

The St. James Connector

December, 2011

St. James United Church of Christ,
76 Main St., Hamburg, NY 14075
716-649-6171

Robert Matlack, Pastor
Alva Looze, Associate Pastor
Patty Jensen, Office Secretary
St. James email: stjamesucc2@verizon.net

Karen Reinagel, Director of Christian Ed
Ciaran Krueger, Director of Music
Jonathan Rizzo, Accompanist
Website: www.saintjamesucc.com

Christmas Pageant

Our Christmas Pageant is Sunday, December 18th this year, so circle the date on your calendar. It is always a special morning and service when the children of our congregation tell the story of the birth of the Christ Child. The service begins at 10:00 a.m. and the pageant will be presented in place of the children's sermon. Fittings for costumes will finish December 4th. Please be sure to fill out a pageant permission form and return it.

The dress rehearsal for the pageant is scheduled for Saturday, December 17th from 10:00 a.m. to Noon and will be followed by a holiday pizza party. If you would like to help with the pageant, rehearsal or party, please speak to Karen Reinagel. We always have room for all the children that would like to be included in the cast. Participation in the pageant is usually for children four years old and up. If a parent feels that their three year old is ready to be in the pageant, please speak to Karen to make arrangements. The youngest children are usually the stars. If you have any questions please feel free to call the Christian Education Office and speak to Karen.

Christmas Eve

7:30 p.m. Family Candlelight Service - There is something for everyone in this celebration. It includes many favorite carols, a Christmas Story, and of course, communion.

11:00 p.m. We will welcome Christmas Day with our traditional Candlelight Communion Service. This is a very quiet, reflective service as we await the coming of Christmas Day.

One of the special ways that we observe Advent is the lighting of candles on our Advent wreath. These candles remind us of some of the many gifts God offers to us. Any folks or families who would like to help by lighting the Advent Candles on a particular Sunday - or to help light the aisle candles on Christmas Eve, please contact Pastor Alva Looze.

Advent Workshop

Our Annual Advent Workshop is December 4th after church. There will be lunch provided by the Youth. We have new ideas for craft project for all ages and decorated bags to fill with our Advent projects. Dave Reichard has ornaments for the adults to work on. Come join us for lunch work on crafts with your children.

A Message from Bob

Advent was set aside as a season of anticipation and preparation.

The first Sunday in Advent is the fourth Sunday before December 25th. This year Advent begins on November 27th. The focus of the season includes preparation for the celebration of this anniversary of Christ's birth, and also the anticipation of Christ's return at the close of history. The liturgical color for Advent is purple, reminding us of Christ's royalty. In some traditions blue is used, jointly symbolizing royalty and hope.

In our society we do a lot of things to prepare for Christmas, but most people find it very difficult to spend time in reflection and preparing themselves spiritually to celebrate the wonder of Christ's birth, and to anticipate Christ's return. We get so busy and pre-occupied with other things that have become part of the season! In many ways, it's easier when we can feel like we're doing something, particularly in a season where we feel like there is so much to be done.

Yet Advent isn't so much about doing, as about our state of being. It's a time to really prepare ourselves inside, a time when we

(cont'd)

(cont'd from first page)

need to stop and reflect, to pray and to ask God to really prepare us for the wonder of Christ's birth. When you get right down to it, that's the most important way that we can observe Advent! As an added benefit, observing the original intention of Advent doesn't cost any money – only some time, some effort, and some openness to God and God's plans for our lives.

I have always enjoyed the Advent season - not the busyness, but rather the opportunity to refocus my life and really remember what is important. In the birth of the Christ Child I hear a call to focus once again on how God has come to us and offered us a love greater than anything else we have known. As you're probably aware by now, with my retirement in early June, this will be my last Advent as your pastor. I look forward to the wonder, the awe, the incredible power of what we're celebrating during the weeks of Advent, and in our Christmas Eve Services. Together let's truly celebrate the power of God's love as we prepare for the wonder of Christmas!

Bob

Poinsettia Sunday

Poinsettia Sunday will be December 11, 2011. Orders will be taken until December 4th in the church office, placed in the offering plates, or mailed to the church office. You may pick up your plant on December 11th or after one of the Christmas Eve services. Plants that are left will be delivered to one of our sick and shut-ins.

