

Celebration News

December, 2012 - Volume 22 - Issue 7



A Christmas Message

Christmas holds the mystery
Of how God touched the earth
By giving us the Christ child
In a newborn baby's birth.

Great awe was in young Mary's heart,
And in the shepherds' pace
As they ran quickly to the town
And found that special place.

These humble shepherds knelt before
This tiny newborn king;
And as they did so, they could hear
The lovely angels sing:

"Fear not, for unto you this day,
The Prince of Peace has come
To share God's love throughout the world.
Rejoice now, everyone!"

---Peggy Ferrell

A Gift

*"Every good gift and perfect gift is from above,
and comes down from the Father of Light."
James 1:17*

As we approach the season of Christ's birth, we reflect on God's greatest gift to us.....his son. What about our gift to God?

With Christmas coming, the main agenda for the majority of people seems to focus on what gifts to get for the various people in their lives. Homes are filled with Christmas trees loaded with gifts. What about the gift for the most important one in our life?

One of God's greatest gifts to me, my mom, has been here spending precious time with us. She shared a story with me about a woman named Verdabelle who lives in her building. Verdabelle gets around in a wheelchair and struggles with things, but she attends church services and occasionally plays the piano for them if the scheduled person is sick or they are without a musician. There are those who make fun of the fact that she hits sour notes from time to time. When the service is over, she gets back in her wheelchair and leaves without a word to anyone. One day my mother went after her and thanked Verdabelle for her offering of music. She told her that any talent is a gift *from* God, but how you use it is your gift *to* God. The woman was thankful for mom's kind words and appreciated the wisdom of that statement.

When Mom was telling me this story, it really struck a chord with me - your gift *to* God. As I prepare for this blessed season, I will be doing my best to focus on what my gift to God can be. As a people truly gifted with talents too numerous to count, how will you use your talents as an offering...a gift *to* God? May HIS Christmas tree be *overflowing* is my prayer!

Carolyn Deering, Editorial Staff

CHRISTMAS EVE

On December 24, Christmas Eve, at 6:00 PM a traditional service of scriptures and carols will be held. All are invited to come and prepare for the celebration of the birth of Christ. Bring your friends and neighbors to this worship service.





A Letter to Santa

The Spirit of Christmas is in the air. Children are getting excited. Parents are preparing for the big day with planning, shopping, writing and mailing of Christmas cards and all the hustle and bustle that goes with Christmas.

I have been thinking of what present I could give to Jesus on his birthday. What would please him the most? I think of all the things I have and the things I would like for Christmas, and I think of how blessed I am. Then I realize that all that I am and all I have are gifts from our Heavenly Father.

This is when I know. I know what present to give to Jesus. I would give the present of sharing God's blessing. I will share with others so that they might share in God's blessings too.

This is what Christmas is all about. Thank you Santa for helping me realize that there is much joy in giving.

Bobby

Christ's Mission is Our Mission

I have often wondered what it must have been like to have been one of those who was first called to follow Jesus. What could have compelled this diverse group of men (and women) to place their faith and trust in this Galilean man, a fellow Jew himself, and join this new and radical movement? Did they recognize the divine, or were they persuaded by the power of the divine Spirit? In the scriptures, of course, we do not have the benefit of hearing their personal testaments; we have only written accounts of their personalities and interactions. Like all great books, we, the reader, must use our imagination to visually see and experience all that is taking place as the story of Christ's mission unfolds.

As the 2013 *Community of Christ* World and National Conferences draw near, we have been asked to prayerfully read and discern Luke 4:16-30. Jesus was preparing to preach in the temple and was handed a scroll. He read this passage from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Thus began the Mission of Jesus Christ.

Beginning on January 2nd, we will have the opportunity to study and to prepare for these upcoming conferences together in a new **adult Church School class, *Christ's Mission Is Our Mission***. We will be ordering books within the next two weeks, so you are encouraged to sign up for this study on the sign-up sheet on the Information Center bulletin board. This 12 weeks class will include a study guide prepared by the International Church Headquarters. Like the first disciples, Jesus calls us to come, follow him.

