

The Church Herald

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



STONY BROOK COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Newsletter Table of Contents

- 1.....Pastor's Letter / MYF News
- 3.....November Lectionary
- 4.....November 2019 Calendar
- 5.....UMW News / Pastor Appreciation
- 6.....Apple Festival Photos
- 8....."A Passion for Justice"

Please send items for the Newsletter to the
Church office at:
stonybrookcommunitychurch@gmail.com
by the 26th of each month.

"Living in Grateful Response"

"It is good to say thank you to the Lord, to sing praises to the God who is above all gods. Every morning tell [God], "Thank you for your kindness," and every evening rejoice in all [God's] faithfulness." (Psalm 92:1-2, TLB)

As November arrives, I find myself marveling over the colorful landscape, reflecting on why this is one of my favorite times of year. I suppose part of it is the abundance of color and the brisk chill in the air which points toward the coming of Christmas and the birth of our savior.



However, a big part of this season – for me – is the sense of joy-filled celebration that comes with an attitude of thanksgiving, an attitude of gratitude. I have often said at the time of offering in worship that it is a time for us to be in a prayerful state, remembering that our giving is a form of prayer, reverence, and sharing of God's love; that it is an act of worship. In the same way the season of thanksgiving can be a time of prayer, reverence, worship, and sharing. It is a time to humbly and joyously lift our lives before God as a holy and living sacrifice to be lived in love and in relationship with those whom God has put in our lives. It is a time to reflect on the people we have known, the good – and even the not so good – that has entered our lives; a time for us all to be thankful for God's presence, guidance, and unfailing love through it all. What a gift: God's unfailing love. But how do we respond to such unfailing love? Could we ever do enough to repay God for God's goodness? The reality of our human condition is that we could never repay God for the unconditional love offered to us through Christ, nor could we ever do anything to earn such love. It is free, unwarranted, unmerited grace: a gift. The only response to such awesome giving is to respond in a genuine sense of thanksgiving; a deep gratefulness. Nevertheless, living our life from a place of thanksgiving needs to happen even in the darkest of situations.

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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.



In Matthew 14 we find Jesus and the disciples in a seemingly desperate and bleak situation. It is the end of the day; Jesus has been teaching more than 5000 people. All that they can scrounge up to serve as a meal was five loaves of bread and a two small fish. In this moment we see what God through Christ can do in this life with seemingly so little if we are in grateful relationship with God. In the words of Matthew: “[Jesus] taking the five loaves and the two fish and, looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples

picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over” (Mt 14:19-20, NIV). Maybe the real miracle here is in our ability to live our life in an attitude of thanksgiving come what may.

When we intentionally choose to celebrate the life given to us in Christ and those around us, we choose to recognize the original goodness of God’s creation and all that is good within us and in our lives. We choose to live our lives from a place of faith that says yes to God’s creation, affirming its goodness in a way that causes us to turn toward God in an attitude of grateful praise. For that is what thanksgiving truly is. It is a time to lift up and praise all of life. For those of us who affirm our faith, it is a time to praise the living God who created us to live our lives as an appropriate response to the life that Christ led in order to free us from the slavery of petty jealousy, anger, resentment, greed, and hatred. Let your life reflect that joy to those around you this season. Greet those around you in God’s love. Spend time with friends, take risks, renew relationships. You just might be surprised at the power of God’s healing love. I know that when we choose to live our lives as such we truly choose to let our lives be a holy and living sacrifice to the world around us, as we declare at communion. May it be so, and may God bless you this thanksgiving season.

