



Loved by God, Led by Grace



The Methodist Messenger

Events and Dates to Remember

Thursday, December 3

7:00 p.m.
Charge Conference
with Natalie Hanson

Sunday, December 6

4:00 p.m.
Ring Master's Christmas Concert

Friday, December 11

7:30 p.m.
Book Club

Monday, December 14

Elderteens' Christmas Party at
Blocher Homes

Christmas Eve, December 24

3:00 p.m.
Service of Word and Table

Christmas Eve, December 24

5:00 p.m.
Children's Christmas Celebration

Christmas Eve, December 24

10:00 p.m.
Festival of Lessons and Carols

Sunday, January 3

11:00 a.m.
Covenant Renewal Service

From Your Pastors

Christmas Gift

Pastor Rich Neal

Well before Thanksgiving, the lights of Christmas begin blinking around town, and here I am thinking about what Christmas gifts to buy while trying to button up the autumn chores around the house before another winter settles in.

Perhaps as an escape from the season's mongers of the mundane, I start thinking of all the ways to exchange Christmas gifts this year without surrendering to Madison Avenue's easy way out (Buy more!). I begin to wonder: What would an alternative Christmas gift look like if it were truly in harmony with God's gift of the Christ child to us?

Of course, such a gift would say, "I care about you." It would say this symbolically and really, in a way that is understandable (though not completely so) and costly (not in terms of money but in terms of forethought, care, concern). It would be a gift that holds nothing back.

A gift in the spirit of God's gift of the Christ would be perfectly centered in relationship. It would be a gift in which the giver moves completely to the receiver and becomes involved completely with the receiver. And because it would be relationship centered it would be incomplete in itself, requiring recognition and response - deep response - by the one who receives it.

It would be a gift that doesn't look at all like a Christmas gift and, therefore, that risks misunderstanding, trivialization, and rejection. So, it would be one in which the giver becomes vulnerable, open to the possibility of the great pain of rejection, but also open to the possibility of the great joy of acceptance and embrace. If the gift is received and valued for what it truly is, the joy would be so great - well, you might almost hear the song of angels, and the cold would no longer seem so cold nor the night quite so dark.

I don't know if I'll receive such a gift this year. I don't even know if I'll give one. But wouldn't it be something if it happened?

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Words From Worship & Music



“Imagine” Christ’s Coming This Advent Season

Pastor Nick Perry

Like many other Christian communities, WUMC is anticipating the arrival of the Christ child. Christ, who once came wrapped in bands of cloth, greeted with the bellows of cows and the cooing of doves, and a soft angelic smile from his teenage mother, intends to make good on a promise to come back again.

I wonder what Mary and Joseph thought as they held God in the crook on their arms, or cried when they rinsed his hair with lukewarm bath water. I wondered what they thought about knowing, in part, that their son was somehow divine and yet still needed tummy time. One’s mind can only imagine what it might have been like to be one of his parents.

Strangely enough, if we are honest we also imagine what Christ’s earthly life was like. Did Jesus have a deep voice? Did he have a warm smile that welcomed those who others shunned? When he preached, did he rub his hands together? When he faced the reality of the cross, did he do so with tears? I must confess that I wonder and try to imagine what his next arrival might be like.

In our church, we follow the Revised Lectionary that provides both Hebrew Scriptures and Gospel readings for each Sunday of the year including the weeks of Advent that lead up to the celebration of the birth of God’s Promised One. I imagine that if we examined the original context of the Hebrew Bible as best we could, we would be hard-pressed to recognize immediately the wonderful prophecies pointing directly and undeniably to Jesus Christ.

It appears the authors, whoever they maybe - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Malachi, - may have had someone else in mind. Perhaps they were thinking of someone closer to their particular time in history. Or, maybe they thought the prophecies were about the immediate future of Israel that included a public hero such as Hezekiah.

However, on this side of the cross, we can look back through history and identify Hebrew prophecies that were fulfilled in part by a litany of names, but were ultimately fulfilled through the person of Jesus. When we examine the prophecies in light of details in the Gospels, we find the One who is humbly born and crucified in the first century, is also the One who overcomes the grip of death and whose second coming we anticipate.

Stille Nachtmusik Christmas Eve Recital Cancelled

Judy Stafford

We are sorry to announce that our traditional Christmas Eve Stille Nachtmusik Chamber Music Recital has been cancelled for this year. We are disappointed, but we look forward to this special holiday recital returning in 2010 when Paul Ferington has recovered from his shoulder surgery that is scheduled for December 17. Good luck Paul!

The Four Weeks of Advent

During the Advent season at WUMC, we will explore how prophecies foretelling Christ’s coming are tied to an Advent season of Hope, The Way, Joy, and Peace. The word “*Imagination*” used in each Advent sermon title does not represent a fairy tale, for we believe in the reality of Christ’s coming and return. Instead, during this Advent season we will recall the original prophecies about Christ, while we recognize our responsibility to wrestle, wonder, and imagine how all of this makes sense for our lives today.

During the four weeks of Advent, we will explore God’s gifts that cause us to wonder anew year at the mystery of Christ’s coming.

A Festival of Worship on Christmas Eve

Pastor Rich Neal

Williamsville United Methodist Church will welcome Christmas this year with three special worship services on Christmas Eve.



A traditional ***Service of Word and Table***, similar to a Sunday morning service but with a clear focus on Christmas, and including the Lord’s Supper, will be held at 3:00 p.m.

At 5:00 p.m., the ***Children’s Christmas Celebration***, a shorter service for the whole family, will feature a presentation of the Christmas message by the King’s Kids, our congregation’s puppet ministry.

The evening ends with the traditional ***Festival of Lessons and Carols*** at 10:00 p.m. Based on the service designed for the chapel of King’s College, Cambridge, our service will include the reading of scripture lessons that tell the Christmas story and a generous amount of singing by the congregation. It concludes with a candlelight service and the singing of “Silent Night.”

Please come and join us this Christmas Eve in one of the year’s most joyful and meaningful celebrations of our faith.

