



# Beneath the Spires

## Sharing the Stories of Family, Faith

**By Pastor Joanne**

Last year at Christmas, my sister got me one of those DNA kits from Ancestry.com. It's the test where you spit into a tube that's supplied, and then mail it back to find out where in the world your ancestors came from.

When I got the results, they more or less confirmed what I already knew: that I'm a European mongrel when it comes to pedigree. My people have connections to England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, France, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, and Switzerland.

These DNA test kits have certainly created a groundswell in the number of people looking into their family roots. People want to know who they are, where they came from, how location and history may have shaped their families, their personalities, and maybe even the life path they've chosen.



I've been doing genealogy since I was in high school; one of my great aunts turned me onto some of the stories on my mother's side. I've tromped through more than my fair share of graveyards and spent hours in state archives. I love knowing the stories about ancestors who were part of Ethan Allen's Green Mountain Boys in Vermont, or became farmers in Ohio thanks to land grants after the Revolutionary War, or served as an ordained pastor in the Reformed Church. Those stories provide a sense of connection to people and

places, both historical ones and present day.

Stories are an incredibly important part of our faith journeys, too. We rely on the stories in the Bible to learn how God has been at work throughout all of history in people like Moses and Miriam, Mary and Joseph, and Paul and Barnabas.

Throughout Advent and Christmas we speak stories that most of us have heard many times before; we never tire of telling them or hearing them. They are so familiar, yet new every time. The Gospel of Matthew goes to great lengths in its first verses to enumerate the genealogy of Jesus back through King David to Abraham. There are three groupings of 14 generations; a total of 42 generations listed between Abraham and Jesus.

And yet we have our own stories about how we came to be faithful followers of Christ. What *Continued on back page*

**Save the date:**

Living Nativity/ In English & Spanish	12/20
Christmas Pageant	12/22
Candlelight Christmas Eve Services	12/24
Emergency Shelter Program	1/27

**Did you know?**

- Christmas is not just one day, but a season of 12 days from sunset Christmas Eve through Epiphany (January 6). Epiphany is an even more ancient Christian celebration than Christmas, and commemorates the Magi visit to the Christ Child with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

# Christmas Giving Opportunities

## Baby Shower for Jesus

We're throwing a "baby shower for Jesus" on Christmas Eve to provide baby and mom essentials for the Putnam/Northern Westchester Women's Resource Center in Mahopac. The center provides residential and non-residential services to victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence, and their children.

Bring your new items in anytime through Christmas Eve and leave them in the church office. We'll bless the gifts in worship on December 24.



### Here's what is needed for infants and children:

- Onesies (but no pajamas, please, at this time)
- Baby diapers: Sizes 1-6; pull-ups: Size 2T-4T
- Baby wipes; baby bath wash, shampoo
- Sippy cups, baby spoons, and pacifiers
- Baby monitors; baby blankets
- Slippers; winter hats, gloves and mittens

### Here's what is needed for women and moms:

- Women's pajama pants, sizes L & XL
- Slippers, all sizes; winter hats, *gloves and mittens*
- Shampoo and conditioner for people of color
- Hair brushes, lip balm, moisturizers for sensitive skin
- Gift cards for grocery stores, drugstores, gasoline

### Food Pantry Birthdays Kits

The food pantry gives out a kit throughout the year whenever a family has a birthday child. The kits include a cake mix, frosting, and sprinkles. Our Sunday School kids are asking for your help in collecting money or the items for these birthday treats. Contact Lisa Porter with any questions.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Bilingual Living Nativity /Natividad Viviente

Join us on the front lawn at 300 East Main Street, Mount Kisco, to hear the blessed story of Jesus' birth, sing some carols, and pet the stable animals. This 6:30 p.m. family-friendly event in English and Spanish is co-sponsored by the United Methodist Church of Mount Kisco and Iglesia Cristiana Fe y Esperanza. Refreshments will follow in the church fellowship hall. (The event will move inside in case of inclement weather.)

### "Baby Shower" for Jesus

We are throwing a "baby shower for Jesus" on Christmas Eve to provide essentials for babies, toddlers and moms at the Putnam/Northern Westchester Women's Resource Center in Mahopac. The center provides residential and non-residential services to victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence, and their children. Call the church office at 914-666-5014 for a list of new items needed for the mothers and their children. Gift cards to grocery stores, drug stores, and gas stations will also be accepted. Bring your donations in anytime through Christmas Eve and leave them in the church office at 300 E. Main Street, Mount Kisco. We'll bless the gifts in worship on December 24.

### Candlelight Christmas Eve Worship

Join us on this most sacred night of nights to welcome the newborn Christ. The services are at 6:30 p.m. and 11 p.m.; they will include special music, a message for children and the sacrament of Holy Communion.

## December Birthdays

- 3 Kathleen Laux
- 8 Jeanne Lentini
- 14 Stuart Beck
- 20 Ruth Ali
- 30 Holly Pike







# Christmas Fair 2019

Thanks to all who made it happen!





