

THE RAPPORTEUR

"Where Faith and Family Come Together"
First Presbyterian Church, Olean, NY
December, 2016

Pastor's Thoughts...

Christmas is coming, like the birth it celebrates. It will come. And I am joy filled to receive it.

In fact, I love the Christmas season. So many people I meet say things like, "It must be stressful for you." I know they think this because it is one of the busiest times of the church year. It is the time for special activities, special worship, family gatherings, community service and parties. But for me this bustle brings joy to my heart. I see the season as not so much stress as a time for enjoying and sorting.

I really enjoy that people's hearts and concerns go out to so many folks in loving a charitable ways. It is also a time for choosing what is important and what is not. It comes with the natural acknowledgement that I have to let God be God and I don't have to do everything for everyone and be everywhere. In fact the most important thing has already occurred; Christ is born and we just get to celebrate his birth. One way we celebrate is with our traditions.

I wanted to share with you some of my favorite Christmas traditions.

- 1) Watching Christmas movies. I love the traditional favorites like *Miracle on 34th Street* and all the iterations of *Scrooge* and *Charlie Brown*. However I also enjoy *I'll Be Home For Christmas*, a somewhat silly story of a young man on the road to discovery just how vital family is.
- 2) Waffle House. When we used to travel on Christmas Eve and Christmas day for vacation and family gatherings, we started eating at the Waffle House because it was open and they were everywhere. This began a tradition where we had dinner with the family on Christmas Eve at the Waffle House after Christmas Eve Services.

- 3) Christmas Breakfast. When my son was little he wanted to eat breakfast before opening presents and from that time on Marlene has prepared family breakfast for those of us together on Christmas morning.

These last two traditions will be skipped this year because of the time of Christmas on Sunday and we won't be heading to Saint Louis until after worship Christmas Sunday, but they are still part of my Christmas

- 4) Stars and Promises. Since Miles was born we have been attending the Peter Mayer's *Stars and Promises Christmas Concert*. First we went in Saint Louis and now we travel to Erie to enjoy this music. He is a wonderful musician, Christian musician, and lead guitar player for the Jimmy Buffett band. When I think about it I have been to more concerts and events with Peter Mayer than anyone else.
- 5) Christmas Eve worship. I enjoy the fact that everything has been made ready and many families are reunited and part of the reunion involves worship together. I love seeing you gathered together for a special event that you have made part of your tradition.

Let the season and your traditions warm your heart again this year. I hope my reflections stir some of your own reflections on this wonderful time of the year when we celebrate the coming of Jesus into the world and into our hearts.

Peace, *Pastor Bruce*



MEF

As usual, the MEF committee has been busy managing fellowship activities. Our First Sunday Potluck Lunch in November was a success. About 35 people attended the traditional Thankfest on November 19th and enjoyed plentiful food and an entertaining White Elephant gift exchange.

Upcoming Events:

December 4 – Deck the Halls after worship. MEF is asking all who can manage the time to assist in getting our sanctuary and Fellowship Hall ready for our celebration of Christ's birth. With enough help, the work goes quickly. There are important tasks for helpers with all levels of physical ability. Sandwiches and beverages will be available for lunch. This activity will take the place of our First Sunday Lunch for December.

December 18 – Caroling. Following worship, hardy folks will have a quick lunch and head out to take Christmas joy to our Friends at Home and others. If you haven't participated in this event in the past, you really need to try it. The recipients of our enthusiastic renditions of favorite Christmas carols are always very appreciative of our efforts and aren't at all inclined to judge the quality of our singing.

December 24 – Following our special Christmas Eve service, there will be a reception featuring cookies, punch, and coffee as we greet old and new friends who are in the area for the holiday.

January 8 – We will Wreck the Halls as we remove and stow our Christmas decorations for another year. As in putting up the decorations, there are tasks for helpers of all levels of physical ability. A sandwich and beverage lunch will be available.

January 15 – Martin Luther King service and dinner beginning at 4pm. Casseroles and salads are needed for the dinner.

Late January – Annual meeting.

Stewardship Committee

The Peace and Global Witness Offering was collected in October, yielding \$920 with additional gifts still coming in.

The Christmas Joy offering will be accepted through December with the formal collection being at the Christmas Eve service.

Your gifts to all the special offerings this year have been generous and will help allow important missions to continue locally, nationally and internationally.

December Birthdays

- 3 ~ Matt Lang, Barbara Taft
- 12 ~ Michael Kalsman
- 14 ~ Beth Kalafatich, Samantha Hanners
- 17 ~ Cindy Shaver
- 18 ~ Rick Snyder
- 21 ~ Brenda Snyder
- 26 ~ Tom Bowersox
- 27 ~ Ryan Whitney

December Anniversaries

- 9 ~ Louie & Lynn McClure
- 31 ~ John & Verna Linney

DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS



WISHING YOU
AN ABUNDANTLY
BLESSED HOLIDAY
SEASON!