Words From Worship & Music



More History of Christmas

Cheryl Thomas

Nativity Scene – The popularity of the Nativity scene, one of the most beloved and enduring symbols of the holiday season, originated in Italy. St. Francis of Assisi asked a man named Giovanni Vellita of the village of Greccio to create a manger scene. St. Francis performed mass in front of this early nativity scene, which inspired awe and devotion in all who saw it. The creation of the figures or *pastori* became an entire genre of folk art.

Caroling – The custom of singing carols at Christmas is of English origin. During the middle ages, groups of serenaders called *waits* would travel from house to house singing ancient carols and spreading the holiday spirit. The word *carol* means, “song of You.” Most of the popular carols we sing today were written in the 19th century.

Yule Log – It is from Scandinavia that most of our Yule log traditions derive. The dark, cold winters inspired the development of traditions concerned with warmth and light. “Yuletide,” which means the turning of the sun or the winter solstice, is traditionally a time of extreme importance in Scandinavia. It is the time when fortunes for the coming year were determined and also the dead were thought to walk the earth. For a long time, it was considered dangerous to sleep alone on Christmas Eve. The extended family, master and servant, alike would sleep together on a freshly spread bed of straw.

The Yule log was originally an entire tree, carefully chosen, and brought into the house with great ceremony. The butt end was placed into the hearth while the rest of the tree stuck out into the room. The tree was fed slowly into the fire and the entire process was carefully timed to last the entire Yule season.

12 Steps of Christmas

Cheryl Thomas

Take pleasure in the trappings of Christmas. Be merry, like the songs say, revel in the tinsel, glitter, and sparkle. Sing the old songs for all the joy that is in them and the memories they bring back. But to touch the real Christmas – to feel the true spirit of the season, look to your own heart and find all the secret treasures that are there to give, including the following 12 Steps of Christmas.

1. **HONESTY** . . . He sees you when you're sleeping . . .
2. **HOPE** . . . For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn. . .
3. **FAITH** . . . Away in a manger . . .
4. **PEACE** . . . Bless all the dear children in thy tender care. . .
5. **RENEWAL** . . . Lo how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung . . .
6. **HUMILITY** . . . Fall on your knees, O hear the angel voices . . .
7. **GOODWILL** . . . Let the whole world send back the song that now the angels sing . . .
8. **LOVE** . . . How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given . . .
9. **PERSEVERANCE** . . . We got into a drifting bank and whee, we got upset . . .
10. **WONDER** . . . O holy night, the stars are brightly shining . . .
11. **GLORY** . . . Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains, and the mountains in reply, echo back the joyous strains . . .
12. **JOY** . . . Fields and floods, rock, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy . . .

During this holiday season, follow the 12 Steps of Christmas. Practice these principles not only during this most holy period, but also throughout the year. You too, can be a child of Christmas.



Covenant Renewal Service to Welcome the New Year – January 3

Pastor Rich Neal

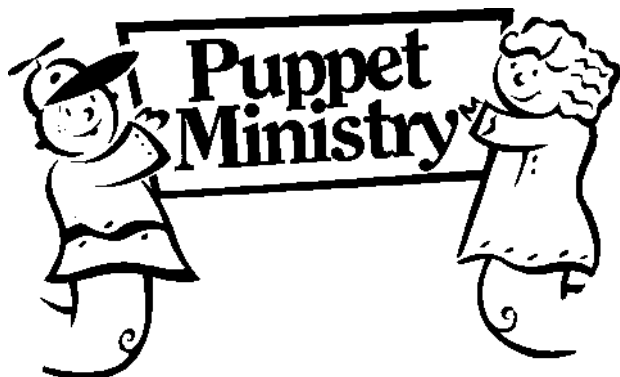
It was “a time of remarkable blessing” for John Wesley, who wrote in his *Journal*, “I do not know that ever we had a greater blessing. Afterwards many desired to return thanks.” He was writing about his first experience of what has become one of the most distinctive services in our tradition, the Covenant Renewal Service. We will use this service to welcome the New Year during our 11:00 a.m. worship service on Sunday, January 3.

Dating from the mid-1700s, the service had at its heart the Covenant Prayer. During this prayer, worshipers commit themselves anew to God. The Covenant Renewal Service was most commonly held during a Watch Night Service on New Year's Eve or on New Year's Day. The service is also appropriate for Epiphany, during Lent, as part of any renewal of the baptismal covenant, or on a church anniversary.

Following so closely upon our celebration of God's gift to us at Christmas, the beginning of a new year is a perfect opportunity to offer ourselves anew as a gift to God. Plan now to join us on January 3.



Words From Worship & Music



Puppet Ministry

Barbara Saltarella

I had the opportunity to spend the weekend of November 6 and 7 in Ontario, New York at a Puppet Ministry Workshop and Competition. This workshop was presented by One Way Street, which is an interdenominational ministry that offers resources and training in creative ministry. One Way Street specializes in puppet ministry and other creative ways to teach the word of God.

WOW! What a great weekend! I was blown away by how other churches use puppet ministry and how they incorporate creative ministry with the teachings of Jesus. I took workshops in puppet technique, storytelling, and music. I was like a kid in a bakery - I didn't know what to do first. I met different people and came away with ideas not only for puppet ministry, but also for our visitation ministry. If you look in my office, you will see a new member of our team. Her name is Lamb Chop and she can't wait to get started visiting members and friends of WUMC.

Get Involved with Our Puppet Ministry!

If you would like to help in the puppet ministry, please let me know. I have a sign-up sheet in the narthex and I am looking not just for puppeteers, but also for people to help with ideas for scenery, music, direction, etc. We also need people to work with the puppets in the Children's Christmas Celebration service at 5:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve. So, if you think this is a ministry you would like to work in, please sign-up or call me at the church office. **WE NEED PEOPLE OF ALL AGES!**

Take the Sermons with You

Mina Rohde

This fall, the Communications and Web Site Teams began podcasting the weekly sermons from the 11:00 a.m. worship service. The word *podcast* is the combination of "iPod" and "broadcast." A podcast is actually an audio file that can be downloaded over the Web and then listened to through your computer's speakers. The type of audio file being used to record the sermons is called an *MP3* file.

