

The Messenger

**The Monthly Newsletter of
Saugerties UMC
December 2020**

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**Sunday Worship 10:30 AM
Facebook Only**



Christmas is Forever!

Yes my friends, Christmas is forever, it is not just one day. But that is what it has become over the years. We rush, rush, rush, shopping, cooking, baking until we are exhausted! And then we have to clean the house. Why? So our family and friends can come over and make a mess! We all gorge ourselves on food, throw wrapping paper all around – and then we have to clean it all up! Is that what Christmas is all about?

There was a time when Christmas did not exist. Yes, it is true; in the annals of time, Christmas is really a modern holiday. The birth of Jesus was indeed the first Christmas, but it was not recognized as a ‘Holy’ day until some 300 years after His death and resurrection. Theologically, it was not as important as Easter – the day He rose from the dead! After all, children are born every day, but Jesus is the first person raised from the dead to show us that life is eternal.

In the fourth century, church leaders decided that the birth of Jesus should be recognized and celebrated. Initially, Christmas was declared a Holy day that required all Christians attend church. However, over time, it became a day when the wealthy would invite the poor into their homes for a meal, as a sign of generosity and humility. It wasn't until the Middle Ages that Christmas grew into a time of community celebration, but not in the way

you might think. During that period in history, Christmas became a raucous celebration, much like Mardi Gras, involving much drinking and sometimes rioting. The wealthy still would invite the poor into their homes, but if they did not, they were subject to vandalism. Obviously, the “Spirit” of Christmas was not yet important. So how did it change?

In the 19th century, Christmas began to change because of the influence of two well-known authors: Washington Irving and Charles Dickens. Irving published a series of stories entitled, “The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, gent.” It told of Christmas being celebrated in an English manor home where the wealthy invited the poor into their homes and all enjoyed a peaceful, comfortable holiday, even though they came from differing social strata. Dickens published, “A Christmas Carol” which spoke of charity and civility towards all humankind. Both books had a major impact on how Christmas was to be viewed and celebrated. But where did Santa come from?

The legend of Santa Claus can be traced back to a monk named St. Nicholas who was born in Turkey around 280 A.D. St. Nicholas gave away all of his inherited wealth and traveled the countryside helping the poor and sick, becoming known as the protector of children and sailors.

The Episcopal minister Clement Clarke Moore wrote a Christmas poem called “An Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas,” more popularly known today by its first line: “’Twas the Night before Christmas.” The poem depicted Santa Claus as a jolly man who flies from home to home on a sled driven by reindeer to deliver toys.

Now that we understand how we arrived at Christmas in the modern age, let’s look at Christmas during a pandemic. As you know, we have already ended in-person worship due to the rising number of cases in Saugerties and Ulster County. At this time, I do not believe the situation will get better before Christmas Eve, so that service will also be ‘virtual’ over Facebook at 6:00 PM. During the first two minutes of the service we will ring the church bells and we are asking that if you have a bell of any kind that you do the same and ring it for two minutes.

After the service ends at 7:00 PM, we will gather in front of the church at 7:30 for a ‘mini’ celebration. There will be a short Christmas prayer and a few Christmas Carols, as long as we are masked and keep socially distanced. And much like the first Christmas, we will have a manger out front. I encourage you to bring a gift to Jesus. What type of gift? I am putting a few shapes at the end of the Messenger that you can copy or cut

out, and write on them what it is you are giving Jesus for 2021. Then we can put them into the manger as our means of recognizing the miraculous birth that changed the world!

So my friends Christmas will be different this year but it is still Christmas. Jesus is once again born into the world bringing light to overcome the darkness; and 2020 has been a year of darkness. But 2021 is on the horizon and the love and grace of Jesus Christ will lift us up and bring us joy!

Merry Christmas to one and all,
Pastor Tony

Christmas Eve Worship 6:00 PM on Facebook

Since we cannot be in church together, we thought one way to still maintain our tradition is if you would email a picture with you and your family holding a lit candle. We can then include them in the worship service.

UMW News

The next meeting of the UMW will be Tuesday, December 15 at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom. The theme of the meeting is "A New Perspective". You are invited to think of a tradition or item that means 'Christmas' to you, and we will share these thoughts at the meeting. Also be thinking about a new way that you will be celebrating Christmas in this unusual year. Debbie Mecca will send out a Zoom link for the meeting. Hope to see you then!

