

NEW DOVER HERALD

February 2019

Holiness unto the Lord

Vol. 153

Highlights

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*It's not how
much we
GIVE
but how much
LOVE
we put into
giving*
—MOTHER TERESA

CHUCK'S CHURCH CHAT

February Twilight

I stood beside a hill
Smooth with new-laid snow,
A single star looked out
From the cold evening glow.

There was no other creature
That saw what I could see--
I stood and watched the evening star
As long as it watched me.

-Sara Teasdale

Saints,
Grace to you, peace.

Many of us prefer February quickly over so we can get on to March, because March starts to sound like spring. Who knows, maybe that's why they made it the shortest month! But like the good poet Sara Teasdale suggests, we shouldn't sell February short. There is a range of beauty to behold in its 28 days, from grey, icy sunrises over frosted fields, to sudden snow squalls, to days that warm into the fifties, teasing us that spring is just around the corner, only to have that dream shattered by a cold front cascading from Canada. February, like all the months, has its very own personality that ought to be cherished. As another good poet, Robert Frost, once put it, "*We love the things we love for what they are.*"

Well, 2019 is starting out with a beehive of activity around New Dover! A lot of it centers on our upcoming "Day Without Hunger" event to be held on Saturday, March 23rd. Led by event coordinator, Brian Richards, we are teaming up with the crew of the nonprofit, "Rise Against Hunger," to assemble 26,500 meals, equal to the number of children worldwide who needlessly die of starvation each and every day. Brian and the team from our Social Justice Task Force and Outreach Committee are busy planning the event, recruiting volunteers, and raising the \$10,500 we need to purchase the various food items that make up each individual meal. This will be a community-wide event as we are asking you to invite your neighbors, co-workers, friends, and classmates to sign up to work the meal assembly lines that day.

One of the ways we are raising money is through our *HUMONGOUS* Rummage Sale that will run Friday and Saturday, February 22nd and 23rd. Our goal for that event is \$5,000, the equivalent of 12,821 meals for hungry kids! That means it's time for each of us to head up to the attic, down to the

basement, through the doors of our closets, and out into the garage and box up any and all that superfluous "junk" that we can drop off at the church. We have already received hundreds of items and are in the process of organizing and pricing them so we can hit the ground running come February 22nd. The kitchen will also be open that day so there will be a wide variety of jobs for anyone who wants to take part. There's an added bonus to anyone who volunteers to work the sale- you will be invited to come by the church on Thursday afternoon and evening and engage in a "*FIRST-DIBS PRE-SALE!*" Be the one to find that hidden treasure before all the antique dealers show up on Friday!

In another exciting piece of news, this fall we submitted a grant proposal to the Greater New Jersey United Methodist Conference to upgrade the technology and sound in our sanctuary. Well guess what? We were approved for \$20,000! That's in addition to the funds we are currently raising through our "Miracles & More" campaign for paint and plaster!

Starting this month we will begin implementing our plans to make worship a more meaningful and accessible experience not only for those who attend, but also for anyone who may tune in anywhere around the world as we will be live-streaming our services through the Internet! One of the reasons we were approved for this grant is because we were able to pay 100% of our Shared Ministries (also known as apportionments) to Conference again this year. So thanks to all of you who have maintained or increased your giving over the past year!

Saints, we have built up a ton of spiritual momentum as we head into 2019, so let's keep moving forward in the footsteps of Jesus as we continue to build God's Kingdom in Edison!