# A Wonderful Life

By Dave Visaggio

Whether we're ready or not the New Year is upon us. What 2020 holds for each one of us, we don't yet know, but God knows. We can fall back on some of the biblical verses that give us hope and reassurance. From Jeremiah 29:11 - "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, to give you a future and a hope." And from Romans 8:28 - "And we know that all things work together for good, to those who love God and are called according to His purpose."

With each new day, life delivers a package to your front door. When you hear that doorbell ring tomorrow morning, try something new: Have Jesus Christ answer the door for you!!

We really do have a wonderful life. It's not perfect and it's not always easy, but it's guaranteed to be wonderful. It's wonderful because a relationship with Christ brightens each day and gives you the ability to brighten the lives of others.

The truth is that if you're being moved into the image of Jesus every day, and the Holy Spirit is doing its ongoing work in you, and you are doing all that you can to serve God, then you are going to shine while living a wonderful life.

Think of what the Spirit of God can do to someone who has lived a half-century or more (which includes a decent number of people in our church). Think of the fruit of the Spirit continuing to blossom in your life.

Decline. Old Age. Baloney, hogwash I say! We should call those years the harvest years when the best and sweetest things in your life become ripe and delicious.

*I have promised you My presence  
With you wherever you go  
I will never, never leave you  
As you travel here below  
Fellowship with Christ is the secret of happiness, now and forever  
- A Wonderful Life (From The Rose Fellowship Church)*

I'm convinced there's a bit of George Bailey in all of us. We want to achieve significance on a huge scale and often forget the small ways that our lives have deeply impacted those around us.

Thank God this morning for where He's placed you. Trust God always, praise God always, seek to please God always, and then one day when you meet the Lord you'll come to realize you really did have a wonderful life!



## Kids School-Break Bowling Challenge

Take on Pastor Joanne in a game of bowling during the two-week holiday break. We'll gather at Spins Bowl at 333 N Bedford Rd., Mount Kisco, for a couple of games and then celebrate with pizza afterwards. Let Pastor Joanne know what day works best for you.



*Andre Ferrara marches on Veterans Day*

### Advent Book Study

There's still time to join in our study, "Christmas Gifts That Won't Break," on Wednesdays at 1-2:30 p.m. or 7-8:30 p.m. at the parsonage.

Books are available in the church office. Study meets December 18, and January 8, 15, and 21. See Pastor Joanne for info.



## Finding Joy in Advent



Our Advent worship series explored how we find joy even in difficult times. We learned that “happiness is when your face smiles, joy is when your heart smiles.”

## Finding Light In Darkness

For most people the color blue doesn't have a place in their Christmas celebrations, except maybe as a bulb in a string of multi-colored lights. But for others, blue is an emotion that colors the hours and days of this “most wonderful time of the year.”

Many people in our communities are walking around with broken hearts – grieving over the loss of a loved one, or the breakup of a relationship. The empty place at the holiday table is one more reminder of that sorrow. Others are battling addictions, or dealing with family discord, financial strain, and the loss of a job. The season of “comfort and joy” may bring neither for those who deal with depression and loneliness all year long.

Here are some strategies recommended in the *Harvard Mental Health Letter* that may help you or someone you know cope with the holidays:

**Start a new tradition.** During a holiday dinner, place a lighted candle on the dinner table, leave an empty chair, or say a few words of remembrance.

**Change the celebration.** Go out to dinner instead of planning an elaborate meal at home. Or schedule a trip with friends.

**Express your needs.** People who are grieving may find it hard to participate in all the festivities or may need to let go of unsatisfying traditions. It's all right to tell people you just aren't up to it right now or to change plans at the last minute.

**Help someone else.** It may also help to volunteer through a charitable or religious organization. Make a donation to a favorite cause in memory of the person who died.

**Give yourself time.** The grieving process doesn't neatly conclude at the six-month or one-year mark. Depending on the strength of the bond that was broken, grief can be life-long. Nevertheless, grief does usually soften and change over time. With time, the holidays will become easier to handle.

There are no tidy answers for why suffering occurs, but we can find some comfort by remembering the true message of Christmas: “What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. – John1:3b-5



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## ***Sharing Stories of Family & Faith***

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(Continued from Page 1)

is your personal faith story? Who were the ancestors, friends or teachers that played a role in nurturing your faith? Those are important connections to acknowledge, be grateful for, and most importantly to share - with family, friends and even strangers.

We may indeed be proud of our Irish heritage, our Ivory Coast forebears, or our Japanese ancestry. But the most important connection is the knowledge that we are beloved children of God, created in God's image along with all of humanity. To fully know who we are, we have to know whose we are. If we are in Christ, that's the only pedigree that truly matters. Thanks be to God!

I'm praying that as you gather with loved ones during this holiday season that you will find the opportunity to share a bit of your own faith story. Maybe it can become a new family tradition - a part of your Christmas DNA? What a gift it would be for your family to hear about the hope, peace, joy, and love that Christ has brought into your life. May you share with them the "Joy to The World" that comes with the light, love, and wonder of a babe born in a Bethlehem manger.

In God's care and service,

*Pastor Joanne*

**[ We pray. We love.  
We serve. ]**

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