

THE SPIRE

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 8

DECEMBER 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On that God-washed, mystical evening two thousand years ago, an angel appeared to shepherds, and announced: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you news of great joy which will come to all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2: 10-11). A proclamation of joy, let alone 'great joy' in our day, is newsworthy. Humanity yearns, but has not found joy in the cultural landscapes outside the stable door in Bethlehem. It is not for want of trying. Ever notice how many popular books contain the word, Joy, in their titles? We have "The Joy of Cooking", "The Joy of Sex", and, "The Joy of Jogging" to name a few. Pick any subject, culture seems to say, and we'll supply the word. Perhaps joy is overused in the media, because we have so little of it in secular society. It is as if we are trying to convince ourselves

through written and verbal overkill.

Back in 1998, one of the most astute social critics, Christopher Lasch, noted that great emotion had been eclipsed by a survivalist mentality. Describing the "minimal self" in a book by that



name, Lasch stated that many Americans felt that "just getting by" is all one can expect from life. Strong feelings of joy or love recede after childhood, he wrote. One statistic which still has resonance, and strengthens Lasch's argument that joy verges on extinction, is the high rate of suicide among adolescents. This problem has grown exponentially since the 70's. Imagine. Culture may prattle about joy, but it has very little experiential knowledge of the word, and little of eternal value to

pass on to younger generations. Christmas reminds us again that secular gospels like greed and power are bankrupt.

We return to Luke's angel. Great joy is proclaimed, and the shepherds respond in kind. They romp to Bethlehem to discover someone who transforms their lives. Luke tells us that they return to work, "glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them" (Luke 2:20). They were no longer "minimal selves" because of the transcendent joy from God which they experienced.

We witness to the power of Christ when we live with more than a survivalist mentality. May the birth of Christ in your souls emit a joy in which others can find spiritual shelter, and abiding hope. I look forward to our Advent and Christ celebrations.

In Christ's Service,
Rev. Dr. Bob Gram

O Come Let Us Adore Him

You and Your family are invited to join us to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in our Christmas Eve Services

7:00pm

A service of Carols and Candles and Chancel Drama to Welcome the Light that comes in the Christ Child.

9:30pm

We celebrate His birth with a service of Carols, Candles, Chancel Drama, and Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Following the 9:30 service we invite you an Open House at the Parsonage to share a bit of eggnog and fellowship.

Experience the Wonder In the beauty of the season as we join together in the sanctuary to welcome Him as the Babe of Bethlehem who comes to give us joy and peace, this night and all year long.

Women's Guild

We are selling our famous pecans. If you did not receive a call but would like pecans please see Jean Dussol to place your order. They are only \$7.50 a bag ... what a bargain!! With the holidays coming up this is an easy way to get your pecans for your holiday baking.

Cookies --- our Annual Cookie Walk will be held on 12/13/09 right after

church. Many ladies bake cookies for you to purchase for only \$5 a dozen. WOW!! You can't beat that!! So, grab a box or two & fill it up with great tasting cookies!! Another great way to make your holidays a little easier.

The quilt has been started. The ladies meet on Monday's downstairs at 9am. If you would like to learn how to quilt this group of ladies are willing to teach you. Just come

to church on Monday's & your lessons will begin. You will have a great time.

We invite all women of the church to be apart of the Women's Guild. You don't have to be a member of the church to be a part of the Women's Guild. We meet right after church in the Dutch Room. So, come & see what we are all about!

Blessings, Sandy Emrich-
President



Dates to Remember

- 12/13/09—Cookie Walk
- 1/10/10—Annual Birthday Party
- 2/21/10--Meeting

Youth Group

We've sold out of the 2010 wall calendars but still have blank note cards available for \$5 each. These make great stocking stuffers. Pick up a pack after church.

Thank you to everyone who donated a food item, turkey, or gave money to assist us in putting together 5 Thanksgiving baskets for area families. Each of the families were thrilled to receive their 2 boxes full of everything for their Thanksgiving meal. We appreciate your support.

We baked, you bought & we hope you enjoyed the Pumpkin & Cranberry breads. We didn't sell out but we had a great time baking. Proceeds from the sale went to the Thanksgivings Baskets. Thanks for your support.