Angel/Mitten Tree

Each year during the Advent season the Board of Christian Education sponsors the theme of "Giving" and with that in mind the Board is pledging to make sure every tag on the Angel Tree has a gift to be sent back to the Salvation Army with the No Tag Left Behind policy. The money donated in the children's offering envelopes will help to defray the cost of purchasing the gifts we need in order to fulfill our goal. You are also invited to make monetary donations to help defray the cost of purchasing gifts to fill the tag requests during the advent season. Please help make this Christmas special for someone in need. The Angel Mitten Tree has been a tradition at St. James for as long as I can remember. The warm hats, mittens, gloves, and scarves are placed on the branches of the tree and given to those in need. The tags on the tree are to be taken so you can purchase a gift for the child or senior whose name appears on the tag you've chosen. You may purchase the suggested items or choose one that you like. The gift tags will be in the Lounge once they arrive so be on the lookout for them and let the giving begin. *Remember do not gift wrap your gift!!!!* Please just return it and place it under the tree in the sanctuary or the lounge with the original tag attached to the items. The Salvation Army needs to be able to see all the gifts. The deadline to bring in gifts is Sunday December 11th. If you have any questions please speak to Karen Reinagel.

Please pick up your contributor statement after January 8, 2012.

Barb Reuter

Sewing Mission

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, December 13th at 9:30 a.m. in the Assembly Hall. Our work session will be followed by our annual Christmas luncheon at Heidi's Hideaway.

We are still in need of sheets for chux pads. If you have any to donate, please label them and leave them in the church office. We also are in need of new members. Please think about joining our group.

Server's

Servers Christmas Party is on Friday, December 2nd at the New Amor Inn Tap Room at 1 p.m. Please call Joanne Roberts 648-6382 with your reservations and meal choice. All ladies are invited.

Christian Education Advent Items

On November 27th, the first Sunday in Advent, during the children's sermon the children will receive a special advent gift. They will also hear about the special "No TAG Left Behind" policy for this years Angel/Mitten Tree.

A basket of advent items on display located near the bulletin board. Please help yourself to any items you might like during the advent season, complements of the Board of Christian Education.

Board of Christian Ed

Our annual Christmas Party and Meeting will be here on Tuesday, December 13th in the Horton Lounge at 6:30 p.m. Please bring an appetizer or a dessert to share.

Annual Reports

Committee Chairs, please have your end of year reports for the Annual Report to the church office by December 15th. You may check last year's Annual Report if you've not done a report previously.

Family Night

Our Family Night will be here on December 7th at 6 p.m. It will be our Christmas Family Night so please bring a holiday treat as we celebrate the season.

Please remember to sign-up if you are planning to attend. When you sign-up please indicate if you are willing to stay and help clean up following the event. Also indicate if you are willing to bring a treat or dessert. Remember sign-up, help if you can and please remember to attend. Talk to Karen if you have questions or ideas.

Lighthouse Meeting

Please join us on Thursday, December 15th at St. James at 7 p.m. Anyone who is interested in working with youth is welcome to attend and learn more about planning youth events, working with youth.

"12 Hours of Christmas" and Youth Board Meeting

Calling all Middle and Senior High Youth on Tuesday, December 27th. The event is still being planned so keep your eye open to information and sign-up sheets on the Youth Bulletin Board. Bring a \$5.00 gift to exchange if you would care to participate in the optional gift exchange. Questions, talk to Donna! Bring warm clothing for outdoor activities. Interested in Chaperoning or driving talk to Karen, Donna or Patty.

WAY Retreat

Our Way Retreat for Sr. High Youth Grades 9th -12th will be coming up in Jan. Most likely over Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend. More information to follow. Check the Youth Bulletin Bd. for details & forms or talk to Karen or Donna.

Sledding

We are planning a day at Chestnut Ridge For Everyone (weather permitting) on a Saturday in January

Mark your calendar the youth are inviting everyone to go sledding at Chestnut Ridge. Watch the bulletin for more information and don't forget to be on the look up for a sign-up sheet after the 1st of the year. - THINK SNOW!

Thank you from Christian Ed

Thank you to everyone who continues to support our Youth fund-raisers.

