

THE SPIRE

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Merry Christmas

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SHILOH

Last month I visited the Civil War battle site, Shiloh, which is located in the southwest corner of Tennessee, about 15 miles from the Mississippi border. Apart from Gettysburg, Shiloh may be the best maintained Civil War site. Unlike other war fields, the 13,000 acre area has been preserved intact, and its National Park service status means that the inroads of civilization will be kept at bay. While in the South I also visited Fort Donelson where the Union General Ulysses S. Grant won his first major victory on the shore of the Cumberland River. I also meandered on trails of smaller sites which were fought, as were Shiloh and Donelson, by arguably the best general the South produced, Nathan Bedford Forest (Forgive me, Robert E. Lee!) Many smaller killing fields have been carved up to make way for shopping centers, strip malls, and private homes. The Civil War trust is an organization continues its efforts to buy back the land which brave Union and Confederate forces met.

I spent three days wandering around Shiloh; the ground seemed holy. I record this during the season of Christmas and the sense one gets of the simple stable and manger where Jesus' birth occurred—certainly holy ground which I had opportunity to visit several times in the 80's. What unites Bethlehem and Shiloh is that the latter name is for a church which was erected before the battle commenced on April 6-7, 1862. Shiloh means "place of peace", and it was hoped that worshipers would find God's peace every Sunday in a small rude log cabin. Ironically some of the fiercest fighting at Shiloh occurred on church property, as General Sherman's division attempted to hold its ground dur-

ing a major onslaught by the Confederates on the first day of battle. And Bethlehem—which means the 'city of bread' was also a peaceful place until Herod the Great, in a failed attempt to kill baby Jesus, slaughtered every infant under the age of two in that, sleepy suburb of ancient Jerusalem. It often seems that places of peace, where people discover the presence of God, become the loci of evil. It is as if Satan tries to destroy God's sacred geography wherever it is found, but again and again the devil fails. Herod the Great is long-gone, dying most likely of cancer in 4 B.C. while Bethlehem remains a major source of comfort and faith for Christian pilgrims throughout the world. And the Shiloh church is still in existence. It outlasted the gun and canon laced carnage which pummeled its land during that terrible April. The congregation erected a new sanctuary in 1953, and continues to worship there every Sunday. Thus it is during this Christmas season when we affirm that light overcomes darkness, and worship outlasts war. Battles come and go, but, in the end, God's peace transcends life's battle-fields.

Shiloh may indeed mark the birth of the modern era of warfare. Historians note that there were 23,746 casualties, a staggering number which was greater than the aggregate of dead, wounded, and missing in all previous wars fought in America, and indeed the Western Hemisphere. It was the first battle in which both Union and Confederate began to understand the staggering carnage which until that point beggared the imagination—something no one North or South could wrap his or her mind around. Nevertheless in a couple of decades,

(Continued on page 2)

both Union and Confederate soldiers would gather together on that terrible anniversary, time and again, to commune with one another, their presence living proof that brotherhood outlasted the bloodletting which had once divided them.

On the third day of my visit to Shiloh, I hired a guide who had been recommended to me by the pastor of the church where I worshiped.. Jimmie is an ex-mayor, and a wonderful teacher. Not only did he help me trace the course of the battle—it is far more difficult to understand than Gettysburg—but he also debunked a few of the myths about the battle itself. There are two special spots where I wanted to devote contemplative time. The first was the “Hornet’s Nest” where determined Iowan brigades in particular fought bravely against numerically greater odds. The Hornet’s Nest is putatively the place—woods and a sunken road—where the fiercest fighting occurred. Behind the sunken road of the Hornet’s nest is Bloody Pond where tourists like myself are often told that dying and wounded Union and Confederate soldiers slaked their thirst unmindful of their differences. There are paintings of the Bloody Pond which depict the injured of both sides limping and crawling toward seemingly sacred waters gathering as one, united in their brokenness. Horses, too, are also shown drinking, and lying beside fallen soldiers. The Bloody Pond is often viewed sacramentally, a holy body of water, a crèche where soldiers as different as magi and shepherds partake of the healing benefits of this simple watery stable. My guide surprised me by noting that the Bloody Pond did

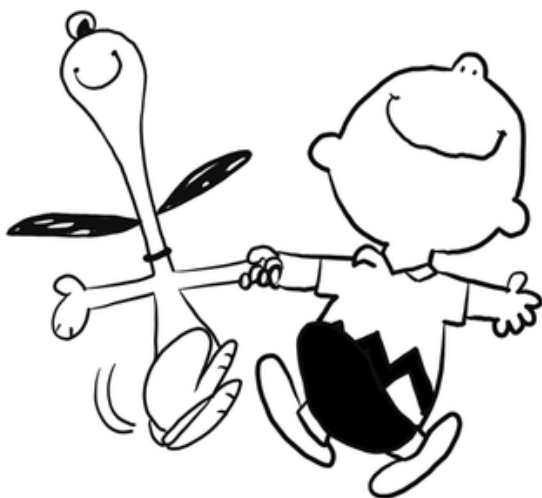
not exist during the Battle of Shiloh. In fact its first written mention occurs more than twenty years after the fighting, and was probably created by a farmer to water his herd. Jimmie also mentioned that there is another pond, far more important, because the heaviest casualties occurred in and around it. So I spent dusk of my last day at Shiloh circum-ambulating Water Oaks Pond like a Muslim circling the Kaaba Stone in Mecca, forgetting its more famous counterpart, trying to comprehend what went on there, as armies, like hurricane wracked waves, frothed back and forth. Truly Water Oaks Pond held the smudge and odor of death in April, 1862.

