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THE MESSENGER

From the Pastor's Desk



January is the beginning of a new year and gives hope to many for a fresh start. This hope lingers for a few weeks until resolutions are forgotten and life returns to our normal routines. The problem with routines is that they often lead to feelings of boredom, loneliness, and depression. According to HealthLine.com, one in ten Americans suffer from depression, and the number of patients diagnosed with depression increases by twenty percent every year. Further, they suspect that eighty percent of people who exhibit symptoms of depression are not treated. Depression may result in a low self-worth and often leads those suffering to search for a sense of belonging.

Fortunately our faith teaches about an eternal hope that does not burn out in the face of failed resolutions and yearly routines. Our hope rests in the promises of God, who has been steadfast to us since creation. In Jeremiah 29: 10-11 God says "I'll show up and take care of you as I promised and bring you back home. I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for." Our God promises to care for us and give us a future of hope. This is true purely because God loves us as a hen loves her chicks (Matt. 23:37) and as mother bear cares for her cubs (Hosea 13:8). Our love from God is not earned, it is a true gift given to us. God finds us worthy of love not through our merit but through her grace.

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Where faith does not cure depression, the hope and sense of belonging it provides can be a significant part of the path towards healing. Starting on January 10th we will explore through a series of didactic sermons the book of Colossians. This book offers some of the most important reflection on the person and work of Christ, who is the focus of God's purposes for the world. Moreover it helps us to find our belonging in Christ and hope in God's purposes. Over four weeks we will discuss and reflect on the four chapters of this book. We invite you to participate by reading the chapters before Sunday mornings and to familiarize yourself with the text through study notes or commentaries. We will provide sermon notes to help you reflect each week via the bulletin, e-news, and our Facebook page. Through sermons focused on teaching the historical context and modern relevancy of this book, we hope that you will discover the deep truth of God's love for you, a deep self-worth, and a sense of belonging within the family of God. Join us as we seek for a fresh start in the New Year.

Blessings of hope and transformation!
Pastors Heather and Drew

Mission Minutes:

SSUMC Supports Three Communities at Christmas

By: David Gibbs

A great many people in Franklin County, Maine; Syracuse, NY; and here in Saratoga Springs had a much merrier Christmas due to the generosity of the congregation at Saratoga Springs United Methodist Church.

Through the use of funds that were available in the mission budget, monetary contributions that were offered, and donations to the Christmas Sleigh, we were able to provide gifts or shopping funds to The United Methodist Economic Ministry in Maine, Syracuse Westside Urban Mission, Franklin Community Center and Shelters of Saratoga.

A check in the amount of \$1000 was sent to UMEM using funds that remained in the Maine account following this past summer's mission trip. UMEM was fortunate to have received contributions from some other sources for their school supply program. This allowed us to reserve some of the donations that were made earlier this year for their Christmas shopping program. Normally, the proceeds from the Christmas wreath sales are used for their shopping program, but UMEM was forced to discontinue their wreath sales this year.

On December 2, David & Betsy Gibbs and Dick & Maureen Rowell spent the morning shopping at Walmart. Later that same day, Dave and Betsy delivered \$530 of mostly clothing and personal care items to Shelters of Saratoga. The kind people at Shelters of Saratoga were pleased to receive the merchandise and were very appreciative of SSUMC for its continued support.

The remaining \$400 of the Walmart purchases and a few donated gifts from the Christmas Sleigh were delivered to Syracuse Westside Urban Mission on December 10. Olga Gonzalez Santiago, the church/community worker at SWUM indicated that people in the neighborhood who are involved in SWUM's programs earn points throughout the year that can be converted to coupons for their shopping



Olga Gonzalez Santiago and Betsy Gibbs with gift items at SWUM



Franklin Community Center, Saratoga Springs Ny.

program. Olga stated that they are always very much in need of gift items so that they can adequately meet the needs of the people living in the neighborhood that SWUM serves.

Finally, on December 14, a van-load of gifts that were placed in the Christmas Sleigh were delivered to Franklin Community Center. The delivery insures that Franklin Community Center is be able to provide assistance to anyone who may have need during this holiday season.

The overwhelming support that the congregation at SSUMC provides for mission work is truly a blessing. Countless people in three different communities were helped this season because the congregation at SSUMC makes the love of others a priority with no questions asked. Thank you and Happy New Year!

