



THE PARK CHURCH

ELMIRA, NEW YORK

CROSS CURRENTS

December 2013

Felicitations

December 1 is the advent of Advent – the beginning, the adventure, the “time of preparation for the arrival of a notable person, thing, or event,” in our case the birth of Jesus. Like our months in the womb before our own births, it is a time of waiting in darkness.

Waiting. Darkness. Neither seems very enticing. And they’re not supposed to be.

Despite the commercialism and hype of this time of year, Advent is about presence, not presents. It’s about, in a word, faithfulness. Echoing in my mind are the words to “Find Us Faithful,” the magnificent solo by Br. Shawn Benedict in our worship this morning.

We're pilgrims on the journey
Of the narrow road
And those who've gone before us line the way
Cheering on the faithful, encouraging the weary
Their lives a stirring testament to God's sustaining grace

Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses
Let us run the race not only for the prize
But as those who've gone before us
Let us leave to those behind us
The heritage of faithfulness passed on through godly lives

Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful
May the fire of our devotion light their way
May the footprints that we leave
Lead them to believe
And the lives we live inspire them to obey

The challenge for us – as for the faithful throughout the generations – is to stay focused on the meaning of Christmas, not the trappings of Christmas. And the greatest gift that we can offer the world is faithfulness – the yearning to stay on course despite the enticements to party more, buy more, want more. It’s not easy with all of the endless commercialism invading our lives, but the way to manage an Advent and Christmas that is truly joyful involves our focusing on the gifts of God and one another, rather than the materials things of the airwaves. The beautiful poem by the artist Michael Podesta captures this better than I can:

If, as Herod, we fill our lives with things,
and again with things,
if we consider ourselves so unimportant
that we must fill every moment of our lives with action,

Church Staff

Rev. Felicity Wright,
Minister

Joe Barber,
Organist & Music Director

Mary Jane Eckel,
Children's Music Director

Mimi Gridley,
Office Administrator

Cindy Rice, *Sexton*
Sue Weaver,

Financial Secretary

Amy Kick,

Administrative Assistant

Contact Us

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office@theparkchurch.org

Visit Our Website

www.theparkchurch.org

"Like" us on Facebook:

The Park Church Elmira
Park Church Elmira Youth
Group

The Arts at Park
Spirit Café Elmira

Open and Affirming

As an "Open & Affirming" congregation, we, the members of The Park Church, embrace people of every ethnic origin, race, class, age, ability, gender and sexual orientation.

We welcome into Christian worship, membership, leadership, friendship and employment all who covenant with us to seek God's truth and follow Christ's example.

when will we have the time
to make the long slow journey across the desert
as did the Magi?

Or sit and watch the stars
as did the Shepherds?

Or brood over the coming of the child
as did Mary?

For each of us, there is a desert to travel,
a star to discover,
and a being within ourselves to bring to life.

May you find the incomparable gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love this Advent and Christmas season!

Blessings,
Rev. Felicity

Message from Council

I hope that you will take the opportunity to attend the Congregational meeting when Jim Wolcott, Treasurer will present the planned budget for 2014. He has given a great deal of time working with our office staff to produce this budget. I was pleased to see the Chairs of the various Teams provide projections of their needs for the upcoming year. With the momentum that was established in the spring to diminish the amount that is withdrawn from the endowments, the team worked to streamline the budget. Please give Jim Wolcott, Sue Weaver and Dean Butts a big thank you when you see them and after you hear the report on the budget.

Now that a proposed budget is in place, we are in the process of finalizing the Stewardship Campaign. The Council is fully invested in helping to assure a successful campaign. Again, we are including a line to pledge to the roof loan as well as the annual Stewardship Campaign pledge. Please give as you can. Your support is needed.

It continually amazes me how much The Park Church has an affinity for the Arts. On November 16 we had the great fortune to host Opera Baritone, Todd Thomas, a native son, as he performed pieces from Verdi as recognition of Verdi's 200th Birthday. That carried over into Sunday morning service. Saturday evening he was accompanied by Dr. Charis Demaris of Ithaca College. Also, the Elmira College a capella choir entertained those enjoying the chicken and biscuits dinner on Sunday. What talent!

On Sunday, November 24th, the congregation was given the opportunity to focus on the history of some of the stained glass windows of our sanctuary and how the design is thought out and the steps to construction.

