

Grace Notes

Community of Grace Presbyterian Church

December 2009

December Highlights

From the Pastor's Desk

The Legend of the Poinsettia Pastor Bill explains the legend of Poinsettia's, reviews Advent, and invites everyone to our two Christmas Eve Services.

During the Holidays

Connecting Our Faith to Real Light During the busy holiday season COG offers many ways to share the gift of God's love with someone in need.

Advent Worship Themes Pastor Bill provides us a theme and supportive scriptures for each week during Advent.

Annual Birthday Party for Jesus

Be a Magi! During our annual "Birthday Party for Jesus" you can buy a birthday present for Jesus as well through "Faith in Action."

"10,000 Villages" comes to COG

On-Site Bazaar in the Narthex on December 6. Dede Carpenter describes a very special shopping opportunity coming to COG.

Fall Presbytery Meeting Elder Commissioner Elaine Nordberg reports on Presbytery's fall meeting held in Logan.

Our Church Community

Session Notes. Here you will find the notes from the Session meeting of November 17.

October Financial Update. This is our updated monthly financial picture provided by Treasurer Tim Fluetsch.

Presbyterian Links. Here is a listing of helpful links for those who are interested in our denomination's work at the national level, including what Presbyterians believe.

Church Officers. This is a listing of the current elders and deacons.

**Thanks to XMISSION for providing our church
with free internet access and a website.**



DECEMBER GRACE NOTES

From the Pastor's Desk

The Legend of the Poinsettia

by Bill McGuinness

Pastor

The legend of the poinsettia comes from Mexico. It tells of a young girl and her little brother. They were very poor but always looked forward to the Christmas festival. Each year a large manger scene was set up in the village church, and the days before Christmas were filled with parades and parties. The two children loved Christmas, but were always saddened because they had no money to buy presents. They especially wished that they could bring something to the church to lay at the manger for the Baby Jesus. But they had nothing.

One Christmas Eve, Maria and Pablo set out for church to attend the service. On their way they picked some weeds growing along the roadside and decided to take them as their gift to the Baby Jesus in the manger scene. Of course they were teased by other children when they arrived with their gift, but they said nothing for they knew they had given what they could. Maria and Pablo began placing the green plants around the manger and miraculously, the green top leaves turned into bright red petals, and soon the manger was surrounded by beautiful star-like flowers and so we see them today.

I love this legend. I think of it as a parable, reminding all of us spiritually needy ones that we can only bring to God what we have – brokenness and willingness. If we bring those in faith, it will amaze us how God can use them. In the words of the old song – all I had to offer Him was brokenness and strife – but He made something - beautiful - of my life.

**Join us, please, for worship on Christmas Eve,
Thursday December 24th at 7 pm or at 11 pm**

During the Holidays...

Connecting Our Faith to Real Life

by Dede Carpenter

Area Leader

It's not easy to manage the hectic pace of the holiday season and keep peace, joy and love at the center. December often becomes the super hero month with a multitude of **to do's** added to the regular schedule and expectations reaching all time highs.

Yet, in the midst of all the busyness a quiet voice is trying to remind us of the **reason for the season**.

It's all about our choices and priorities.

This holiday season there will be many opportunities to exchange gifts; connect your faith to real life and share the gift of God's love with someone in need.

December – Faith in action Events

Sunday December 6 – 10,000 Villages

Saturday December 12th – Salvation Army Bell Ringing

Saturday December 19th – Crossroads Food Co-op

Sunday December 20th – Birthday Party for Jesus (Be a Magi opportunities)

All month – Food & clothing & bedding collections for Crossroads and the Food Bank

Advent Worship Themes



Advent Week 1
Hebrews 3 and 4
Enter the Lord's Rest –
Slow Down
Mary

Advent Week 2
1 Kings 19
God's Still, Small Voice
Listen Up
Joseph





Advent Week 3
Joshua 4
Big Foot of Faith Step Out
Magi

Advent Week 4
1 Cor 2
The Mind of Christ Tune In
Shepherds



Annual Birthday Party for Jesus

Be a Magi!

by Tim Fluetsch

On December 20th (9:45 – 10:45 am) children of all ages, family and friends are invited into the gym for an hour of celebrating a very special birthday. Our Bethlehem marketplace will be alive with tents featuring food and fun and of course...cake!