Despite the name podcast, you do not need an iPod to listen to MP3 files. In fact, the MP3 files you download can be played through PC or Mac computers using Windows Media Player or iTunes. These files can also be loaded onto any brand of portable music player.

Now if someone misses the Gospel reading and sermon on Sunday, he/she can download the sermon the next week and listen to it at home. Newcomers or friends of the church who live out of town can also listen to the weekly sermons. You can save favorite sermons to replay whenever you like - while taking a car trip, working in the garden, or running errands.

To make a podcast each week, we plug a special recorder directly into the church's sound system. This allows us to capture all the audio in the service without disturbing the pastors or worshipers and it eliminates stray noises in the recording. When the service is over, the recorder is plugged into the computer where the audio file is converted to MP3 format. Then the Gospel reading and sermon are clipped out of the service and uploaded to WUMC's Web site. Each finished recording is about 4 MB and only takes a few minutes to download, even on a dial-up connection.

Audio sermons and text sermons are available on the church's Web page. Here's how you locate this page: from the Home page, click Worship and then select Sermons from Our Pastors (<http://www.williamsvilleumc.org/WorshipandMusic/SermonsfromOurPastors.aspx>).

Click on a title of the sermon you want to download and the file will open automatically in the appropriate player program. Sermons from the past few weeks will be on the main page, while older sermons will be moved to a secondary page for archiving.

Please let us know if you have any questions or run into a problem when downloading either the audio file or the printed PDF file of the sermon.



WUMC Leadership and Conference Updates

Selecting Memorial Gifts

Sally Jost

It has been my honor to serve as chairperson of the Memorial Committee for several years, along with a loyal group of committee members for the same period. Together with a pastor, we meet regularly to discuss church needs and share any input received from the congregation about selecting new memorial purchases. Memorial gifts to WUMC enable us to console each other at the loss of our loved ones and affirm our belief in the goodness of God and the church during a time of sorrow. These gifts also enable us to create something positive out of our loss.



At the time of funeral and memorial services, cards for contributions to the WUMC Memorial Fund are made available. Gifts we receive are acknowledged promptly with a grateful note to the donor. Sometimes we receive a call from a relative of the deceased asking for suggestions on what WUMC feels would be a fitting tribute to honor their loved one.

Listed below are examples of purchases approved by the Memorial Committee over the last few years using the thoughtful memorial gifts received by WUMC:

- Beautiful four-sided mobile bookcase that can be secured when not in use. This bookcase is used for educational materials and books appropriate for early grades.
- Refurbished the church library to create an attractive room for resources and a comfortable meeting area
- Portable tables and chairs that are used in various church settings
- Armless chairs that are perfect for instrumentalists in the coming holiday season and other occasions
- Additional bells for the Memorial Handbell Choir
- Colorful, seasonal banners
- Restoration of some frames and mats for religious photography or prints
- Improved capacity for the sanctuary sound system
- A substantial pledge to help replace the church sign facing Main Street

Currently, the Memorial Committee is proud to share new additions in 2009. Each idea was presented and researched before receiving an affirmative vote to be purchased by the Memorial Committee.

- Replaced coffee urns
- Added meaningful posters in the church
- Purchased a new computer and projector that are both in regular use

We are also grateful to Rev. Gail Lewis for her thoughtful gift of a six-piece communion set of matched pottery that is utilized each week at the altar.

If anyone has questions regarding the purpose of the Memorial Committee or suggestions for future consideration, kindly call me at home.

Sally C. Jost
Memorial Committee Chair



Urgent Need for Church World Service Kits

Church World Service Kits are urgently needed to fill requests from partners around the world and in the U.S. Please consider getting your congregation or a group of people together to assemble some kits. Hygiene Kits, School Kits, Baby Care Kits, and Emergency Clean-up Buckets can make a world

of difference to someone in need. This is a great group activity and a learning experience for all ages. To find out more about what is needed in each type of kit, visit ww.churchworldservice.org/kits. Kits can be sent directly to the Upstate New York Regional Office warehouse for distribution before our Spring Drive. For information about our Spring Kit Drive or how to send kits directly to the distribution center, contact Amy Bobbette Manning at (315) 458-8535 or by e-mail at amanning@churchworldservice.org.

CROP WALK

CROP Walk

Kim Weingartner

Thanks to all who sponsored me in the fall CROP Walk this past September. Your pledges enabled me to exceed my personal goal of \$250. For those who may not be familiar with CROP, this acronym stands for Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty. Founded in 1946, Church World Service raises money to fight hunger worldwide. In September 2000, 189 countries including the United States endorsed the Millennium Development Goals to cut in half the percentage of people living in extreme poverty and substantially improve health and education in impoverished countries by 2015. Last year CROP Walks and events raised over \$17 million to fight hunger right here and around the world.

We are making a difference! In developing countries, the number of hungry has dropped by 80 million over ten years, but more help is needed. Still over 923 million people around the world remain hungry – more than the population of the western hemisphere. Every day, more than 16,000 children – about one child every 5 seconds – die from hunger-related causes.

In September, I enjoyed the fellowship of others from the surrounding area on a one-hour brisk but sunny day to walk for the hungry. The CROP Walk started at Amherst Community Church then went down Main Street and up Harlem to the Rest Stop at Christ United Methodist Church. We followed the same route back to the starting point to enjoy hot dogs and other refreshments. It was wonderful to see adults, children, and youth groups coming together to dedicate one hour to help raise money for the hungry. Hopefully, you saw the picture in the newspaper.

Next year perhaps others from WUMC will want to walk with me. Think about it - I'll have the information ready as the date approaches!

Family Ministries News



WUMC Book Club

Ann Killian

Join us on December 11 for our last book of 2009 and the selection of books for 2010. We will take some time at the end of our December discussion to share recommendations for upcoming book selections.

We will meet on Friday, December 11, at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Midge and Vaughn Hackworth to discuss *The Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch and Jeffrey Zaslow. Pausch, a professor at Carnegie Mellon, was asked to lecture on the question, "If you vanished tomorrow, what would you want to be your legacy?" For Dr. Pausch, this was a real question since he knew he had terminal cancer. However, Pausch took a somber subject and shared it with humor. It so resonated with students and faculty alike that it resulted in this book, which will inspire your Advent season.

