

THE TIMES OF Halcott

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Shirley's Story

When Peggy DiBenedetto asked me to write a piece about my mother, Shirley Bouton, for the **Times of Halcott**, I wasn't sure where to begin...

First of all, I'd like to share with you that this has been quite a year for my mother. Last Christmas Eve, Mom's doctor called the family to her hospital bed to discuss her prognosis. It wasn't good. With her cancer advancing to the bones and who else knows where, we started looking at things one day – even one hour at a time. Our first course of business was to get her out of the hospital – which we did that night. My mother was home for Christmas. Over the next few months, Mom did an amazing thing – she started to get better. Thank God for Procrit. It's a wonderful drug, which seems to have helped my mother tremendously. On Christmas Eve, Mom's 80th birthday seemed so far away; but miraculously, we celebrated that in September.

The word miraculously comes to mind with my

mother. Here's her birth story – as far as we know...

My mother was born on or about September 11, 1922, at least that was the assumed date based on the investigation report. You see, my mother was a foundling. She was found on the roof of an apartment building on the upper West Side of New York City. The report states that a note was pinned to her garment saying, "God help the poor. This baby got a private baptism." She was taken to Bellevue Hospital for a check-up and was found to be in good health.

The miracle continues... During that same week, a Delaware County couple, Mary and Wilber Woolheater, had an infant daughter who lived only 12 hours. Mary was so distraught, that her doctor recommended that she try to adopt a baby as soon as possible.



Wilber and friend Fred Stahl, headed for NYC to accomplish that task. They went to Bellevue where they found my mother, and worked with the Sophia Fund, a NYC adoption agency. My mother was adopted by Wilber and Mary and brought home by train to the Catskill Mountains on September 22, 1922.

My mother's birth story became a passion of mine a couple of years ago. Through letters and phone calls, and with the help of a brother-in-law who is familiar with NYC agencies, I was able to contact the adoption agency that took over for the Sophia Fund. (I need to stop for a minute to share that for those of you that don't know, our youngest daughter is named Sophia. Sophia also means the wisdom of God.) Anyway, they were kind enough to share some of my mother's file which included the "roof story." I wanted to go there – to the roof where my mother was found. I got my chance in February of this year. On a bright, clear day,

the manager of this beautiful building gave me permission to go up to the roof. I felt many emotions that day. Why did I want to visit this roof? I still had so many questions. As I stood there, I decided to call Mom from the roof. I said, "Mom, do you know where I am? I'm on your roof." Her response was, "Well, did I leave my mark anywhere?"

Yes, Mom. A loving husband of 57 years, children, grandchildren, family, neighbors, and

many, many friends. Your light has touched us all. *Mary Bouton Konstantine*



Winter on the Farm

"There are days and then there are DAYS," someone once told us when we began farming about 13 years ago. We now know how much truth is contained in that statement. Especially, it seems, during the winter when snow, ice and cold can make even the simplest of tasks monumentally difficult. Fortunately, the days when things hum along pretty well outnumber the DAYS when Murphy's Laws and their associated corollaries occur with frustrating frequency leading us to believe ol' Murphy must have been a farmer. Winter on the dairy is certainly a grab bag of challenges and opportunities.

Although dairying is a 365 days-a-year proposition — cows must be milked and fed every day regardless of weather, holiday, or any other reason — winter's arrival means changes in our routine. The summer and fall days of putting up crops and moving cows to pasture are replaced by spending a lot of time feeding cattle indoors and keeping them clean and comfort-



able. Animal health is monitored a bit more in winter while cows and calves spend more time indoors in closer proximity to one another (similar to our cold and flu season). Cows calving during cold, nasty weather are kept in on a clean, well-bedded area. New-born calves are covered with wool jackets — yes, they make wool coats for calves! — to help them get off to a good start. All of this is necessary because the cattle no longer have the luxury of eating, loafing, and calving outdoors on sunny, grassy pastures every day.

Winter means winter weather, which we all know presents unique challenges at times. Everything seems to take longer to do. Snow and ice, besides causing problems with just getting around by machine or on foot, sometimes make simple chores difficult if not hazardous. Even a routine trip to the barn can become an adventure as we try to avoid slick spots and the embarrassment of taking a spill. Also, wintry precipitation adds plowing and sanding to the “to do” list so the milk truck can get in to pick up the milk and so we can get around the farm more easily.