On 11/17/09 we took part in a local Thanksgiving Interfaith Service. It was held at a synagogue in Kingston. Most of us have never been at a synagogue or sang in public. But we did it & enjoyed it a

lot. We sang 2 songs & learned about other faiths as well. It was a great learning experience for us all.

The Giving Tree is up. This is an expanded version of the Mitten Tree. Please bring in adult hats, gloves or scarves as well as a bottle of shampoo or a bar or 2 of soap. Hats, gloves & scarves will be donated to Queens Galley & they like to also hand out toiletries so, whatever we can collect for them would be appreciated.

We held a babysitting night on 12/4/09 from 6pm till 9pm. More on this next month.

We will be going caroling on 12/11/09. If you live within a 3 miles radius of the church & would like us to come to your house & sing a few carols please give Amy Sirni a call at 338-4960 or see the sign ups after church. Thanks for helping us spread some holiday cheer.

We wish you a Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year.

Lisa Longto, Sandy & Katie Emrich
Youth Group Leaders



Upcoming Events:

- 12/4/09—Babysitting at church at 6pm till 9pm. We baby-sit children of all ages.
- 2/11/09—Caroling in the area at 5:30pm
- 1/10/10—Meeting
- 2/6/10—Make chili for Souper Bowl Sunday
- 2/7/10—Chili Sale for Souper Bowl Sunday fund raiser

Christmas Pageant
Presented by our Church School
Sunday, December 20th
Immediately following the 10:00am
Worship service
Special visitor at the conclusion.

S T I C K L E Y G A R D E N S

The Columbarium, Stickley Gardens, will now be entering it's first winter, and while the fountain had to be turned off and covered, the large shade tree has shed its leaves, and the colorful tulips and flowers now await a new spring, we are sure that the serenity and peaceful beauty of the winter snows will lend a different beauty to such a solemn place. One can brush the snow off one of the benches and sit for a moment in the quiet of the cold. The Committee is planning for Phase II, which among other things, will consist of a walkway, fence and shrubbery, and will be entering the cost analysis phase with the hope of starting this in the spring.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE COLUMBARIUM PLEASE CONTACT ANY OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS.

LISA LONGTO (331-1438)
CHAIRPERSON

JIM PIRRO (383-0079)
TREASURER

JERRY FINK (246-6567)
SECRETARY

ESTHER STICKLEY (331-2919)

DIANA CLINE (338-7276)
CONSISTORY LIAISON

A SACRED PLACE OF BEAUTY AND CONTEMPLATION. (LOCATED ON THE SOUTH LAWN OF THE CHURCH)

BIRTHDAYS

December

Coty Burgess	2, '90	Alfredo Martinez	8
Jonathan Delano	5, '91	Shirley Peterson	9
Micaela Ryan	5, '96	Kyla Thomas	9
Isabel Martinez	8, '97	William Rockwell	11
Christine Lemus	9, '93	Rich Little	11
Calvin Lemus	9, '93	Renee Nekos	11
Brent Jordan	11, '94	Tami Longendyke	12
Lauren Rubino	16, '97	Jennifer Mayfield	14
Delaney Cox	17, '97	Erma Moore	15
Brian Rafferty	22, '95	Linda Moon	16
Avery Herzog	24, '95	Jamie Hopper	20
Kasey Stelter	27, '92	Mary Lou Vogt	20
Megan Christiana	28, '93	Kathleen Pfeiffer	23
Jada Nekos	30, 08	Don Kent	25
Daniel Waligurski	31, '97	Logan Schoonmaker	26
		Beth Alden	27
		Jim Prentice	27
		Bill Baldinger	28
		Lia Sumerano	28
Toni Fisher	2	Frieda Constant	29
Carolyn Cranfield	3	Mary Kent	29
Pat Baker	4	Dawn O'Brien	29
Frances Hofler	4	Florence Prehn	29
Susan Hutton	4	Judy Horvers	30
Mary O'Dell	5	Alyson Rafferty	31
Thomas Horvers	5		
Hal Hauck	6		
Caitlin Decker	7	<i>January</i>	
Donna Brundage	7	Virgil Winnie	1
Callie Rockwell Ashby	8	Andrew Maxwell	1

ANNIVERSARIES

December

Carolyn & Gene Matheus	2
James & Laura Gregory	2
Nancy & Rick Salzmman	15
Barbara & Jim Mayfield	19
Mark & Carolyn Cranfield	20
Steve & Kristen Helm	21
Clarence & Faye Jansen	27
Carolyn & Andrew Marchetti	31

January

Rev & Esther Stickley	2
Donna & Bill Brundage	3
George & Renee Nekos	4
Tom & Ruth Harkin	6



MATTHEW 2 THE VISIT OF THE MAGI

¹After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ²and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶" 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'"

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.



