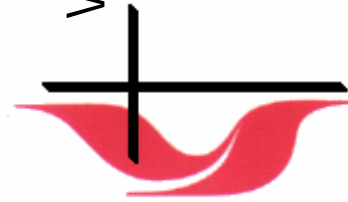


Visit us On-line at
www.westhillsumc.com

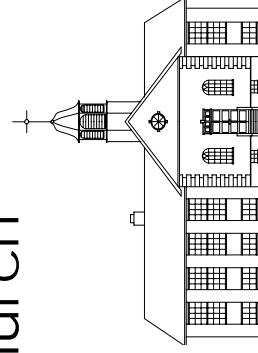


PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of the West Hills United Methodist Church is to be a living church, where we can learn about our Lord, love Him, worship Him, and serve Him. We want our church to emphasize fellowship with a sense of sharing one another's concerns and joys. We want our church to reach out to the needs of our youth, and encourage them to participate in our programs. We want our church to be actively involved in the world community, with outreach programs to help the needy and less fortunate, and to attract others in our community who



West Hills United Methodist Church



Newsletter

Bruce Anspach, Pastor
Paul Knorr, Newsletter Editor

November/December 2003

Church: 271-4474
Parsonage: 423-1523

Located off of West Hills Road, across from the Walt Whitman High School
A Little Church with a Big Heart!

West Hills United Methodist Church
P.O. Box 467
One West Hills Court
Huntington Station, NY 11746

Non-Profit Org.
Bulk Rate
US Postage
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Huntington Station,
NY

From The Pastor

Are You Ready?

In some ways fall seems like the beginning of a new year. As our Jewish friends say in the fall, “*L’Shana Tovah!*”—“To a good year!” Although there are several “new years” mentioned in the Bible, the new year associated with the fall high holy days has been the one that has caught on. With the beginning of a new school year and most of our activities and programs starting up again after the summer break it all seems to fit.

In the Church calendar our year ends and begins in the fall also. As we move toward the final days of the “After Pentecost” season (or Kingdomtide” as it’s sometimes called) we ready ourselves for Advent and the beginning of a new church year that opens with this season of preparation for the birth of Jesus.

With the move into autumn we ready ourselves for the events, celebrations, opportunities for ministry and especially the spiritual preparations ahead. Are you ready to “begin again” as an indispensable member of the People of God? We need your presence, prayers and service here at West Hills UMC. But even more, your membership in the larger connectional system of the United Methodist Church and the worldwide community of all of God’s people is so critical today.

We have a busy fall already started. Our Sunday School is up and running and we have five young people on deck for confirmation. We have a new youth group being formed and activities being planned for adults. As pastor, I would like to hear suggestions from you about topics for study and projects for ministry that you think are important.

Some possible study subjects that are being floated are: “Bad Girls Of The Bible”—a look at some of the more “questionable” women that are in our biblical stories; a new study of the traditions of Advent; a better understanding of the faith of our Islamic

Missions News

We are sponsoring a new girl at the Navajo Mission. Her name is Leona and she will be in 8th grade this school year. She enjoys helping out in the kitchen, working with the farm animals, reading and playing basketball. Her birthday is September 28.



We will be collecting Christmas gifts for her so that we can send them in time for Christmas. See any member of the missions committee if you would like to donate a gift.



The Mission s Committee and the Sunday School would like to thank the members of the congregation for participating in the pumpkin decorating contest. We were able to raise over \$100 !!



Its Time for the annual West Hills UMC Cookie Walk

December
13th

9:00am



sisters and brothers; an exploration as to how Christians are and should be responding to the political crisis in this country and in the world; and the Christian and death and dying. I need your input about what might be of interest to you and us from among this list or any other ideas you might have. Please let me know.

We must always be open to where God is calling us to minister. Please let me or any of our lay leadership know of your concerns about needs in our community or in our world.

Finally, all that we do in this season must be centered on our worship and prayer life together. Please make time in these days to spend time with God in prayer and together with our community in worship. The strength and support that we get from being together with God and one another is one of our greatest gifts.

Let's join together as we get ready for the New Year, a New Beginning and a New Life in the community of God's People!

Pastor Bruce

December is
POINSETTIA TIME



Don't forget to put a flower on the altar in honor or memory of someone you love.

Look for the insert in the bulletins during
November and December

Thanksgiving Food Drive



The missions committee will be collecting food up until Thanksgiving for needy families in the Huntington area. When you're at the food store this week, pick up some extra food for those in need.

