

# HILLTOPPER

United Methodist Church of Parsippany

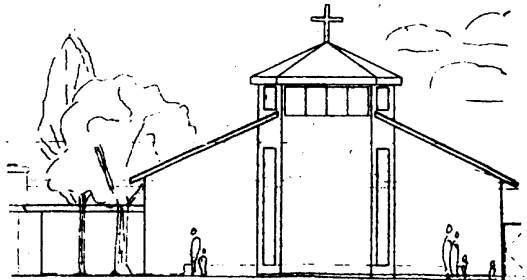
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*Sunday Worship Celebration: 10:30 a.m.*

*In a hostile, hurting world we reach out to share kindness and laughter. Our spirituality is based on Jesus and his love and compassion. We provide a community of support and healing where all are welcomed and valued regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, disability, gender, or economic status. In a world where people feel they can love only those who are like themselves, we seek to celebrate the uniqueness of every human being.*

*"Making Room in the Circle"*



**JANUARY, 2010**



A sermon preached by Pastor Jeff on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009 based upon Philippians 4:4-7, entitled "The Other Point of View and the Way of Gentleness."

There are two distinctly different angles from which to view our lives.

The most common angle sees it as a great struggle -- a kind of war, fought on various battlefronts with us in the thick of it. There is the work front, the personal financial front, the home front. There is the struggle we engage in with our most intimate relationships in the ongoing attempt to make them life giving rather than life crushing.

There is the battlefield of our personal health, and the battlefield we hopefully engage in our own personal development – the struggle to curb our character flaws, our bad habits and addictions, and enhance our virtue and character.

And then if we are fortunate enough to have any energy left over from the various personal battles we wage, there are the battles we are called to fight to make our society more humane and just, to promote the integrity and effectiveness of government, to enhance the work and witness of our church, to care for the earth and those persons less fortunate than ourselves.

(In this view of the world Christmas itself becomes another battle, a struggle to make it come off right.)

It is, to large extent, unavoidable that we see our life this way. Life **isn't** easy, and there is truth to the notion that it **is** a dog eat-dog-world, with lots of people out there looking to take advantage of us, so we'd better choose our alliances carefully, knowing who we can trust – who is for us, and who is against us. We have to stay vigilant.

Life **is** exhausting, like that circus act where the performer spins multiple dishes on poles. The plates continue to stay up only if the performer manages to regularly return to each one to give it some individual attention. Sooner or later, we know there will be no choice but to give up and let the dishes come crashing down.

Although from time to time we celebrate victories in particular battles, there is a kind of creeping despair that colors this view of the world, because we know that in the end this is not a war we can win. Every bit of order we manage to create will in time give way to chaos, and we

are, after all, every one of us in the process of dying, and so pretty much everything we work to accomplish sooner or later dies along with us.

As I said before, there is a certain validity to the battlefield view of life, and an unavoidable necessity of engaging in it. But if this is the only we have of viewing life, we will inevitably end up defeated, despairing and bitter.

And it is particularly important as we age and are forced to give up the illusion we have that we might actually win the war that we discover another way of seeing life.

The Apostle Paul, writing late in his life from a prison cell invites us to see life from a completely different angle. Like countless other prophets and seers throughout the ages in every culture, he invites us to see life from a above, so to speak.

*“Rejoice in the Lord Always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your gentleness. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

The apostle Paul speaks of joy, which isn't the same as happiness. Happiness has to do with victories won on the battlefronts of war: the clean bill of health from the doctor, plenty of money in the bank and a job we can count on and enjoy, and relationships that are working well.

Joy is different. It comes from a deeper place, and, as the Christmas story reminds us, shows up in surprising places: to poor shepherd outcastes watching their flocks by night; to a homeless couple giving birth to a child in, of all places, a stinking stable.

The view from above doesn't see life as a struggle or a battle at all, recognizing instead that we already have what we most need: that, as Paul puts it, “The Lord is at hand!” That it is possible to be content, to know peace, even when the dishes are coming crashing down around us, and the news bulletins from our various battlefronts are not good.

This other point of view recognizes that, in the end, love is all that matters, and that love is the one thing that never ends, and that every moment, no matter how outwardly bleak, is an opportunity to let love be birthed into your life.