Mission Minutes Continued:

Mission Trip to New Mexico:

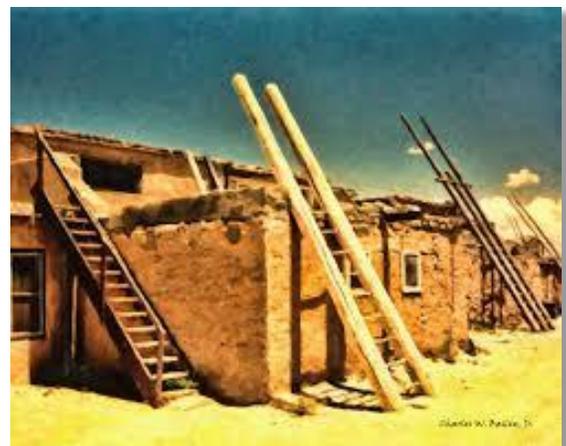
An Intergenerational Missions Experience

By Jess Swett

Last July six youth and six adults went to West Virginia to complete construction projects through the organization Appalachian Service Project. Many hours were spent bonding in our 12 passenger vans, while not being quite sure what we would experience once arriving at the community center to start our week of volunteer work. Painting, digging, nailing, cutting, tiling, sealing, insulating, dry wall, laughter, tears, hugs, sweating, cold showers, bonding with each other and the families we served are just some of the things we did. Though we were exhausted and ready to come home at the end of the week, all agreed that another intergenerational missions trip would be planned. This trip was rewarding on so many levels for all involved. We grew. We grew as individuals, as a team, as a church.

Fast forward five months and we have decided on another trip. This July we will be traveling by trains, planes, and automobiles to Eastern New Mexico to the Navajo Region/Reservation to work on similar projects. We have room for up to 20 youth and adults ages 14 and up, to travel by train from Schenectady on June 30, 2016, to Chicago where we pick up the Southwest Chief on an overnight journey west to Albuquerque. Once there, we will pick up vans to complete the initial travel to our worksite. Experience Mission, the organization we are working with, will connect us with Navajo families and churches that have some work for us to do. Once our work is done, we will be returning by plane July 10, 2016.

If this adventure is something you might be interested in, please come to our informational meeting on January 6, 2016, at 8p in the kitchenette. We will discuss additional information and requirements for this trip. Paperwork and commitment meeting will be held on January 20, 2016, at 8p in the kitchenette. For more information, please see Pastor Drew or Steve Conklin



Church Life

UMW: meets every fourth Tuesday of the month at 7pm in the lounge. The only requirement to attend is to be a woman! We would love to see you join in this fun group as we talk about the church and have fun activities. See you then!

RUTH CIRCLE: will meet January 25, 2015 at Woodlawn Commons, 156 Lawrence St., at 1 p.m. in the Activity Room. Pastor Drew Sperry will speak on the topic: JOY IN A TIME OF STRUGGLE. Worship Leader will be B.J. Fisher. Hostess will be Dodie Goody.

2016 GENERAL CONFERENCE: Study Group with Rev. Bill Lasher – meeting monthly at 6pm for 90 minutes. The first four sessions will cover:

Jan: 1/17 Review UM Organizational Structure 101

Feb: 2/21 GC Legislative Sessions – Human Sexuality

Mar: 3/20 Missions, outreach, fostering vital congregations

Apr: 4/17 Financial implications & future structure(s)

MORAVIAN LOVE FEAST

On January 3rd (Epiphany Sunday), our service will again be a Moravian Love Feast, featuring the Moravian Star, Scriptural watchwords, and Moravian hymns (both bells and voices). We aspire to become the light of the world, following Christ's light as did the Wise Men on their journey to meet Mary and the infant Jesus. Diners (servers) are needed for both services; please contact Ruth Helgerson (518-879-4884) or Mary DeRidder (518-587-1391) for further information.