While snow and ice can be a headache, extremely cold temperatures (the kind no amount of coffee, cocoa or thermal underwear will help), make things downright miserable. On days this cold, our cows’ breath will hang like a fog in the barn, giving the place a “Hounds of the Baskervilles” feel. The “to do” list grows as the thermometer drops. Jobs now include breaking ice on water troughs, thawing our hands and feet, de-icing the hose to the stock tank, thawing our hands and feet, and making sure slippery areas of the barn floor are sprinkled with hay or calcite to keep cows from falling. Starting machinery on such

super-cold days becomes either a test of patience or an exercise in futility as motors wail to a start or groan to a stop. Rare days are cold enough that manure in the alleys freezes to the floor and can’t be moved until it thaws. (The frozen cow patties actually provide a great non-skid surface for the cows on what would otherwise be as slick as an ice rink.) On such days, we sweep the parlor instead of hosing it out to avoid making the milking area a sheet of ice. Obviously, days (or is it DAYS?!) like these make us long for the relative simplicity of summer.

Winter, for all of its challenges, is also a season of wonderful opportunity. The shorter daylight hours limit outdoor jobs so there is time for other endeavors. Winter is a good time to reflect on the past year and consider what went well and what didn’t go so well. It is a time to plan ahead for next year and beyond, to think about possible changes in the operation, how goals can be met etc. Cold winter days are a great time to bolster our knowledge by reading, catching up on paperwork, or attending some of the educational programs often offered this time of year. Finally, winter is a season to simply enjoy. Family and friends, church, community, school, and holiday events all brighten the season and give us a break from the farm.



These activities also help make the inevitable DAYS seem more like days by reminding us just how much we have to be thankful for throughout the year. *JD*

Trees for the Grange

After the Grange Hall was painted this summer, it was landscaped. Thanks to a grant from the Department of Environmental Conservation won by the efforts of Al Doubrava, we were able to spend \$5,000 in matching money for trees and shrubs. Our intention was to select plantings to give four season interest for all the townspeople who pass the Grange on their way in and out of Halcott. We hired Bob Kerns of Kerns Nursery in Jewett to work together with our highway department.

September 24th, the day of the planting brought good weather. The Town Highway Department had placed 25 yards of topsoil for the nurseryman to use, and that morning dug the holes for the trees under the direction of Bob Kerns. The Town Board had chosen a crab apple and a shadblow for spring interest, three Heritage White Birch for summer interest, a Red Maple and two Larch for autumn color, and a Fraser Fir to represent winter. We were also lucky enough to get a fine North American



chestnut (pictured above). According to old-timers in the valley, Halcott's mountains used to have many native chestnuts that were either cut down for building (some farm-houses in the valley contain beautiful local chestnut) or destroyed by the blight. The planting of a new, blight-resistant chestnut is very exciting.

In the afternoon, the nursery crew took some time to educate our small 4-H Club about trees and tree planting. Together they planted the Fraser Fir. The kids measured themselves against the tree to see how quickly each would grow (see photo on p. 9).

Since the trees have been planted, we have been able to watch the birch catch the light of the afternoon sun, the trees lose their leaves, and the larch turn slowly to a beautiful cinnamon color. The

Highway Department has installed a guard rail at the top of the parking lot and along the road to the lower level to prevent parking vehicles from overshooting their mark. There has been much positive community comment about the landscaping and one citizen volunteered to donate picnic tables next spring for the area. The project has been a great success. *JK*

Congratulations to Adele Siegel

The fall season of 2002 brought a harvest of honor to Halcott when Adele Siegel was chosen for this year's Keene Roadman Award – the region's most prestigious recognition of volunteer community service. Adele's creative, tireless, and productive efforts to raise funds for the survival of an up-to-date Margaretville Memorial Hospital is a significant contribution to the safe health care of Halcott residents. Adele's capacity to endure the numerous demands of the project, her disregard of who gets the credit for its success, and her praise of others who have been partners in the effort are reflections of the good citizenship of the Siegel family and their love of their Judd Hill home in Halcott. *Lillian Steinfeld*

On Wayward Cats and Yellow Buses

[Ed. Note: Although she is far too modest to make a big thing of her children's soccer successes, Editor Peg DiBenedetto and family were happily run ragged this fall trying to keep up with their two children's participation in simultaneous championship games of both the girls' and the boys' soccer teams. All of Halcott is bursting with pride over the achievements of both Kane and Suzanna DiBenedetto.]

