The days are few before the arrival of the Christ child. Are you ready?

This Saturday, Dec. 22, at 9 a.m., children in the Christmas Eve pageant will gather for their one rehearsal. If you have a child, kindergarten age and up who wants to be in the pageant, bring him/her then. Costume fitting will follow rehearsal.

This Sunday, the fourth in Advent, Christmas Sunday, will include the regular Community/Church Breakfast at 9 a.m. The coats and other warm outerwear collected this past Sunday will be distributed then.

The 10:30 a.m. worship service will include the Handbell Choir on three different selections.

The “Hallelujah Chorus” will not be sung at the end of the service. The piece, which celebrates Christ’s resurrection, will be sung at the end of Easter worship on March 31.

This Sunday organist Dennis Triggs will play “Toccata” by Widor from the Fifth Organ Symphony as the postlude.

Monday, Christmas Eve, will include the usual pageant featuring the children of the congregation, candlelight and carols. The service begins at 7 p.m. Children in the pageant should arrive at the church at 6 p.m. for costuming.

Lynn Steenberg will be in Rochester, but preceding the service the traditional Disciples Choir reunion will still be held at 6 p.m. in the Music Room.
How should we care for our children year-round?

'Twas the night before Christmas
when all through the house
not a creature was stirring,
not even a mouse . . .
The children were nestled
all snug in their beds,
while visions of sugar-plums
danced in their heads.

In the aftermath of the shootings of school children in Newtown, Conn., the familiar words and images of Clement Moore’s poem seem hollow, naïve and empty this year. The tenderness, hope and innocence of Christmas have been blown away, along with 20 kindergartners and first-graders and six school staff.

But that’s the point, isn’t it? Christmas comes not because we desire it, but because we need it. We need it because this world is every bit as volatile and violent as it was when Herod ordered the killing of all the children 2 years old or under in the vicinity of Bethlehem, as a way of eliminating the newly born Jesus.

Like it or not, Christmas has as much to do with cruelty, inhumanity, heartlessness and vengeance as it has with angels, shepherds, stars and magi.

While it’s a side of the story we’d rather not think about, it’s precisely why we need a Savior in the first place — someone to call and inspire and lead us back to God, back to our better selves, back to the true way of life and community, back to the innocent joy and innate goodness that most of us associate with childhood ... pointing the way to a place we can barely remember or dream of, but cannot seem to find on our own.

“Come, thou long-expected Jesus,” we pray, “born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.”

Turn our dreams and our tears, our outrage and our anguish into bold and courageous action.

Turn our creeds into deeds, our beliefs into new ways of thinking and talking and acting.

Turn our cries of lament over a blinding culture of violence (where roughly 1,000 persons are shot to death every month in the U.S.) into cries for justice around stronger gun control, especially in reducing access to assault-style firearms.

But it works in the other direction, too. Changing our behavior sometimes requires changing our thinking first — including our thinking about God (our theology).

During a videoconference earlier this month, Sr. Joan Chittister was asked about what the Church needs to be doing on behalf of the next generation.

Her answer was swift and blunt: “Quit terrifying the children!” While her words sound prescient and prophetic in light of last week’s tragedy, she was really talking about moving away from images of God centered on wrath, judgment and rules, and replacing them with images of love, caring and tender mercy.

“The kind of God in which we choose to believe,” she said, “makes all the difference. I have known many kinds of gods, and so have been many kinds of persons myself.” Who we are ... what we believe ... what we do ... are all directly connected.

Over the past few weeks, I have been thinking about our life as a congregation and how we care for the children entrusted to us.

In particular, I’ve been thinking about our Sunday School and Christian formation — more specifically, about our Sunday School format and schedule.

Currently, we use a traditional classroom model of Sunday School — teachers working with children divided into different age groups. This model works well when we have sufficient teachers and children who function well in a structured environment.