January

5th –16th Photo Directory
Portraits

11th 7pm UMW Reads

12th 7pm– Knitting Ministry

13th 3pm – Knitting Ministry

14th 7pm –UMW Reads

21st 6pm –3rd Thursday
Fellowship

7pm– Finance Meeting

23rd 4pm– Church Ham Dinner

26th 6:30pm– UMW Meeting



HAM DINNER
SATURDAY, JANUARY 23
4:00–6:00 PM
FREE WILL DONATION
PLEASE JOIN US FOR DINNER
AND/OR VOLUNTEER TO HELP

THE MUSIC BOX

This month the Joyful Hope Choir offers “Ring Out, Wild Bells” and the Chancel Ringers offer “Night of the Father’s Love” (January 3rd). On January 31st (early service) AcaBella offers “Here I Am, Lord.” The month also brings the Chancel Choir presenting “There Shall a Star,” “Thee We Adore,” and “And the Saviour Will Dance”.

FREE VOICE CLASS meets on Tuesday evenings (7:00–8:00pm) in the choir room! Anyone interested in learning more about singing with confidence, projecting your voice, increasing your vocal range, better breath control, and relaxation techniques is welcome. Dates are Dec. 1, 8 and 15. Come and bring a friend!

In The Spot Light

Madrigale 2015 Recap
By Colleen Farnan



The tradition in our church continued on December 11 and December 12 when A Christmass Madrigale Feaste was again held to celebrate the Christmas season with beautiful music, delicious foods and medieval-like pageantry. Begun in 1986, the biennial event was initially held to honor the pastorate of the Reverend James Borden and his vision for this congregation. This successful event has continued to be held every two years since that time.

The church sanctuary was barely recognizable as it was magically turned into a medieval banquet hall trimmed with Christmas décor and filled with beautiful music. The tables were beautifully set and included natural wood centerpieces. The candlelight added a warm glow to the evening.

The pageant revolved around the lord (Al LeCours) and lady (Robin Leary) of the Manor entertaining their guests for the evening with warm wishes, musical fanfare, and delicious food. The lord Chamberlain (David Norton) provided the narration for the event, which included musicians, pages, and yule sprites (children). All the cast was decked out in medieval costumes that added to the festive atmosphere of the evening.

The food was outstanding and included roast beef, roast duck, and fresh trout as the offerings. Mouthwatering appetizers were added this year as well as blue cheese wedge salad. Returning favorites such as hot wassail punch and flaming Christmas pudding for dessert continued past traditions.

As always, the music was fantastic but the Christmas Lullaby at the end of the program was particularly moving. Many Christmas favorites were also included. Ellen Riley, who coordinated the huge production for the second time said, "it was a lot of work but a lot of fun." She said, "I was impressed by the sense of spirit of volunteerism and camaraderie from church members in putting the wonderful event on."

Ellen described the work as a tremendous and amazing effort by over a 100 church members. In particular, the executive chef, Fred Tracy organized and oversaw feeding 300 people among the three performances. Also, Rand Reeves put forth a tremendous effort coordinating the music and directing the musicians. The list of church members who helped is too long to list here. Among the group were Linda and Steve Rodriguez and Dave Snyder as wait staff directors. Becki Cramer oversaw the publicity committee that spread the word about the event making it very well attended.

Ellen related that the event was so popular and successful because this type of event isn't done much in the Capital District. Therefore, the event attracted people from all over the area as far as the Plattsburgh and Albany areas. If you weren't able to attend the feast this year, you missed something special. Now, you will have to wait two years to experience it!



Vision Update

Our Vision:

Embracing everyone through deep meaningful connections to grow closer to God and transform lives.

Our Foci to for living into this vision:

1. Revitalize small group ministries
2. Develop a family music ministry
3. Create hospitality and growth through inviting, embracing, and nurturing
4. Deliver an intentional focus on youth ministry

Our church has begun a three year vision plan based on the above vision statement and foci. As it has been about six months since the journey began we would like to update you on our progress. There have been several new small groups, serving many different interests that have already begun. The pastors have each begun seasonal bible studies, two UMW knitting circles were formed, a photography club, new musical groups, and two additional studies one on the old testament prophets and one on the upcoming General Conference. Small groups are where our faith is nurtured, as we grow closer to one another and God. The care and accountability that they provide help each of us to walk in faithful ways.