And yet the artistic depictions of Bloody Pond are important as symbol and metaphor if not history. The vision of Confederate and Union forces gathered in their common affliction became analogous for me of that simple manger where we, too, weary, wounded, and heavy laden soldiers, carrying life’s scars, can lay down our burdens, and drink spiritual freshets exuding from a simple manger,

May we come more fully to Jesus to the healing pond of abundant life during this Christmas season.

Yours in Christ.

Doc Bob



Peace
On
Earth

It seems like a stark contrast to see the
Christmas trees in the Columbarium
next to the white crosses.

But it is such an important reminder
that the child whose birth we celebrate,
came to be crucified for our sins,
to enable us to spend eternity with him,
blameless of any wrong doing.

Take a moment to rejoice with those
who have gone before us and
now see Jesus, face to face.

*Merry
Christmas!*

STICKLEY GARDENS

FOR MORE INFORMATION – CONTACT ANY OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

LISA LONGTO (331-1438) CHAIRPERSON
JIM PIRRO (383-0079) TREASURER
ESTHER STICKLEY (331-2919)
SANDIE GREGORY (338-7626)
JIM CRAVEN, CONSISTORY LIAISON
REV STICKLEY, SECRETARY

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

Special Thanks

The fountain move is complete!
We look forward to it's beauty and
ease of maintainence in the spring.

The project could not have
happened without the following
people and their gifts of time
and reduced costs. We thank them
from the bottom of our hearts!

Ted – Musialkiewicz Construction
Company, Inc.

Matt – Sirni Bros. Landscaping

Rian – R. Bradley Construction, Inc.
(Plumbing)

Bob – High Falls Electric, Inc.

Bob & Jim Willis – LHV Precast Inc.

Dave's Tree Service

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

Women's Guild

The pecans have finally arrived!!! We are so very sorry for the delay in delivery but it was out of our control. Our supplier shipped our order a whole week later plus they told us the plain was being shipped first when in fact they were not. Then half of our order was shipped out west... yes it was a real problem that had us all on the edge of our seats. But the main thing is that they are here & ready for your holiday needs. This year we have Plain, Milk & Dark Chocolate, and Cluster pecans. They are \$10 a bag. Be on the lookout for them during coffee hour. Thanks to Natalie Woodard, Shirley Burns & Beverly Roosa for going down to the church three times to meet the UPS man for the order delivery!!! Thank you Sandie Gregory for tracking our order!!! Couldn't have done this without all of your help!!

We hold our annual Election Day Bake Sale on 11/3. Thank you to everyone that baked &/or purchased baked goods to make this sale another success!! With your help we made \$173.50. Thank you for your support!

On 11/15 our altar was decorated with boxes that were filled with love & items that will brighten many lives across our big world. With the world with the way it is we are blessed to have been able to help this wonderful organization & help spread some Christmas cheer!! Once again thank you to everyone for all of their support for Operation Christmas Child!! Plus a HUGE thanks to Sandie & Jim Gregory for chairing this great activity!!

Our Thanksgiving altar looked great & a thank you goes out to Shirley Ruth & Helen Sgroi for going out & purchasing the fruits & vegetables for it. Then on Monday they delivered the items to the local soup kitchen for their holiday meal.

With Thanksgiving over we are now ready for Christmas & what a better way to get your holiday started but some cookies. Our annual Cookie Walk is coming up on 12/13. There will be a signup sheet after church for the bakers. Our Youth Group will once again be assembling our boxes & putting up our tables for us. We thank them very much for their valuable assistance!!! Looking forward to seeing everyone at this wonderful holiday festivity!!!

So with all of this being said this bring us to the end of another year. Wow... where does the time fly to? I would like to thank all of the ladies of the Women's Guild that make up this wonderful group of ladies!! You all are special & the talent that you all bring to our group is so much appreciated!!! Thank you!!! Thank you!!! I truly am honored to know you all!!

Our calendar of events: 12/13/15 Cookie Walk

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year,
Sandy Emrich-President



The Giving Tree

The tree is up & full of tags for you to pick & purchase the item(s) on the tag & return them unwrapped to the tree on or before 12/13/15. This year we have adopted 2 families with 4 children each as well as collecting food for the Reservoir Food Pantry and new blankets for the local area warming shelters. There is a huge need out in our community & your help is much appreciated. If you have any questions please see Lisa Longto or Sandy Emrich. Thank you for helping us spread a little Christmas magic for someone.