When you in the midst of seeing life as a great ongoing battle, talk arising from this other viewpoint can seem like nonsense. You can't just talk yourselves into seeing life this way. A gift of grace is required for to catch a glimpse of life from above, and grace shows up on God's good time, without coercion by us.

And once we're allowed by grace to catch a glimpse of this over view and are awakened to an abundance that previously was invisible to us, we realize there are choices we can make in regard to our attitude and our actions that help us get out of battlefield mentality.

“Rejoice in the Lord,” Paul commands us, implying that there is some measure of choice here. At any given moment, we can choose to forgo drawing the lines of the battlefield, and trust that we do, in fact, already have what we most need.

“Let all people know your gentleness,” he declares, reminding us that the choice to live gently is an antidote to the creeping despair of the life as war viewpoint.

We can choose to be gentle and patient rather than angry and hostile. Here's a simple challenge to you. In the coming week, try to be aware of the times you are tempted to become angry, because anger is a sure fire sign that we are seeing life as a battle. We assume that we have no choice in the matter.

But what if, in fact we do have a choice? What if you were to consciously choose gentleness, rather than anger? Chances are, there will be some stumbling if you attempt this. Nonetheless, I guarantee that a concerted effort to choose gentleness over anger will surprise you with the possibilities of grace it opens up to you.

“Nothing is so strong as gentleness,” wrote St. Francis de Sales, “nothing so gentle as real strength.”

There is a 1.4 km stretch of rocky cliff in Japan known as Tojinbo, where routinely as many as ten people a month jump to their deaths. The choice to take one's own life is the inevitable consequence of the battlefield view of life, because, as I said before, in the end we will lose this war.

I came across this remarkable story about a retired policeman in Japan named Yukio Shige, who spends each day patrolling Tojinbo, scouring the precipice with binoculars for people who have come there to end their lives. Yukio devotes himself to the practice of gentleness. He has established a little café near the cliffs as a kind of base camp in this work, and a non-profit group of like-minded folk who share in his mission. Yukio and his supporters are said to have persuaded 167 people from leaping to their death over the past five years.

His method of persuading someone to stay alive is quite simple. When Yukio spots a person standing on the edge of the cliff, he talks to them gently and invites them back to his cafe, where he serves them warm rice cake. "You can see what the person is here for just by looking at the way they stand on the edge," he said. "Most of them look relieved and soon break down in tears when I just say hi."

The battle lines between us are overcome with gentleness. The Good Shepherd is there, quietly, persistently, gently seeking those upon the precipice, calling them home. And we are invited to join Him in this great love.

In the kindness of Jesus,  
Pastor Jeff



Looking back...2010 Officers installed.... And great fun and great gifts playing the Christmas Gift Game, and dee-licious refreshments, and wonderful fellowship!...



**NO MEETING IN JANUARY**

**United Methodist  
Women**

Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> – New Year's Day

Jan. 18<sup>th</sup> – Martin Luther King Day

Get well wishes to those of you who are ill, and  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY to those of you celebrating this month with Ruth Freerks.

God Bless,  
Doris Bradley

**Prov. 17:17 "A friend loves at all times."**



Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup> our choir will be participating in a special **community worship service** at Temple Beth Am marking the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. All are invited to the service that begins at 7:30 p.m.



Congratulations to Pastor Jeff for writing a terrific Christmas Play that enjoyed 3 "full houses"!  
BRAVO!!



Administrative Council will meet Sunday, January 24 after the worship service.

**Looking back:** Pastor Jeff's original Christmas comedy, *"How Angels Like to Party,"* was performed over three nights in December with a total audience of about 200 people. The cast included Al and Gail Booth, Betty Polen, Garret Belanus, Amy, Bill, Kelsey, Erika and Anna Gripp, Justin, Alison, Eddie, Cassie, Beth, TJ and Marissa Cogan, Anita, Ryan and Briana Laux, Josh Romine, Jared Gropper, Victoria Bond, Jack Walsh, Joanne Rich, Doris Bradley, and Jeff and Bobby Edwards. The support crew included Dawn Barhite, Monica and Val Hawkins, Kate Eiring, Sarah Edwards, Brendan and Bob Laux, Michael Soriano, Charlie Bruxgalis, Darryl Sokolowski, Andrew Edwards, Greg Elbin and Connie Keller with original music composed by Jason Zarcher and recorded by Jason, Norm, Marnie and Joshua Zarcher. Jared Gropper will be editing a videotape version that will soon be available.