FROM THE FULLNESS OF
GRACE WE HAVE ALL
RECEIVED ONE BLESSING
AFTER ANOTHER.
JOHN 1:16

SESSION UPDATE

Information received and actions taken by Session at the November 7, 2016 meeting:

- The state has suspended the operating license for OCDC for two years. Their board has decided to liquidate all assets in a sale scheduled for December 1 and 2. Our church has looked into obtaining some items. The church has agreed to store the OCDC records for 10 years.
- The Martin Luther King service will be held in our church on Sunday, January 15 at 4 pm.
- Received thank-you notes from the Olean Food Pantry for the Noisy Can donations and the African Center for Cultural Development for a Burt Fund donation.
- A toilet in the men's room was left running, leading to a large water bill. We need to check the bathrooms as part of the process of locking up the building.
- Diane Trippany has developed a Building Use Policy brochure and an Indemnification Form/Contract for people and organizations wishing to use the building.
- The October Budget Report was accepted.
- Approved gifts from the Burt Fund: \$4,000 to the Olean Soccer Club TOP Program, \$16000 to the Catt. Co. Youth Bureau, \$5,000 to the Santa Claus Lane decorations.
- Approved informing Genesis House that they can keep the 2013 \$5,000 Burt Fund donation for the Men's Homeless Shelter that didn't open because of zoning issues.
- Learned that the loss of \$25,000 in rent from OCDC must be considered in the development of the 2017 budget.
- Learned that the church will receive a portion of the Toth estate in Florida, possibly \$60,000 - \$80,000. The estate may be settled by the end of the calendar year.

(Session Update Continued)

- Approved 2017 staff and pastor wages and benefits as recommended by the Personnel Committee.
- The Christmas Pageant will be December 18.
- MEF and the youth will cooperate in raising funds for the Heifer Project. The youth will also sell cookies after church to raise funds to aid the people of Haiti.
- At the time of this meeting, the Peace and Global Witness Offering had received \$820 with donations still coming in.
- Activities scheduled by MEF include Thankfest on Nov. 19, Deck the Halls on Dec. 4, Caroling after church on Dec. 18, Christmas Eve reception on Dec. 24, and Wreck the Halls on Jan. 8.

The next meeting will be December 5th at 7pm.

	<p>Presbytery News and Notes <u>Updated information:</u> No meetings are currently planned for the remainder of the year. Information from around the Presbytery can be explored at: http://www.pbywny.org/</p>
<p><u>South/East Cluster Mtg:</u> Members of the Southern Tier Cluster churches met on Saturday morning, November 19th at the Allegheny Presbyterian Church. Snack bags were created for distribution through local missions of our member group churches. Funds given to Presbytery for 'local mission' are now available to our So. Tier churches for distribution. Any suggestions you have for specific missions or groups should be given Rev. Levine or our church office.</p>	



Book Club

The November book, Code Name Verity, by Elizabeth Wein, is about two British women during World War II. Verity is a spy who is sent into Nazi-occupied France on a mission and the other is her close friend and pilot who flies her to her site and then crashes in the plane due to damage caused by German attempts to bring the plane down. Verity is arrested by Nazi officials when she makes a cultural error. This historical fiction story is narrated by the two women and illustrates the challenges and excitement women faced in serving their countries in wartime.

The book club meets the fourth Monday of most months at Perkins at 6pm. It is possible there will not be a meeting this December as the date for that meeting would be the day after Christmas. Watch the church bulletin for an announcement regarding the next meeting and the book selected for discussion at that meeting.

Anyone wishing to join the book club or to sit in on one or more meetings, should simply go to a one. It is not necessary to have read the book for that meeting. There are usually a couple of members at each meeting who haven't read the book and we have never thrown anyone out.

Reminder: The book club is maintaining a list of books that individual members have enjoyed or that have been recommended to them. The list is filled with excellent books and copies are available to anyone who would like to obtain one. They are in Punkie Sinesiou's mailbox in the church office.



Adult Discussion

During the season of Advent we're utilizing a resource entitled 'FAITH TALKS' for the focus of our discussions. Each topic card provides a situational challenge that encourages personal reflection and experiences. Each Sunday morning at

9:35 AM in Fellowship Hall, all are welcomed to the discussions.

CE Corner

Our Sunday School class has been studying some of Jesus' parables this month. We have also examined a few of Paul's letters. We have used these passages of scripture to help us learn what God wants us to say, do and act upon in our daily lives. We have also learned that we are part of a big church family, and that we need to support each other in being the best Christians that we can be.

The students have been very busy with stewardship this month! We baked 4 dozen cookies and donated them to the Olean Police Department on Sunday, November 13th. This was the final phase of our Cookies for Cops service project. While we were busy in the kitchen, we whipped up some cookie packages to sell. All proceeds will go to the Presbytery's fund to assist the Haitian people as they struggle to recover from the devastating Hurricane Matthew. The cookies sold very well, as did the brownies that Jackson and his grandma made! The bake sale will continue for a few more weeks. We are also assisting MEF with the Heifer Project- an organization that provides animals and other agricultural supplies to people in third-world countries. Please consider helping out, either by purchasing an animal yourself, or by going in with friends and donating to a community fund that will purchase a larger, more valuable animal.

Our Sunday School Christmas Pageant is scheduled for Sunday, December 18th. The kids have been busy throughout November and December creating some special artwork for the pageant. We hope you will join us for our special presentation. There will be no Sunday School the following week (December 25).

I hope you have a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful 2017! Enjoy God's blessings this holiday season!

Carol McClellan, CE Director