Hi, just a reminder that you're receiving this email because you have expressed an interest in Upper New York Conference. Don't forget to add cornerstone@unyumc.org to your address book so we'll be sure to land in your inbox!

You may unsubscribe if you no longer wish to receive our emails.

JOYS & CONCERNS

Please include these prayer requests in your weekly church bulletin, in your prayers during your Sunday worship if you have a time of "pastoral prayer" and keep these pastors, their families and the Church families in your prayers throughout the week.

December 22 (Fourth Sunday in Advent)
The Centerville Church. Robert Schooley, his wife Karen and their family.

December 29
The Charlotte Center and Pleasant Valley Churches. Chuck Wittenbrook, his wife Kelly and their family.

January 5

Prayers for Pastor John Bowen (Magnolia UMC), Cordie and their family as the celebrate the life of John's mother, Leona Grace Waite Bowen. Mrs. Bowen died Saturday, December 14; the funeral was held Wednesday, December 18 Westfield First UMC. Cards/messages may sent to John and Cordie at PO Box 145, Westfield, NY, 14787.

Please keep the following folks in your prayers this holiday season: Pastor Carol Becker and her family; Pastor John Dedloff, his wife Liz and their family; Pastor John Green, his wife Janet and their family; and Renee and Shorty Gross and their family.

SAVE THE DATE!
6th Annual Learning Day for Laity & Clergy
Advent

The United Methodist Book of Worship reminds us, "The Advent season proclaims the comings of the Christ - whose birth we prepare to celebrate once again, who comes continually in Word & Spirit and whose return in final victory we anticipate."

According to Hickman, Saliers, Stookey and White, "Advent is both a time of thanks for the gift of Christ to us in past time and a time of anticipation of Christ's second coming."

Advent is a time of expectant waiting and anticipation that is saturated by feelings of hope, joy, peace & love. We reflect on our own longing for and need of grace, forgiveness, salvation, redemption and a new beginning.

Advent: the four Sundays prior to December 25th. The Sundays often designated as Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

Advent seems to be a time where we can barely manage our "busyness." There are presents to buy, food to cook, cards to send, relatives to visit, forms to fill out, parties to attend, cookies to bake, dusting and vacuuming to do, charge conferences to attend, bathrooms to clean, cookies to bake, refreshments to buy, cookies to bake and cookies to sample! And when that is over, the return to our normal, exhausting "busyness" of everyday life awaits us in January.

Take a deep breath. Breathe in the coolness of the December air. Study the bare branches of the trees taking rest until spring. See the joy and anticipation on the faces of children. As the sun sets earlier and earlier, take the time to rest. To rest in God's presence. Take the time to reflect on scriptures that remind us of hope, peace, joy and love all found in Jesus.

This year's Lectionary readings from the Old Testament are from the prophet Isaiah. Read each scripture slowly. Ask yourself, "Is there a word or phase that makes you stop and ponder?" Then offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for this new insight. Do this for each of the four scriptures listed below.

December 1st, HOPE: Isaiah 2:1-5
This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle
disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

**December 8th, PEACE: Isaiah 11:1-10**

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him - the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord - and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.

**December 15th, JOY: Isaiah 35:1-10**

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God.

Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads.

Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee
December 22nd, LOVE: Isaiah 7:10-16
Again, the Lord spoke to Ahaz, "Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test." Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and[c] will call him Immanuel. He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

May this Advent Season find you taking deep breaths, centering in the scriptures and waiting well!

In Hope, Peace, Joy and Love,
Suzanne

NEW - Christmas Play at Cherry Creek
The Cherry Creek United Methodist Church Children's Sunday School will present "The Great Discovery," a Christmas play, at 10:30 a.m. Sunday, December 22, at the church, 6813 Main St. All are welcome!

NEW - Celebrate the Savior's Birth
Conewango Valley United Methodist Church, 51 Church St., will have a worship service at 5 p.m. Tuesday, December 24.

The Cherry Creek United Methodist Church, 6813 Main St., will have a worship service at 7 p.m. on December 24.