Your servant in Christ,

Rev Chuck

Rev. Chuck Coblentz

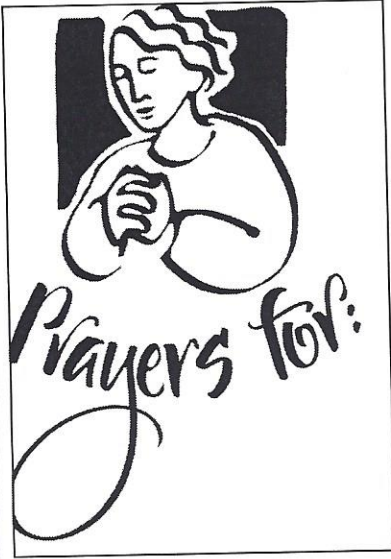
**EVERY DAY
26,500 CHILDREN
NEEDLESSLY DIE OF HUNGER**



**SATURDAY, MARCH 23RD
WILL BE
"A DAY WITHOUT
HUNGER"**

**JOIN US AT
NEW DOVER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
AS WE ASSEMBLE
26,500 MEALS
LET'S "RISE AGAINST HUNGER!"**

KEEP US IN YOUR PRAYERS



Bob Meckler & Family
Manny DeLaPaz & Family
Spencer Kolb
Christine Rowland
Eric Myers
Christine & Judy Tymitz
America
Christians of India
Marian Jones

LuLu Kamenas
NDUMC Missionaries
Preston Family
Boyce Family
Jeff & Karen Rowland
Our Schools
Robyn & Carolyn DeCicco
All suffering with
Addictions

Convalescent Homes
All Servicemen and
Women
Allie Forbes

Pray for all those seeking employment, those affected by Natural Disasters, those suffering with addictions, those suffering from depression, those affected by acts of terrorism, all national leaders and troops, and all those serving at New Dover UMC.

Any names that may have been left off are not intentional. We trust in God to know all our needs.

Become a Member of New Dover!

Have you thought about joining the New Dover Church family? Wonder what it means to become a church member? Are you currently a member of another church and would like to transfer your membership?

Please let Rev Chuck know and we will schedule an information session in the very near future!



SAVE THE DATES

Feb 22-23	Rummage Sale
Mar 5	Shrove Tuesday
Mar 6	Ash Wednesday
Mar 23	Rise Against Hunger



SERMON OF THE MONTH

"The Wounds of Faith"

(Sermon preached October 29, 2017)

Genesis 32:22-32

The Old Testament reading this morning concerns a man named Jacob, one of the four great patriarchs of the Hebrew people. But Jacob was not what you'd call your basic "garden variety" biblical hero. As a matter of fact if Jacob were a member of this church we'd probably have a hard time liking him! Not only was he an arrogant narcissist, but he was also a cheat and a swindler who endeavored to gain the upper hand in life by any means necessary. If Jacob ran for public office his character certainly would be called into question (okay...that may be a stretch!).

You may remember Jacob's story from Sunday School. He was the son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham- the man to whom God had promised that from his descendants would arise a great nation. Jacob was also the twin brother of Esau. Just how power hungry was he? Well even in the womb, Jacob wrestled with his brother to be the first one "out the chute," but when he found he couldn't jump the line, in embryonic frustration he grabbed at Esau's heel, and that's how the twins came into the world! Esau sliding out first, Jacob hanging onto his heel! In the ancient Middle East the order of birth in a family was of extreme importance because the one who was born first would receive two vital benefits: First of all, he (and at that time it had to be a he) would inherit upon his father's death the bulk of his family's wealth and property. And second, he would receive something even more important- his Father's blessing, which the ancient Hebrews believed to be a very sacred and powerful source of success and happiness.

Because he was the first born, all these benefits rightfully belonged to Esau, but guess what happened later on in their lives? Yep- first Jacob tricks Esau out of his inheritance and then he swindles him out of their Father's blessing. Now put yourself in Esau's place- how would you feel if your sibling bamboozled you out of everything that mattered in your life? Well, no need to speculate- we know how Esau felt, the Bible tells us in no uncertain terms: he was filled with such furious anger that he plotted to murder his brother in order to take back what was rightfully his, but overhearing Esau's plans, their mother, Rebekah made hasty arrangements for Jacob to get out of town and go live with her brother Laban in faraway Haran. Jacob, fearing for his life, leaves his homeland behind and hightails north to Haran. But on the way there, at a place he later named Bethel, as he slept with his head on a rock pillow, Jacob envisioned a ladder stretching to the heavens with angels ascending and descending on it, and there he encountered the God of his grandfather who said to him,

