Pastor Page

It must have felt like the longest night when Jesus was born! Not only did Mary and Joseph get turned away at the Inn, but they had also waited nine months to see what the Savior of the world, conceived by God’s Holy spirit, would look like. Their people, Israel, had waited for seven hundred years to see prophecy fulfilled: “A child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6) There was darkness in the world when Jesus came. King Herod heard about a “king of the Jews” being born and did not want the competition, so he ordered all young boys in Israel to be killed. Somehow Jesus was spared this atrocity and lived to teach, heal, forgive and offer salvation in his day. Sometimes we wonder if Jesus’s life made any difference in our world today. We look for God’s light through our faith in Christ, even in the darkest night. Difficulty and loss cloud can cloud our view.

This year I am offering a chapel service before Christmas on the longest night of the year: December 21, when the sun will set at 3:54 p.m.! Not everyone feels joyful around Christmas. We will gather in the midst of suffering to remember God is good, God is strong, and God is nearby. We are not alone, and we have every reason to hold on to hope. Some people have lost a family member; some people are all alone; some have just moved into the area; some are lamenting the terrible killing on other shores; some want to reach out and find God again, and some feel God let them down in the distant past, right around these holidays. This service will give space and time to grieve, pray, sing and hope again in the saving grace of God given through Jesus Christ. Join me on the Saturday before Christmas and experience the light filling our darkness once again.

Jesus’ advent (coming) truly changed the world. I hope you join us also for all the special events this holy season, preparing ourselves spiritually to receive the greatest gift ever given: Jesus the Lord. Nothing remains the same when following God’s direction, except the love of God and isaHisHisHis relationship with us. We have been assessing the work of our church in reaching more people with that Love. In doing this work, your leaders are working hard to bring about some changes that will help us be more effective, efficient, and focused in who God is calling us to be. Look for the coming signs of a renewed vision for our church beginning in the New year. And please join us to find the light of God this season!

***You Are Invited!***

* **Sunday, December 1 9:30 am 1st Sunday of Advent Worship, Communion**
* **Saturday, December 7 9:00 am-3 Winter Fantasy**
* **Sunday, December 8 9:30 am 2nd Sunday of Advent Worship**
* **Sunday, December 8 5:00 pm Lesson and Carols in Sanctuary**
* **Saturday, December 14 9:00 – 12 Church Decorating Party**
* **Sunday, December 15 9:30 am 3rd Sunday of Advent Worship**
* **Tuesday, December 17 6:45 pm Christmas Concert by Crystal Chords**
* **Wednesday, December 18 12:00 pm Women’s Christmas Luncheon**
* **Saturday, December 21 6:00 pm Longest Night Service in Chapel**
* **Sunday, December 22 9:30 am 4th Sunday of Advent Worship**
* **Tuesday, December 24 7:00 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship**
* **December 18-23 4:00 pm-8:00pm Living Nativity on the front lawn**
* **December 24 10:00 pm-8:00pm Living Nativity on the front lawn**

A person sitting at a desk using a phone

Description automatically generated**Parish Visitor/Cindy Ellis**

I haven’t had my Thanksgiving turkey dinner yet – but I need to prepare this article for December newsletter! I look out at trees that haven’t given up all of their leaves and the sky is so pretty (air is cold though). I think of folks who are still suffering from illnesses: Dan Flatt, Peg Peary, Dick Brigger, Alan, Larry, & Walter Madison, Gerry Austin, Denise Hamilton and her mother – Ruth Pfaff, Harold Lauper, Marion Avery, Larry Crandell – who is home from the hospital. We keep Andy Gillette, Kevan Carichner, Barb & Don Sommers, Dick Davies in our prayers. We will also keep our “At Home” members in our prayers: Bonnie Flashphaler, Dolores Wilcox, Tom Peck Beverly Ring, Gladys Kucher, Carl Schnautz, Mary Mack, Josie Knapp, Phyllis Naegely, Letha Padgett, Betty Hess, Lucille Panosian, Nancy Whittaker, Evelyn Catlin, Bob Blackall, Betsy Hull and Andrea Harradon recovering from illness. Do send cards to let the folks know they are remembered and missed. God be with you this season of Thanksgiving, Advent/Christmas.

**UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH**: Out next circle meeting is:

Wednesday: December 18, Noon in Fellowship Hall, Christmas luncheon, bring a dish to pass and your own table service. There will be Entertainment and a short business meeting.

*ALL WOMEN OF THE CHURCH AND FRIENDS ARE INVITED TO OUR GATHERINGS ANYTIME*

We continue to gather items for the Homeless in Chemung County. A box is under the United Women in Faith bulletin board for your gift. It is located near the church kitchen. Candy Kirkwood said socks, individual snacks, wipes, bottles of water, canned fruit are great items. The entire list is on the bulletin board. Thank you for helping God’s children who live a different life than ours.

**Thank you for your gifts of money to help folks at Thanksgiving time**. We were able to give food gift cards to 8 families.

**Membership Committee**. We are updating our membership records and are trying to locate the following members of our congregation. Our current information isn’t correct. If you know any of these people and have their address or phone number, will you contact the church office (607-739-1943)? Sheila Brown, Donald & Sharon Beigun, Sandy & Christine Bussard, Amy D’Angelo, Sandra & William Felthousen, Dianna Kitzmann, Michael Leonard, Rebecca & David Romig, Elizabeth Vondercheck, MaryJane & David Walton, Stephen & Deborah Seeley, Nancy & Charles Knapp, Margo Kohan, Sandra & Richard Swartz, Diana Kitzmann, and Richard Lintal. Thank you for your help.

**BEHIND THE SCENES**

**Question?**

What is an Acolyte? Who is an Acolyte? What does an Acolyte do? Why do we need an Acolyte? Who does the training for those who would like to be an Acolyte? Who filles the large candle snuffers/lighters used in our Sunday service? Who makes sure the lighting wicks are ordered/replaced? Who makes sure the candle snuffers/lighters are kept in good condition? Where are the candle snuffers/lighters kept? Who gets an Acolyte for church service? Is this job a volunteer job, or do we pay someone to do it? Where does the money come from to pay for new wicks, new lighters if needed? Who maintains the equipment? (Hint, it is not the trustees.)

**Winter Fantasy, December 7th, 2024**

**Winter Fantasy sign-up sheets are posted in the entranceway for Set-Up help and Kitchen help**. Please sign up for any donations for the Holy Grounds Kitchen that you could help us with! We are still in need of kitchen helpers and donations of food items/drinks.

Please sign up for help setting up tables/chairs on Thursday and cleaning up on Saturday. Any questions please contact Bob Aiello, 607-331-6121, Larry Crandell: 607-731-1816.

For any food donations/kitchen help questions, call Janell Sullivan, 607-739-3797

**Winter Fantasy Help Needed**: Our list of Vendors for Winter Fantasy has filled the building!! With more calls each day asking for space. Unfortunately, the committee had to turn away some, but all rooms are filled! So please come shop, even to buy just a small ornament or a large lawn decoration, a homemade gift, and of course our own sweet shop has something you should not have but are going to buy anyway! And don’t forget, lunch made by our own Holy Grounds kitchen staff. On December 7th we are asking you, our congregation, to come over to help support the church and the vendors who make our fund raiser the successful event it has become for 22 years now! Please check the Facebook page and share the Winter Fantasy Poster on your own page.

**Please join us for the annual service of Lessons and Carols on December 8 at 5pm**. A tradition since its inception in 1990 by Cathy Peckham, it features the combined choirs of our church and the Church of St. Mary Our Mother. The service will include a chamber orchestra, three “new favorites” and of course several carols for all to sing. A spiritual and festive beginning to the Advent season!

**Congratulations to Raychel Yost from Stillwater Oklahoma, the Houghton College student who was recently awarded our $1,000 George Lee scholarship for the 2024-2025 school year.**

**Stewardship Update: Our** 2025 Pledge Campaign was pushed back a bit due to the work of our Ministry Audit team.  Pledge cards will be mailed out later this month, to be returned in December or early January.  Thanks to everyone for your generous support.

**What/Who are the FAITH BUILDERS?** Well, we are not a committee, but a small group that has been together for many years.  Our (if the) group is here to reach out.  We have created a visitor/welcome table with visitor bags to take and keep the table as current as possible.  We try to host occasional mid-week fellowship activities.  We brainstorm ideas and try to implement whenever possible….and last but not least – we try to help other committees with their activities when we can   We meet the 1st Wednesday of every month @ 5pm and invite you to drop in to see what we’re all about.