Pastor Heather sharing with the children

Further we have intentionally put pastoral focus toward the youth ministry. Both pastors participate every Sunday evening. The youth groups are also now fully staffed, with volunteer and staff positions. The groups have learned some new songs, studied the bible, practiced journaling, and shared their joys and concerns with one another. A youth opens and closes our time together with a word of prayer each week.

Our hope is to begin a family music ministry soon that will invite all who have a passion for music to gather their gifts together. The work toward this goal is just beginning. If you are interested or would like to help in its creation please let us know!

Finally, have you felt the buzz in the air on Sunday mornings? Our worship attendance is up by 15% and this is largely due to the warm welcome you all provide to newcomers. What a joy it is to see so many new faces in our congregation each week. In what ways can we invite, embrace and nurture in this New Year? Is there someone you could invite to worship one Sunday, to third Thursday fellowship dinner or any one of the many activities happening here at SSUMC? Let us seek to discover new ways to embrace one another and to encourage growth and transformation. How will we journey together in this New Year growing closer to God and transforming lives?



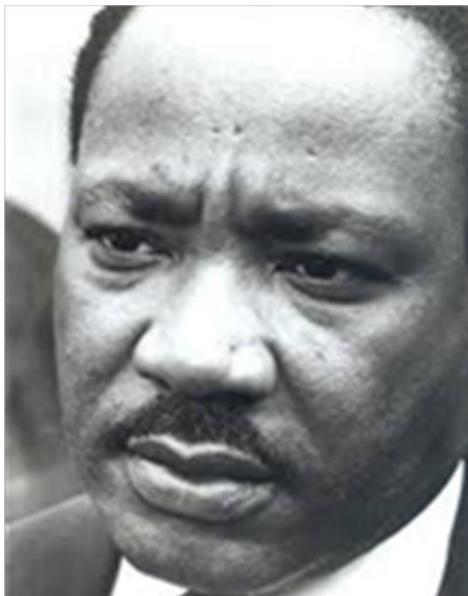
A Small Group learning how to stay youthful

In the Know

A New Photo Directory is Coming!

How many times have you wished you could remember a name or need to put a face to a name? We are going to have an updated Pictorial Directory and ask all of our church attendees to participate. The photographers will be here for 2 weeks in early January. There will be no cost for sitting for a photo and you will receive an 8 x 10 portrait along with a copy of the completed directory. A 5\$ donation will be made to the church for each family, couple or individual photographed! You can visit the website to sign up for your appointment or we will have computer savvy help available during fellowship time. If you will be unavailable during January, please contact the church office so alternative arrangements can be made. All of our church family is welcome and encouraged to be a part of this very important ministry! To schedule a portrait session go to the following website:

<https://WWW.securedata-trans14.com/ap/saratogaspringsunitedmethodistchurch/index.php?page=10>



MLK WEEKEND:

Saratoga Springs is hosting several events during Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend.

On Monday January 18th, there will be a Day of Service at Code Blue, Temple Sinai, and the Saratoga Public Library. We hope that you will consider serving in this way. If not please attend one of the many activities that will be offered.

For more information visit
[facebook.com/MLK.Saratoga](https://www.facebook.com/MLK.Saratoga)

Third Thursday Fellowship:

Join us on January 21st for our monthly potluck supper and fellowship. The entertainment for this month will be a church wide talent show! So please come and share your talents with us. Supper begins at 6pm and the talent show will follow. If you have any questions or would like to offer your talents please contact Pamela Easler.

Heifer International:

We are so grateful to again be able to send an ark of animals to places desperately in need of sustainable agriculture and resources. We are even more please to do so in memory of our cherished friend Mrs. Rosy Zinn. Rosy worked effortlessly to raise well over 25 arks as our Heifer coordinator, making us one of heifer's largest non-profit supporters. Thanks for your generosity again this year!

Community Highlights

SSUMC affirms Saratoga Hospital in Their Work for Justice

Saratoga Hospital Highlighted in Healthcare Equality Index Named as “Leader in LGBT Healthcare Equality” by National Survey

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY, December 15, 2015 – For the third year in a row, Saratoga Hospital has been recognized as a “Leader in LGBT Healthcare Equality” by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation, the educational arm of the country’s largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights organization.