I am pleased with the volunteers that have stepped forward to assist in providing child care for our families to enable the parents to participate in the worship service. Thank you Congregational Life for recruiting these volunteers.

Let me just say one final thing. Are you a member or friend of Park Church and just not sure where your talents could be used OR think that you are not needed? WE DO NEED YOU! Please make yourself known. We will help you to find your place at Park Church.

Missions Message

We will ask for contributions to the UCC Christmas Fund on Sunday, December 8. Gifts to the UCC Christmas Fund help provide pension and health premium supplements to low-income retirees, emergency grants to the families of clergy and lay employees, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to hundreds of retirees. Our Pastor Emeritus, Bob Lester, wholeheartedly supports this program and is a beneficiary of it.

We ask you to prayerfully consider your response to the 2013 Christmas Fund Offering. Reflect upon the ways in which your life has been touched by a retired pastor, a former youth leader, a Christian Education director, a church secretary, a custodian, or a minister of music, and honor their ministries in a way that will help them and others like them in these challenging times.

For those who prefer to donate on-line, the UCC Pension Board URL is: <http://www.pbucc.org/>

The Missions Team meets on the third Wednesday of every month at 4:00 pm in Beecher Hall. Meetings are open to the congregation if you would like to be more involved with the community outreach of The Park Church!

Treasurer Report ***(October 2013)***

1. Pledges/Income:

Pledges and Contributions received in October totaled \$17,461.00 or 142% of the monthly budgeted amount. Plate Offering Income was \$137.00 for the month, or 82% of the monthly budgeted amount. Total Giving Income for October was \$17,598.00. There was \$303.00 in Building Rental Income (\$103.00 from AM Art and \$200.00 for sanctuary use for the McDowell funeral), \$625.00 in Parking Contributions

Income, \$43.00 in Meaningful Movies contributions, \$271.00 in Spirit Café income, and \$125.00 in Tops card sales. In addition, a total of \$2,155.80 of Roof Fund Income was received in October; \$1,304.80 in contributions, \$372.00 from the September 26th Park Café, \$474.00 from the chicken and biscuits dinner, and \$5.00 from Books for the Roof.

2. Account Balances: (as of October 31st)

Checking: \$7,434.28 (system balance)

Endowment A: \$391,426.14

Combined Funds: \$28,929.96 (system balance)

Endowment B-E: \$353,775.59

3. Items of Note:

Operating giving income received year to date for 2013, not including Prepaid Pledge Income, totals \$123,113.15 or 99% of the year to date budget of \$123,798.30. In comparison, total giving income received year to date in 2012 was \$104,809.18 or 84% of the year to date budget of \$123,798.30. A total of \$50,000.00 has been transferred from Endowment A to cover 2013 operating expenses. In October 2012, a year to date total of \$70,000.00 had been transferred from End. A.

As a result of the recent appeal to the congregation, annual pledges for the Operating Fund have been increased by \$6,350.00, and for the Roof Fund, \$1,300.00.

The \$2,314.53 Roof Fund Expense line includes an additional payment of \$2,136.39 on the roof loan principal, \$70.62 to Bill Knapp for food expenses for Park Café, and \$107.52 to Bill Knapp for the chicken and biscuits dinner expenses.

A payment for \$12,166.80 was made on the CCTC roof loan in October. This includes the regular \$771.48 principal payment, \$1,258.93 interest payment, an additional payment of \$2,136.39 on the principal from the Roof Fund Income balance, as well as \$8,000.00 from a transfer from the Memorials Fund. A total of \$37,442.70 has been paid on the roof loan principal in 2013. The CCTC roof loan liability balance is \$307,457.40 and the balance of the Britenbaker Promissory Note is \$55,000.00. As of October 31st, the Endowment E balance is \$210,422.98 (including the \$5,000 Cameros Family Trust Gift intended for the Arts at Park program).

Electronic Giving

We are pleased to announce that our electronic giving program is officially up and running! If you visit our website regularly (www.theparkchurch.org), you will have noticed that a brand new "Click Here for Online Giving" button has appeared. The process is very simple; just click the button and you will be redirected to a page where you will be able to determine your donation and even designate where it goes. As you plan your contributions, please consider electronic giving. It is convenient and safe for you and provides much-needed donation consistency for our church. Contact the office with any questions!