Council of Churches Toy Store!



Every year at Christmas time, the Council of Churches sponsors a Toy Store, for families that need a little help for the holidays. Donations of new toys are made and then 'sold' to the families for a nominal amount. However, the pandemic does not allow us to donate as we normally would. Pastor Jennifer Bendelius, of the Flatbush Reformed Church is once again in-charge of this ministry. They are seeking monetary donations to purchase specific gift cards for the families. You can make checks payable to "Flatbush Reformed Church" marked – Toy Store - and send it to:

Flatbush Reformed Church

1844 Rte. 32

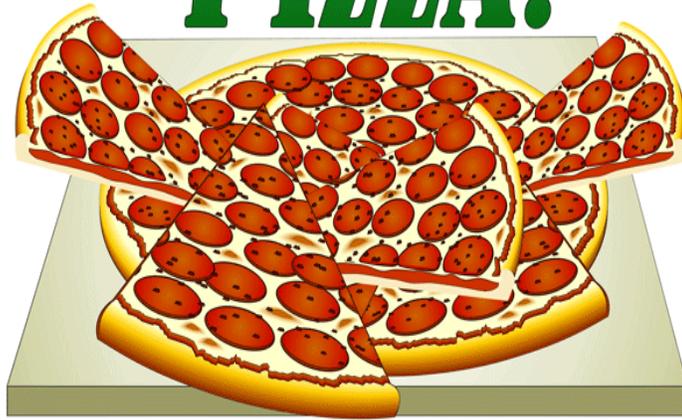
Saugerties, NY 12477

The families thank you very much for your generosity.

The 2020 Holiday A-Fair is Virtual!

Because of COVID, we are not able to hold our annual Holiday A-Fair in church. We will certainly miss the delicious offerings from our kitchen, the yummy bake goods table, and the fun of being together. There are many unique crafts that have been completed, so we are offering some on Facebook. We are posting pictures of the items on Facebook with a suggested donation. The first person to indicate in the comments that they would like the item gets it! A time will then be arranged for pickup at the Church. The proceeds will go directly to the Church. **Watch for Updates!**

PIZZA!



**The Youth Group Pizza Fundraiser has been extended until December 23!
Keep Eating Pizza – Remember, Pizza contains all four food groups!!!!
We have already made \$200.00. Let's see how much more we can raise!**

Hungry Bambinos Pizza is offering a coupon for a 1 topping large pizza for \$16. Our Youth Group will receive \$8 for each coupon redeemed!!!! What a great deal! You get a delicious pizza and the Youth Group gets \$8!!!! Hungry Bambinos is located at 3139 Route 9W, Saugerties Plaza (Barclay Heights). Coupons will be available at the church or can be mailed to you if requested. The coupon is for pick up only and is good till December 23, 2020.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR CHURCH'S YOUTH!!



Envelopes are now available for 2021! They are ordered by your specific number. If you have not asked for envelopes in the past, there are a limited number of extra ones available. Please contact the church office to make arrangements for pick-up.



It's Not Christmas without Poinsettia's!

In Memory of

**Ray, Rosemary & Don Quackenbush
Julie Peters-Mitnick
Henry & Marion Wolfe
Gladys & Norman Gilmore
Edna & Sidney Robinson
Cliff Harris, Donna & Doug Longto
Dee Harris & Tony Kopycinski
Loved Ones
Janet & Neal Robbins
Mr. & Mrs. Harvey Porter
Hiland Newkirk
Helen & George Brodsky
Ed & Louise Nolan
Neil Cox
Loved Ones**

Given by

**Nancy Dooley
John & Nancy Wolfe
John & Nancy Wolfe
Joan Robinson
Joan Robinson
Lisa & Keith Kopycinski
Lisa & Keith Kopycinski
Debbie & Pastor Tony
Susan Robbins
Susan Robbins
Lisa & Carolyn Newkirk
Lisa & Carolyn Newkirk
By their family
Joan Zuckerman
Audrey & Dan Klinkenberg**

Suggested Shapes for our Jesus Gifts