**Our church is blessed to have a devoted staff**.  They give of their time and talents to ensure jobs well done.  It has been a tradition at this time of year to give these people a monetary gift to say thank you.  If you would like to make a donation for the staff Christmas Giving, please mark your donation as Christmas Giving and put it in the collection plate or turn it in to the office.  Your generosity is appreciated.  Your Staff Parish thanks you, Brent Arnold, Fred Daniels, John Young, Gordon Gillette, Ann Rouse, Jan Przybylski, Christina Peklak.

**Church Staff**

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey McDowell pastorjeffmcd@yahoo.com

David Peckham, Music Director davidcathy@gmail.com

Jamie Olcott, Custodian jbolcott@gmail.com

Sarah Woodard, Lullaby Room woodard.sarah14@gmail.com

Cindy Ellis, Parish Visitor cellis6@stny.rr.com

Sandy Crane, Secretary office@horseheadsumc.org

**Karren’s Clothing Cupboard** is getting ready to celebrate our second anniversary. *We invite anyone interested to come see us on December 8th after church to check us out.*

We continue to increase our reach and the people we serve, thanks to the help of Christine Peklak and Pam Skebey, along with our Theresa Mckinley, who are putting us out there on the internet.

Recently, we were able to move storage out of the clothing closet and open a section just for youth and children. Theresa has done an amazing job setting it up, organizing it and maintaining it.

We are still looking for coats in good to excellent condition, preferably not wool, children’s clothing, men’s size 29,30,31,32 waist pants and jeans, larger sizes for both men and women, 1x and up. Again, thank you for all your donations, you are helping many people you may never meet.

Leslie Barfoot played a big role in coming up with some of the ideas for Karren’s Clothing Cupboard, because of her we remain a free will offering organization. Because of this free will offering, and the free clothing we have coming in we have been able to purchase supplies we have needed to get set up and organize ourselves. We are currently in a good place with our needs and have decided to support Thanksgiving and Christmas giving projects in our church with our extra, remaining in the mission mode. Thank you to all the people who put so much effort and commitment into Karren’s Clothing Cupboard and to all who donate so freely.

A person in a blue robe

Description automatically generatedA person in a scarf holding a person

Description automatically generated**MEDIA MUSINGS FROM OUR LIBRARY**: Is it possible for Biblical fiction to be intriguing, adventuresome, romantic, whimsical, grace-filled, sad, and joyful all at once? YES, in the hands of author, Tessa Afshar, it is exactly that! Our library has been gifted with two lively Tessa Afshar books. Thank you, Pat Stumpff, for donating **Pearl in the Sand** and **In the Field of Grace** to our growing collection of popular Afshar books. Tessa Afshar cleverly brings historical figures to life.

Can a Canaanite harlot who has made her livelihood by looking desirable to men make a fitting wife for one of Israel’s leaders? **Pearl in the Sand** has the answer.

**The Field of Grace** comes alive as the love of Ruth and Boaz unfold with vivid imagery, the sights and smells of the countryside, and the devotion of family. This is a love story that ultimately changes the course of Israel’s destiny. These books along with Afshar’s **Land of Silence**, make the old new again!

The library recently acquired **Creating Moments of Joy Along the Alzheimer’s Journey: A Guide for Families and Caregivers** by Jolene Brackey. This book is just filled with such good practical advice sprinkled with hope, encouragement, stories, and generous helpings of humor. We cannot always create perfect days for people with dementia or Alzheimer’s, but we can create moments that will generate a smile and positive feelings. This book came from the recent Southern Tier Caregiver Conference seminar. Jan Aiello donated a book that is an amazing portrait of friendship, feminism, and political activism covering three decades in the turmoil of Tehran, Iran! An impactful fiction novel, **The Lion Women of Tehran** by Marjan Kamali is a “stay up late, page turning read”! The two main characters grow up before your eyes. They each pursue their own goals for meaningful futures. Unfortunately, the years of devasting turmoil in Iran have such frightening life changing consequences for each character. Take a risk and read this book! Take time and search out our library! Sit, relax, and look around. It is always open and welcoming!