Ginger Robertson, Class Facilitator

Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love." ---Hamilton W. Mabie



Looking for a Bargain?

The Community of Christ Sings is the name of our new hymnal coming out next year (October, 2013). If you would like a personal copy for yourself at a discounted price, review the information on the bulletin board in the Information Center and sign-up on the designated sheet. No money is due until we, the congregation, are ready to place the order at the end of April, 2013. **Jo Fenn-Martin** will be handling the ordering and receiving the money (checks and cash) for all purchases. Checks should be made out to Community of Christ.

Delivery will be in November of 2013. If you have any questions after you review the brochure and information, please see **Bob Beers**.

TO BETHLEHEM AND BEYOND



Advent is a time of waiting. Advent is a time of preparation. Advent is a time of HOPE, PEACE, LOVE, and JOY. The Advent season begins with the fourth Sunday before Christmas and ends with Christmas Eve. It is a time for us to prepare ourselves to celebrate that great event, the first coming of Christ, in a way that will be spiritually renewing to ourselves.

Like Mary and Joseph, who traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem, we all make our journeys this Christmas. We will make the journey *To Bethlehem and Beyond* at our morning worship services in December as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior.

HOPE

The First Sunday of Advent - December 2

God's Promise Will Be Fulfilled

God is sending a new leader who will bring about justice and righteousness. Jesus fulfilled God's promise of hope. As we approach this Advent season, what are your hopes? High Priest **Nanette Dizney** and Elder **Ginger Robertson** will share their ministry during the Communion Service on the first Sunday of Advent.

PEACE

The Second Sunday of Advent - December 9

All Shall See God's Salvation

Elder **Larry Bell** will speak about the message of peace on the second Sunday of Advent. John came to prepare the way for Jesus, the One who will bring salvation. The message of salvation is for all people. Elder **Charyn Walker** will preside over the service on this Sunday.

LOVE

The Third Sunday of Advent - December 16

God Is Among You

The scripture reading in the third chapter of Zephaniah tells us that God "will renew you in his love." God is among us in many ways. Evangelist **Bob Slasor** will share many of those ways with us as he preaches on this Sunday. Teacher **Nancy Skene** will lead the worship.

JOY

The Fourth Sunday of Advent - December 23

Rejoice

The Christmas story is a story of God using plain, ordinary people to do something extraordinary. Today is a day for rejoicing. Elder Andrea Cooper and **Christina CooperFoster** will bring ministry on this special day of celebration.

LIFE

First Sunday after Christmas - December 30

Let Christ Be in You

The excitement of Christmas day has passed, but we are still within the Christmas season. We journey from the birth in Bethlehem to the life we are called to lead where we are. Priest **Charlie Walker** and Elder **Charyn Walker** will help lead us on this journey to beyond Bethlehem as they challenge us to be transformed for service.

Wednesday night Prayer and Praise services offer opportunities to renew and refresh your relationship with God during this busy season. Take time to attend and see what it can do for your week.

Advent is here. Let us make our preparations. We prepare the way for God's coming in our midst. We celebrate the coming of the Lord.

Jo Fenn-Martin for the Worship Team

What's Missing?

When shopping for gifts became too difficult, an elderly man decided to just send checks to relatives. In his Christmas cards, mailed early, he wrote, "Buy your own present."



After the holiday, the man noticed he'd received few cards in return. Puzzled he went into his study, intending to write to a few relatives and ask what had happened. As he cleared his cluttered desk, the horrified man found the answer. Under the stack of papers were the checks he'd forgotten to enclose with his cards!

The lesson? Don't be in such a hurry to give gifts that you inadvertently leave out what's most important. Without the message of Jesus and his birth, the earthly trappings of Christmas are empty indeed.

