



The Church Herald

Stony Brook Community Church (United Methodist), Stony Brook, New York



STONY BROOK COMMUNITY CHURCH

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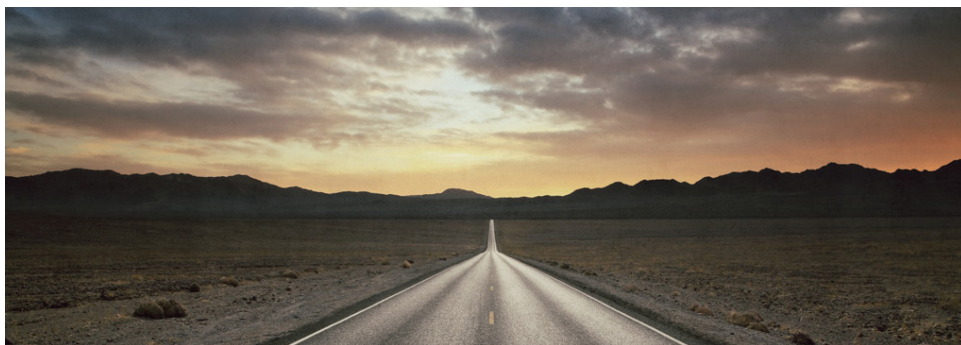
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"A Highway for Our God"

¹ In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming,
² "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." ³ This is the one of whom
the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilder-
ness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

Matthew 3:1-3

Read: John 1:1-5, 11-13



Greetings to all, and blessings in the name of our Lord, and coming Savior!

Well, I can't believe it, but here we are with the first Sunday of Advent upon us. Wasn't it just August? Weren't we just beginning to make plans for Back to Church Sunday and the Apple Festival? What a joy that day was rain and all! You guys are AWESOME! Yet, where has the time gone? On that same note, I have to say that our Consecration Sunday event was also quite a joy to share in together, and very successful. I pray you received blessing from that program. What a blessing you all are as we continue to work together so that our church can make a positive difference in our community while helping to prepare the world for the coming of Christ into the lives of many once again this advent season. Thank you to all of you for that blessing.

Yesterday I was talking with a friend who was helping me select some guitar music for Christmas. As we came across the Hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" he asked me; "Who is Emmanuel anyway? Is this someone new? Is it a new name for God? What's the deal with this?" In that moment he and I connected on a new level, as I was able to share with him the translation of the wonderful name of the Christ Child, Emmanuel, which means "God with us."

NYAC VISION STATEMENT

The New York Annual Conference, through the grace of God, embodies a beloved community of hope, building up a healthy Body of Christ, with heartwarmed United Methodists in mission for the transformation of the world.



I shared with him how Advent is a time to prepare our selves for the coming of Christ into our lives, to prepare ourselves to be born anew in our hearts again during this season of advent and Christmas. But then he asked me a much more important question, “How do we do that? How do we make him come into our lives like new? What’s the deal with that?”

I couldn’t help but smile as I pondered that question and spoke with him. I thought about how we need to spend time in this attitude of expectant waiting or “active waiting,” as Henri Nouwen would put it, of spending time quietly and attentively with God meditating on the Christ child over the next few weeks. But then I thought, what is the real rebirth of Christ for me, for us all?

When we become grateful for the gift of God’s love made real in our lives, so real in our hearts that we can’t help but share it through acts of love and charity toward others, then we are beginning to get the picture a little bit. The inner transformation is then beginning.

I think of the people we serve through ministries such as Pax Christi Men’s shelter, The Midnight Run (which some of us participated in last December), The Thanksgiving Meal Boxes, the Angel Giving Tree in our Community Room again this year, and so many other acts of love and ministry that we take part in together. I think about the children of our Sunday school and the nurture and sharing of God’s love that we try to offer them. I think of our Bible and book study groups and the sharing that takes place there. I think of our Youth Group sharing God’s love with one another, Christmas Caroling, and raising funds to help others and even save lives through the 30 Hour Famine. I think of our choir and our worship band, young and not so young, sharing the joy and praise of God with those who have hearts open to listening for God’s voice. I think of all those ministries and so many more, because, in this season of advent, John the Baptist stands boldly and wildly in the wilderness crying out to all who will hear, “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” (Mt. 3:3 NRSV). Or, as Handel’s Messiah exclaims, make straight in the desert “a highway for our God.” I love that wording! Because in the end, our lives, being transformed by God’s presence within and our willingness to share that transforming love with the world, is the advent of God’s birth and life to the world. That is what Advent and Christmas are all about, the salvation of the world, offered from the loving, forgiving heart of God in human form. This is why it is so meaningful for me to be able to say thank you to all of you for your many acts of service and kindness through which you make God’s love real to the world. What a privilege it is to be part of God’s people making straight in the wilderness of the world a highway for our God, one life at a time. God bless you all.