**Living Nativity**. Our church family portrays the nativity scene outdoors on the front lawn during the days before Christmas. The time spent with friends and family in the Living Nativity is special. We also send a wonderful message to the community about the true meaning of Christmas.

**History of the Living Nativity**

In 1983, Rev. Mary Jo Yaekel and Maureen Nicolo worked together to start the first Living Nativity. They borrowed costumes and built the stable by hand each year. Later many volunteers sewed their own costumes. In 1985, John Bouille offered to construct the first stable. Each year, Doug Mayhew gathered a group to rebuild the structure. Three years ago, Eagle Scout, Dylan Maynard built a new stable for his eagle project. Each year now, the scouts help put the stable together for this event. Our front lawn is the perfect location to show the true meaning of Christmas. Without our church family & friends, people who use our building, this tradition of the First United Methodist Church of Horseheads would not be possible.

If you would like to participate in this event, please give Louise McIntosh (607-739-1954) a call or call the church office and we will schedule you. (607-739-1943). A sign-up sheet is also in the entranceway.

**Living Nativity dates and times**. Wed Dec. 18- Mon Dec 23, 4-8pm, Tuesday Dec 24 10- 8 pm

Shifts are preferably 1 hour but will entertain 30 min shifts if necessary. Volunteers must report no later than 15 minutes before their shift starts. All costumes are provided, just wear something to keep warm.

**GIVING TREE:** It is hard to believe that Christmas will be here before we know it. Once again, Outreach is hoping to purchase gift cards for 8 families who need help to bring Christmas to their homes. We have begun asking for donations so that gift cards can be purchased in time for families to shop. If you are willing to help, please take an envelope from the small Christmas Tree and be a Christmas Angel. Cash or checks (if writing a check, put Christmas Giving on the memo line) should go in one of the envelopes. The envelopes can be put in the mailbox by the tree, in the collection plates, or given to Sandy in the church office. All donations need to be in by Dec.13.

**CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA ORDERS.** (Poinsettia’s will be put on the altar on December 24th.)

POINSETTIA ORDER

It is time to begin planning for this Advent season. The worship Team will be purchasing poinsettias from Emily’s Florist. ***Orders may be placed by returning the form to the Church office by November 24th.***

The cost is $10 each.

Quanity: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In Memory: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In Honor: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ $ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ENCLOSED

*PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION CLEARLY*

**Answer**

**A candle holder on a table

Description automatically generatedMeet Brent Arnold!** On Sunday mornings, you can find either Brent or Isaac Miller walking down the center aisle with a long brass candle lighter/sniffer to light the candles on the altar before the church service. Brent takes care of all things connected to the Acolytes. When new wicks or lighters are needed, the money comes from the Worship Fund and Brent makes sure they are ordered. Brent and Andy Gillette started the acolyte program for the church many years ago. Brent also takes all your empty pop can donations and turns them in for us. He has been a member of the choir “Since the beginning” he told us. So when you see Brent or Isaac, tell them Thanks for the behind the scenes job not many know happens in the church.

**What does Acolyte mean?** The word *acolyte* comes from the Greek word *akolouthos*, meaning follower, helper, or assistant. Acolytes may have any number of helping functions. They may carry the light, processional cross, banners, or Bible. They may also assist the pastor or other worship leaders with communion, baptism and other duties. [Youth often serve as acolytes](https://www.cokesbury.com/product/9780687038220/the-acolytes-book), but adults may serve as well.

**Do you ever wonder why there are so many cars in the parking lot all week long?** Here is a list of all committees/groups who use the building for meetings, parties, events. These groups make for an ever-changing schedule. Rooms get changed when requested for any party/special event, Church gatherings, Christmas/Holidays, Zoom meetings. Rooms switched for many groups when another group has a special event. If we have a Funeral, that will always over-ride any event. And just a reminder: Please send any change of time for December to the church office asap. If you cancel your committee meeting, please let the office know. Here is a list of all those who use our church.