The Gifts of Diversity

It is for divine purpose that you have been given the struggles as well as the joys of diversity. So it must always be in the peaceable kingdom. Modern Counsel to the Church

Have you thought that differences of opinions about beliefs, interpretations, life choices, and strong feelings that have a tendency to divide and separate us from each other, are a bad thing and should not be evident in the congregations of the saints? We have been given this gift of diversity so that we can learn to love each other in spite of differences, honor each other in our differences, and seek the common purpose of Christian Discipleship which is to grow a congregation of hope, peace, love and joy. It is in our struggles that we learn to listen, hear with the heart, repent for hasty judgments, and forgive one another.

God has called us and has trusted us with the sacred task of helping him build Zion, the peaceable kingdom, in the life of each disciple and in the gathered community that bears his name. We have just been through a bitter political campaign by two political parties. May I suggest that God has called us not to a political party but to the "Worldwide Spiritual Party of God", the party whose platform might include the following goals: (1) Love one another as Christ loves us no matter who, what, or when; (2) Seek the welfare of the least among us as much as we seek our own welfare; (3) Honor each other no matter what and without judgement or anger; (4) Be an instrument of peace in the life of each person we meet, believing that God wants to and will work miracles through us for the sake of others; and (5) Rejoice in the spiritual gifts of each other, and pray that we will use our spiritual gifts so that the whole body can be blessed.

You and I are God's gift to the world. We join together to assist God in the redeeming and saving of the world. We are a vital part of the "Worldwide Spiritual Party of God." We will transform the world and fulfill the angel's message of *Peace on earth and goodwill to all persons*. Vote with your prayers and act with your words and actions. The world waits to be saved by the sons and daughters of God through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank God for diversity for it is God's gift to grow us.

Evangelist **Bob Slasor**



Children's Peace Garden

Youth from our congregation are pictured standing in our church driveway island area to help us envision this area as a Children's Peace Garden. Watch for the garden to grow as it develops under the care of our youth.

Planting begins on Saturday morning, December 15th, at 9:00 AM and all youth are invited. If you need a ride, call **Charyn Walker** at 941.545.3232.

Charyn Walker, Sunday School Coordinator



Financial Report Through November, 2012

	Budget YTD	Actual YTD	Difference YTD
Operating Income	\$53,468	\$ 45,682	\$-7,786
Operating Expenses	\$53,468	<u>\$(43,836)</u>	\$-9,632
Balance Actual Income to Expenses		\$ 1,846	

Our planned Operating Expenses for the month of December are \$6,861. Through your support we will meet these expenses and have some left over!

Other Funds	Income	Expenses	Balance
Our Father's Cupboard	\$3,442	\$1,961	\$1,481
Labyrinth	\$1,515	\$ 0	\$1,515

Bob Beers, Congregational Financial Officer



Generosity Based Budgeting

For 2013 the Florida Mission Center (FMC) is handling their operating budget differently than assessing the congregations as in the past. The FMC has a Big Dream for 2013 with programs to match. Each congregation within the Mission Center has held a meeting to explain the Generosity Based Budgeting process. The FMC has asked each person in the congregation to prayerfully consider how much they can contribute so that a collective Congregational Pledge can be made to the FMC. These Congregational Pledges will determine the Mission Center's final budget and what programs can go forward and what programs need to be cancelled. The FMC Budget Conference will be held in Orlando on December 8, Saturday, from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. All are invited to attend this important conference.

Bob Beers, Congregational Financial Officer



Reaching Out: Giving through Community

Last month, on November 16, a small group of women from our congregation joined women from many other churches throughout Manatee County to honor the migrant worker families in our community. Church Women United, Manatee hosted their annual Migrant Tea at Manatee United Methodist Church. This event was established as a way to reach out to the many migrant farm workers and their families. Accompanied by members of the Manatee County Migrant Education staff, children and youth of local migrant farm workers sang songs and shared their personal stories. Each church brought contributions of items that they made or collected to present to these families. Roser United Methodist brought over one hundred quilts they had lovingly made! **Nanette Dizney, Jeanette Harris, Kathy Park** and **Ginger Robertson** represented *Community of Christ* with offerings of baby baskets filled with baby items, warm blankets, socks, underwear and personal hygiene products.