As we prepare the way, as we prepare our hearts for the journey that we will all be invited to take with Christ again this year, I pray that we will choose to say yes to that journey together, making it a meaningful time that prepares a highway in our lives for our God and for God’s love. I pray then that we will come to know that our life is an offering in which we allow God to make God’s will known to the world through the highway for God that is our very lives. That we will actively choose to allow God to travel to places unknown, places of great healing, of quiet but wonderful and selfless acts of beauty, forgiveness, and love – one life at a time. And I pray that this will be a year round experience for us all.

You are the light of the world, my friends, simply because the light of the world has chosen to live among us and within us, as we are told at the beginning of the gospel of John (John 1:1-5, 11-13). And that light, by the power of the Holy Spirit, wishes to make himself known to you in this most amazing of seasons through the birth of a small child, a savior, a seed planted in your heart once again this year. Tend to him, nurture him, and then, let your light shine, as you prepare the way in the world, a highway of blessing, peace, hope, joy, and love, for our God.

Have a blessed advent, and a very merry and meaningful Christmas this year.

In God’s hope, joy, peace & love

Pastor Chuck





Lectionary

December 3: First Sunday of Advent

As we light the first candle in our Advent wreath today, officially enacting this annual ritual reminder, and as we move toward the celebration of the birth of the one God sent to save us from the law of sin and death, let us take seriously God's call on our lives. Let us make our confession of sin, as individuals and as a human community. Let us pray that God will have mercy on us. And let us embrace our need for a Savior.

- Isaiah 64:1-9
- Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
- 1 Corinthians 1:3-9
- Mark 13:24-37

December 10: Second Sunday of Advent

What is home? Home is anywhere we meet God, face-to-face and hand-in-hand. Home is the assurance that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, thus proving God's love for us. Home is knowing that we are saved by the grace of God. Home is anywhere that we meet God's people and welcome them in with the love of Christ.

- Isaiah 40:1-11
- Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
- 2 Peter 3:8-15a
- Mark 1:1-8

December 17: Third Sunday of Advent

Let it be in a spirit of grace that we acknowledge that for many of us, welcoming guests or going home will never resemble in any way the pictures of perfect familial bliss that we see in the constant holiday barrage of Photoshopped advertisements, holiday television specials, and Christmas movies. Nevertheless, let us enter into this time with rejoicing, prayer, and giving thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for us. For no matter how hard the journey may be some days, we know that joy is our true home.

- Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
- Psalm 126
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
- John 1:6-8, 19-28

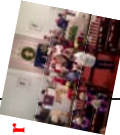
December 24: Fourth Sunday of Advent

Are we willing to receive Christ into our hearts? And are we willing to live with Mary's courage? Can her song be our song too? Can we refuse to give into the fear that the world screams constantly into our lives? Can we reject the notion that everything is spinning out of control, and embrace that the world is simply about to turn, just as God intends it? Can we admit that there are things about our world that need to be turned upside down for the sake of others?

- 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
- Luke 1:47-55
- Romans 16:25-27
- Luke 1:26-38



December 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 10:00 Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour	28 7:00 (pm) AA	29	30 1:00 and 7:00: Jesus in the Gospels classes	31 6:00 AA 7:30 Choir	1 11:15 AIAnon	2
3 10:00 Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour 5:00 MYF	4 7:00 AA	5 Finance Committee	6 1:00 and 7:00: Jesus in the Gospels classes	7 6:00 AA 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	8 11:15 AIAnon Decorating Sanctuary	9 Christmas Tree Sale 
10 10:00 Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour 4:00 LIE Advent service 5:00 MYF	11 7:00 AA	12 7:30 Trustees	13 Meals on Wheels Board Meeting 1:00 and 7:00: Jesus in the Gospels classes	14 6:00 AA 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	15 11:15 AIAnon	16
17 10:00 Worship: Children's Pageant 11:00 Coffee Hour 	18 7:00 AA	19 7:30 Church Council	20 <u>NO</u> Jesus in the Gospels classes	21 6:00 AA 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	22 11:15 AIAnon	23
24 Christmas Eve 10:00 Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour 7:00 Candlelight Service	25 Christmas Day 	26 <i>Pastor Chuck on Vacation</i>	27 <u>NO</u> Jesus in the Gospels classes <i>Pastor Chuck on Vacation</i>	28 6:00 AA <i>Pastor Chuck on Vacation</i>	29 11:15 AIAnon <i>Pastor Chuck on Vacation</i>	30