Remember – *It is good to say thank you to the Lord, to sing praises to the God who is above all gods. Every morning tell [God], “Thank you for your kindness,” and every evening rejoice in all [God’s] faithfulness.*

In God’s love, joy and hope
Pastor Chuck

MYF News

In October, the SBCC Youth Group (MYF), continued to meet in fellowship, champion each other in Game Night/Wii Bowling activities, and participate in worship service and community projects. On Youth/Laity Sunday, MYF contributed to various parts of worship – including their first drama – and afterwards held a Bake Sale for UMCOR. Thanks to their baking efforts, and the many delicious goodies contributed by the SBCC community, they raised \$160 for UMCOR’s relief efforts for the hurricane victims in the Bahamas. To finish off the month, the group (together with parents) braved the Deepwells Haunted House in St James. Future plans include Advent candle and Christmas cross ornament projects and joint youth activities with area churches. Open to all SBCC youth (grades 4 - 12) and friends! Feel free to contact Dr. Karen Van Houten, DrKVanH@optonline.net ,with any questions.

November Lectionary

November 3:

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost
All Saints Sunday
Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18
Psalm 149 or Psalm 150
Psalm 149 or 150
Ephesians 1:11-23
Luke 6:20-31

November 10

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost
Haggai 1:15b-2:9
Psalm 145:1-5, 17-21
2 Thessalonians 3:6-13
Luke 20:27-38

November 17

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost,
Isaiah 65:17-25
Isaiah 12 or Psalm 118
2 Thessalonians 3:6-13
Luke 21:5-19

November 24

Christ the King Sunday,
Jeremiah 23:1-6
Luke 1:68-79
Colossians 1:11-20
Luke 23:33-43

December 1

First Sunday of Advent, Year A
Isaiah 2:1-5
Psalm 122
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:36-44



November 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 10:00 Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour 12:30 Food Drive, Stop & Shop	28 7:00 (pm) AA	29 7:30 Long Range Planning Committee	30 1:00 and 7:30: <i>Can You Drink the Cup</i> classes	31 7:00 AA 7:00 Choir Chimes 7:30 Choir	1 11:15 AIAnon 7:00 MYF	2
3 9:50 Prayer Circle 10:00 Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour 11:30: Worship Committee Meeting	4 7:00 AA	5 6:45 Committee on Lay Leadership	6 1:00 and 7:30: <i>Can You Drink the Cup</i> classes	7 7:00 AA 7:00 Choir Chimes 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	8 11:15 AIAnon 7:00 MYF	9
10 9:50 Prayer Circle 10:00 Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour	11 Veterans' Day – Office Closed 7:00 AA	12 6:45 Committee on Lay Leadership 7:30 Finance Committee	13 Meals on Wheels Board Meeting 1:00 and 7:30: <i>Can You Drink the Cup</i> classes	14 7:00 AA 7:00 Choir Chimes 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	15 11:15 AIAnon 7:00 MYF	16
17 9:50 Prayer Circle 10:00 Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour	18 7:00 AA	19 6:45 Committee on Lay Leadership 7:30 Church Council	20 1:00 and 7:30: <i>Can You Drink the Cup</i> classes	21 7:00 AA 7:00 Choir Chimes 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	22 11:15 AIAnon 7:00 MYF	23
24 9:50 Prayer Circle 10:00 Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour	25 7:00 AA	26 6:45 Committee on Lay Leadership 7:30 Trustees	27 1:00 and 7:30: <i>Can You Drink the Cup</i> classes No class	28 Happy Thanksgiving!	1 11:15 AIAnon Office Closed	2

UMW NEWS – NOVEMBER

November is almost upon us! It is time to begin bringing donations for the Thanksgiving Boxes which will be distributed to families in the Three Village School District. We are planning to organize ten boxes. All donations must be delivered to the Community room by Sunday, Nov. 24, when the boxes will be assembled. We will distribute the boxes to the schools on Monday, November 25. Please look for the Thanksgiving Boxes Sign-Up Sheet in the Community Room. Thank you for your support of this important ministry.

PASTOR APPRECIATION SUNDAY

Pastor Appreciation Sunday was celebrated by the Congregation on Sunday, October 13. During the worship service, Pastor Chuck and Pastor Anthony were honored with a special congregational hymn. The celebration continued during coffee hour with a cake and the gift of a Manger in Pastor's honor.