Watch for future meeting dates and reading selections in the Sunday and monthly Messengers.



Christian Education News

Christian Education Dates to Remember

Monday, December 7

7:00 p.m.
Children and Youth Christian Education Meeting

Sunday, December 20

9:45 a.m.
Movie Day for Kindergarten through Grade 4 in Fillmore Hall

December 27 and January 3

No Sunday School – Christmas Break

Children and Youth Christian Education

Thank You to All Our Special Helpers

Judy Toone

During the months of September and October, children in kindergarten through 4th grade learned about the seven helpers in the Bible: Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenus and Nicholaus. To help the children apply the lesson of being a good helper to their lives today, “helpers” from our church talked to the children about various ways they serve others in our church and community.

Our deepest thanks to our special guest speakers who took turns sharing how they are helpers too! Week one Penny Graham told us about gleaning produce from fields. Week two Nancy Howlett showed how the Dorcas Circle puts together hygiene kits for Haven House. Week three Carol Forden and Pam Curcio told about the volunteer work they do at the Central City Café soup kitchen. Week four Rosemary Elliott explained how she helps with Seneca Street.



Children Helpers at the Outreach Event – October 25

The children spent four weeks bringing in canned goods for WUMC’s food pantry. We then hosted a special Outreach event on October 25 during which the children made things to help others. They made 48 sandwiches for Central City Café, put together 40 hygiene kits for Haven House, assembled 40 bead craft kits for UMCOR volunteers to use when they go to disaster areas, and decorated 24 turkeys for our friends in the nursing homes.

Special thanks to Mary Hourt, Margaret Roesch, Melinda Kratzer, Laura Koeppel, Carol Forden, Pam Curcio, Tony DelGobbo, Shelley Kayne, Luke Miller, Spencer Roberts, Nathan Roberts, Sara Philips and Kendyl Kratzer for all their help running the different stations at the Outreach event!



Christian Education News

Advent Fair - Christmas Around the World

On Sunday, November 22, children and their families participated in our “Christmas Around the World” adventure at the annual Family Advent Fair. During the Sunday school hour, we engaged our imaginations and traveled to different countries to learn a little about how Christmas is celebrated in different countries. Our deepest thanks to the Christian Education Team for planning, shopping, decorating, and serving as hosts from the various countries during one of our favorite family gatherings!

Donate a Book

Every year our children decorate their own Christmas tree in Fillmore Hall. This year we are also hanging book ornaments that include a title of a book that corresponds to the curriculum we use each week. We are looking for families that would like to choose a book (or several!) that your family can purchase to donate to our children’s ministry at WUMC. Please feel free to write your family’s name inside the book cover along with a special message to the children. These books will be treasured and read for many years to come. In advance, we thank you all for your generous hearts.



Junior and Senior High Youth Group News



Gift “Exchange!?” – December 6

Have you ever received a gift that you pretend to like so you won’t hurt someone’s feelings? I have! It’s not that I am not grateful, but I don’t know what to do with the cookie jar that looks like a toaster that my grandma gave me. Let me know if you know someone who might like this cookie jar - it’s yours!

This year we are inviting all the youth to purchase a gift in the \$3-\$5 range, wrap it, and then bring the gift to our meeting on December 6. Whatever you do, **do not** - I repeat **do not** tell a single soul what is inside the festive wrapping. This is your chance to be creative

with the gift you bring, but it must be *church appropriate*. If you are not sure if your gift is church appropriate, then get something else instead.

At our meeting on December 6, we will put your gift in a pile on the floor with all the other gifts and fight to the bitter end to get the gift we want. Remember, this is not for the faint of heart. If you need help purchasing a gift, please let Judy Toone or Nick Perry know.

Well, I’m off to the mall to find a gift. I have something in mind already! See you on Sunday, December 6, at 6:30 p.m. for youth group!

Junior High Youth Group Blast

Junior High is off to a great year. It was an eerie Friday night in October as the youth group wandered from a bright warm fire into an old dark cemetery at Old Fort Niagara. Before you knew it, we were entering the “Haunted Fortress.” The night wasn’t all about the frightening events in the Fort. We also learned that the Wesley family was convinced that they lived in a haunted house. We even retold the story of King Saul’s unwise encounter with the Witch of Endor. Special thanks to Carol Descutner, Vinnie Pascoe, Annette Jones, and Brad Curcio who joined us for our spooky adventure!

In November, the junior high had a little competition with the senior high to see how well they knew their church on a wild scavenger hunt! Toward the end of November, they joined us for a “Buffalo Bills Night Out” where they heard some Buffalo Bills players share their faith stories. Look for more fun and upcoming happenings on the calendar below.

December 6	Regular Meeting 6:30-8:00 p.m.
December 19	Seneca Street Christmas Party 1:00-5:00ish
December 27	No Youth Group - Christmas break
January 3	No Youth Group - Christmas break
January 17	Regular Meeting 6:30-8:00 p.m.
January 31	Regular Meeting 6:30-8:00 p.m.



Christian Education News

Junior and Senior High Youth Group News



Pastor Nick Perry

It's not every Friday night that we get to hang out with National Football League players. However, that is exactly what happened to several of our junior and senior high youth on November 13! The Buffalo Bills have a weekly Bible study where they challenge each other to grow deeper

Hanging Out with Buffalo Bill Players!

in their faith with God. It was this Bible study that made the whole night possible at the Buffalo Christian Center.

The line-up of Buffalo Bills attending the study included: Spencer Johnson, Chris Kelsay, George Wilson, John McCargo, Jairus Byrd, Jon Corto, John Wendling, John Stupar, C.J. Hawthorne, Kyle Williams, Justin Jenkins, Brad Bulter, Drayton Florence, James Hardy, Josh Reed, Bryan Scott and their wives if they were married.

Each player shared how important attending church is in his walk with the Lord. Some players resist going, some don't go to church, and others use the pastor's sermon as a time for a nap. We were encouraged to know that God is with us no matter where we are in our walk.