Choir Corner

Joe Barber ~ Adult Choir/Grace Notes

Mary Jane Eckel ~ Children's Choirs/Adult Bell Choir

Adult Choir: Two Christmas rehearsals are scheduled for Thursday, December 12th and 19th at 1:00 pm in the choir loft. Please bring a guest to choir too! Those who wish to sing who have previously sung with us are always welcome.

I am also putting out an urgent request for sopranos for Christmas Eve. In that there is a possibility we may have only one soprano for Christmas Eve choir, I am urging you to recruit a couple of more. This is one section that I can always use more folks. The alternative for lack of sopranos is to just sing two part anthems which limits us as to music repertoire and blend which at times are nice depending on the piece but the SATB blend always sounds better. If you know of a soprano or two, invite them to our two Christmas rehearsals and Christmas Eve service. Invite them to contact me.!

Children's Choirs: During the month of December, beginning on December 2, we will rehearse until 5:30, including the younger children, for our Christmas program on December 22. Children are asked to report to church that morning, wearing black or dark clothing, at 8:30 am. We will have a dress rehearsal of our program, and then eat breakfast. Please speak to Mary Jane if you are able to assist with the breakfast and provide something for the children. Special thanks to Chris and Mary Wynings for their combined talents in assisting with this year's program! You will be delighted, I promise!

On Monday, December 23, we will carol, and I invite any interested members of the church to join us. Over the years, we hear back from our shut-ins how much they enjoy this experience. I know that it is a busy time, and we will take whoever can come--the more the merrier! Join me at the church at 4 pm, and we should report back by 5:30 pm.

No rehearsal on December 30. Choir rehearsals will resume on Monday, January 6.

Adult Bell Choir: Rehearsals have changed to Tuesdays at 1:15-2:15, beginning on Nov. 26. We will rehearse every Tuesday in December except for Christmas Eve, December 24, when we will rehearse in the evening prior to the service. We also will have no rehearsal on New Year's Eve. We will resume on Tuesday, January 7. We welcome new ringers!

Music at Park

Joe Barber and Linda Couchon will be performing a Holiday Recital in our sanctuary on Friday, December 13 at noon, during the Arts and Edibles Holiday Bazaar. Joe will be playing the organ and Linda will be playing the violin. Join us for their beautiful Christmas music and then stop over and have some lunch at the bazaar!

Arts at Park

As a benefit for our summer Arts at Park, we are hosting a Holiday Arts and Edibles Sale at the church over the Dec. 13-15 weekend. Please consider stopping by to shop our vendors as well as support our program. It will be necessary for us to sustain this program if it is to continue. We are hoping to add several "Cooking at Park" classes to our offerings on Saturday mornings during the winter months as well. Look for details after the holidays.

Youth Decorating Party

Rev. Felicity is planning another hosting of the "Christmas-tree-and-the-chain-saw-massacre" on Sunday, December 8 with the Combined Youth Group. Folks will gather at 2:30 after confirmation class to head out and cut down the prettiest tree in the forest. And then the decorating and partying will continue until... whenever. Please let us know if you're coming so that we can have enough food!

Church Fellowship

Rummage Sale: What a Sale!!!! We netted over \$3,000 from this November's effort! A large portion will be given towards the roof debt, and we will be purchasing new table cloths for our card tables, as the current ones are stained and fraying. Special thanks to all the "Worker Bees", as we could not begin to pull this off without them! We have begun to take spring and summer items and clothing, as the shelves are empty! We also have begun Ebay sales, thanks to Deb Harris, and we hope to continue this effort, so our coffers continue to fill year-round. Thank you, thank you!!!!

Hanging of the Greens: We will have a combined Hanging of the Greens and Spirit Café on Friday, December 6, with both hands-on and discussion elements (a la Spirit Café) with Christmas caroling and sanctuary decoration (a la hanging of the greens). At this point, we expect that both Jose Gomez and Carrie Hooper will join us.

Quilting for the Roof: Mary Jane is planning to begin this project in January. If you are interested in machine piecing, let her know. She will give specifics and provide all fabric for you. The goal is to have the quilt finished by the time Wisner Market begins in order to display and sell tickets all summer. The drawing will be held in September.