Halcott has a history of fostering success in its young people. Our rural character and agricultural base create opportunities to develop a sense of responsibility and inspire confidence. Kids learn to sit still in church and speak publicly at the



Grange Christmas program. Feeding calves and milking cows provide a blueprint for future conscientious job performance. So maybe some of this has had something to do with the highly successful soccer season our teams enjoyed this year.

Six elementary Halcotters played in the Fleischmanns youth soccer program this fall. Genesis Quinones, Kristin Finch, Marshall Bouton, Nicky and Samantha Bouton, and Rachel Kelder participated in this superb foundation-building program, as well as Dalton Sanford who joined the volunteer coaching staff for the 100+ children, God bless him. I think I remember hearing him liken the experience to "herding cats".

By the time they are in 7th grade, these young players bring an excellent understanding of the game to the modified teams. We had Shadow Williams, Lucas Bouton and Tommy Vitro playing boys' modified. Elena DiBenedetto was on the girls' team, which enjoyed an undefeated season. The modified teams, as well as spring and summer leagues, serve as incubators for the varsity teams. This fall we saw both the boys' and girls' varsities earn the Section IV Class D Championships - a first in school history. And for any of you who are living in a cave, or have been out of the country: with skill, heart, and tenacity, the girls proved themselves to be the best small school team in New York State. Not humbly I admit that Kane and Suzanna DiBenedetto were integral to their teams' successes.

What has our community given to all of these children? Room to roam, stone-walls and tall trees to climb, mud to play in, hay bales to throw, tractors to drive, steers to toss... you get the point.

And lots of love. Support wherever they go. And values, too. There was only one yellow school bus amidst a sea of chartered coaches at the state championship, and it carried our girls. What does that teach them? That what we have is good enough. And what did they teach all of us? That when they did their best, it *was* the best. In my office I have a photo of my son's full-body stretch as he punches a ball away from his goal. To me, it is the epitome of our area's soccer program. It is the realization of the potential inside every little kid kicking around a soccer ball on the Fleischmanns ball field. *PD*

ELECTRICITY BUYING GROUP FORMS:

Dec. 31 enrollment deadlines for electric and propane groups

More than seventy-five families have expressed interest in participating in the Halcott Center Electricity Buying Group organized by Stan Siegel, Walt Parker and Alan Adelson. Each family must fill out a form to be filed directly with NYSEG. As the Times goes to print, we are still unsure of the percentage of savings to current bills, but it promises to be helpful! The cut-off to lock in this price and participate in the "aggregate" buying opportunity is December 31st. If you have questions, contact Stan by phone (254-4653) or Alan by e-mail, aadelson@jps.net.

Alan can also give you information on the Halcott Center Propane Buying Group through which townspeople are experiencing a very significant discount by buying together—more than 6,000 gallons per year. The group, now negotiating its fourth annual contract, opens for enrollment only until December 31. *Alan Adelson*

Need an Electrician?

The Town building has had quite a facelift over the past few months. Most of us are familiar with the good work of Kurt

Flachs the plumber and Chris

VonHassel the carpenter, but the electrician,

Dave Nissen is new to our area.

Dave has done some wonderful work on the Grange, getting rid of amazing amounts of "spaghetti," the old-fashioned wiring, and replacing it all with tidy white wires running in orderly directions. The Town Board was particularly pleased when he offered to become licensed for Greene County, thereby saving the Town the money required for temporary licensing. (He has had a Kingston City license for many years). Dave lives in Phoenicia with his growing family and fits his electrical work around a heavy schedule of parental cheering at soccer games. He can be reached at 688-7958. *IK*

Welcome Neighbor!

The town of Halcott just got a wonderful new addition. Ann Robinson purchased the yellow-and-blue house across the street from our code officer Karl Von Hassel in mid-October of this year.

"It's just a dream," Ann says happily of her new home. Though it still needs a bit of painting, plumbing, and floor refinishing at the time of this writing, Ann plans to be totally moved in by mid-December. Though she has visited the area off and on for over thirty-five years and has many close friends

in the Margaretville/Fleischmanns area, Ann says it was the clarity that came in the aftermath of 9/11 that compelled her to invest in a long-wished-for Catskills home of her own.

