A number of activities are being offered during Advent as part of our getting ready for Christmas. The entire church family is invited to participate in all of these events.

On Sunday, December 4, immediately following worship, we will decorate the sanctuary in preparation for Christmas. Those people who are staying to decorate are encouraged to bring a snack to share. We'll eat and work at the same time. Many hands make light work, so the more people who can stay, the better.

That same day, Mohawk Valley Chorus is performing one of their Holiday Concerts at 3:00 at the United Presbyterian Church in Amsterdam. Some of our church members are members of this choir. Those people who wish to attend and go as a group, will go to the manse after we finish decorating and get more to eat, then go to the concert. Anyone who wants to join us, please tell Pastor Tom (by Friday, December 2) if you want to go so we're sure we have enough food at the manse.

On Monday, December 19 at 7:00 PM, Christ Episcopal Church (15 W. High Street) in Ballston Spa will present an Evening of Lessons and Carols. Anyone who would like to attend as part of a group, will meet at Augie's Italian Restaurant (183 Church Ave.) in Ballston Spa to have dinner together before we attend the performance. People who have attended this event in the past have thoroughly enjoyed it and have found it helps them prepare spiritually for Christmas. Those who wish to join us for dinner MUST tell Barbara Cervenka of your intent by Thursday, December 15 so we can give the restaurant an accurate count of the number of people attending. If you don't want to go to dinner, you're welcome to meet us at the Episcopal Church at approx. 6:30.

For your information, the church will present the same program on Tuesday, December 20 at 7:00 PM. In order to get a good seat, it is suggested you get there early.

It is hoped that we have a good turnout for all of these events.

**Flowers for the Chancel**

If you are interested in giving flowers to be placed on the Chancel on a Sunday during the year— please contact Sonja Greenhill at 882-9462. Please fill out the form and give it to Sonja or mail it to her. Please check with her to make sure no one else has chosen the Sunday you would like to give. The flowers can be taken by the person giving them, or they can be given to a person who is a shut-in or someone not feeling well.

The following florists will deliver on Saturdays. You do not need to be here when they are delivered. The flowers will be placed in front of the cross in the Sanctuary.

Sweetbriar Florist located on the corner of Lake Road and Hermance by Galway Lake : 882-5132 or 882-3676.

Country Florist is located at 225 Kingsley Road in Burnt Hills: 399-2650

Bloomfields Florist is located on Rte 30 in Amsterdam, just past Pizza hut going north: 843-2000

**December Flowers**

- 5 Poinsettias
- 12 Sandra Holt: In memory of her father Jerry King
- 19 Poinsettias
- 26 Poinsettias



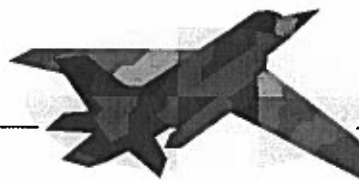
**Treasurer's Report**

Balance 10-1-2011	-\$7,705.95
Receipts	12,713.50
Expenses	14,017.67
Balance 11-1-2011	-\$9,010.12

**HELP SUPPORT OUR TROOPS**

The Sanctuary Spa of Saratoga is collecting items that can be used by military personnel who are serving overseas. (The owner's son is headed for Afghanistan). Barbara Cervenka will collect the items you donate and see that they get to the spa. Please give them to Barbara and don't put them with items for the food pantry. The spa will be collecting items at least through the end of 2011. Session has approved our participation in this activity.

The following items which can be used: instant drink mixes, gum, hard candy, Rahman noodles, salted nuts, tuna in foil packets, pumpkin seeds, baby powder, Q-tips, sunscreen, chap stick, gauze, cotton balls, body wash, eye drops, mouth wash, cough drops, batteries, hand sanitizer, baby wipes.



**Flowers for the Chancel**

I, \_\_\_\_\_

Would like to have flowers placed on the Chancel on \_\_\_\_\_ (Date).

Any special celebration or memorial for which you are providing these flowers:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Please give to Sonja Greenhill. Sonja can be reached at 882-9462.



***Happy Birthday to all those who have a birthday in December  
including the following:***

Sandra Wiese, 4th  
Tyler Grupe, 7th  
Brooke Arnold, 8th  
Jean Brinkman, 11th  
Tom Gregg Jr. 11th  
Dick Kindl, 11th  
Herb Smith, 19th  
Hannah Goldstein, 27th  
Caroline Holt, 28th



~ December 2011 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p><b>NOTE: Tom on vacation 12/10 through 12/17/11</b></p> <p><b>Legend: SS – Sunday School</b></p>						
<p><b>4</b> 9AM Choir Practice 9:30-10:15 Adult SS 10:00 Fellowship Time 10:30 Worship &amp; Children's SS 11:30 Decorate Sanctuary 3:00 Mohawk Concert Amsterdam UPC Flowers: Poinsettias</p>	<p><b>5</b> Session Meets 7PM</p>	<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>7</b> Deacons Meet 7PM</p>	<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>10</b></p>
<p><b>11</b> 9AM Choir Practice 9:30-10:15 Adult SS 10:00 Fellowship Time 10:30 Worship &amp; Children's SS</p>	<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>13</b> Louise Smith Circle 9:30 AM</p>	<p><b>14</b></p>	<p><b>15</b></p>	<p><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>17</b></p>
<p><b>18</b> 9AM Choir Practice 9:30-10:15 Adult SS 10:00 Fellowship Time 10:30 Worship &amp; Children's SS Food Pantry Sunday Flowers: Poinsettias</p>	<p><b>19</b> 5PM Christmas Dinner Augie's Restaurant 7PM Lesson &amp; Carols Christ Episcopal Church Ballston Spa</p>	<p><b>20</b></p>	<p><b>21</b> Helen Killough Circle 7 PM</p>	<p><b>22</b></p>	<p><b>23</b></p>	<p><b>24</b> Christmas Eve 7PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Service &amp; Pageant</p>
<p><b>25</b> Christmas Day 10:30 Chrismon Service Flowers: Poinsettias</p>	<p><b>26</b></p>	<p><b>27</b></p>	<p><b>28</b></p>	<p><b>29</b></p>	<p><b>30</b></p>	<p><b>31</b></p>