What's going on? Where's the party? Who's gonna be there?

Why wasn't I invited

While passing through town the Wisemen spilled the beans and announced that a very special event was happening. Herod, the only King in his own mind... caught wind of this and he didn't like that news at all! Another King? People traveling to worship *someone else*? How could that happen? Why didn't I know? It seems to me that Herod's ego took a hit when he heard about a big event that didn't involve him.

I can just see Herod's face go from confused, to bewildered, to angry, to pensive, to devious, to downright cold. He had to stop this event. No, he had to SMASH IT. Reading on in the verse we know that Herod's plan was to kill Jesus (Matthew 2:16). His jealous actions killed innocent lives and didn't

work. We know that it's human to be jealous. We've all experienced it in our lives. This passage teaches me two things (probably more than two if I think longer!).

First, jealousy gets you nowhere. It puts a mini or a major rage in us that makes us do things that we ought not to do. Things that end up making us look more foolish than we looked in the first place. Moreover, usually the actions of our jealousy don't change anything! Actions from jealousy are more destructive than productive in any form. Many times we aren't invited to the party or we hear about fancy things that are going on that we could have been a part of. Those events still go on and sometimes the results of those events actually benefit us. The birth of Jesus certainly saved and helped more people than any good old Herod could have ever done.

Second, God had, and always will have a plan and will provide

direction. It was already written that Jesus, the ruler and shepherd of his people, was to be born and that people would flock to worship him. That plan was in place long before Herod. When it comes to direction, instead of dreams, I'd like to think that, in this case, God whispered in the ear of Joseph and the Wise men. He whispered to Joseph to move away from Bethlehem before Herod's devious actions took place (Matthew 2:13). God also whispered in the ear of the wise men to go home another way knowing that would help thwart Herod's plan to smash the party.

Take the lesson of Herod's jealousy and don't let it consume you and also listen to God's whispers. Maybe God whispers to us every once in awhile to take another way. If you feel in your hear that the whisper is God, take the new route and go to the best place on earth. Home.

Joe Ulrich

LUKE 2:8-20

THE SHEPHERDS AND THE ANGELS

⁸And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

¹³Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

¹⁶So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Luke 2: 8-20

In this season of advent I find myself reflecting upon the meaning of Christmas. In doing so I re-read the version of the Christmas story from the Gospel according to Luke. It's the familiar passage where the shepherds are in the fields and an angel appears to them and announces "be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a savior, who is Christ the Lord." I try to imagine this scene, how bewildered and frightened the shepherds must have been; the sense of unreality in this vision before them. Although they must have been full of fear and disbelief at first they came to believe the message of the angels and went to find the baby Jesus in the stable in Bethlehem. This makes me think about how Christ the Lord is revealed to us throughout our lives in so many ways. Maybe less dramatically than heralding angels but in ways we should recognize. Do we believe the message and choose to share it with those around us? Or do we pretend we didn't see or hear the presence of Christ our Savior? During the season of advent, as we prepare room in our hearts for Christ's birth, I hope we can all see signs of his presence and share the message of the angels with others.

JOY TO THE WORLD THE LORD IS BORN!

~Bonnie Dumas, Deacon



RECIPE FOR A COOKIE WALK

1. *Bake several batches of ONE of your favorite holiday cookies (or candy).*
2. *Deliver your donations to Schadewald Hall before the church service on December 13.*
3. *Participate in the worship service at 10:00am on December 13.*
4. *Return to Schadewald Hall to pick up a cookie box and proceed along the tables laden with a multitude of freshly baked holiday cookies.*
5. *Stop at the weigh and pay station to have your box weighed. Our price continues to be \$5.00 per pound.*
6. *Take cookies home and ENJOY!*



You do not need to contribute baked goods to be a buyer. All are welcome to participate. Men, women and children are encouraged to back AND to buy. It's a fun activity and a great fund raiser for the Women's Guild. Thank you for your generous support.