2019 Apple Festival a Huge Success!

Congratulations to our Organizing Committee – Cheryl Davey, Kate Hausske, Barbara Lynch, Megan Murphy, Mark Marino, Pat Martin, Sue Murphy, Donna Smith, and Michelle Varghese – and to our many wonderful worker bees, with special nods to Vishal Varghese, Matt Seyfert, Sharon Klecher, Sarah Klecher, Diana Contanza, and pie tsars the Lunde Family! Thanks to everyone's work and enthusiasm, the Apple Festival raised \$7638 this year.



2019 Apple Festival a Huge Success!



A PASSION FOR JUSTICE

By Jeanne Torrence Finley



The whole gospel

When I entered Candler School of Theology at Emory University, I was assigned as a work-study secretary to retired bishop John Owen Smith, the “Churchman in Residence.” As bishop of the Atlanta Area in 1968, he had presided over the merger of the black Georgia Conference with the historically white North and South Georgia Conferences. Bishop Smith was writing a book called *Give the Whole Gospel a Chance*, and my job was to transcribe it from his dictation. Bishop Smith, firmly in the tradition of John Wesley, wanted Christians to connect personal piety and social justice.

Bishop Smith had articulated for me the connection between faith and social justice. Years passed before I discovered our United Methodist Social Principles and long tradition of involvement in social justice causes. Then I began to wonder, *How is a passion for justice taught and nurtured?*

Bishop Smith’s passion for justice came both from his study of the prophets, particularly Amos, Micah, Jeremiah and Isaiah and his understanding of Jesus’ teaching and ministry. He was also profoundly influenced by John Wesley’s concern for the social issues of his day — poverty, inadequate education and medical care for the poor, and slavery.

Biblical justice

Some people who are passionate about justice acquired that passion from the Bible. The Old Testament pair of words for justice are *mishpat* and *tzadeqah*. *Mishpat*, which occurs more than 200 times in various forms in the Hebrew Old Testament, means treating people equitably, giving people their due, whether that’s punishment, protection or care. It often means caring for or defending orphans, widows, the poor and immigrants — the most vulnerable members of a society.

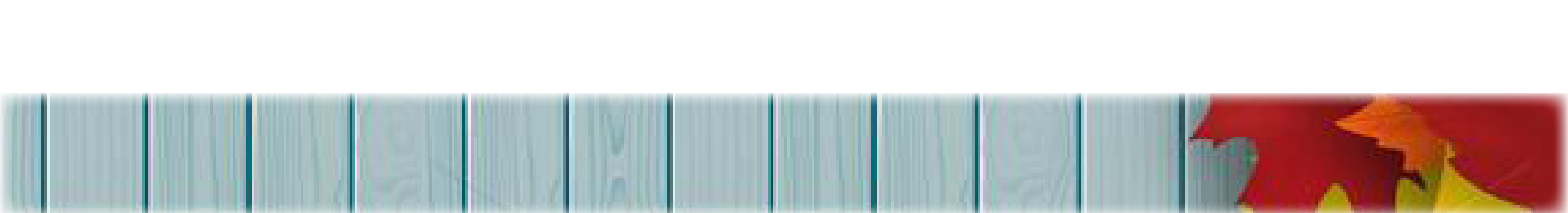
Tzadeqah also means being just, but it’s often translated as “being righteous.” To modern ears the word *righteous* refers to private morality, but in the Old Testament it means living in right relationships. The righteous person conducts all relationships with equity, generosity and fairness. The two words frequently appear together in the Bible as justice and righteousness.

Another Hebrew word for justice is *shalom*, which also refers to peace, wholeness (in the sense of well-being), security and the restoration of broken relationships. God’s desire for humankind is *shalom*. Jim Wallis, editor of *Sojourners* magazine, explains that justice is “about repairing broken relationships both with other people and to structures — of courts and punishments, money and economics, land and resources, and kings and rulers.”