The morning was filled with beautiful worship, inspiring music and most important, the love of Jesus Christ. There is a calendar of future meeting dates and events for Church Women United on the Information Center bulletin board. I can't think of a better way to begin each month than to worship and fellowship with other Christian women in our Community. Join us!

Ginger Robertson, Outreach Ministry



A 7-year-old boy was chosen to be the innkeeper in the Christmas program. When Joseph and Mary approached him, looking for shelter in Bethlehem, he simply had to say there was no room.

The kindhearted boy tried to take the sting out of the situation, however. "I don't have room for you in the hotel," he said. "But I'd love to have you come in for milk and cookies."



Genevieve Wenzel and Jeanette Dean's sister, Imogene Hoffhine, passed away November 15th. The funeral was held in Illinois. Our sympathy and prayers go out to the family.

Kinsley Allyn Roehl arrived Monday, November 19th. She is the daughter of Denise and Nick, granddaughter of Jerilyn and Dick Chlebina, and the niece of Megan Chlebina. They, along with many other family members, welcome her arrival. Congratulations to all.



Danielle Johnson and Mark Sobolewski were joined in marriage at Selby Gardens on Saturday, November 24, in a beautiful ceremony officiated by Elder Jim Deering. Danielle is the daughter of Brad and Joan Martin and sister of Kenny Johnson. Best wishes to the couple.

DID YOU KNOW ???

- ◆ **Matthew Devine** made honor roll for this semester at Tatum Ridge Elementary School and was added to their wall of fame Responsible Risks and Finding Humor?
- ◆ **Bill Williams** had shoulder surgery and will be at Sunset Lake Health & Rehabilitation Center, 832 Sunset Lake Blvd, Venice, 34292, phone is 941.492.5313, until the last of December?
- ◆ **Nancy Brouger** has moved and her new address is 1707 Woodwinds Dr, Bradenton 34208 and her new phone number is 941.741.4904?



Banners were hung and the tree in the sanctuary was decorated by Cole and Zoe Van Beek.



Coming Events in January, 2013

Thursday, January 10 - A **Women's Luncheon** - watch for time and place

Saturday, January 12 - **Work Day** at the church from 8:00 am to noon

Saturday, January 26 - **Winter Reunion** begins at Deerhaven Retreat Center



The tree in the Fellowship Hall waits for it's finishing touches. Items are provided for you to add your personal touch.



December

- 03 Genevieve Wenzel
- 07 Daryl Quinn
- 09 Bob Slasor
- 13 Rosalee Long
- 22 Jerilyn Gregg-Chlebina
- 26 Jim Brougher
- 29 Shirley Clow
- 30 Cody Morgan
- 30 Carol Law
- 30 Nancy & Lee Peters (anniv)

Thanks

Thanks to a crew of willing workers, our church home is ready for the holidays. The trees, the lights, and the colorful decorations were put in place on Saturday, December 1, at the **Hanging of the Greens**.

The decorations will be taken down on Saturday, January 12. Consider joining the crew that will be packing the decorations away for another year. Time will be announced later.

January

- 05 Jean Botelho
- 06 Nancy Skene
- 09 Lee Peters
- 19 Lennon Quinn
- 13 Nanette Dizney
- 13 Kaitlyn James
- 17 Heather Quinn
- 19 Patrick James
- 20 Elaine Gregg
- 21 Rebecca Creel
- 21 Heather Devine
- 26 Patti & Larry Bell (anniv)
- 30 Dawn Kolquist



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Peace and Love to:

CHRISTMAS *Joy!*

*“This will be a sign for you:
you will find a child
wrapped in bands of cloth
and lying in a manger.”*



Luke 2:12, NRSV

*May the peace and joy of Christmas
abide with you through all the year.*

Editorial Staff