

# THE SPIRE

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 10

DECEMBER 2016



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

God states through the prophet Isaiah that God's ways are not humans' (55:8-9), a point well illustrated when we examine the background of Jesus' birth. Jesus was born to a family who were either peasants or those clinging to the lowest rung of what we might charitably call lower middle class. It's not a favorable lineage, socio-economically at least, in comparison to the royal stock of Buddhism's founder, Gautama, or the moneyed mercantile background of Islam's Muhammed. IN human understanding, God could have raised the bar had Jesus been born to the Roman Emperor Augustus, under whose reign our Messiah slipped into human existence without fanfare or the greater world's knowledge. Or had he been sired by Roman citizens of prestige and power, a man, for instance who governed a Roman province, or served in the Roman Senate.

The problem of Jesus' birth extends beyond his familial background. The thought that Jesus was born in the Roman Province of Judea must have sent shivers down the spine of any upwardly mobile individual, in the Graeco-Roman world, who believed that geography made the man or the woman. Judea was simply the "wrong side of the tracks", and any Roman governor worth his salt tried to avoid being sent there, to oversee a hostile land where Roman benefits — embraced readily by other provinces — were despised. To make matters worse, geographical hierarchy existed with in the country itself. It was thought that the region of Galilee, where Jesus grew up, and began his ministry, was a religiously barbarous area where few Jews observed Torah law or attended synagogue on a

regular basis. Galileans had a funny accent, too, which evoked invidious comparisons between the cultured Jews of Jerusalem, and their cracker barrel brethren 'up north'.

There is one other hierarchical distinction of note. It was thought that Jesus' hometown, Nazareth, was particularly suspect, even in lowly Galilee itself. Perhaps the problem was religious laxness, or the fact that Nazareans most likely conducted business in the pagan city of Sepphoris, less than ten miles north. In the Gospel of John, Jesus disciple Philip encounters one Nathanael in the town of Bethsaida by the Sea of Galilee. I think we can assume that Nathanael himself was Galilean. When Philip notes that he has found the messiah, Nathanael replies, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Suffice it to say that Jesus, by dint of his family and geographical background, would hardly have been considered Messiah material in the greater Graeco Roman world. The Apostle Paul can talk about the scandal of Jesus' ignominious death on a cross as, "a stumbling block for Jews, and foolishness to Gentiles" (1 Corinthians 1:23). I think his words are appropriate also with regard to Jesus' birth.

What was behind God's plan to locate Jesus among the least of the very least? Perhaps it was to show us that the Christ Child comes to us when we are feeling terribly small and marginalized. Perhaps Jesus stands as guarantor that God's plans for our wonderful destinies as individuals and as a believing church are not impeded by the judgments of the world. Perhaps the Christmas story reminds that

*(Continued on page 2)*

the greatest of miracles in our lives are removed from the world's scrutiny and negative judgment.

May we delight in the secret ways in which the Christ Child enters our lives. May we, like the angels, sing out, "Glory to God in the Highest."

In Christ's service,

*Doc Bob*

Doc Bob

## December Events

December 1	Hurley Senior Citizens
December 4	Second Sunday of Advent
December 10	Breakfast with Santa Holiday in Hurley
December 11	Third Sunday of Advent
December 11	Cookie Walk
December 11	Christmas Party at Parsonage
December 12	Consistory Meeting
December 13, 27	Women's Ministries Bible Study
December 14	Men's Group
December 18	Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 24	Christmas Eve
December 25	Christmas



It is hard to believe it is December! We began gearing up for winter in November by collecting for Clinton Avenue Warming Center. Our December Mission is the Family of Woodstock Teen Shelter. This is a place for teens who have either been removed from their homes or left them. I have had at least one student who has utilized this service. They help the student get to school, do homework, get involved in chores etc. Family of Woodstock has a good reputation for putting a large percent of their money into their programs.

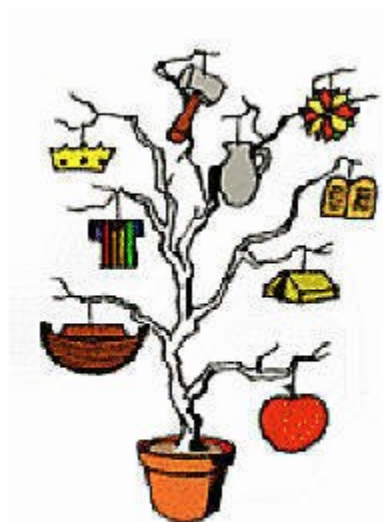
In January a new Consistory member will take over being the chair of the committee. It has been a very meaningful experience!

See one of the committee if you have any suggestions!