January 2018

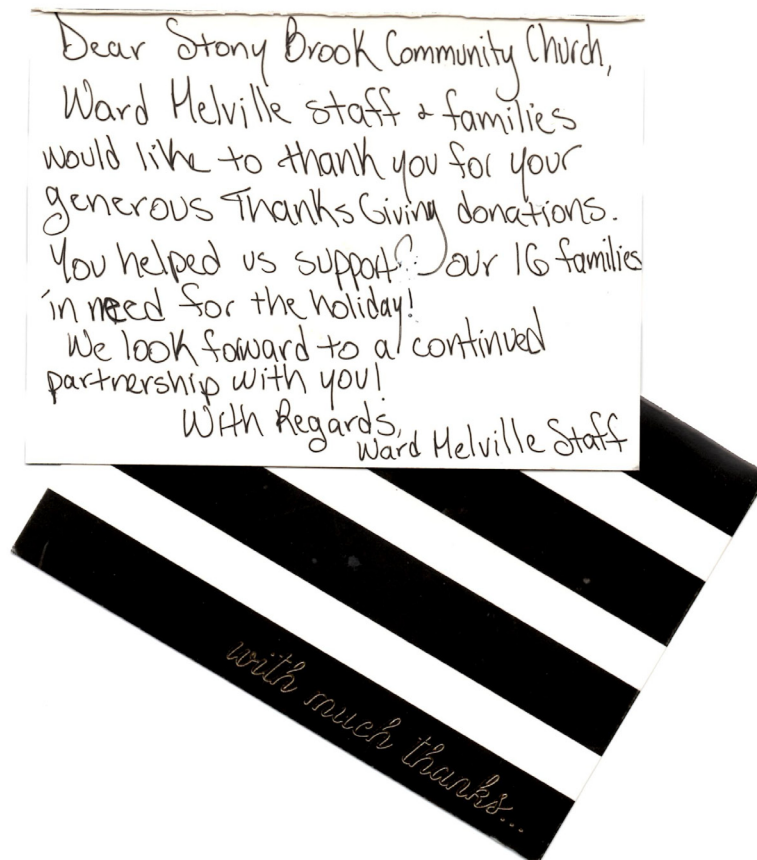
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 10:00 Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour	1 7:00 (pm) AA <i>Pastor Chuck on study leave</i>	2 7:30 (pm) Finance <i>Pastor Chuck on study leave</i>	3 <i>NO Jesus in the Gospels classes</i> <i>Pastor Chuck on study leave</i>	4 7:00 AA 7:30 Choir Rehearsal <i>Pastor Chuck on study leave</i>	5 11:15 AlAnon <i>Pastor Chuck on study leave</i>	6
7 10:00 Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour 5:00 MYF	8 7:00 (pm) AA	9 7:30 SPRC	10 1:00 and 7:00: Jesus in the Gospels classes	11 7:00 AA 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	12 11:15 AlAnon	13
14 10:00 Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour 5:00 MYF	15 7:00 (pm) AA	16 7:30 (pm) Church Council	17 1:00 and 7:00: Jesus in the Gospels classes	18 6:00 AA 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	19 11:15 AlAnon	
21 10:00 Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour 5:00 MYF	22 7:00 (pm) AA	23 7:30 (pm) Trustees	24 1:00 and 7:00: Jesus in the Gospels classes	25 7:00 AA 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	26 11:15 AlAnon	27
28 10:00 Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour 5:00 MYF	29 7:00 (pm) AA	30	1 1:00 and 7:00: Jesus in the Gospels classes	2 6:00 AA 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	3 11:15 AlAnon	4



UMW NEWS

The Thanksgiving Boxes were delivered to Ward Melville High School and Gelinas Junior High School on the Monday before Thanksgiving. The Social Workers have asked that we express their gratitude for our help. We would like to share a quote from one of them, "Thank you so much. Your fellow church members are a real blessing to us in the district. We appreciate all that you do and so do the families that you're helping." Thank you and blessings to all who contributed to this project.

Our next project, The Christmas Angel Tree Outreach, is underway! This outreach project helps fulfill the Christmas wishes of children in the Three Village School District, who might not have their Christmas wishes come true, because there is no money available in the family budget. Specific information regarding wishes and ages is posted on the Community Room Bulletin Board. Look for our Angel Tree icon. Gifts will be delivered to the schools December 18th, so they must be in the Community Room on Sunday, December 17th. With your help and generosity we can make this happen.





Sunday School Christmas Tree

On December 3rd, the first Sunday of Advent, our Sunday school walked down to Stony Brook Village to decorate a Christmas tree. Please be sure to stop by and admire it, and then vote for it: number 115. You'll find it near the post office.