"I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring... all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and your offspring. Know that I am with you and will go with you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Well! This promise of God had a great impact even on a rascal such as Jacob. He picked up the stone upon which he had slept and set it as a pillar, and called the place Bethel, which means "House of God." Responding to God's promise Jacob prayed, *"If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so will I again come to my Father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God..."* That night at Bethel never left Jacob all the time he patiently awaiting God's call to return home. To make a long story short while living in Haran, Jacob married two sisters, Leah and Rachel, had 12 children, and gained great wealth. Twenty years came and went until once again God came to Jacob in a dream. The time had come. The voice said:

"I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and return to the land of your birth."

Jacob's call to return home had finally arrived, and so he and his family gathered their possessions and pointed their caravan toward the south, toward Jacob's real home, toward a face to face encounter with Esau. Now normally when someone is returning home after a long time away it a joyous event, but with each step of the journey Jacob's fear worsened and the knot in his stomach grew. How would Esau

react upon seeing the brother who had cheated him, the brother who had hurt him so badly? In the 20 years had the wound healed over, or had it festered? Would Esau offer forgiveness or seek murderous revenge?

As the Jacob's caravan approached the ford of the Jabbok River, he received word from scouts that Esau was coming up from the South to meet him marching with 400 men. "Uh oh," it didn't look good. Jacob knew he now had to make a hard choice. God had commanded him to return home, and he had promised to obey, but by doing so he would risk violent confrontation, even death, at the hand of his brother. That was the choice before him: obey God's call and risk suffering and death at the hands of Esau, or retreat back to the security of Haran? Now all that stood between the brothers was the Jabbok River. Jacob sent the entire caravan including his family over the river ahead of him. In order to decide what he should do he needed to be alone. And alone he was. Even the sun will exit the scene, retreating behind the hills to the West, casting long foreboding shadows over the wilderness, dragging with it the last vestige of light until Jacob was left in utter darkness and utter solitude. Only the gurgling of the river broke the eerie silence that engulfed him. He lay there alone in the darkness, alone that is until a shrouded stranger approached the tent, materializing from the shadows of night.

Have there been times in your life when you felt as though you were all alone on the dark side of a river? Where you were facing a hard choice, a decision that could very well affect the direction your life would take from that moment on, a choice that you and you alone could make. It may have involved a relationship. Whether or not to move to a different part of the country, or whether or not to have had a medical procedure. Whether you should confront a friend or family member, or where you should stand on a controversial or divisive issue. And you knew that no one could make that choice for you because it might mean the difference between security or ruin, companionship or isolation, health or sickness, even life or death. How did you stand up to the anxiety of the moment? Did you move forward with courage or retreat backward in fear? Of what value was your faith during such a test? Was it even a factor, or discarded as soon as the crisis grew in intensity? Or was it the reason you made it through the dark night of the soul?

Alone on the banks of the River Jabbok, Jacob lay there wondering whether his faith was stronger than his fear, strong enough to enable him to cross over come morning. How could he bring himself to face his brother? How could he return home after what he had done to Esau so many years ago? But then again how could he run away from his destiny? To do so would be to deny the God of his fathers. The future was as murky as the night that had closed in around him. But as Jacob lay there in the fog of indecision, without warning he was set upon by a shadowy figure who fell upon him from out of the pitch black darkness, and with this unknown assailant Jacob would grapple throughout the long night.

And grapple Jacob did, wrestling with the stranger hour upon hour, battling fatigue and exhaustion. But why did he fight so hard? For two reasons: for one, Jacob always liked to win! From birth he had done things his way, and he wanted to keep doing things his way, and he was determined that no one, not even this menacing intruder was going to force him to do otherwise. No matter what, the only one he trusted to decide whether or not he was going to cross that river come morning was he himself- no one else, and so he grappled with all his strength.