New Members (Joining December 15th)

Wayne Young: Wayne has been a volunteer fireman for the Village of Horseheads for over 30 years. He has also worked for a local cab company for the past 13 years and drives the handicapped van, helping those in need, assuring they will arrive at their destination safely and comfortably.

Lauren Shaw: Lauren and her son, Wondwossen, recently moved to Elmira from Ithaca. She is a professor at Elmira College, where she teaches Hispanic Studies and yoga. Wondwossen is currently attending Corning Community College. They have a lovely yellow lab named Marigold, and all three of them are settling in to their new home. Lauren joins the Park Church for its close community, progressive programming, and connection to important historical figures who acted for justice.

Spiritual Offerings this Month

As we celebrate Advent, the "waiting time" before Christmas, we can expect many traditional elements, but with added emphasis on great rejoicing at the beginning and a quieter, more reflective ending. We would like more involvement from children and youth as percussionists, greeters, and (possibly) readers. And here's what's coming in December:

- **12/1:** This is the first Sunday of Advent, with the theme of hope. We will light the Advent candle and offer communion. This will be an intergenerational service with a Congregational Meeting to present the budget.
- **12/8:** The second Sunday of Advent will focus on peace. Rev. Felicity will lead worship as Rev. Manda Adams preaches. The Christmas Offering will be taken.
- **12/15:** The third Sunday of Advent focuses on joy. We will welcome new members and enjoy the Craft Sale following worship.
- **12/22:** The fourth Sunday is all about love and will feature the Children's Pageant.
- **12/24:** Christmas Eve offerings include a family service at 4:00 and a candlelight lessons and carols service at 10:00.
- **12/29:** We will enjoy a relaxed agape service.

Ecumenical Offerings



A discussion group focused on asking questions

Where is the church headed?

What does it mean to be Christian today?

What shifts in church culture are on the horizon?

And so much more...

Sound like a worthwhile conversation? We would love to hear your insights. There are no right answers to these questions! New to faith or life-long adherent, all are welcome to the table.

Next Meeting: December 4th 6:30-7:30pm Bethany Lutheran 256 S. Walnut St.

We will enjoy desserts and hot beverages. All are invited to bring a dessert.

Bethany Lutheran Church will be hosting a Blue Christmas (or Longest Night) Service on December 18th at 7:00 pm. A grief counselor will be in attendance, offering a few words for those gathered...practical wisdom for managing the holiday season if you are struggling with loss. This will be a service of lament and hope for those who have experienced a difficult year and who may find it hard to seek the joy of the holiday season.

Christian Education

Meaningful Movies: We will no longer hold potluck suppers before the movies as we have very few folks participating. Should there be demand for more suppers, they will be reinstated. Movies play at 7:00 pm in Beecher Hall on the second Wednesday of each month. This month we will be screening “Dive” on Wednesday, December 11. Curious about how much of our food goes straight to the land fill? Watch filmmaker Jeremy Seifert and friends as they dumpster dive in the back alleys and gated garbage receptacles of Los Angeles’ supermarkets, salvaging thousands of dollars worth of good, edible food.

Sunday School: Our Christmas project will combine thoughtfulness and reading. Through the Traveling Books Program of the Family Reading Partnership of Chemung Valley, we’ll get the names, ages, and interests of children who participate in the program via their daycare providers. Our Sunday School students will each choose the perfect book (gently-used or newly purchased) for two children, and wrap the books and make personalized cards. Traveling Books volunteers will deliver the carefully chosen books in time for Christmas. Michelle and Donna will oversee this project and teach during December.

Adult Education: Casual conversations can lead to fascinating programs. A chat with Jim Galbraith about his work as chief librarian at CMOG inspired our November 24th program about the White Friars stained glass windows in our sanctuary. As you listen to friends, neighbors, and congregants, keep an ear out for potential adult education programs. Travel? Community projects? Global concerns? Could prove fascinating! Please contact Bill Hungerford or Donna Homuth with your suggestions.

Nursery: Thank you to Peg Kutchukian, Chaliss Wolcott, and Mary Wynings for volunteering to take turns welcoming babies and toddlers to the nursery on Sunday mornings! A couple more wouldn’t hurt – please contact Peg at 742-3894 to volunteer.