Ann is a native New Yorker who lives in the Village during the week and has a unique and gratifying job at the Bronx Zoo. As Director of National Programs, Ann works with educators across the country to create science-and-nature-oriented curricula. Her job with the zoo—where she has worked for twenty-five years—has taken her to such exotic locales as Papua New Guinea to conduct research. Though she loves her job—and the quick departure from the city to upstate that working in the Bronx entails—Ann is constantly busy. She's very much looking forward to the relaxation and peace that comes from spending time in our beautiful valley.

The 160-year-old house she purchased charmed Ann right away. She says, "I just like old things—and I wasn't interested in the maintenance involved in lots of land...and it doesn't have much. I have very close friends that live nearby. And I could afford it!" She doesn't know too much about the home's history, but has heard it was once a bed and breakfast. Ann plans to spend most every weekend in Halcott—"For the money I'm putting into it, I better!" she wisecracks—as well as much of her enviable yearly five weeks' vacation time from the zoo.

In her spare time, Ann loves to antique and auction-hop—she is already an old hand at Eddie Roberts's in Fleischmanns and Macintosh in

Margaretville, "I love antiques and am a big collector," she says. When asked if she was looking forward to buying antiques to fill her new home, Ann allowed that she already has many pieces waiting anxiously in storage. So, whether you're interested in antelopes, alligators, or antiques—please stop by and welcome our new neighbor Ann Robinson to her new home. *Laura Vogel*

Chickadees at My Window

I bought a new bird feeder this year that seems to cater mostly to chickadees. Almost all in one motion, they loop and dart through the air, land smoothly, and delicately peck up a sunflower seed. They eye me warily as though the glass between us might not be enough protection. However, they keep coming back. Chickadees may be common in Halcott, but they are high in my pecking order. They are completely courteous at the feeder, unlike the very selfish finches. I'm told that chicka-



dees have the most complex social structure of any feeder bird, which is, I think, a fancy way to saying how polite they are at the bird feeder. They also have one of the largest vocabularies of calls – more than fifteen. Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology reports that: "Depending on slight variations in the phrases, the call can convey separate, unique messages: in addition to acting as a contact call or as an alarm call, chickadees also use their call to relay information about an individual's identity or to indicate that they recognize a particular flock."

Chickadees weigh in at about 11 grams and are about 5 inches in length. They are related to the

Tufted Titmouse, the other visitor at my small birdfeeder. Titmouse, by the way, comes from Old Icelandic "titr," meaning something small, and



Old English "mase," or small bird. That relieves me. Who could mistake a bird for a mouse?

Chickadees are omnivores, eating insects, caterpillars, spiders, as well as wild fruits such as blueberries, blackberries, and of course seeds of all kinds. In cold weather, birds must operate well above their basal metabolic rates in order to maintain body temperature. Because the chickadee is here all winter, he must eat continuously during the short daylight hours to stay alive, to last through the long nights. I'll try to remember this the next time I think it's too cold to fill the bird feeder. *JK*

Halcott Town Board Business

On November 20th, The Town Board adopted the 2003 budget for the Town of Halcott. When our citizens receive their tax bills this winter, they will find that the town's budget went up only 3%. This is in stark contrast to other nearby towns, some rumored to have risen over 30%. And in an era when most of Greene County's agencies will receive drastic cuts, Halcott's obligations will remain steady.

Granted, we are a very transparent layer of government in the Town of Halcott. We seem to do very little other than road maintenance (which, thanks to Russell Bouton and Greg Finch, we do extremely well.) But as one member of that government, I can tell you it is a bit like swan-swimming, such stillness and gliding on top, such paddling underneath! Our town budget is modest in part because we have dedicated spirits willing to serve. To indulge in a bit of horn-tooting, I would like to point out all the service that goes on under our very noses. Let me mention the folks on our payroll: Our code enforcement officer, Karl Von Hassel, oversees the building in Halcott, must familiarize himself with the huge (and new this year) building code, and makes multiple visits to construction sites, at all times of day and night. Annual salary: \$1500. Ruth Kelder, our town clerk, keeps the Town Board on track with her careful minutes of meetings, does countless, thankless paperwork chores every month for New York State agencies, and spends hours helping people with tax maps and other questions. Annual salary: \$1650. Ruth is also our tax collector, another crucial job for our town. She gets an additional \$1210 for this. Our Budget and Fiscal Officer, Jennifer Bouton, doesn't just handle the payroll or pay the bills. She also completes mountains of forms for all the NY State projects we've been a part of; she builds a budget every year that doesn't break the bank, a sweet budget that bends to absorb nasty surprises. She's a financial wizard, rare even on Wall Street. Annual salary: \$2860. Our dog officer? Adina Risdal spends precious weekends investigating dog complaints or trying to persuade dog owners to license their pets. Annual salary: \$250. Nancy Reynolds, Planning