The honor is given to facilities that meet LGBT-inclusive benchmarks that are part of the HRC Foundation’s Healthcare Equality Index, a unique survey that encourages equal care for LGBT Americans by evaluating inclusive policies and practices related to LGBT patients, visitors and employees.

Saratoga Hospital earned top marks in meeting non-discrimination and training criteria that demonstrate the hospital’s commitment to equitable, inclusive care for LGBT patients, and their families, who can face significant challenges in securing the quality healthcare and respect they deserve.

“We pursue this leadership designation as part of our commitment to meet the needs of all patients,” said Mary Jo LaPosta, Senior Vice President of Patient Care and Organizational Excellence and Chief Nursing Officer. “We recognize that LGBT patients still face barriers to equal access to quality healthcare. The care, respect, and compassion all patients deserve continues to be a priority at Saratoga Hospital.”

Saratoga Hospital is one of a select group of healthcare facilities nationwide to be named Leaders in LGBT Healthcare Equality. Facilities awarded this title meet key criteria, including patient and employee non-discrimination policies that specifically mention sexual orientation and gender identity, a guarantee of equal visitation for same-sex partners and parents, and LGBT health education for key staff members.

“Despite all the progress we’ve made, far too many LGBT people still lack inclusive and affirming healthcare. Leaders in LGBT Healthcare Equality are helping to change that, and, in the process, making the lives of LGBT patients and their families better each and every day,” said Chad Griffin, president of the Human Rights Campaign. “LGBT people have a right to be treated equally in all aspects of our lives, and HRC celebrates Saratoga Hospital for its tireless work to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all patients.”

The Healthcare Equality Index offers healthcare facilities unique and powerful resources designed to help provide equal care to a long-overlooked group of patients, as well as assistance in complying with new regulatory requirements and access to high-quality staff training.

For more information about the Healthcare Equality Index, or to download a free copy of the report, visit www.hrc.org/hej.



In Our Prayers: Edna Lloyd, Patty Gandee (Rosie Spring's Aunt), Carolyn Vallelunga, Glen Flannagan, Ruth Burton, Bob and Betty Allen, Don and Linda Carpenter, Ray DeRidder, Arthur Crouch (Frank's father), Thomas Family, Alden Barton, Ryan Vaughn, Robert Dake, Terry Ross (Kristen's brother), Kathy Boice, Sandy Mercaldi, Peggy Evans, Louise Hunter, Margo Larson, Lori Bussing, Barbara Thomas, Linda Griffing, Peggy Abbondandolo, Lexi Gurka, Marti Ladue, Barbara Peck, Barbara O'Brien, Patricia Squailia, Frank Crouch, Jane Flannagan (Glen's mother), Tracy Imes, Sue Zutterling, Virginia Cooley, Ethel Clark, Janet Woodcock, Shirley Bozony, Jeanne Cramer, Helen Richardson, Dorothy Place, Marge Bramhall, Helen Smead, Rev. Walter Taylor.

For Those Who Mourn the Loss of: Marjorie Grout, Eric Baum, Richard Gerlach, William Schewe, Stu Hefter, Kay Runge, Sylvia Hoyer, Don Smith, Rosy Zinn, Paul Jones, Mini Mae Coleman, Charles Coleman, Alden Sharp, Rev. Jane Borden, Miriam Ellsworth, Michel Kril, William Young.

For Those Around the World: Those serving their country at home and abroad, victims and families involved in violence, victims of recent natural disasters, those listed on our Prayer Board in the Lobby.

** Please submit changes or additions to our prayer list to our church office.*

FELLOWSHIP HOSTS

January 3rd

Missions, Joy in the Morning, and Church & Society

January 10th

Welcoming & Nurturing and "Birthday People"

January 17th

Music Teams

January 24th

SPRC, Trustees, and Finance

January 31st

Pastors

Embracing everyone through deep meaningful connections to grow closer to God and transform lives!

Saratoga Springs United Methodist Church
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*We invite you to join us for Worship on Sundays at 9:00am & 10:45am,
with Coffee Fellowship between the services.*

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&

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erichborden@gmail.com



The Mission of Saratoga Springs United Methodist Church is to spread God's word as we embrace persons of any age, gender, race, ethnic background, sexual orientation, economic condition, and physical or mental ability as full participants in a loving community of worship, fellowship, study, and outreach.