But there was one other reason he held out: Jacob needed to know who this mysterious person was! Who was this who fought so hard with him? Jacob determined that he would not let go until he found out. He would hold on until the light of dawn if he had to, and so he refused to let go, and more than held his own, and the hours ticked by. Then, just as the dawn's first hazy light began to permeate the darkness and reveal his opponent's identity; just as it appeared Jacob would see the stranger's face; just as it seemed Jacob would win after all; his assailant reached down and touched him on the hollow of his thigh, and immediately Jacob's hip was put out socket with such ease, you get the idea the stranger could have done it at any time during the night. For some reason he had held back.

One touch, one little tap, and boom! Jacob's hip was out of its socket. Oh man! How painful that must have been! Ever dislocated something? Ouch! Okay, wrestling match over, right? Jacob knew he was beat right???? **Wrong!** Jacob still held on, he wouldn't relinquish his grip! Only now it wasn't to win the fight; he knew that was no longer possible; now he wrestled for another reason, now he wrestled to receive the stranger's blessing. And we all ask, "Why in the world would he want the blessing of such an opponent as this?" The answer is that Jacob now had a hunch as to who this intruder was. The moment Jacob experienced the ease at which the stranger dislocated his hip, it hit him: this is the very same one who had called him home to begin with! The very one who had spoken to Jacob in a dream 20 years before at Bethel. As the morning light rose it dawned upon Jacob that he was wrestling with God. Jacob was wrestling with God.

Saints, every one of us who have pitched our tents in the darkness of this time and place have had nights when it seems we too are locked in mortal combat, rolling and tumbling in a sleepless night, wrestling with a decision, fearful of what the outcome may be. We wake up the following morning exhausted, often no better off, remorseful and discouraged with no visible sign of hope, often lying in a pool of self-pity.

Know what the problem is? Like Jacob we fail to realize who it is we are wrestling! Boy oh boy! When we're confronted with a crisis we want to wrestle with anybody and everybody. We want to wrestle with our family because they're the problem, our friends because they're the problem, our boss because she's the problem, other races or religions or political parties because they're the problem. We want to wrestle with everybody...everybody that is **except for the one who actually shows up**. When it comes right down to it, the real adversary with whom we wrestle is the one we've been fighting all our lives. Our opponent is God.