Rebecca Masters  
Cindy Sumerano  
Debbie Tucker  
Kathy Jansen  
Linda Caddy

There are so many people in need and I know it can be overwhelming, but while I was working on the Mission committee I often thought of this little story:

Early one evening a man was walking along a beach when he saw a boy picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. The man asked the boy why he was doing this. The boy explained the starfish would die if left until the morning. The man asked the boy, "What difference will your efforts make when there are thousands of starfish on the beach?" The boy stopped and looked at the starfish he was holding and said, "It will make a difference to this one."



## THE GIVING TREE

Our annual helping area families in need for Christmas will be up just before Thanksgiving. Please be on the lookout for the Christmas tree. It will be adorned with tags for you to pick a tag, purchase the item listed on the tag & then you return that item unwrapped. If you have any questions please see Lisa Longto or Sandy Emrich. Thank you for helping us make a little Christmas magic for someone. Please bring your gifts by December 11.

## WOMEN'S GUILD

Pecans... get your pecans!!! They are in & we have been selling them. We do have extras still available such as the plain, milk chocolate, and chocolate cluster pecans for \$10 a bag. With the holidays just around the corner they will make great gifts &/or stocking stuffers. Thank you for your support.

Operation Christmas Child has come to an end. What a HUGE response we had this year. We collected 125 boxes this year. Thanks again to everyone that supported this great organization. Thanks to James & Sandie Gregory for taking the lead on this!

Cookies... get your cookies!! The annual cookie walk is coming up on December 11. During coffee hour pick up a box & start filling up your box. Thanks for your support!!

So another year is coming to an end. 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!! 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:	December 11	Cookie Walk
	March 4 2017	set up for Church birthday party
	March 5 2017	Annual Church birthday party
	March 26 2017	Meeting



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

# December

## **BIRTHDAYS**

Coty Burgess	2
Toni Hedges	2
Pat Baker	4
Micaela Ryan	5
Thomas Horvers	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
Reid Dumas	20
Mary Lou Vogt	20
Brian Rafferty	22
Kathleen Pfeiffer	23
Don Kent	25

Paul vonderHeide	27
Bill Baldinger	28
Lia Sumerano	28
Megan Christiana	28
Frieda Constant	29
Dawn O'Brien	29
Judy Horvers	30
Jada Nekos	30
Alyson Rafferty	31
Daniel Waligurski	31

## **ANNIVERSARIES**

### *December*

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

### *January*

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



### ***It's That Time Again!!!***

### **POINSETTIAS**

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.

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

Number of plants: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$10.00 each:

Total due \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

Make Checks Payable to: **HRC Women's Guild**

Give to Shirley Ruth after worship or mail to:

215 Grandview Terrace, Hurley NY 12443

**Payment must be received by December 11, 2016**

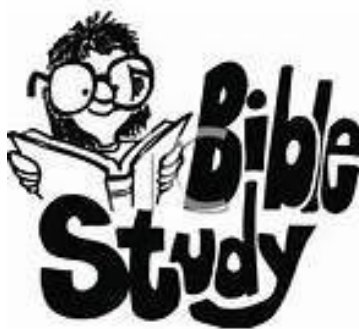






### Quilting Group

The Quilting Group needs your help. We've made 20 quilts in 20 years and we want to make 20 more. We raffle off a quilt each year as a major fundraiser for Women's Guild. We meet Mondays at 9:30 am. If you think you can help or are interested in helping, contact Barbara Kindt. (If you can't sew, Barbara will teach you!)



Women's Ministry Bible Study is studying the book Really Bad Girls of the Bible by Liz Curtis Higgs. Women's Ministry Bible Study meets every other Tuesday at 1pm in the Dutch Room. For more information, contact Nancy Sweeney.



Looking for good fellowship?!

The Men's Group meets the third Wednesday of the month. Next meeting is December 14 at 7 pm. Come hang with us. See Wally Cook for details.

### WHAT DO THE CANDLES IN OUR ADVENT WREATH MEAN?

The Advent wreath, four candles on a wreath of evergreen, is shaped in a perfect circle to symbolize the eternity of God. In some churches, four purple candles, one for each week in Advent, are used with one larger white candle in the middle as the Christ candle. Other churches prefer three purple or blue candles with one candle being rose or pink, to represent joy.

While the Advent wreath with its four candles did bring light to churches, it was not to illuminate the interior as much as to symbolize the coming of Christ. The Advent wreath began in the time of the Protestant reformer Martin Luther.

During each Sunday of the Advent season, we focus on one of the four virtues Jesus brings us: Hope, Love, Joy and Peace. Others consider the lighting of the first candle to symbolize expectation, while the second symbolizes hope, the third joy and the fourth purity. The Christ candle is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day reminding Christians that Jesus is the light of the world. The order and exact wording vary among churches, but the wreath continually reminds us of whom we are called to be as followers of Jesus.





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Pastor

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