2018 Stewardship Drive



The Finance Committee and the Consecration Sunday Committee would like to thank the members of the congregation for their generous commitment to the mission of the Stony Brook Community Church. On Consecration Sunday, 34 families and individuals pledged over \$83,000 to the church. When compared to the amount pledged during 2016, when we ran our last pledge drive, this represents a 58% increase in pledged money. Pledged money allows the Finance Committee to better prepare an operating budget for the coming year. If you or your family have not made a pledge and you would like to make a commitment to help SBCC do God's work, please ask for a pledge card at church or email the office with your pledge commitment. Again, thank you to all those who have made a pledge to help further the mission of SBCC as we strive to do God's work in the world.

*Finance Committee
Consecration Sunday Committee*



The Pearl



Price is Not Cost

When your desire is to win people to Christ, then the primary cost to be concerned with is the cost of the people you don't win because of the things you choose not to do. In managing ministry business, we need to be mindful that we are talking about a really big God who says the stars and planets are but vapor in His breath. The Church incurs a cost in what we do

not do for Him, which in business is known as "opportunity cost." This is the price of not doing something or doing nothing. This is the true cost of the western Church in the last century.

One pastor friend we tried to help was struggling with that "shall we change?" problem that most churches have grappled with in the past three decades. This particular church had been shrinking for over a decade and the pastor wanted to shed his robes on Sunday morning, disband the choir and stop using the hymnals. He met with his team, who were all in favor of the change. They wanted to meet their contemporary neighborhood with contemporary means.

They talked about it endlessly, and even leaked it to parishioners. Many were thrilled, some grumbled. The pastor assured the grumblers that the change wouldn't be forced on them, that it would be an option for others. This settled them down. The staff talked more and more about the many ways this change could be implemented. A year went by, but no date was set. No one could come to a decision to make the switch.

In this case, the staff's lack of decision had nothing to do with what God wanted. They were all in agreement that the change was the right thing to do. Their indecision came right down to not wanting to deal with the hassle of some people being angry. They kept telling themselves they were easing into the change to be wise, but they weren't wise at all. After all, would Jesus have entered their staff meeting and said, "Please don't change things. Keep doing what is shrinking My Church."

The biggest cost most churches will ever pay is "opportunity cost." There is no immediate physical cost for doing nothing. But the ongoing cost that doing nothing creates is that people don't come to church, families are not saved, orphans are not cared for, and so forth. When we talk something to death and end up doing nothing, we're spending "opportunity cost."

When we compare potential projects, we ask, "What is the cost of this?" "What is the cost of that?" But what we are really asking for are prices. Yet in business terms, the difference between price and cost is that price is what you pay for a thing, and cost is what you give up, don't get, or give away. It's like investing. When investing you want to measure return on investment. Price is what you pay. Return is what you get. In the Church, the return is how many people we reach for Christ. In the Church, the cost has to be measured in the resources we allocate (cost) and by how many people we do not reach (opportunity cost) because of our decisions, or lack of decision.

I recently was told "no" by a bank when trying to raise financing for a local church building campaign. The church had been in the community for over 100 years and a customer of the bank for almost 40 years. When I asked the banker "why," he said, "While the bank appreciates our



long business relationship with the church, the loan committee views churches as depreciating assets in a declining industry and they have no appetite for lending to an organization in that environment.”

What the bank was saying is “we look at the church and we see nothing happening.” There was a time when banks fought to do business with the local church for the value the reputation of and relationship with the church brought to the bank. Do you think the Church has come to this point for all it has done over the last forty years or what it has not done?

What about your church? Do you spend more time talking about what people inside the church won’t like or what people outside the church need? Do you spend more time avoiding conflict or changing lives? Do you spend more time talking or doing? Each choice has a cost and each cost has a return. On which does your church focus? “Return on investment” in the Church is best measured in lives changed. Cost should be measured in how many people won’t hear the Gospel and whose lives will not change because of the things we choose not to do.

We cannot simply measure costs in dollars, resources and time. Start looking at the money your church spends as investments in heaven, not the price of goods and services. But most importantly, measure costs in people not going to heaven and the amount of people who won’t hear the Gospel if you do the safe easy thing instead of the scary God thing.

Minding His Business Basic:

The greatest cost most churches will incur is “opportunity cost”—the price of doing the safe, easy thing instead of the scary, God thing or—even worse—doing nothing.



Don is an industry thought leader on ministry operations and administration, with a primary focus on finance, accounting, marketing, communication, systems, and staff management. With over 30 years of business and church executive leadership experience, Don helps ministry leaders implement their vision and impact their communities.