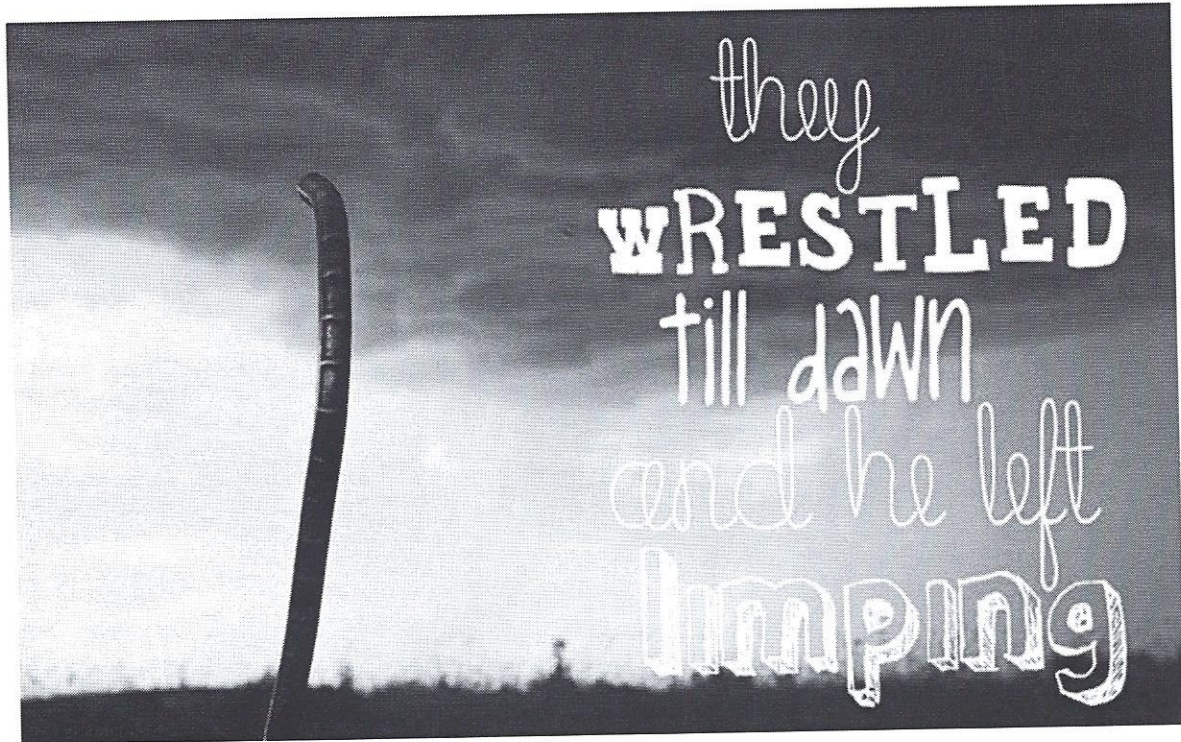
But why should God have to make his presence known in such a manner you may ask. Why grapple with us at all? Well maybe it's because we often fight so hard to keep God away. You see, we are just like Jacob- we believe God exists but when it comes to running our lives, we really rather do it our way, and especially when we're in crisis. Man, that's when we strive for maximum control and we will do ANYTHING to keep it that way, even going so far as to fight off the one who has our best interests at heart! And the sad part is we don't even recognize the God with whom we struggle. It is only when we have been soundly defeated, only when we've exhausted every option, only after we've tried and failed in every turn, only when we lie writhing in pain, unable to do anything but hold on for dear life, that we finally recognize the stranger with whom we've battled.

Isn't this the way it always seems to happen: the addict who won't go to rehab until his or her life is in complete shambles, the financier who realizes after decades that all his or her wealth hasn't purchased an ounce of happiness, the politician who's sold out to special interests and realized that their dignity and self-respect was part of the bargain, the church that won't open its doors to the stranger until there's no one left to turn the lock. Jacob had to have his hip put out of socket before he recognized the God who loved him. Is this what it takes for us to recognize him as well? I mean we thought the way we recognize God is through faith; there's nothing in there about having our hip put out of joint is there?!

This isn't the idea most of us have when we speak of faith. We don't want a faith that's going to hurt us; we want a faith we can relax with, a user friendly faith. We want to sing "*He touched me, and made me whole,*" not "*He touched me and made me limp*"! But, as attested throughout the pages of scripture and in the lives of countless saints throughout the centuries, the faith to which you and I have been called often leaves us wounded and scarred. Why in the world is that necessary? Because you see, it is only through the struggles we have with our God, that, like Jacob, we can ever hope to have what it takes to cross that river and make it back home again. It is only by **our** wounds that we are healed. "No pain, no gain" as the saying goes. Sometime there's just no way around it; faith is not always easy; sometimes we are going to have to struggle and strive to receive God's blessing. Jacob knew that come morning if he were to cross that river and face his brother he needed, above all, the blessing of God and so he held on for dear life, and as the pain in his hip shot up through his spine and buried itself in the deepest reaches of his soul, as struggle gave way to surrender and darkness gave way to light, Jacob finally received that blessing, not on his own terms but on God's, not on the strength of his own conniving and cheating, but a blessing that could only be received as a gift. And it was only upon receiving that gift that Jacob was able to cross the river and make his way back home.

Like any battle, to have such a faith as his will leave its scars - scars that let others know of the battles we've had. They are the testimony of a recovering addict, the determination of a paralyzed veteran, the tearful apology of a formerly abusive parent or spouse. The wounds of faith are often not very pretty to look at, but ultimately, it is by gazing upon them that we most clearly see the power, the glory, and the ultimate triumph of God.