**CHURCH COMMITTEE** **Meeting Day Place to Meet Time of Meeting**

1 Bells Choir Room TBD

2 Bible Study When announced

3 Choir Saturdays Choir Room 3 P.M.

4 Christian Education

5 Church Council 4th Wednesday Large Conf. Room 7 P.M.

6 Communion Team Last Fri/Sat of month K/SAC/SA/N TBA

7 Decorating Team Narthex TBA

8 Faith Builders 1st Tuesday Sm. Conf Room 6:30 P.M.

9 Investment Thursdays Large Conf. Rm. 7:15 P.M.

10 JAWS Saturdays All areas 8:00:00 A.M.

11 Living Endowment Thursdays Large Conf. Rm. 12:00 AM

12 Missions 3rd Wednesday Large Conf. Rm. 2:00 P.M.

13 Outreach 1st Thursday Large Conf. Rm. 7 P.M.

14 Quilt Ministry 3rd Monday Fellowship Hall 9 A.M.

15 Staff Parish 3rd Wednesday Large Conf. Rm. 6:30 P.M.

16 Stephen Ministry Every other Wed. Rm. 12 5:30 P.M.

17 Stewardship 4th Tuesday Large Conf. Rm. 7 P.M.

18 Trustees 2nd Tuesday Rm. 11 7 P.M.

19 United Women in Faith 3rd Wednesday Large Conf. Rm. noon

20 Worship 3rd Tuesday Sm. Conf. Rm. 1 P.M.

**Organization**

1 AA Mondays Large Conf. Rm. 7:30 PM

2 AA Tuesdays Large Conf. Rm. 12:15 PM

3 A Few More Faithful Band Mondays Sanctuary 5:30-8 P.M.

4 Art Club Mondays Large Conf. Rm. 1-4P.M.

5 Book Club 3rd Monday Wesley Rm. 1-2 P.M.

6 Brickyard Brass Tuesdays Sanctuary 6-7pm

7 \*BSA T84 Mondays Fellowship Hall 6:30 - 8:30 P.M.

8 \*BSA SPLC Meeting 1st Monday Sm. Conf. Rm. 7-8:30 P.M.

9 BSA Committee 2nd Tuesday Room 12 6:30 - 8:30 P.M.

10 \*BSA Eagle BOR When Needed Sm. Conf. Rm. 6:15-8:30 P.M.

11 Cards Fridays Large Conf. Rm. 12-2 P.M.

12 C.C. Board of Elections Election Days Fellowship Hall 5 A.M.-10 P.M.

13 Crystal Chords Tuesdays Fellowship Hall/CR 6:45-10 P.M.

14 \*FOHAS When needed SCR or Rm.11 5:20-7 P.M.

15 Girl Scout T40021 Wednesdays Rm. 10 5:30-7P.M.

16 Girl Scout T40197 Wednesdays Fellowship Hall 6-7:40 P.M.

17 Girl Scout T40216 Wednesdays Rm. 13 6-7P.M.

18 Girl Scout T40092 Th. Ev. 2 wks. Rm. 10 5-7 P.M.

19 Girl Scouts T40078 Fridays Rm 12 5:15-7:45

20 Happy House M-F Happy House Rooms 8-11:30 A.M.

21 \*HFRC Tuesdays HFRC Room 1:30 - 7:30 P.M.

22 HFRC Tuesdays Fellowship Hall 3:30 - 6:30 P.M.

23 HFRC Thursdays FH/Rm 11, 14, 15 10 A - 1 P.M.

24 HFRC BOARD 3rd Tuesday Rm. 12 11:30 A.M.

25 \*KCC Tues. & Thurs. 10:00-1: 00 /1:00-3:00

26 Kennel Club 3rd Tuesday Large Conf. Rm. 6-9:30 P.M.

27 Knit Wits Thursdays Large Conf. Rm. 11:00 A.M.-2 P.M.

28 Model A 2nd Tuesday Large Conf. Rm. 7-9 P.M.

29 \*OSFL-Hertzog When needed Classrooms/CR/ CH/ S/N

30 Scrapbooking Every 3rd Saturday Fellowship Hall 8 A.M.-5 P.M.

31 Swim & Dive Club 2nd Tuesday Wesley Rm 6:30-8:30 P.M.

\* BSA -Boy Scouts BSA SPLC- Senior Patrol Leaders Council

BSA Eagle BOR - Eagle Board of Review HFRC - HH Family Resource Center

FOHAS - Friends of the Horseheads Animal Shelter OSFL - Orchestra of the Finger Lakes

KCC - Karren's Clothing Cupboard