But this model may not fit us well anymore, and it may inadvertently “teach” values and prac...
There are several volunteers who work in the pantry. In this area food items such as fruits and vegetables, cereals and the meats are stored and served.

The system we use in the pantry is one where friends serve themselves with guidance from the pantry workers.

In addition to the volunteers who guide the friends, there are persons who restock during the day’s activity. Today, I highlight one person who guides the friends.

Donald Haughton came to the pantry after we met at a meeting in the city. He has Jamaican and English roots and lives in the greater Syracuse area. A Jewish person, he offers service to the community and he has been serving the people for the past two years.

Donald is bilingual and hence is valuable whenever we have persons of other languages, especially Spanish.

Donald is committed and knowledgeable about food and its value. He seeks to offer suggestions to the friends how they may prepare various food items they tend not to take because they don’t know how to prepare them.

**Thanksgiving Bags**

This year’s Thanksgiving bags were served in a different way. Individuals were seated in the Pettengill Center and then guided to Fellowship Hall in groups of five or six and hence the numbers of persons were reduced where the food items were prepared and delivered.

While they were seated individuals were treated to fruits and vegetables along with coffee, tea or water. This made the friends relaxed while they waited for their bags.

We must commend the cooperation of those who guided these individuals.

When the friends entered Fellowship Hall the numbers were fewer and it was easier for the runners to identify the friend’s bags and complete the other items.

After each person was served, they left the Fellowship Hall mostly via the elevator thus making the entrance less congested for the duration of distribution.

At the end of the day the runners, those who distributed the chicken and turkey and those who guided friends to the Fellowship Hall, were satisfied that the operation went smoothly.

We served 160 families and with an average of four per family we served 640 individuals.

After most persons were served we heard the words “thank you” and “have a wonderful Thanksgiving.”

On behalf of the Outreach/Missions Committee I say thanks for everyone who gave to this major project.

**Pecans**

Pecans are on sale and many persons are purchasing these items. Johanna MacDonald and the group continue to seek buyers. The pecans are available and from what I heard they are enjoyable. Please purchase them.

**COATS**

Some of the coats donated on Sunday that will be given away at the Community/Church Breakfast Dec. 23.

See COATS, Page 6
“But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.” “You have said so,” Jesus replied... Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” “He is worthy of death,” they answered.” [Matthew 26:63-66]

I love the fact that the Christian year begins with Advent. This year, I feel especially connected to this season; in moving to a new place, I have spent a lot of time waiting and praying for God to show up.

The Jewish community had waited hundreds of years for its Messiah. But when he finally comes along and goes, “Oh, hey, I’m the Messiah,” their leaders get all outraged and execute him. They're not even like, "Whoa, that guy is crazy," or "Hmm, are you sure about that?" They are clothes-destroyingly infuriated.

I don't think the Pharisees were such big liars that they were only pretending to expect the Messiah. But they wanted their own kind of Messiah; there was a script in their heads for how this thing would go. The Messiah would restore the nation of Israel to the nation-state of Israel. He wouldn't pay taxes or help centurions; he would take names and throw down, rout the Romans and make Israel a theocracy once more.

And who better to assist in the government of a theocracy than the faithful keepers of the Torah?

A Messiah who did not legitimize or increase their own power was entirely outside the Pharisees' frame of reference, because they had stopped worshipping a God who was "slow to anger and abounding in love" in favor of worshipping the Law. They only understood the power of coercion, of religious threats and expensive vocabulary and alliance with governing swords — so they were baffled by Jesus' power of love, his influence by compassion, his simply-worded summation of the Law and the Prophets, his foolish donkey rides.

Jesus' message and ministry were always simple but never easy. He made it clear that God's standards for holiness are nothing short of perfection ["love your neighbor as yourself"], but when the time came he did not condemn sinners.

The God-man himself is a paradox and at every turn in the Gospels, the paradoxes only compound and multiply. So here is the question for every person who wants to walk humbly: Are you waiting for the true Messiah? Because we always encounter him again and again, as long as we are willing to let God be as God is.