Toward the end of the evening, one player summed up the whole night when he said, "We come from different places: Louisiana, Hawaii, Iowa, New York, and many other places. What brings us together is not football - but God." After the event the players and their wives signed autographs. Athletes in Action, who co-sponsored the night's event, made this statement, "In a society that looks up to its heroes, we need to have heroes looking up to God."

So, the next time you watch a Bills' game, remember that there is more at stake than what happens on the field. We were all challenged on Friday evening to take a deeper look at our relationship with God, thanks in part to those Buffalo Bills named above.



Senior High Youth Group Fundraiser

Thanks to all who supported the Senior High Youth Group and Wes Shute by purchasing fruit again this year. Wes is a member of the Buffalo Outreach & Community Assistance project and the proceeds of the sale make it possible for BOCA members to serve populations around the globe in dire need of dental care. This year Wes graciously agreed to split the proceeds with the youth group. The fruit should arrive on December 10.

Adventures at Old Fort Niagara "Haunted Fortress"

It was an eerie Friday night in October as the youth group wandered from a bright warm fire into an old dark cemetery at Old Fort Niagara. The tombstones mostly dated back to the early 1800s. A tour guide shared the little information known about those whose graves are marked. We wandered together throughout the cemetery tiptoeing ever so carefully so as not to disturb those who were resting eternally.

As we left the cemetery, we prepared to go into the "Haunted Fortress." We all understood what we were about to see were volunteers raising money for Old Fort Niagara. Along the way, we were reminded of the legends that have risen from the Fort's past. Except for a few candles in the Fort, it was as dark as a black cat. We took each step with great caution. Our eyes were open wide hoping to catch even the slightest movement from the Hal-

loween "visitors." Hiding in the shadows were those waiting a frightened youth group from Williamsville United Methodist Church. It is rather spooky to have someone or something following behind you in such an old building.

Somehow, we all made it out okay. We may say, "We weren't scared," but please, please do not come up behind us and say, "Boo!" Well, not yet anyway! And if anyone asks, our standard response is, "Yes Mom, all the kids are sleeping with their lights on."

The night wasn't all about the frightening events in the Old Fort. We learned that the Wesley family was convinced they lived in a haunted house. However, some suspect the strange noises they heard might have been created by the wind. Or, maybe it was just some parishioners having a little fun at the Wesley family's expense.



We retold the story of King Saul's unwise encounter with the Witch of Endor. We even touched on the fact that Christ cast out demons during his earthly ministry. As much as we may be fascinated with all things "scary," we are confident that it is important to have our relationship firmly established in the Lord.

Junior and Senior High Youth Group News

Senior High Youth Group Happenings

Senior High Youth Group Schedule

December 6 Regular Meeting 6:30-8:00 p.m.	January 3 No Youth Group - Christmas break January 10 Regular Meeting :30-8:00 p.m.
December 13 "The Story of Christmas" at The Chapel 6:00-when it's over	January 17 Regular Meeting 6:30-8:00 p.m.
December 19 Seneca Street Christmas Party 1:00-5:00ish	January 24 Regular Meeting 6:30-8:00 p.m.
December 27 No Youth Group - Christmas break	January 31 Regular Meeting 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Please double-check the Weekly Messenger and WUMC's Web site (www.williamsvilleumc.org) for any changes to the schedule. If you have questions, comments, or concerns please feel free to contact: Pastor Nick Perry or Judy Toone.

"The Story of Christmas" at The Chapel

On Sunday, December 13, from 6:00 until it ends, we are taking the Senior High Youth Group to The Chapel to see their performance of "The Story of Christmas." This will be a wonderful, inspirational worship experience incorporating beautiful music, a live nativity, and narration. The Chapel Choir will be joined by members of worship choirs throughout WNY and an orchestra, as we come together to worship the Newborn King. This is sure to be an amazing evening! Tickets are \$7.50 each. Since we have only 16 tickets available, make your reservations with Judy and Nick quickly!

Special Thanks

Special thanks to the senior high youth group who graciously helped a member of the congregation rake her leaves one beautiful Sunday afternoon in November. You were the perfect example of God's hands at work!



Adult Christian Education



Adult Christian Education Update

This year we have a Christian Education team solely devoted to adult programming. The Adult Christian Education (ACE) Team is currently looking for other adults who have an interest in helping formulate new programs and ways to meet the diverse needs of our adult population. Interested parties should e-mail Judy Toone at jtoone@williamsvilleumc.org

Sunday Adult Educational Opportunities

The ACE classes listed below meet every Sunday morning from 9:45 - 10:30 a.m. between WUMC's two worship services. Please feel free to join us on Sunday morning when you can.

Contemporary Issues

There are many reasons why it is difficult to talk about race and racism - even in the church. There are also many reasons why we must have this conversation - especially in the church. For this reason, the Contemporary Issues class will discuss the topic of race and racism in the coming weeks. We begin by considering the question, "Why is it so difficult to talk about racism?" Next, we undertake a brief overview of "Racism 101." Then we ask, "Do segregated churches imply racism?" Short resource readings that are available in class will also be posted on the WUMC's Web site (www.williamsvilleumc.org). This class meets at the top of the Main Street stairs near the back of the building. Everyone is welcome to participate.

Adult Bible Study

Is your Bible collecting dust on a shelf? Blow that dust off and join the Adult Bible Study group during the Sunday school hour! Each week this informal, discussion-based class looks at how a different part of the Bible applies to us in the 21st century. We hope to see you Sunday morning in the classroom at the bottom of the stairs at the Oakgrove entrance!

Other ACE Opportunities

Invitation to Psalms

A 10-week Disciple Course titled "Invitation to Psalms" will be offered through the ACE ministry on Sunday afternoons from January 17 through March 28. The class will meet in the church library from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. Our first meeting on January 17 will be a short orientation gathering during which participants will receive the book that will be used for this course. There is a nominal cost for the participant's book. The study will be facilitated by Barbara Manhardt and Cheryl Thomas. Information and sign-up is available in the narthex throughout the month of December. If you love the Psalms and would like to explore them at a deeper level, then this is the study for you. We look forward to joining with others who are interested in spiritual growth through the verses of the psalms.