Both congregations invite their friends and neighbors to join them to celebrate the birth of our Savior!

NEW - Christmas Dinner at Kennedy
Kennedy First United Methodist Church will host their annual Christmas Day Dinner from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Wednesday, December 25, in the church's Fellowship Hall. A complete homemade dinner of turkey, ham, mashed potatoes, stuffing, corn, salads, rolls and dessert. Come join others to celebrate Christmas. This dinner is open to all at no charge.

For more information, please call the church at 716-267-2645.
church address is 3594 Church Street at the corner of Church Street and Second Street in Kennedy. The church is handicapped accessible through the lower side door which enters directly into the Fellowship Hall.

**Latest Issue of the *Bridge***
The December Issue II of the *Bridge* is now available for download. It is available in both color and black & white formats. Click [here](#) to select the version you prefer and make copies as necessary.

This issue offers tips on how to appreciate Advent in this time of busyness and ideas of how to celebrate the remaining days of Advent with children.

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**Opportunities for Prayer & Study**

**Thursday Bible Study** (meets weekly), **8:30 a.m. at South Dayton Library**, 17 Park St. Call Pattie Lukaszewski for more information, 716-296-1021

**Cornerstone District Prayer Gathering**, Thursday, **December 19, 12 noon to 1 p.m.** at **Christ UMC**, 633 Linwood Ave., Olean.

**Jamestown Area Prayer Gathering**, Thursday, **January 2 and January 9, 2020, 11:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.** at **Celoron UMC**, 28 E. Livingston Ave.

**Cornerstone District Prayer Gathering**, Thursday, **January 16, 2020, 12 noon to 1 p.m.** at **Christ UMC**, 633 Linwood Ave., Olean.

The events listed are open to everyone! Please let the District office know if there are other opportunities for prayer & study in your church/area.

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**UPDATE - Contributions to Red Bird**
From **Dave Alexander**, coordinator of this Conference-wide project:
"On Sunday, December 1, we packed the two 26-foot trucks: one truck had approximately 3,000 shoeboxes, back packs, school supplies, sheets, blankets, and new clothes; the other truck had gently used clothes. In the four years that I have been involved in this mission, this is by far the most that we have transported to the Red Bird Mission. I am so thankful for all of the Churches that have been part of the important mission. Weather permitting we will start the trip sometime on Monday (December 2). Thank you again for all of your donations for the Red Bird Mission."

On behalf of our District, a big "Thank You" to **Bob Ebert**, a member at **Ripley United Methodist Church**, who coordinated the collection of items, and to the Cornerstone congregations who participated: **East**
REMINDER - Insurance Carrier Change
Earlier this month the UNY Board of Trustees sent a letter to all churches in the UNY Conference to inform them of the plan to change the Conference's insurance carrier from Church Mutual to **Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company**. Click [here](#) to read the letter.

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**Celebrate the Season of Giving: Christmas in the HUB**
The **UNY Conference Mission Central HUB** has launched its holiday campaign. Our warehouse needs your monetary or supply donations. In the past few weeks, the UNY Mission Central HUB has brought hundreds of cleaning kits to the Mohawk District as part of the disaster relief response to the flooding that took place on October 31. Your donation helps disaster relief both locally and around the world.

Click [here](#) to make a secure monetary donation using a credit card (most cost effective).

Shop Amazon for specific items that the HUB needs ([cleaning kit](#), [hygiene kit](#), [school kit](#)). Please have your shipment sent to **UNY Mission Central HUB, 7481 Henry Clay Blvd, Liverpool, NY 13088**. Be sure to include your name on the gift receipt.

Save your receipts as all donations are tax-deductible. If you have any questions or want more information, contact Mike Block, Director of Missional Engagement, at mikeblock@unyumc.org or MaryBeth Ingalls, Mission Volunteer Coordinator at marybethingalls@unyumc.org.