Saints, the one who called Jacob home, is the very same one who calls us home as well. And that call becomes all the more powerful because our God knows what it's like to be wounded. Frederick Buechner, in his sermon "*The Magnificent Defeat*" states that the last scene we remember of this story is Jacob limping home, silhouetted against the fiery crimson dawn. Reminding us also of Jesus, staggering on nail-pierced feet out of the tomb that could not hold him, bearing on his body the wounds of faith; of his crucified surrender to the awesome power of God. They are perhaps his greatest identifying marks remembering that when the disciple Thomas demanded proof that the man before him was truly Jesus, he didn't ask for a miracle, he asked to see his wounds, and only when he placed his fingers in the hands and side of Jesus was he able to proclaim, "My Lord and my God!"



**TIME FOR SPRING CLEANING?
WHY NOT DONATE YOUR
VALUABLE JUNQUE
TO
FIGHT GLOBAL HUNGER?**

**churchWIDE
RUMMAGE
SALE**

A vintage television set is positioned to the left of the word 'SALE', and a lamp is positioned to the right of the word 'RUMMAGE'. The text 'churchWIDE RUMMAGE SALE' is written in a stylized, bold font.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22nd- SATURDAY, the 23rd.

DONATIONS ACCEPTED STARTING NOW!

**Clothing for Children – Women – Men,
Jewelry, Furniture, Linens, Housewares, Luggage,
Bric-a-brac, Appliances, Tools, Toys & Games,
Artwork, Books, CDs & LPs, Fine Collectibles
Exercise & Sports Equipment & Much More!!!**

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR SET-UP & WORKING
THE EVENT!**

BENEFITS “RISE AGAINST HUNGER” EVENT!

Call Rev Chuck with questions, etc. 609-937-4565



OUR MISSION

Rise Against Hunger is driven by the vision of a world without hunger. Our mission is to end hunger in our lifetime by providing food and life-changing aid to the world's most vulnerable and creating a global commitment to mobilize the necessary resources.

Volunteer for Our Meal Packaging Event

Date: Saturday, March 23, 2019 Time: 10 AM - 2:00 PM

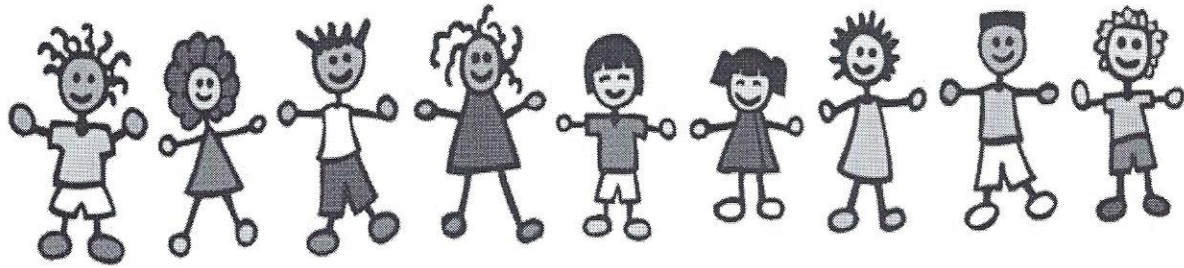
Meals Goal: 26,500 Funds Goal: \$10,000

Location: New Dover United Methodist Church
687 New Dover Road, Edison, NJ 08820

Contact: Brian Richards, Event Coordinator: 732-433-3000



▶ **This is possible.**
#2030isPossible



Children's Church

New Dover United Methodist Church Children's Service Report, January 2019

The Food Drive was a great success and we received a ton of positive feedback from the parishioners. I am looking for ways to partner with UMCOR and Brian Richards with their efforts. More to follow.

I sent out a mass email to all the parents to say Happy New Year and to touch base with them. I hope that they will become more attentive to being on time and that if they have any issue, concern or response they will email me. I heard from a few.