Outreach & Missions Musings



WANTED: Angels to Help Angels this Christmas

Kevin Lyttle

Gateway Longview - Adopt-an-Angel

Gateway-Longview is a local organization that delivers a wide range of services to disadvantaged and special needs children in our community. Gateway-Longview needs our help again this year! So, help to spread some holiday cheer this Christmas! You have the opportunity to provide a gift or two for a deserving, needy child. Simply take an angel from the display in the church narthex between November 29 and December 6. On the angel will be a child's first name, age, and a small list of their Christmas wishes.

Choose the items you wish to purchase from his/her list that amount to about \$25 to \$30. Then bring the items UNWRAPPED, with the angel attached to the bag of gifts, and place them in the labeled boxes in the church narthex.

The items must be **returned to church by December 15** so they can be delivered and wrapped by Gateway's helpful "elves." This is your chance to give the gifts of hope and happiness. Thank you for giving back to our community children!!

Let's Help Seneca Street Church Provide Its Best Christmas Party Yet!!

We need gift cards!! We need cookies!!

Gift Cards!!!

Seneca Street Church's annual neighborhood Christmas Party will be held on Saturday, December 19. Over 100 children and youth from the local neighborhood are expected to attend. For the past several years, we have helped by providing gift cards of \$10, \$15, or \$20 from Wal-Mart, Target, and other discount stores. These gift cards are very much appreciated, and are used to get suitable gifts for older children – particularly teens - with their hard to please requirements!

We have also been asked to contribute gift cards for McDonald's in \$5 denominations. These are included in special "gift packs" distributed to attendees at the party. So, stop in the Narthex and pick up a "gift card" reminder, purchase your gift cards or make a cash donation (we will purchase the gift cards for you), and then return them to the church by December 18. Your gifts are deeply appreciated by all who help or are helped by Seneca Street Church!



Christmas Cookies!!!



Homemade cookies are as much a part of Christmas as are the gifts. Can you help make Christmas for Seneca Street church families even more special with homemade cookies? While you are baking for your family, consider making a few dozen extra cookies for the Seneca Street Church Christmas party or for their

special Christmas Eve service. If you can do this, please either let Kevin Lyttle know or sign up in the church narthex. Then, bring your cookies to the church by December 20 or earlier. If you make them earlier, please put them in the freezer in the church kitchen – be sure to label them for Seneca Street Church. We will deliver your goodies to Seneca Street Church in time for their Christmas events.

Holiday Meal Bags - A Special Need this Year!

You probably look forward to some special favorite foods as part of your Christmas celebration. For the past several years, WUMC has provided Holiday Meal Bags, to families in our congregation and community. Each of these bags includes a gift card for a turkey, ham, or other fresh food. Last year, we were also able to provide 30 Holiday Meal Bags to families served by Seneca Street Church. The need is particularly acute this year, so we would like to receive as many Holiday Meal Bags as possible to help with this program and make it bigger than ever!

If you would like to participate, stop in the narthex any Sunday in December to pick up a grocery bag with its accompanying list of suggested foods for a holiday meal. Fill the bag to overflowing, return it to the church by December 20, and we will see that it is delivered to a family who not only needs it, but who will also enjoy all the special holiday foods included in the bag!

If you cannot fill a Holiday Meal Bag, please consider a cash donation toward a turkey or ham gift card so one can be included in each Holiday Meal Bag.

Thanks for helping make Christmas a little happier for many in our community!

Nurture and Visitation Reflections

Nurture and Visitation Reflections

Happy Holidays!

It is hard to believe that we are coming to the end of another year. As I look back on 2009, it has been a time of great loss, not just for me, but also

for all of us at WUMC. Like all of you, for my birthday this year, I said goodbye to one age (62) and hello to another (63).

I am truly amazed at all the hellos and goodbyes we say in a lifetime.

It doesn't matter what age we are, we still have to say goodbye. However, as you and I grow older it seems we say goodbye more often. Perhaps it is goodbye to a friend who has to move, we may say goodbye to a friend who died, or possibly illness has made us say goodbye to some degree of independence. Even so, with these goodbyes we can also say Hello - hello to a New Year and hello to a new life with God who is at the center of our lives. This can be a time of creative growth, a time when we look deep within ourselves and see that inner spark of God within us.

In Psalm 90: 12 the psalmist says it all, "Teach us to number our days aright that we may gain a heart of wisdom." To all of you, I thank you for being a part of my life and my faith journey. I wish you all a **Blessed Holiday**

Season.

Blessings and Love,
Barbara Saltarella



Psalm 90:12

Health Corner

Women and Heart Attacks: Symptoms

Barbara Saltarella

Today women are living stressful lives. With taking care of your family, jobs, care giving to other family members, and taking a little time for yourself, women are more susceptible to heart attacks than ever before.

We may know the symptoms of male heart attacks - squeezing chest pain, shortness of breath, and nausea. Some women who are having a heart attack experience chest pain or discomfort, but not all women do. In fact, as it turns out, the symptoms of female heart attacks can be quite different, so it is important that all women learn the warning signs.

Women are more likely than men to have signs and symptoms unrelated to chest pain including:¹

- Neck, shoulder, upper back, or abdominal discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- General weakness
- Unusual fatigue
- Sweating
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness
- Lower chest discomfort
- Upper abdominal pressure or discomfort that feels like indigestion

These signs and symptoms are more subtle than the obvious crushing chest pain often associated with heart attacks. This may be because women tend to have blockages not only in their main arteries, but also in the smaller arteries that supply blood to the heart — a condition called small vessel heart disease.

Be aware of these symptoms and call 911 if you experience a cluster of these symptoms.

¹ "Heart disease in women: Understand symptoms and risk factors,"

Mayo Clinic Staff,
www.MayoClinic.com



Caring Corner

Holiday Blues

Barbara Saltarella

Not everyone looks forward to the Christmas season. Dealing with the death of a loved one, facing life after a divorce or separation, coping with the loss of a job, or living with a disease can put a question mark over the future. There are numerous other situations that can make it painful for people in our congregation and community to feel enthusiastic or joyous about Christmas.

In an effort to minister to people in this situation, WUMC offers a Service of Hope and fellowship each year before the Christmas season begins. This year this service was held on November 29.