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**Please Make Note of These Dates on Your Calendar!**

**December 23, 2019 - January 2, 2020**
**District AA on vacation**
Cathy will return to the office on January 6, 2020. If you need to reach Suzanne during this time, please call or text her at 716-860-7860.

**Wednesday, December 25**
**Merry Christmas!**

**Tuesday, December 31, 2019**
**Last day to contribute to New Places for New People campaign**
Help us meet the goal of 200 church partners for this important work - contact Rev. David Masland, 315-898-2013 or davidmasland@unyumc.org for more information.

**Wednesday, January 1, 2020**
**Happy New Year!**
Wednesday, January 1, 2020
The Ezra site (www.ezra.gcfa.org) will be open for entry of 2019 local church statistical data. Saturday, February 15, 2020 is the deadline for 2019 local church statistical data.

Wednesday, January 8, 2020
Deadline for 2019 Ministry Shares payments
After this date any payments received for 2019 will be reflected as Prior Year Ministry Shares payments on your church's monthly statement.

Saturday, February 8, 2020
6th Annual Learning Day for Laity & Clergy
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Bemus Point UMC, 4954 Bemus-Ellery Road

Sunday, March 15, 2020
The 2019 Local Church Annual Financial Audit is DUE in the District Office.

April 19-25, 2020
Local Pastor Licensing School
Casowasco Camp & Retreat Center
For more information please contact Rev. Caroline Simmons, revcsimmons@gmail.com.

May 28-30, 2020
11th Session of the Upper New York Annual Conference
The Oncenter, Syracuse, NY

NEW - New Direct Bill Arrearage Policy
This affects full time benefits for eligible pastors! Currently, if you/your church has an arrearage on your direct bill, you likely receive notification from the Conference Office, your DS or both asking you to contact the Conference office to make payment arrangements. Some contact us; many do not. Since the one-time arrearage forgiveness from the Board a few years ago, the total accumulated amount of direct bills, UNPAID is $787,673.04.

The new policy outlines the process, which now involves Wespath, as well as consequences (while active and potentially into retirement) for ongoing non-payment. Click here for more information.

Opportunities to Serve
The Nominations Committee is accepting nominations for almost all Upper New York Conference ministry teams.
Their team has begun its work of developing a list of nominees for consideration at our upcoming Upper New York Annual Conference session (May 28-30, 2020).

While each Conference ministry team has a focus, all exist to equip clergy, laity, and their churches to live our mission of making disciples for
the transformation of the world. The Nominations Committee believes all the gifts needed to live this mission have been given to the people of Upper New York by God. Prayerfully consider serving as a member of one of our Conference ministry teams.

Click here for a description of the ministry teams that have vacancies. Click here to complete a nominations form on Survey Monkey. Should you need to print the form, please use the Survey Monkey link.

For questions or information, contact the Rev. Tony Hipes at tjhips@gmail.com.

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**2019**

**Important Dates For Your Calendar!**

**December 19**
**Charge Conferences** at **Ripley UMC** (Ripley & South Ripley) at 6:30 p.m.

**December 22**
**Charge Conference** at **Great Valley UMC** following worship

**December 23, 2019 through January 2, 2020**
Cathy will be on vacation during this time. Regular office hours (9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.) will resume Monday, January 6, 2020. If you need to reach Suzanne, please call 716-860-7860.

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**UPDATE - NYS Minimum Wage Increase in 2020**

**Employers in the Upper New York Conference**, regardless of number of employees, must pay non-exempt employees minimum wage. The minimum wage will continue to increase annually until it meets $12.50/hour on December 31, 2020. Future increases after 2020 will be determined by the New York State (NYS) Director of Budget in consultation with the NYS Commissioner of Labor and will be announced on or before October 1 each year.

You may download a flyer that provides details about NYS Minimum Wage Increase for Non-Exempt Employees and NYS Minimum Salary Increase for Exempt Employees here.

For more information, please click on the links below:


If you have any questions, please contact Tracy Rickett, Human Resources Generalist, at (315) 898-2017 or TracyRickett@unyumc.org.
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