Blast from the past

Here are some pictures from the confirmation class, including the trip to the city



Thank God for the helpers!



Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees would like to thank the volunteers who came out on the church work day during October.

Remember:

If the song is to continue, we must do the singing....



The next time you are walking in the front of the church, take notice of the new concrete work that was done due to a generous donation.

CHURCH CHARGE CONFERENCE

All members of the church are encouraged to take part in this important meeting. It is here that we plan out the future of our church. If no one attends, what is our future?

Committee chairpeople are reminded to have their reports in to Darlene by December 1st

Important Dates & Announcements

November 26: Thanksgiving Eve Service: 8:00pm

December 13: Annual Cookie Walk 9:00am

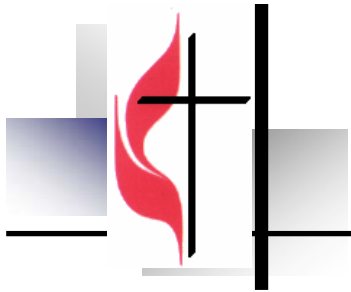
December 24: Christmas Even Service: 7:30/
Caroling 8:00pm service

LINK FOR NOVEMBER:

<http://bible.crosswalk.com/>

search multiple **Bible** versions in nine languages.
Also features audible readings of all scripture.

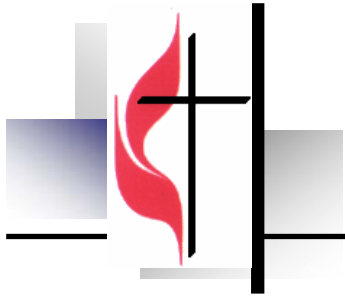




WEST HILLS UMC

NOVEMBER 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 Service: 10:45am	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 Service: 10:45am	10	11	12	13	14	15
16 Service: 10:45am	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 Service: 10:45am	24	25	26 Thanksgiving Eve Service: 8:00	27 Thanksgiving	28	29
30 Service: 10:45am Advent						



WEST HILLS UMC - DECEMBER 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 Service: 10:45am Advent	8	9	10	11 Charge Conference	12	13 Cookie Walk 9:00am
14 Service: 10:45am Advent	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 Service: 10:45am Advent	22	23	24 Christmas Eve Service : 7:45	25 Christmas Day	26	27
28 Service: 10:45am	29	30	31			

From Newsday.....

Fact, Fiction And Opus Dei

The bestselling novel 'The Da Vinci Code' puts the Catholic sect in the spotlight's harsh glare.

By Paul Moses

The Da Vinci Code" is the page-turner of the summer, a sizzling mystery in which the plot revolves, in part, around a blindly obedient member of the Catholic organization Opus Dei who commits murder to conceal ancient evidence that the group believes would destroy the Christian faith.

Of course, it's fiction. But in the front of the book, a page headlined "FACT" offers this description of Opus Dei: "a deeply devout Catholic sect that has been the topic of recent controversy due to reports of brainwashing, coercion and a dangerous practice known as 'corporal mortification.'"

Author Dan Brown has said that his best-selling novel is meticulously researched. But that doesn't sit well with Opus Dei. From the sparkling 17-story, \$47-million Manhattan offices it opened two years ago on Lexington Avenue, the organization says it has been trying to correct the record - not an easy thing to do with a book that ran to the top of every major bestseller list and was optioned to Columbia Pictures. Brian Finnerty, Opus Dei's U.S. communications director, said a letter was sent asking Doubleday to remove the "FACT" page and to correct such claims as the novel's notion that Opus Dei had drugged college students to recruit them.

"I think people reading the book will be confused as to what's fact and what's fiction," said Finnerty, adding that Opus Dei is simply an organization devoted to helping laypeople lead holy lives. Doubleday has turned down Opus Dei, said Finnerty, who would not comment on whether the letter was a prelude to legal action. "We hope that they'll still make corrections in it. We'll see what happens in the future."

Even critics of Opus Dei say Brown's novel grossly exaggerates. "The author is using Opus Dei as sort of a cardboard villain. I have to feel sorry for Opus Dei for continually being cast this way," said the Rev. James Martin, associate editor of America weekly and author of a 1995 article in a Jesuit magazine that criticized Opus Dei.

Experts also reject some of the research passed off in other parts of the novel, which cleverly packages the stories of the Knights of the Templars, Leonardo Da Vinci, the Priory of Sion, the Holy Grail and Mary Magdalene into a whodunit. They say the novel's elaborate claims that Mary Magdalene gave birth to Jesus' children are over the scholarly edge.

