

In Brief

Consider giving to UNY Mission Central HUB this Christmas

Christmas is a time of giving. During the Advent season, the Upper New York (UNY) Mission Central HUB is accepting both monetary and supply donations through Home Depot and Amazon, to help those affected by natural disasters. For every donation, an ornament will be placed on the UNY Mission Tree. Help adorn the tree with ornaments by making your donation today. Visit www.unyumc.org/mission/christmas-in-the-hub to make a donation and learn more.



Write about your favorite Christmas tradition

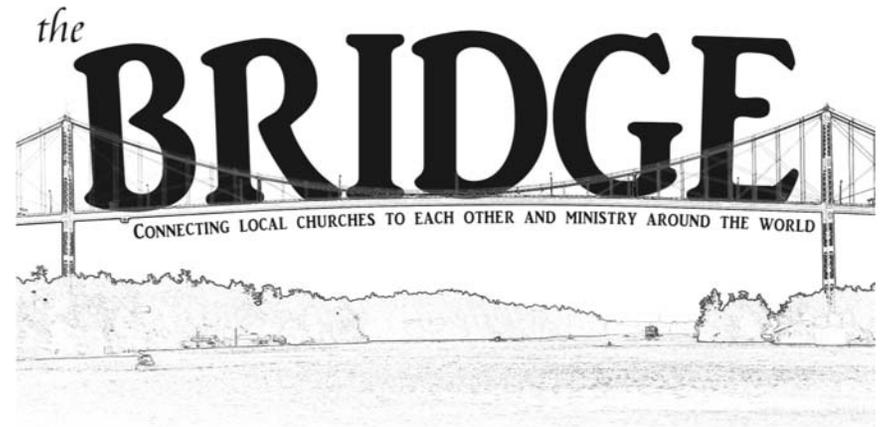
Do you have a Christmastime tradition that you particularly enjoy? Visit <http://bit.ly/BishopWebbChristmas> to learn about Upper New York Area Resident Bishop, Mark J. Webb's favorite Christmas tradition. Then, tell us yours! Send us a paragraph and a photo if you have one, describing your favorite Christmas tradition to news@unyumc.org. We will be sharing traditions on the UNY Conference's Perspectives blog.



The Bridge is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world. For more news and stories visit:

www.unyumc.org

Visit <http://bit.ly/ChristmasintheHUB> to hear a message from Mike Block, UNY Director of Missional Engagement, about Christmas in the HUB.



The Upper New York Conference's vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

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Advent, Christmas, Epiphany 2018-2019: Prepare the Way



Advent marks the beginning of another year in the cycle of Scriptures that presents the narrative of the love of God revealed to the world. In our usual fashion, the worship resource planning team has chosen to take Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany together as a seven-part series to begin Year C in the Revised Common Lectionary. Each week (with the exception of the first Sunday after Christmas Day) includes two Scriptures—the Old Testament and gospel readings—that complement each other in illustrating how we are to “prepare the way of the Lord” (Lk. 3:4).

The first week of Advent points directly at Christ’s coming. Even



though there is some apocalyptic language, the overall tenor of the passage is one of hope and encouragement. Though fear and foreboding are significant elements of this event, Jesus says, “stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Lk. 21:28). Signs will be given, and God’s people must be alert, constantly praying for strength, in preparation to “stand before the Son of Man” (Lk. 21:36, NRSV).



Week two begins with the question from Malachi, “who can stand when he appears?” (Mal. 3:2), which serves as a hinge point from the “stand” imagery of the previous week. This week’s readings address issues of justice, purification, and refining that will accompany Jesus’ coming.

The third week of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, is always an occasion of joy. With these Scripture lessons, however, comes an expectation that the



people of God will “do” something to be a part of the inheritance promised to Abraham. Zephaniah instructs the people to “not let your hands grow weak” (Zep. 3:16), and John offers further teaching: “Bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Lk. 3:7-16). The promise to Abraham is not forgotten in week four, in which Mary sings and recalls the covenant of old that shows God’s mercy and justice. There are senses of preparation and nesting as both Bethlehem and Mary receive word of Jesus’ coming. Both Bethlehem and Mary will be agents of welcoming God in flesh to earth.

Christmas Eve then becomes the point of arrival as Christ—the “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”—comes to the world. In the ways Jesus comes, however, it is often easy to become so overwhelmed that we cannot see the presence or work of Christ around us. Just like Mary and Joseph, we find ourselves searching for Jesus, despite knowing all the

places and ways in which Christ can be found. However, the promise we are given with the story of the Epiphany is that all who search for Jesus will find him.

Jesus is coming! It is our responsibility to “prepare the way” and get ready.