If my Messiah never forces me to confront paradox;
If he could never be found in the face of a little girl at the Friday Community;
If he always serves my interests;
If he never surprises me;
If he would never, ever ask me to give all I had to the poor;
If he would exercise his right to cast the first stone;
If he prioritizes the powerful over the needy;
If he never asks for more than I think I can give;

if I've stopped waiting for him to reveal himself because I think I've already grasped him, then I've constructed a false idol, and I do not worship Jesus Christ at all.

The Christian year begins with Advent – with waiting. Stillness. A desire to encounter God in all God’s glory.

And then – somehow we forget every time – it turns out that all along we were awaiting the birth of a very poor woman’s not-really-legitimate child.

This Christmas, may you encounter the God who surprises.

Lyndsey is our mission intern by way of Grace House. She will be with us through July.
Consecration Sunday: tears and commitments

Consecration Sunday worship included a number of elements, some planned, some unplanned.

Rev. French modified the beginning of the service to acknowledge the shock, pain and sadness in the wake of the elementary school shooting in Connecticut that took the lives of 20 children and six staff members.

He said, “Our faith invites us to turn once more to the God who loves every child and who calls upon God’s people to not only love little children but to do everything we can to protect them, to assure them that they are loved by us and by God.”

We received new members, as scheduled. Joining the congregation were Elise Curry-Schemichen, Ted Guerico, Keith Nevin and Nancy Nevin.

Guest preacher Rev. Keith Muhleman, executive director of the United Methodist Frontier Foundation, spoke about different ways people give. At the conclusion of the service members came forward to deposit in baskets two cards, one with their financial commitment, and one with commitments to their spiritual life in 2013.

A catered luncheon in Fellowship Hall followed the service. At the luncheon Governing Board Chair Lynn Steenberg announced the following:

- 60 pledges were submitted totaling $210,854
- 21 of these did not pledge in 2012, so they are “new” pledges
- 25 individuals who pledged in 2012 will receive a pledge card and letter in the mail.

**Pledging Update**


**SOS** Update

Approximately $40,000 is needed to upgrade our outdated sound system.

Current “Sounds of the Spirit” campaign balance is $36,706. Current expenses paid are $6,215. Total donations received are $30,491.

Checks should be made out to University UMC with a notation of “SOS.” Thanks to all who have contributed.
CONTINUED from Page 3

Winter Coats
On Sunday, Dec. 16, we collected coats, especially for the persons who attend the breakfast. These will be distributed at the Dec. 23 breakfast.

Reading Corner
Thanks for the books we received for this corner. Friends are reading and taking them home.

Children’s Party
The annual children’s party put on by the East Genesee Regent Association took place on Dec. 11 from 4:30 to 6 p.m. It was a success. The number who attended was in the high thirties. The number of children and adults attending were far less than those registered. Despite the numbers, those who attended enjoyed themselves.

Christmas Dinner
On Monday, Dec. 17, the Annual Community Dinner was held at the church. Registration began at 5:30 p.m. The dinner followed at 6. About 100 people attended.

As we come to the Christmas season and end of the year, take a few minutes to give thanks for all the blessings God has given to us.

Let us anticipate newness because the birth of Christ challenges us to newness.

Newness as lives are changed, newness and new plans are implemented and newness because new areas of concern will bring us to the place where we recognize that the newness affects us.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says if anyone is in Christ old things are passed and all things become new.

May the peace of God guide us.

Blessings.
— Rev. Joseph Smythe, Friday Community chaplain

CONTINUED from Page 2

Do we need a new approach to Sunday School?

Because of that, I want to begin a conversation — with parents and teachers and others in the congregation — about what we want to teach our children about loving God, loving our neighbors and following Jesus ... and how we best go about doing that.

How can we get more adults involved in active caring for and interacting with our children?

How do we communicate the Christian values we hold dear, so that they begin to shape the lives of our children not just on Sunday morning but all week long, and not just for today but for the rest of their lives?