Some stresses that lead to the Holiday Blues cannot be avoided, but there some things you can do to minimize the impact these stresses have on you. So, if you or someone you know is experiencing the Holiday Blues, the following ideas may help you beat those blues:

- Manage your time wisely. In addition to making time for shopping and socializing, also time for relaxation and rest.
- Make a budget for your holiday spending and stick to it.
- Talk with others about a recent loss and ask for support.
- Accept any unpleasant family situations as best as you can. Remember, the holidays are rarely as ideal as they seem in the movies.
- Take time to participate in activities that you find relaxing and enjoyable.
- Create a new holiday tradition that you enjoy and that will take your mind off the past.
- Accept your feelings. There is nothing wrong with not feeling jolly.
- Drink alcohol only in moderation.
- Get in touch with your spiritual side by attending church, spend time in prayer or meditation, or participate in whatever activities enrich your soul.

Stewardship Thoughts



Annual Stewardship Campaign: Interim Report

Rosemary Elliott

By Thursday, November 12, we have received 97 pledges for 2010. This is less than half the number we hope to receive. Thus far, pledges to general operations are \$154,390, compared to \$283,965 in 2009. Pledges to Missions are \$9,905 for 2010, compared to \$25,970 in 2009. Pledges to Building Care for 2010 are \$11,073, compared to \$16,628 for 2009.

By the time you read this article, we expect many more donors will have returned their 2010 pledges. In the final report that will be included in the February newsletter, we hope to be able to report that our final 2010 pledge numbers are even better than received in 2009.

IRS Donation Information

As the end of the year draws near, we would like to remind you about which donations to WUMC can be reported to the IRS as a 2009 tax credit. Keep in mind that only donations post-marked December 31, 2009 or earlier can be reported on your 2009 tax return.

Give Thee or Give Me¹

Bill Sherrill

Here we are between the "Thank You" and the "Give Me" seasons. Somehow, it seems that Thanksgiving should follow Christmas. That way, after everyone finished getting their Christmas gifts, they could spend a little time giving thanks.

In Acts 20:35 Jesus taught, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," but it can be difficult to find many who agree with that teaching. I am reminded of Lucy in the "Peanuts" cartoon. She invariably had a "get list" for each Christmas.

Of course, Lucy represented the perennial selfish child in the cartoon. From time to time, most of us can relate to Lucy - we're just a little less obvious with our "get lists."

Jesus said, "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good" (Luke 6:45 RSV). Let's pray that the season of thoughtful thanksgiving we just finished will lead us to overflow with gratitude and produce an outpouring of true gift giving.

Giving, which is a central theme of the Bible, may be best seen in John's Gospel, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son..." (John 3:16). If there is to be a spirit to this Christmas season of the year, let it be a spirit of selfless giving. Learn the true lesson of Thanksgiving by giving liberally out of thankfulness!

¹© 2007 Bill Sherrill's Thought for the Week. Used by permission. "Give Thee or Give Me," *Heartlight Magazine*, December 13, 2007. http://www.heartlight.org/articles/200712/20071213_giveme.html.

For God so loved
the world that he gave
his only Son.



Hand Sanitizers

Barbara Saltarella

We are all being cautious today because of the seasonal flu virus including H1N1. But the question being asked is should you wash with soap and water or coat your hands with disinfecting gel from one of those dispensers that are popping up in offices, wash rooms, stores, hallways, and churches.

If your hands are not grimy, the best way to clean them is to use hand sanitizer, James Scott, a microbiologist at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health tells us. He says that hand sanitizers reduce the bacterial burden to a greater extent than soap and water, and your hands stay cleaner longer than when you use soap and water.

However, don't use hand sanitizers instead of soap and water. Wash your hands often with soap and water, and then use hand sanitizer wherever you go. I keep hand sanitizer in my car and purse. Sometimes when I am visiting members and friends of WUMC, I keep a small container of hand sanitizer in my pocket.



Open Door Nursery School News

Calling All Preschoolers!

Judy Knab

Registration for the ODNs 2010-2011 school year will begin January 4, 2010.

Priority is given to current ODNs families and WUMC members **before** we open registration to the public.

Our morning programs consist of certified teachers and aides conducting classes for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children. Our school year begins the MONDAY after Labor Day and ends the FRIDAY before Memorial Day. Children must be 3-, 4-, or 5-years-old respectively before December 1, 2009 to be enrolled.

An Open House for the community will be held Tuesday, January 26, 2010 from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Registration forms will be available after January 4, 2010 from the church office, in the main nursery school hallway downstairs, or from the ODNs page on WUMC's Web site (<http://www.williamsvilleumc.org/OpenDoorNurserySchool.aspx>).

For more information or a tour of the school, call Judy Knab at 633-1655.



Rejoicing, Prayers, and News From the Pews

In this section, you will learn about times of rejoicing, celebration, prayer, and sorrow that have been experienced in our church community since the last newsletter. From time to time, you will also find news in the "Where Are They Now?" section about current and former members and friends of WUMC that are no longer in the Buffalo area.

In Our Prayers and Thoughts

Prayers of healing and support are requested for Mary El Minich, Charles Mastin, Tamar Friedner, Irene Wachowiak, Rev. John Beeson, and Russ Lewis. We ask that you continue to pray for Tony Eichhorn & family and other families in crisis. Also, continue to pray for Sarah Gregory, who was recently released from the hospital, but needs continued prayers and support.

Those in the Niagara Frontier District in Need of Prayer:

Rev. Richard Kempton (Olcott UMC) and family. Rev. Kempton's mother died in Ireland at the age of 94.

Rev. Leland Bowman (retired, Lockport) who is dealing with health issues.

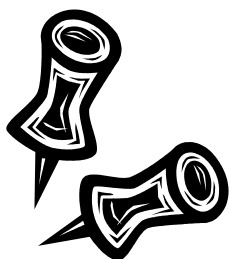
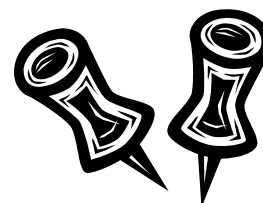
Evaline Schaal (surviving spouse, Orchard Park) who is having health concerns.