"Not even the fringe," said PHEME Perkins, a New Testament scholar at Boston College. She added: "Nice tale, but not history." And William Petersen, director of religious studies at Penn State, said that despite all the speculation about Mary Magdalene, "We know next to nothing."

Doubleday did not return repeated calls and Brown's agent, Heidi Lange, said he was not available to comment. On his Web page, he asserts his story's authenticity. "I worked very hard to create a fair and balanced depiction of Opus Dei," Brown says. "Their portrayal in the novel is based on more than a dozen books written about Opus Dei, as well as on my own personal interviews with current and former members."

But it's not so easy to sort out fact from fiction about Opus Dei.

Msgr. Josemaria Escriva founded the organization in 1928 in Spain, insisting that laypeople as well as clergy were called to holiness. He set out a detailed, stringent spiritual discipline, which includes basics that many other Catholics follow, such as daily Mass, prayer and spiritual reading. But Opus Dei, which means "Work of God," veers from the modern Catholic mainstream with such practices as banning books, encouraging members to inflict pain on themselves and consigning women to do all domestic work.

Members speak of the organization in glowing terms, noting that Escriva was declared a saint last year. "If the founder was just canonized, he had to be doing something right," one former member said.

Yet a steady stream of former members portrays the group as manipulative and even cult-like. "We've heard from too many former members who say the same thing," said Dianne DiNicola, a Pittsfield, Mass., woman who started the Opus Dei Awareness Network after resorting to an intervention expert to get her daughter to leave the group. "They control a person's environment, their mail is read, what they watch on TV is monitored," said DiNicola.

From Newsday.....

Martin said trouble spots include Opus Dei's recruiting practices, view of gender roles and "penchant for secrecy." But, he said, "I think that 90 percent of what Opus Dei does is good and holy and beneficial to the church."

Opus Dei members point out that Escriva's emphasis on helping laypeople seek holiness in everyday life was later a goal of the Second Vatican Council, during the 1960s. In 1982, Pope John Paul II made Opus Dei a personal prelature, a sort of diocese without boundaries, defined by membership rather than geography.

Today, Opus Dei says it has 85,000 members, including 3,000 in the United States. The membership includes 1,820 priests. About 30 percent of the members, known as "numeraries," adhere to the strictest provisions: They are celibate, donate all their income to Opus Dei and live communally. They are not called monks and do not wear robes, like Brown's murderous character Silas. Most of the remaining 70 percent are "supernumeraries," who agree to a regular routine of prayer and meetings with a spiritual director, but marry and live with their families.

Nassau District Attorney Denis Dillon said he was a supernumerary for nine years, but left several years ago because his job didn't allow time for all the meetings, prayer circles and discussion groups he was expected to attend.

"You're under a contractual obligation of obedience to your superiors if you're a member," he said. Dillon remains a "cooperator," a non-member who contributes money and prayer, and said he still tries to follow Opus Dei's spiritual guidelines.

Sharon Clasen, who joined while a student at Boston College in the 1980s, said she wasn't prepared for how controlling Opus Dei would be when she moved from supernumerary to numerary.

Clasen, 39, a mother of two in Dumfries, Va., said she quickly discovered when she moved into a community of numeraries that women - but not men - were expected to sleep on boards. (Finnerty said men sleep on the floor once a week.) Clasen said she became disturbed at the insensitive treatment of "numerary assistants," celibate women, often recruited as teenagers, who cooked and cleaned for men.

Clasen said that the bloody whippings Silas gives himself in "The Da Vinci Code" are exaggerated, although less severe than the beatings Escriva is reported to have given himself. But on her first day as a numerary, she said, she was given a hand-sewn bag containing a cilice, a spiked chain to be worn around the thigh for two hours a day, and a small whip.

The cilice, she said, "is kind of like a barbed wire fence. It hurts. It depends on how tight you cinch it." She said she noticed that some of the women had scabs from wearing a cilice, but added, "I never drew blood." And she would hear one other woman whip herself. (Opus Dei officials said such practices have a long tradition in Christian spirituality.) Clasen said that Opus Dei's overemphasis on control and obedience finally drove her out when visits to her family were limited, even during a family health crisis.

Cathy Hickey, 69, of Larchmont, a supernumerary since 1973, said Opus Dei's daily diet of prayer, Mass and spiritual reading has made her happy.