Board secretary, keeps applicants informed of requirements for site plan review or subdivisions, making sure that signed documents are correctly distributed, maintains the agenda, writes the minutes, and a thousand other little details. Annual salary: \$375. Pete Ballard, Planning Board Chairman, does his job free. Is there a picture emerging? Bob VanValkenburgh is our webmaster, posting current events, agendas and minutes on the town's website. He donates his time free of charge. Victor Pagano, our Town Justice must attend schools, do enormous amounts of paperwork, and of course, hear cases. Annual salary: \$525. Town councilpeople Michael DiBenedetto, Tim Johnson, Pattie Kelder, and Walter Miller come to between 15 and 20 meetings a year. Believe me, these are long, arduous meetings. Nevertheless, they spend their "spare time" researching legal questions, trying to contact prisons to paint our Grange, installing telephones, calling all surrounding municipalities to compare salaries. Annual salary: \$550 each. Your supervisor makes \$1900 a year, not quite the \$6500 of Lexington's supervisor, the \$7100 of Prattsville's or the \$12,000 of Windham's, but compared to Ruth's or Karl's salary, it embarrasses me. Of course, we don't do it for the money. And yet every year, the budget has tried to increase these salaries very slightly. Where are we going here? Certainly we will never catch up to the real-world salaries of those towns around us, and some may ask that, if we are volunteers, why are we being paid at all? But these people are not real volunteers who are free to choose whether or not they want to work; our town government is composed of true employees, whom others depend upon. Tiny increases from time to time help to send a message of

thanks, to pay a small amount of tribute to these public servants. Halcott should be proud of the community spirit that can be witnessed in this town. Our public servants throw themselves passionately and fiercely into doing the best job they can - all for you and me. What a wonderful gift! *IK*

Halcott Dog Law

At the October meeting and after a public hearing, the Town Board passed a dog control law. The intent of the law is to allow townspeople who are harassed by nuisance dogs to file complaints and seek redress. The Board studied many other sample dog control ordinances and rejected the concept of a "leash law," as being better suited to a suburban environment and for our rural area, being too punitive to well-behaved dogs and their owners. A leash law would also be extremely difficult to enforce. Clerk Ruth Kelder (254-5589) has copies of our new law and soon it will be posted on our town's website. Those who wish to file a complaint may call the police, or our dog control officer, Adina Risdal, 254-6507.



I have learned that even the nicest dogs can bite under nervous conditions. When meeting a strange dog, try not to

panic, wave your arms, or make sudden moves. But if you are bitten:

1. Wash the wound with hydrogen peroxide and see your doctor as soon as possible.

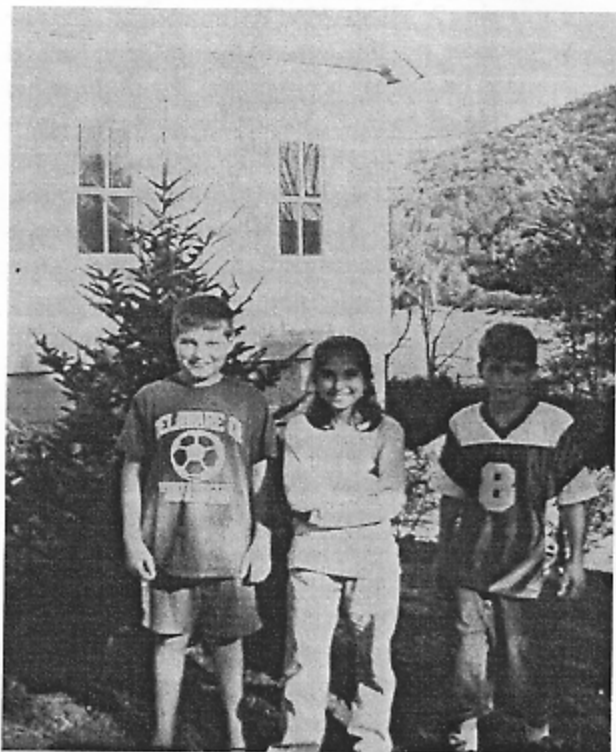
2. Immediately try to locate the dog owner. Ask for proof of rabies vaccination.
3. Call Greene County Public Health Department 1-518-943-6591 to report the incident. The health authorities have a very efficient procedure in the case of dog bites. They contact the dog owner and require them to keep the dog under quarantine for ten days of observation. I have been assured that rabies shots are effective even after this ten-day waiting period, should it be necessary to administer them. Finally, the new town law will make it easier for dog bite victims to lodge a complaint. *JK*