Community Bulletin Board



Help Wanted

Ushers are needed - male or female - for the 11:00 a.m. Sunday worship service. Inspiring positions are available. Please contact Bob Wood for further details.



Help Create Final Wishes Brochures


The Memorials Committee is looking for someone who would like to help review materials and develop ideas that can be used to create two pamphlets. One pamphlet will serve as a guide when making final arrangements and the other will be a record of personal wishes. The Memorial Committee has several resources including books, DVDs, and tapes that can be used to help create these pamphlets. We hope to have these pamphlets printed in early 2010. Please call or speak with Sally Jost or other committee members at church if you are interested in helping with this project.



"Bells at Christmas" Concert – December 6

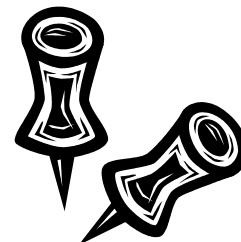

The "Bells at Christmas" concert, presented by Ring Masters, will be held in our sanctuary on Sunday, December 6, at 4:00 p.m. This concert is free and open to the public.

Community Bulletin Board




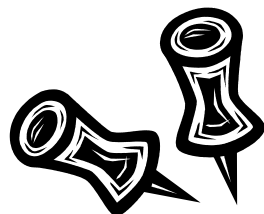

Elderteens' Christmas Party – December 14
 ARE YOU OVER 65? If so, then you probably remember the Sunday School Annual Christmas Pageant...little angels in white sheets, shepherds in oversized bathrobes; the three kings in regal attire, the honor of being chosen to portray Mary or Joseph...
 IF YOU ARE OVER 65 then you are invited to relive the pageant when the "Greatest Christmas Pageant Ever" is presented at the Elderteens' Christmas Party!

WHEN: Monday, December 14, at 12:00 Noon
WHAT: Luncheon and Program - \$5.00
WHERE: Blocher Homes, 135 Evans Street
WHO: Anyone over 65 years of age!
RESERVATIONS: Please call Mrs. Donna Swift

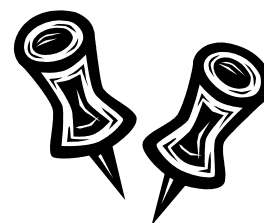



Gentle Reminder
 about Reserved ODNs Parking Space

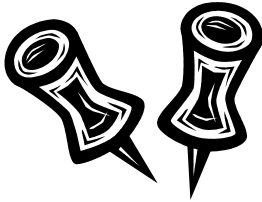
For those using the parking lot in the morning hours...
 Every year ODNs auctions off a parking space in WUMC's parking lot. Parents pay for the privilege of parking close to the school to drop-off and pick-up their child Monday through Friday from 8:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. This reserved parking space gives them convenient access to the Oakgrove door, especially during the winter months when parking is at a premium. This is particularly useful for those parents with younger siblings and babies in tow. This parking space is clearly marked with an ODNs sign. We would appreciate your helpfulness in keeping the spot free during the days and hours mentioned above. Many thanks!

Women's Post-Retreat Get Together – January 28
 Calling all women of the church! We are having a post-retreat get together for those who attended the September retreat and any who were unable to come. Mark your calendars now for Thursday, January 28 at 6:00 p.m. to join in an evening of fun and fellowship at the church. Watch for more details in the Weekly Announcements as the date approaches. Feel free to contact Kim Weingartner for more information.

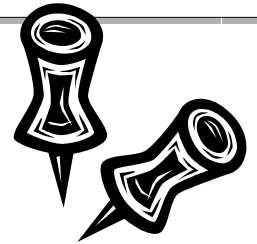


Community Bulletin Board



Help Restock WUMC Food Pantry

The shelves of our food pantry at WUMC are getting quite low since August and September were the months that our church is responsible to provide extra assistance to families and individuals who are experiencing hard times in the Williamsville community. Please try to remember this important ministry when you are in the grocery stores this week. We especially need spaghetti sauce, canned fruits, cereal, soup, crackers, canned spaghetti or ravioli, boxed dinners, juice, and baby food. At this time, we do not need tuna fish or beans.



Recycle, Recycle, Recycle!

Don't forget about our Recycling Bin at the back of the church parking lot. Please bring your old newspaper, catalogues, magazines, paperback books, hard cover books with the covers removed, junk mail, and other paper to the Recycle Bin. The more we collect each month, the more we receive per ton.

Infant and Toddler Care

Loving, consistent childcare is available in the nursery downstairs from 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. September through May and 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. when we have only one service in the summer. Our paging system will alert you quietly if your child needs your presence. If you need directions to the nursery, an usher will be happy to help you!

Prayer Chain

Church family and friends may request special prayers through the Prayer Chain by calling Bob or Irene Hayman.



OUR STAFF AND LAY LEADERS ARE HERE TO HELP YOU

Senior Pastor: Richard W. Neal

Associate Pastor: Nicholas Perry

Director of Christian Education: Judith Toone

Pastoral Assistant for Nurture & Visitation: Barbara Saltarella

Music Directors: Judith Stafford and Wendy Amuso

Church Administrator: Denise Barham

Custodian: Floyd Schebell

Nursery Care Supervisor: Kathleen Ciccone

Nursery Care Assistants: Amanda Dickerman, Allison Soucise

Newsletter Editors: Sondra Scott and Rachel Zeller

LAY LEADERS:

Trustee Chair: Ed Howard

Staff & Pastor Parish Relations Chair: Gary Brost

Stewardship & Finance Chair: Rosemary Elliott & Lori Pacer

Coordinating Lay Leader & Treasurer: Dave Reichard

Communication Ministries: Karen Gerken & Sondra Scott

Family Life Ministries: Kim Weingartner

Membership Care Ministries:

Memorials: Sally Jost

Open Door Nursery School: Kathleen Zarbo

Outreach & Missions Ministries: Kevin Lyttle

Relational Ministries:

Worship Ministries: Cheryl Thomas

Please submit articles, news, announcements, etc. for the next edition of *The Messenger* to Sondra Scott. Thank you