December

Birthdays

December

Coty Burgess	2
Toni Hedges	2
Pat Baker	4
Susan Hutton	4
Mary O'Dell	5
Thomas Horvers	5
Micaela Ryan	5
Hal Hauck	6
Caitlin Decker	7
Joyce Ann Leverenz	7
Brent Jordan	11
William Rockwell	11
Renee Nekos	11
Rich Little	11

Jennifer Mayfield

14

Lauren Rubino

16

Linda Moon

16

Delaney Cox

17

Jamie Hopper

20

Mary Lou Vogt

20

Brian Rafferty

22

Kathleen Pfeiffer

23

Don Kent

25

Jim Prentice

27

Bill Baldinger

28

Lia Sumerano

28

Megan Christiana

28

Frieda Constant

29

Dawn O'Brien

29

Florence Prehn

29

Jada Nekos

30

Judy Horvers

30

David Szekeres

30

Alyson Rafferty

31

Daniel Waligurski

31

ANNIVERSARIES

December

Nancy & Rick Salzmman	15
Barbara & Jim Mayfield	19
Steve & Kristen Helm	21

January

Rev Charles & Esther Stickley	2
George & Renee Nekos	4
Tom & Ruth Harkin	6

Youth Group News

Well we finally have our band kids back. We have participated in the youth collaborative (now called Youth Fusion) and have enjoyed each meeting.

The youth group will be supplying Thanksgiving meals for 6 families.

We have a team for the Relay For Life which will be held June 11.

We are still discussing mission trip options.

The Christmas Pageant will be on December 20.

Happy Thanksgiving!!!!
Christine Henning



Christmas Pageant

News Bytes

Information you should know ; Opportunities for Fellowship.



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 to welcome the Light that comes in the Christ Child*

9:30pm - *We celebrate His birth with a service of Carols, Candles, and Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

*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.*



Prayer Shawl Ministry update....

Some of our dedicated needle workers are starting to fill up a basket in the Narthex with "Prayer Squares". Prayer squares, like the prayer shawls, are prayerfully knitted, crocheted, quilted, and embroidered by members of our congregation. If you feel the need of some extra prayer energy, please take a prayer square to carry with you in your pocket.

To my Church Family:

When I knew the date of my knee surgery, I was a bit uneasy. My daughter was here for a week and then I was alone. Or so I thought! My sisters from the Women's Ministries stepped up to take me to my physical therapy sessions and times while we were out, took me out to eat! Thanks to all who brought food to me as well! I was impressed that 2 guys were involved too! God is so good and my Church Family shares this goodness with everyone!

God bless each and everyone of you!

Yours In Christ,
Deb Zuill



Operation Christmas Child 2015



(A picture of our Contribution)



A heartfelt THANK YOU to all who filled, moved, donated and prayed for our shoebox collection. Because of you, we were able to reach our goal and fill 100 boxes this year. Also, thank you to everyone who was able to cover the \$7.00 per box shipping charge and to the Women's Guild for donating \$177 to cover the outstanding charges.

Please continue to pray that these boxes will not only bring joy into the hearts of these children, but also show them the love of Jesus exemplified in the gifts from Christians in Hurley, New York

Thank you again and may each of you have a Blessed Christmas.

Sandie Gregory

It's That Time Again!!!

Once again it's time to place your orders for poinsettia plants to adorn the sanctuary for the Holiday season.



Plants are one size, one color, and one price: red at \$10.00 each.

POINSETTIAS

Number of plants: _____ @ \$10.00 each: Total due _____

Name: _____

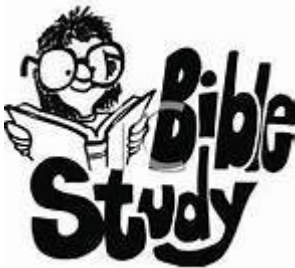
Phone: _____

In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

We are requesting that you take your plant home or deliver it to someone special.

Make Checks Payable to: **HRC Women's Guild**
Give to Shirley Ruth after worship or mail to:
215 Grandview Terrace, Hurley NY 12443



Tuesday evening
Educational Op-
portunities for
December

Dr. Gram will be exploring the birth narratives as they are found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. In light of the Paris attacks and heightened terrorism, the courses will focus on what both Evangelists tell us about the triumph of peace over evil. The time of Jesus' birth will be compared to the uncertain times we live in today.

When: Tuesday, December 1st, 7-8:30 The Gospel of Matthew
Tuesday, December 8th , 7-8:30 The Gospel of Luke

Dr. Gram will continue his study of how Nazi leaders and theologians used Jesus to further their evil aims. The writings of Nazi theologians like Gerhard Kittel and Paul Althaus will be explored as well as their theological antecedents in the 16th and 19th centuries. Special attention will be paid to the Reformation Theologian, Martin Luther (1483-1546) and his book, "The Jews and Their Lies".

Criminal Christologies: The Nazification of Jesus Part 3
Tuesday, December 15th, 7-9 pm

December 2015

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The Rev. Dr. Robert L. Gram, LCSW
Pastor

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