How do we structure our time together on Sunday mornings, so as to allow all this to happen in a way that is pleasing to God, as well as to us?

I have a hunch that we may want to think outside the box — both in terms of a multi-generational approach to Sunday School (in which children, teens and grown-ups all learn together) and in a Sunday schedule more conducive to that (such as our learning time taking place right after worship).

Will you join me in this conversation? About how we want to care for our children, not just at Christmas but all year-round, in a way that makes a lasting difference ... to them and to the world.

Not just stories about Jesus and God’s love, but living examples of Christ’s sacrificial love, compassion and justice.

Will you join me, for the sake of the children?
— Craig
THANKS
- Thank you, Lord, for my home family and my church family
- Giving thanks for our Thanksgiving Bag Project, especially for Joyce Flynn and family, along with all other contributors, volunteers and recipients

BIRTH
- Matilynn Sara Charno was born to Jason and Chrysa (daughter of Matt and Lynn Steenberg) on Monday, Dec 10 at 5:47 a.m. She weighed 7 pounds, 7 ounces and was 22 inches long. All are doing well including big brother, Ryan (age 2). Great-grandparents David & Ellen Bacon and Donald Steenberg are thrilled with the new addition.

PRAYERS REQUESTED FOR:
- Those in military service: Nathan Miller, Jim Pettyjohn, Alex Saxby and Matt Fischer
- Kathy and Patty, who were both recently diagnosed with cancer
- Watch for the light flickering in the dark! Keep it bright, from Grandma Ann
- Kitchen staff who prepare, serve and clean up after us, such a great effort! From Jim
- Concentration and questions I know on the GRE today, from Lyndsey
- The effective partnerships and mentorships that show mutual support, cooperation and progress are possible, from Peter Swords
- Jesus the Prophet, place positive thoughts in our minds as to serve the hurting in our community, from Elise
- Those in Egypt and the people who have been affected by Hurricane Sandy, by Dakota
- The family of Dr. Wesley Bradley, who died in October, form Ginny and Bob Dewey
- Jesus the Prophet, I plead with you to place me in a test for my credible actions against ignorance, by Elise
- Carol Moyer, who is in Van Duyn recuperating from a fractured pelvis
- John Swords, who keeps bouncing back and fighting courageously to stay in consciousness, from Peter Swords
- Those who hunger — physical and emotional hunger
- Help save the pit bulls in New Orleans, from Dakota
- Jesus the Prophet, guide your servants to use the light of your truth walking in the world’s darkness, from Elise
- Continued healing for Katie Flynn
- All of us sharing our money to serve people with our Christian faith
- We pray the peace of Christ among us will fill this world with peace
- People in war
- The boyfriend of a co-worker who took his life yesterday
- The family and friends of Rev. Wayne Underhill on his passing

PRAYERS REQUESTED FOR CROSSROADS DISTRICT CHURCHES AND PASTORS:
- Jan. 6: Syracuse: University, Craig French; THE ROAD (Syracuse: West Genesee), Rebecca Laird
- Jan. 13: Ira UMC, Scott Johnson; Tully, Keith Wimmersberger
- Jan. 16: Fulton State Street, Joseph Kim; Syracuse: St. Paul’s, Caroline Simmons
- Jan. 20: Warners, Betty Morey; Lycoming, Steven Eddy
- Jan. 27: All appointments beyond the local church

CARE AND SHARE MINISTRY ASKS PRAYERS FOR:
- Jan. 6: Ila Christoff, Thomas Christoff, Dorothea Clark, Richard Clark
- Jan. 13: Barbara Cook, Thomas Cook, Ingrid Coutts, Robert Coutts
- Jan. 20: Ken Craig, Elise Curry-Schemichen, Richard Schemichen
- Jan. 27: Linda Damron, Timothy Damron, Jo Davis, Peter Mortensen

New Stephen Minister Training Planned
Coming Jan. 22: The first session for the next Stephen Minister training class.