Christa Conlin and Joyce Pinckney, Co-Chairs

CHURCH 2010 OPERATING BUDGET
Adopted by Congregation: 11/15/09

INCOME

EXPENSES

Envelopes	140,000	Pastoral & Personnel	127,715
Loose Plate	12,000	Finance & Administration	38,002
Envelope-Spec	3,500	Worship	2,130
Building Fund	6,500	Property & Maintenance	43,675
Estates	5,600	Program & Activity	1,900
Investment Div/Interest	8,500	Education	1,500
Building Usage	12,400	Mission	23,802
Church School	1,400	Fund Raising	6,600
			=====
Women's Guild/Quilters/Youth	0		==
Stone House Day	9,500	Operating Expenses	245,324
Misc. Dinners	4,600		
Denomination Fin. Responsibility	19,422		
Cell Tower Income	13,800		
Miscellaneous	800		
	=====		
Operating Income	238,022		
Transfer from Savings	7,302		
	=====		
	245,324		

“The supreme trick of Old Scratch is to have us so busy decorating, preparing food, practicing music, and cleaning in preparation for the feast of Christmas that we actually miss the coming of Christ. Hurt feelings, anger, impatience, injured egos--the list of clouds that busyness creates to blind us to the birth can be long, but it is familiar to us all.” Edward Hays

The Stickleys send their greetings and best wishes from their house to yours. May you have a joyous and blessed Christmas as we pause to honor the One who comes to visit us in the manger and each day of the New Year in His love and peace. Rev and Esther

*May you know the wonder of the birth of the Christ Child,
 May you feel the glow of the joy of the season as the Child
 comes to us.*

*In the wonder of His birth may you know His peace,
 Dr. Bob , Debbie, Jane and Iris*

“It might be easy to run away to a monastery, away from the commercialization, the hectic hustle, the demanding family responsibilities of Christmas time. Then we would have a holy Christmas. But we would forget the lesson of the Incarnation, of the en-fleshing of God--the lesson that we who are followers of Jesus do not run from the secular; rather we try to transform it. It is our mission to make holy the secular aspects of Christmas just as the early Christians baptized the Christmas tree.” ~Father Andrew Greeley

HURLEY REFORMED
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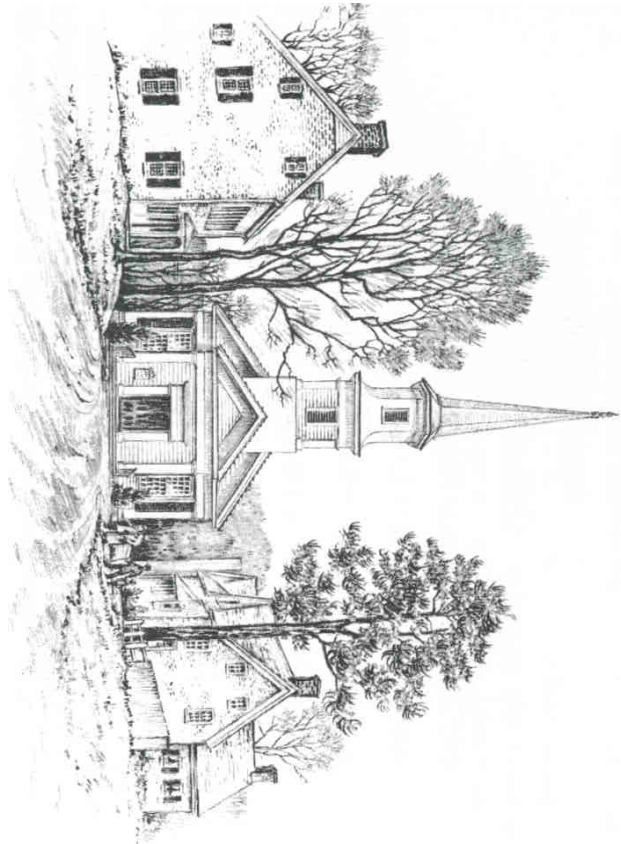
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