The Parsippany UMC theater ministry is alive and well. Put forth your ideas and run with your dreams. There is oodles of God-give talent among us!



Our **youth group** meets approximately every other Sunday evening from 7 to 8:30 p.m. All 8<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders are invited. Josh Romines is our youth leader, assisted by Dawn Barhite.



In order to help us to learn the names of all our children and youth in our Church Family, we've put together a **photo directory** of them. If you have a child or youth who hasn't yet been included, please submit a photo to Pastor Jeff.



A limited number of first edition copies of the book, *From Reveille to Appell: The Story of an American Prisoner-of-War in World War II*, about the year our own Harold Gantert spent in a German prison camp, are now available. The book is full of drawings, journal entries, photos and letters from Harold's scrap book, and provide insight of the common heroism of Harold and so many others who served our country valiantly. It also provides a lesson in trusting God. Harold describes his experience of parachuting from his plane this way: "I said a little prayer and it felt OK and then I jumped. I could hear the sound of the air around me; I could feel it on my face. At some point my plane exploded, but still I continued to feel peaceful. You know, it's quiet way up there, looking down at the countryside below. Copies are available for a donation of \$20.



Our church website has been revised and updated. If you haven't seen it lately, check it out at [Parsippanyumc.com](http://Parsippanyumc.com). At the website you will find a link to all of Pastor Jeff's sermons, as well as his occasional bloggings.



**Healing Prayer sessions** are held every Wednesday morning from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in the prayer chapel. All are invited to come and be a part of this time of prayer -- for yourself or for others.



A **Men's Breakfast** is held every Tuesday at 7 a.m. at the Empire Diner on Rt. 46. It's a relaxed time with many jokes and laughter and conversation about whatever we care to talk about, concluded with a prayer. All are welcome



The **UMW** is selling **Food Certificates to benefit the General Budget** for ShopRite and PathMark as an *ongoing Fund Raiser*. The church will receive 5% of all purchases (you buy \$100 of certificates, the church gets \$5). Certificates are available in \$5, \$10, \$20, \$25, \$50 and \$100 denominations. Please see Betty Polen at the beginning of Coffee Hour if you would like to purchase Food Certificates. Checks should be made payable to The United Methodist Women.

Thank you,  
The UMW



**Consider becoming a part of one or more of our Musical Groups here at church:**

**Bell Choir** – rehearses Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. The Bell Choir has been shrinking over the last few years and we sure would like more people to join us! Speak to Tom Smith or Barb Bradley - or just show up on Thursday and see what happens!

**Choir** – rehearses Thursdays at 7:45 p.m. We always have an "open robe" for anyone who loves to sing. We sing in 4-part harmony, so if you've sung in your high school chorus or any other equivalent, you have a great start! Speak to any choir member or Barb Bradley if you're interested.

**Kids Choir** – rehearses after Sunday service in the sanctuary. Children of all ages are invited to join Sarah Jernstrom and Barb Bradley as they teach your children songs and signing.

**Jr. Choir** – rehearses after Sunday service in the sanctuary. For kids too old for Kids Choir and too young for the adult choir! Speak to Sarah Jernstrom or Barb Bradley if you're interested.



Anyone aware of a **Prayer Concern** is invited to contact Grace Agre at 539-3855 who will put the **Prayer Chain** into action. If Grace cannot be reached, please contact Pastor Jeff. If you would like to add your name to the people who receive the prayer chain, please speak to Betty Polen



**Parsippany Food Pantry** - Wes Sitgreaves has called to our attention the ongoing need of the Emergency Food Pantry in Parsippany in these difficult economic times. There are more and more families turning to the food pantry for help. You can bring your donations of non-perishable food items to the church any Sunday. Our church has been collecting non-perishable food for the Parsippany Food Pantry for many years. There is a bin outside of the sanctuary for contributions. Wes Stigreaves takes the food over as the bin gets filled up. They have given us a list of items that they can use: Canned fruits, vegetables, meat, fish, poultry and soups; dry goods: cereal, pasta, rice, dried potatoes, peanut butter and jelly, tomato sauce, tea, coffee, hot chocolate, fruit juice, powered or evaporated milk, salad dressings, mayo, mustard, ketchup. Supermarket gift cards are also welcome - buy them from Betty Polen and raise money for the church at the same time!!! This is a very easy way to give back to the less-fortunate in our own township. Please consider buying some of these items every week as you shop for your own groceries.



**SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR JANUARY**

Jan. 3<sup>rd</sup>

Isaiah 60:1-6  
Ephesians 3:1-12  
Matthew 2:1-12

Jan. 10<sup>th</sup>

Isaiah 43:1-7  
Acts 8:14-17  
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>

Isaiah 62:1-5  
1 Corinth. 12:1-11  
John 2:1-11

Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>

Nehemiah 8:1-3,5-6  
1 Corinth. 12:12-31a  
Luke 4:14-21

Jan. 31<sup>st</sup>

Jeremiah 1:4-10  
1 Corinth. 13:1-13  
Luke 4:21-30



1 <sup>st</sup>	Harold Gantert	22 <sup>nd</sup>	Heather Weiss
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Barbara Bush	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Ruth Freerks
5 <sup>th</sup>	Barbara Anderson	25 <sup>th</sup>	Jennifer Collins
5 <sup>th</sup>	Gene Lange	25 <sup>th</sup>	Chris Salink
11 <sup>th</sup>	Jim Sakelakos	25 <sup>th</sup>	Kathryn Montecullo
13 <sup>th</sup>	Olivia Evans	27 <sup>th</sup>	Darryl Sokolowski
19 <sup>th</sup>	Dominick Pesquera	29 <sup>th</sup>	Michael Weiss
20 <sup>th</sup>	Pauline Rich	30 <sup>th</sup>	Chris Payne
20 <sup>th</sup>	Jim Cochrane		

**JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES**

12<sup>th</sup> Fred & Grace Schlosshauer  
25<sup>th</sup> Ruth & Charles Faulend



**HAVE A  
BLESSED  
NEW YEAR!**



# Celebrate "A New Year and A New You!"

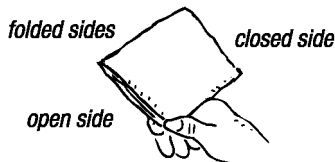
Make a paper noisemaker to celebrate with.

**You will need:**

- \* a piece of notebook or copier paper
- \* crayons or markers
- \* ruler
- \* scissors

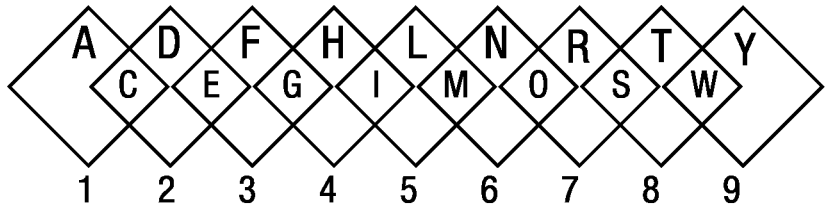
**How to:**

1. Cut a piece of paper 7" or 8" square.
2. Color it or write "Happy New Year & Happy New You" on it.
3. Fold paper almost in half. The bottom edge should be 1/2" from the top.  Crease the fold well.
4. Fold in half side-to-side with the shorter flap inside.  Crease well.
5. Hold the paper tightly between thumb and index finger at open corner where there are only 2 thicknesses.
6. Quickly flick your arm and wrist downward. The inside paper will pop out and make a loud snap.



## "A New Year – A New You"

Find the words from 2 Corinthians 5:17.



“ e ’ 4,5 3

8 4 2,3 7 2,3 3 6,7 7 2,3

1 6 9 6,7 6 2,3 4,5 7,8 4,5 6

1,2 4 7 4,5 7,8 8 ’ 4 2,3 4,5 7,8 1

6 2,3 8,9 1,2 7 2,3 1 8 4,5 6,7 6 ;



8 4 2,3 6,7 5 2 4 1 7,8

3,4 6,7 6 2,3 ’ 8 4 2,3

6 2,3 8,9 4 1 7,8

! ”

1,2 6,7 5,6 2,3

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