Donald's Poem

Today we ask a prayer for Peace
 For home and lands across the sea.
 To touch the hearts of men who rule
 A countless millions' destiny.
 To teach them that the life of man
 Is measured not with that of steel.
 Agreements wrought by prayer and pen
 To triumph over battlefield.
 To recognize the ONE who rules
 And that HIS Will be understood.
 To bring a peace to all mankind
 In everlasting brotherhood.
 That somewhere out of troubled skies
 Will come a power to stop the sword
 And boldest tyrants realize
 A love for man – a fear of God.

Donald W. Bouton, 1940 **10**



*Season's Greetings from the
 4-H Club of Halcott – seen
 here measuring themselves
 against the new Frasier Fir
 at the Grange.*



THE TIMES ***OF THE HALCOTT*** ***UNITED METHODIST*** ***CHURCH***

WINTER, 2002
PATTIE KELDER,
CORRESPONDENT

With the memory of Thanksgiving dinner lingering on our taste buds, we begin the season of Advent, moving from counting our blessings, to waiting for the birth of Christ, to ushering in a new year of fresh beginnings.

Blessings: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

- A nation willing to give thanks, and plenty for which to be thankful.
- Sunday School children who care about shut-ins through prayer, mail and visits.
- Shut-ins (and others) who share their wisdom and encouragement with children.
- Parents who pitch in when Sunday School is short-handed.
- Bakesale bakers and buyers.
- People who go the second mile for neighbors in need.
- The Killians and many friends afar who bless us in prayer.
- Accumulated gifts in memory of loved ones, making a new church roof possible.
- Folks able to keep our church in

good repair.

- Pastor Charlie and Tracy Gockel have a baby boy!

Waiting: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who lived in a land as dark as death a light has dawned." Isaiah 9:1.

- The children – some patient, some not – wait for turns to light Advent wreath candles, to sing Christmas carols and to put Jesus (from the crèche) in the birthday circle.
- Adults – sometimes with patience, sometimes not – wade through the hubbub, wait on those who need us and wait for the "Christmas Spirit" to arrive.

New Beginnings: "Behold, I will make all things new..." 2Cor 5:17; Rev 21:5

- Area lay speakers working together to assist Prison Fellowship Ministries with Project Angel Tree.
- Possible resolution for 2003: We will re-affirm that we serve a God of second chances.

Memories:

Christmas Caroling

±1958: Families singing to Addie VanValkenburgh, Jim Johnson and others – the snow was deep, the night was crisp, and Jim couldn't get over my 2 ½ year old sister wading through the snow to sing in her red boots.

±1970 Tears streaming down Will Morrison's face during "O Holy Night" – I had to keep singing by myself when the rest of the youth group forgot the words.

±1990 Sunday School Caroling around Donald and Shirley Bouton's telephone for Claretta Reynolds, Louis Crosby and others – the weather didn't permit us to venture any further!



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813 Route 3
Halcott Center, NY 12430

Church Calendar:

Dec 11: Administrative Council Meeting, 7:00PM at the Church.

Dec18: Bible Study of Nehemiah, 7:30PM place TBA.

Dec.19: Fleischmanns UMC hosting a bakesale at the Chamber of Commerce event (we're invited.)

Dec. 22: Candlelight Service, 7:30PM at the Church.

Jan 27: Parish Council Meeting, 6:30PM at Margaretville UMC.

Feb 4: Special Parish Council Meeting to host new pastors conference-wide. (This is an honor.)

Mar 5: Ash Wednesday – watch for particulars.

Mar.8: Hudson North District Workshop Day, St. James Church, Kingston. Details to follow.

Mar. 15: Halcott UMC Chicken BBQ – takeouts only – Arkville Fire Hall, 10:30AM.