Justice is also a major theme in the New Testament, although English translations often make that difficult to see. Following the lead of the King James Version, many modern English versions of the Bible use the word *righteousness* in place of the Greek word for justice in translating the New Testament, even though they often translate *tsedek* [another form of *tzadeqah*] as justice in the Old Testament.

The Law and the Prophets

The Israelite law called for remembering the stranger, the foreigner, the orphan and the widow — the people most vulnerable to hunger and poverty. Deuteronomy 24:19-22 required the Israelites to leave grain in the fields and grapes on the vine at harvest time for the foreigners, orphans and widows. Verse 22 states the reason for this practice: “Remember how you were a slave in Egypt. That’s why I am commanding you to do this thing.”



Other laws required lending to those in need without charging interest (Exodus 22:25), cancelling debts every seventh year (Deuteronomy 15:1-2, 7-11) and observing a year of Jubilee every 50th year in order that property be returned to the family of the original owner (Leviticus 25:10). This law was intended to ensure that no family would go hungry.

The prophets spoke passionately about God's vision of justice and wholeness for all creation. They knew that God requires both charity and justice, and justice can often be accomplished only through changing public policy. The prophets had the view that nations, as well as individuals, will be judged by the way they treat the weakest and most vulnerable among them.

Jesus' passion for justice

The justice ethic of Jesus was profoundly influenced by the Hebrew Scriptures. In the synagogue at Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus read aloud from the prophet Isaiah:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners
and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed,
and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19)*

Jesus' passion for justice led him to reach out to those on the margins of society — the poor, women, children, Samaritans, lepers, tax collectors and prostitutes. In addition, Jesus taught us to love not only our neighbors (defined as anyone in need in Luke 10:25-37) but also our enemies (Matthew 5:44). In both the Old and New Testament, God's intention is justice, particularly for the most vulnerable of society.

Empathy and compassion

How is it that the justice demands of the Bible are so easily overlooked in our day? Have we simply ignored the message of the prophets or overlooked Jesus' passion for justice? Is the problem that we haven't the capacity to imagine how oppressed people might feel?

Empathy — the capacity to imagine how the experiences of others might feel — precedes the compassion that leads to action. Philosopher Rick Lewis says that a "way to see the importance of empathy is to ask what happens when it fails." He cites acts of terrorism as examples and asks, "How could anyone be prepared to cause such intense pain to other human beings — the innocent victims and their families — except through a catastrophic failure of the imagination? It is as if the [terrorists] are so selfishly wrapped up in their own grievances, ideals and sacrifice — their own drama — that they forget about the pain they will cause." He notes that "having a reasonable degree of empathy at least for those immediately around them saves people from selfishness and barbarity."

Worship and justice

Don Saliers, professor emeritus of worship and theology at Emory University, has written and spoken widely about the relationship of worship and ethics. By *ethics*, he means "a concrete way of life" that is shaped by "a continuing remembrance of the vision" of "the covenant community in Hebrew Scripture, and the followers of Jesus in the New Testament." This "remembrance" is mediated through communal prayer, Scripture, the proclaimed Word, music and the sacraments. In this way, worship can reorient our lives and convert "the heart and social imagination to the rule and reign of God that Jesus proclaims and embodies." Over time, these acts of worship can hold before us God's vision of shalom for all humankind and for the earth itself and evoke in us a passion for justice.

If we're willing to "give the whole gospel a chance," we can learn, teach, and nurture a passion for justice. The process involves being shaped by the Law and prophets of the Old Testament and the example and teachings of Jesus through study and worship. Then we're in a better position to make the connection between faith and justice and to encourage others to do so.

Jeanne Torrence Finley is a retired clergy member of the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church. She has worked as a campus minister, pastor, college English teacher, and workshop leader.