Thank you to the Middle High Class and Senior High Class for bagging the Harvest Home Collection.

Thank you to Christian Ed staff members who helped to run this year's Halloween Party. I have received many comments on what a great job you did and the kids told me they had a lot of fun.

Paula Pfister Pie Auction

Thank you to everyone who donated something for the auction and thank you for everyone who attended and bid on the goodies. The proceeds of the auction go to the Paula Pfister Scholarship Fund. Paula was a wonderful person who served as our CE Director and she worked hard for our children and congregation.

Operation Christmas Child

Thank you to everyone who participated in this event. ***The Power of a Simple Gift*** - Operation Christmas Child bring joys and hope to children in desperate situations worldwide through gift-filled shoe boxes and the Good News of God's love.

From the office:

If you are moving, going way for an extended period of time, or do not wish to receive the newsletter, please let the office know. You may instead have the newsletter emailed or pick up a copy here at church.

Thank you, Patty Jensen

De-Greening

We will be degreening the church on January 8th after the service. Please stay and help. It's fun to work together.

FOOD PANTRY

Dec 4 Dry/canned milk
Dec 11 Cake/bread/muffin mix
Dec 18 Canned vegetables/fruit
Dec 25 Instant potatoes/pasta

REGISTRY

Deaths:

Evelyn G. Ottley
Born: October 23, 1915
Died: October 31, 2011
Service: November 3, 2011

Baptism:

James Timothy Schueler
Born: September 15, 2011
Baptized: November 6, 2011
Parents: Tim and Katie Schueler

Mission 1

Our food collection for Harvest Home Sunday totaled 226 food items which were distributed to the Southtowns Food Pantry and Operation Good Neighbor. Thank you to everyone who brought food, signed letters and donated money to this project.

GIFT Thanksgiving Dinner

Not only did we feed 97 people with a delicious dinner, have a worship service followed by dessert, but many pans of food went to the Niagara Falls Soup Kitchen. Thank you to those who prepared, set up and cleaned up.



St. James
United Church of Christ
76 Main St., Hamburg, NY 14075

Non - Profit
Organization
Auto U.S.
Postage Paid
Hamburg, NY
Permit # 121



A

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Sometimes a Sheep

Psalm 100: 3 "Know that the Lord is God--it is God that has made us; we belong to God. We are God's people, the sheep of God's own pasture." **Reflection by Anthony B. Robinson**, a United Church of Christ minister, is a speaker, teacher and writer

I love this short, cheerful Psalm. It calls us to, "Enter God's gates with thanksgiving; and God's courts with praise." It makes me think--or better, feel--the happiness of going to church, the sense of anticipation on a Sunday morning, the joy in gathering and the feeling of being caught up in praise of God, "who is good, whose steadfast love lasts forever." But for some the whole sheep thing is hard, a downgrade. Sheep are dumb. Sheep stand around going "Baa, baa." Sheep are passive. Sheep are dependent. "I'm no sheep." Actually, I am sheep-like, or what I imagine sheep to be like, at least some of the time. I need my human version of green pastures and still waters, some safe pasture and sanctuary. I need a good shepherd to turn to, to check in with. I am dependent, at least every now and then. I want, some days or hours, to rest on the everlasting arms and be rocked on the bosom of Abraham.

But we're big on independence, on being in charge and on our own. Okay. But really, we are both, both dependent and independent. We gather to worship as a return to a womb. We come back to the rock from which we were hewn, to the well from which we were drawn. There's a time for that and a place for that. You've been being big and independent all week long. Now you get to rest, to depend on an Other and turn to a power greater than your own. But it doesn't last forever. The benediction is a blessing but also a charge. A sweet farewell and a kick in the butt. Now, the pendulum swings the other direction. Having drawn near to God in the hour of worship and prayer, we are blessed and sent forth into the world to declare God's praise and be instruments of God's grace. I love the church. That's the Christian life: gathering and scattering. Frequent factory recalls and regular road tests. Dependence and independence. Not one or the other, but both. Sometimes sheep, sometimes shepherds.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for the church, for its life of worship and service, for its rhythm of gathering in and sending out. Thank you for every community of faith where we find both rest and challenge. Amen.