Notes from the Office

Please do not leave loose money in the office – place it in a sealed envelope labeled with the amount of money and what it is for. This is both for security and so we know who and where to apply it to.

Notes for our Church Community

As reported last month, The Park Church is sponsoring a Buy a Day event for Vanessa Myers-Dudley. As part of her seminary studies, Vanessa is required to participate in an immersion experience in a part of the country or world that is foreign to her. Although Vanessa has received a generous grant to pay for the expensive transportation, the room, board, and local travel costs will be upwards of \$1500. By buying a day for just \$88.25, either by yourself or with a few friends, you can help sway the daily costs for her to participate in this important activity. Sign-up sheets are located in Beecher Hall.

Spirit Café

SPiRiT CAFÉ
Friday, December 6 at 6:00 pm
The Park Church



Food for body and spirit designed for those who are “spiritual but not necessarily religious”

December’s theme:
The Spirit of Preparation

Join with others in ornament making, table discussion and music of the season.

Chili and salad (vegetarian entrée available)
Assorted homemade desserts
Donations for the meal are accepted at the door.
Music by Jose Gomez (“Jogo”)
Bring a holiday ornament for the ornament exchange.
Please R.S.V.P. to be guaranteed a meal, but walk-ins are welcome.
Contact: office@theparkchurch.org or 607-733-9104
208 W. Gray St. Elmira, NY 14901

December Birthdays

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------|----|--------------------|
| 1 | Sherrie Drake | 9 | Anne Booth |
| | Mary Booth Tebo | 10 | Doug Wells |
| 6 | Marge Fahs | 17 | Carol Eberhard |
| | Janet McLaughlin | 22 | Babek Raj |
| 7 | William Schweizer | 26 | James Kaffenbarger |
| | Nancy Sutton | | |

Next Issue Deadline

The **deadline** for submissions to the January Cross Currents is **MONDAY, DECEMBER 23rd**. Please send in committee news and reports by then so we may begin creating the newsletter as early as possible.

December 2013

The Park Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																																		
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i> Children's Choirs 3:45pm	<i>3</i> Adult Bell Choir at 1:15pm	<i>4</i> Book Club 6:00pm Emergents Meeting 6:30pm (Bethany)	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i> Spirit Cafe 6:00pm Arena Event	<i>7</i>																																																																																																		
<i>8</i> Youth Decorating Party 2:30pm Arena Event	<i>9</i> Children's Choirs 3:45pm	<i>10</i> Adult Bell Choir at 1:15pm	<i>11</i> Meaningful Movies 7:00pm Seeker's Lunch 12:10pm Arena Event	<i>12</i> Adult Choir Rehearsal 1:00pm	<i>13</i> HOLIDAY BAZAAR 10-4 Holiday Music Recital 12:00pm	<i>14</i> HOLIDAY BAZAAR 10-4																																																																																																		
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<i>22</i> CHILDREN'S PROGRAM	<i>23</i> Children's Choirs 3:45pm	<i>24</i> Adult Bell Choir (evening) Christmas Eve	<i>25</i> Office Closed Christmas Day	<i>26</i> Arena Event	<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>																																																																																																		
<i>29</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i> Adult Bell Choir at 1:15pm New Year's Eve	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="7">Nov 2013</th> <th colspan="7">Jan 2014</th> </tr> <tr> <th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th> <th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td> <td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td> <td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td> <td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td> <td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Nov 2013							Jan 2014							S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S						1	2				1	2	3	4	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	27	28	29	30	31	
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208 West Gray St.
Elmira, NY 14901

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, December 4	Book Club at 6:00 pm (<i>Water for Elephants</i>) Emergents Group Meeting at 6:30 pm (Bethany Lutheran)
Friday, December 6	Hanging of the Greens and Spirit Café at 5:30 pm
Sunday, December 8	Youth Christmas Tree Decorating at 2:30 pm
Wednesday, December 11	Seeker's Lunch at 12:10 pm Meaningful Movie at 7:00 pm
Friday, December 13	Holiday Music Recital at 12:00 pm
December 13-15	"Arts and Edibles" Holiday Bazaar
Thursday, December 24	Christmas Eve Services at 4:00 and 10:00 pm
Friday, January 3	Spirit Café at 6:00 pm

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607-733-9104

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