We have given Communion twice now in the Children's Service and it went well. We made every attempt to follow the format of the church with the children doing the Prayer of Thanksgiving and a lesson on what the bread and the wine really mean.

On March 17th, in conjunction with the Bell Choir, our musical director JayR Manglapus will have a number for the children to perform as the Introit.

On April 14th the entire Sunday School will be meeting for a group craft. This will have the older kids helping the younger. We will display their crafts and then allow them to take them home on Easter. We will also have a little Easter Celebration! There will be cupcakes!

MEMBERSHIP BLOG

Our blog begins with a review of the Advent and Christmas seasons. At the Dec. 15th Saturday service, Rev. took his sermon from Jeremiah 33:10-16, discussing the state of Jerusalem during the time of Jeremiah. He prophesies with words of hope. We must continue to remember God's promise and faithfulness in our lives despite what we see in the world. Let's not sell out our faith for the things we see, but be the righteousness for others. On December 16th, the third Sunday of Advent, the congregation was treated to the inestimable talents of our young people as they presented their holiday pageant... The whole affair was led unerringly by our own Mary Jane M. Thanks to everyone who put in the hard work that made the day joyful! Following the service, congregants gathered together in fellowship for a pot luck luncheon which was a resounding success-plenty of food for everyone! The next Saturday, Rev. spoke from Luke 2:1-5, discussing the journey of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem. At the end of their journey they would have been exhausted and unwelcome visitors from their native land. What journeys do today's immigrants embark on that requires courage and persistence along the hard roads to a better life? Sometimes we are compelled to travel these roads despite obstacles and trials, in order to be somewhere better than we are now. On Dec. 23rd, the last Sunday in Advent, there was a record crowd of over 200 in attendance to hear the annual Christmas cantata which featured selections from Handel's Messiah. Highlights included solos by Jim D. and Karlo T. and readings by JayR. M., Krisel M. and Karissa T. The congregation rose during the Hallelujah chorus, and both singers and listeners were uplifted by the entire musical event. Thank you to all those who practiced so diligently and also to those who supported the event with their work and appreciation. We are especially grateful to Grace, our musical director, for planning and directing this special music each year. On Monday, Dec. 24th, Christmas Eve services were full, both in attendees and special music. At the 7 PM service, the congregation of over 200 was treated to a liturgical dance by Jaffy J., accompanied by a procession of the bell and youth choirs. During the service, various readers proclaimed the Scripture in the many languages of our church family, filled in between by songs performed by our musical groups or sung by the congregation. Rev. Chuck used Revelation 12:1-5a for his sermon, noting that many relate better to Jesus the infant than Jesus the adult. We must be aware of the bigger picture-that Jesus wants us to show compassion for the vulnerable and battle for justice for the kingdom of God, and that His enemy wants to deceive us and erase Jesus from existence. The service concluded with passing of the light with candles and the singing of "Silent Night", followed by "Joy to the World". We are so grateful for all those who worked so hard to beautify the sanctuary and plan these Christmas services-you all know who you are! On the last Sunday service of 2018, the mood was reflective. Sanjay B. sang for the offering, a piece dedicated to his father-thank you Sanjay for your heartfelt addition to the service. The Scriptures for the day were Psalm 8 and Luke 12:22-31. Rev talked about bringing our sense of wonder back into play for the New Year, opening our hearts and becoming like children in our faith. Let's be in awe of God and His creation, keeping the right perspective of the world through our faith. Sing a new song! The New Year's services began on January 5-6, with Paulette Harland being our guest speaker during services. She spoke movingly of Mario Almonte, the former leader of the community in the Dominican Republic where Paulette helps build houses. In his life, Mario helped others do for themselves, knowing the needs of others and helping them as his ministry. Suffering with cancer over a period of time, he was prayed for and visited constantly-his return on his kindness and work for God. He showed hospitality, humility and praise even in his suffering, and he lives on through those he impacted. Thank you Paulette for your talk and ministry, and may we see Mario as an example of what our relationship should be with Christ and His children.



CHURCH BLOG