"Underneath the turmoil, way down at the bottom, there's this really still stream, so that no matter what happens, you know that your Father God - you're in His hands," she said. "I know if I weren't in Opus Dei, I would not be faithful to prayer, because if I didn't have somebody coaching me and encouraging me, it would be too easy to give it up." Hickey is a former director and still a volunteer at Opus Dei-run Rosedale Achievement Center in the South Bronx, which offers tutoring, job training and other help to girls from fourth grade to high school.

Opus Dei says its message of calling laypeople to holiness is, as one brochure puts it, "at the core of the Second Vatican Council," when the world's Catholic bishops sought to attune the church to the modern world. But the Rev. Alvaro de Silva, a Boston priest who left Opus Dei in 1999 after 35 years, said the organization refused to change after the council revitalized Catholic teachings. "It was not only conservative, it was reactionary," he said. "I know that's a very strong word."

"My hope is that Opus Dei will change and embrace modernity and the modern Catholic Church," he said. "Maybe the next pope is going to be different, and then Opus Dei will have to change."

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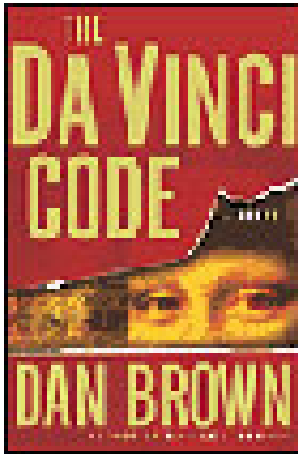
News from the Library

Item to Highlight:

The DaVinci Code by Dan Brown

From Publishers Weekly

Brown's latest thriller (after *Angels and Demons*) is an exhaustively researched page-turner about secret religious societies, ancient coverups and savage vengeance. The action kicks off in modern-day Paris with the murder of the Louvre's chief curator, whose body is found laid out in symbolic repose at the foot of the Mona Lisa. Seizing control of the case are Sophie Neveu, French police and Harvard cryptologist, and Harvard symbol expert Robert Langdon, reprising his role from Brown's last book. The two find several puzzling codes at the murder scene, all of which form a treasure map to the fabled Holy Grail. As their search moves from France to England, Neveu and Langdon are confounded by two mysterious groups—the legendary Priory of Sion, a nearly 1,000-year-old secret society whose members have included Botticelli and Isaac Newton, and the conservative Catholic organization Opus Dei. Both have their own reasons for wanting to



ensure that the Grail isn't found. Brown sometimes ladles out too much religious history at the expense of pacing, and Langdon is a hero in desperate need of more chutzpah. Still, Brown has assembled a whopper of a plot that will please both conspiracy buffs and thriller addicts.

We've made some changes to the library. After a year or so of it being in disarray, Kenny and Todd spent a day in there cleaning it up and making it easier to use. All videos are now either behind the boxes on the shelves (ala Blockbuster) or in the actual case (ala Disney). Items can be taken out by simply taking the items and signing it out on the sign out sheet clipboard.

New items:

Lord of The Rings— complete trilogy of books and more

Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring VHS
Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers VHS

Judy Knorr on Martha Stewart DVD

Books:
The South Beach Diet
Prey
Timeline
The DaVinci Code by Dan Brown:

In Case you missed it...

between disciplining, touching, beating, smacking, humiliating, kicking, etc.). And we said OK.

From Rich Columbia....

Billy Graham's daughter was interviewed on the Early Show and Jane Clay-son asked her "How could God let something like this happen?" (regarding the attacks on Sept. 11).

Anne Graham gave an extremely profound and insightful response. She said "I believe God is deeply saddened by this, just as we are, but for years we've been telling God to get out of our schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives.

And being the gentleman He is, I believe He has calmly backed out.

How can we expect God to give us His blessing and His protection if we demand He leave us alone?"

In light of recent events...terrorists attack, school shootings, etc. I think it started when Madeleine Murray O'Hare (she was murdered, her body found recently) complained she didn't want prayer in our schools, and we said OK.

Then someone said you better not read the Bible in school ... the Bible says thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, and love your neighbor as yourself. And we said OK.

Then Dr. Benjamin Spock said we shouldn't spank our children when they misbehave because their little personalities would be warped and we might damage their self-esteem (Dr. Spock's son committed suicide). We said an expert should know what he's talking about. And we said OK.

Then someone said teachers and principals better not discipline our children when they misbehave. The school administrators said no faculty member in this school better touch a student when they misbehave because we don't want any bad publicity, and we surely don't want to be sued (there's a big difference