The 50-hour class will be taught weekly on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and this time instructors and site are hosted by UUMC’s Stephen Ministry network partners at Dewitt Community Church, 3600 Erie Boulevard East. The $75 cost covers book material.

If you are interested in this opportunity or would like more information, please contact Gwen Tillapaugh-Fay at 256-7668, or leave a message and your contact information with the office staff, 475-7277, or uumc@twcny.rr.com for a return call.
Altar Flowers
Altar flowers were given by the Virgos. Harold Britton and family.
Flowers were given to Mary Klepper, Carol Moyer, Martha Sut-ter and Beth Drew.
Flowers were delivered by Lee Potter.
The red poinsettias on Dec. 16 and for Dec. 23 were given by the
Altar Guild. After the Dec. 23 they will be delivered to our ill and
homebound members. The guild also donated the white poinsettias
for Dec. 30 in memory and honor of UUMC loved ones.

January birthdays
1 – David Lund, Lisa Weah, Pablo Weah
2 – Maria Pedro
4 – Autumn Kerr, Charlotte Burnap, Ken Craig
9 – Joseph Smythe
11 – Jim Samuel
13 – Harold Orvis
15 – Martin Luther King Jr.
16 – Eric Nilsson
20 – Ebony Wilson
21 – Jacob Upcraft
22 – Diane Swords
23 – Eboni Marshall, Judith Bowers
25 – Lara Chappell
26 – Matt Rokahr
27 – Colleen Magowan
29 – Freda Kirkley
30 – Eros Marshall, Gwen Tillapaugh-Fay
31 – Neil Damron

Week of December 23
Sunday the 23rd
9 a.m. Community/Church Breakfast
9:30 a.m. Sunday School, ages 5 and up
9:30 a.m. Contemporary Issues
10:30 a.m. Worship; Sunday School, ages 3-4
11:45 a.m. Fellowship - Gathering Room
Monday the 24th
7 p.m. Christmas Eve service/pageant
Tuesday the 25th
Christmas Day—office closed
Wednesday the 26th
Office Closed
Friday the 28th
10 a.m. - noon Friday Community

Week of December 30
Sunday the 30th
9:30 a.m. Contemporary Issues
10:30 a.m. Worship
11:45 a.m. Fellowship - Gathering Room
Tuesday, the 1st

Office Closed-New Year's Day
Wednesday the 2nd
11:15 a.m. Staff meeting
Thursday the 3rd
7:30 p.m. Senior Choir
Friday the 4th
10 a.m. - noon Friday Community

Week of January 6
Sunday the 6th
9:30 a.m. Sunday School, ages 5 and up
9:30 a.m. Contemporary Issues
10:30 a.m. Worship, Sunday School, ages 3-4
11:45 a.m. Fellowship - Gathering Room
Tuesday the 8th
5 p.m. Outreach Committee
7 p.m. Stephen Ministry
Wednesday the 9th
11:15 a.m. Staff meeting
7 p.m. Handbell Choir
Thursday the 10th
7:30 p.m. Senior Choir
Friday the 11th
10 a.m. - noon Friday Community

Returned Chimes
If you are moving or going away for an extended period, like South for the winter, and need The Chimes either stopped or sent to a new address, please contact Tom Boll at 475-7277 or uumctb@twcny.rr.com. This will prevent your copy of The Chimes from being returned with postage due that the church must pay.

End-of-Year Giving
If you want to prepay your pledge for 2013 or make any other donation for the 2012 tax year, checks must be received at UUMC by Dec. 31.
Advent Dinner, Dec. 9 in Fellowship Hall
7 photos

Pickup orchestra plays Christmas carols.
Consecration Sunday, Dec. 16
2 photos
UUMC members and Friday Community Friends at Louisville-SU Football game
2 photos

Ted, Jeanne and Mitchell, front, and Barbara
Dererick, Mitchell, Barbara and Bryan