We will have gifts that you can buy for the Baby Jesus. The gifts are sponsorships for our local missions and mission trips. Give Jesus your support for the Salvation Army sandwich-making, vans and gas for the Mexico, youth and RHINO mission trips, sending adults on the youth mission trip, the Heifer project, Children of Peace International, Utah Food Bank and Urban Crossroads. Those in full Magi costume will receive discounts.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, *Jesus!*

10,000 Villages comes to COG
On-Site Bazaar in the Narthex Dec. 6

by Dede Carpenter
Area Leader

Ten Thousand Villages is a nonprofit fair trade organization that markets handcrafted products made by artisans from more than 130 artisan groups in 38 countries. As one of the world's oldest and largest fair trade organizations, Ten Thousand Villages has spent more than 60 years cultivating long-term buying relationships in which artisans receive a fair price for their work and consumers have access to unique gifts, accessories and home decor from around the world.

Ten Thousand Villages comprises a global network of social entrepreneurs who strive to improve the livelihood of disadvantaged artisans by building a market for handmade products in North America. We provide a vital link to U.S. consumers for artisan partners who often lack access to markets.

As an importer, wholesaler and retailer, Ten Thousand Villages is a successful nonprofit enterprise. We use sales profits to increase purchases from artisan partners and to expand our distribution channels. In the past fiscal year, we increased purchases from artisans by more than one million dollars.



10,000 Villages Bazaar Sunday, Dec. 6 at COG

With Ten Thousand Villages, artisan partners thrive with the opportunity to build on traditional skills and expand their artistic vision in the creation of new crafts.

Fall Meeting of Presbytery

by Elaine Nordberg

COG Elder Commissioner to Presbytery

The fall meeting of Presbytery was held in Logan this year. Cindy Shogren, a Utah Presbyterian and locally grown candidate for ordination as a Presbyterian minister, conducted the worship service that also featured the Logan Bell Choir. Later in the meeting Cindy was approved for ordination, now serving in Mt. Pleasant.

Presbyterian Youth Triennium is coming up July 20-24, 2010, again at Purdue University. The format is changing somewhat from previous years in order to allow more young people to participate. We will again send a delegation from the Presbytery of Utah, but congregations will be able to send more young people, if they desire to do so.

In other business, the New Beginnings Church was dissolved, having conducted its final worship service on September 27. The church is evaluating the current Synod staffing model and possible alternative models for consideration. From COG, Dave Adamson was elected to the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry, and Tom Keene continues to serve on the Executive Presbyter Search Committee.

Our Church Community

Session Notes (Meeting of November 17)

by Jane Cooper
Elder


1. Alpha Program: Session Elders who have been leading break-out groups during the Sunday morning Alpha classes shared their observations about the program. Attendance is good and participants seem to enjoy the videos and small group discussions. There is a sense of connectedness and active participation in the discussions.
2. Pastor Search Update: The Church Information Form (CIF) approved by Presbytery has been approved by the PC(USA) Church Leadership Connection (CLC) and is now active in their system. Applicants for the Installed Pastor's position at COG may now submit Pastor Information Forms (PIFs), and our Pastor Nominating Committee can begin to consider the applications they receive.
3. Revised Building Use Policy: A Session team of Chuck Stolfa, Alwyn VanderWalt and Jane Cooper has been working to revise COG's Building Use Policy, which was approved by Session at the November 17th Session meeting. This updated policy will provide office staff with an effective way to prioritize and manage requests to use our gym and other areas of the church and also contains updated guidelines for suggested donations to offset maintenance costs from groups using the building.
4. Treasurer's Report & Stewardship Update: Tim Fluetsch reported that pledges in October are a little off pace for this time period, however a catch-up usually happens in December. Session hopes to receive some additional pledges for the coming year before finalizing the 2010 budget. Pledges total about \$296,000 at this time. Tim will continue to contact members of the congregation to follow up with those who have not yet submitted an Estimate of Giving. Tim Fluetsch and Dede Carpenter will coordinate planning for a "Mission Tent" in the gym to suggest mission giving opportunities during the Birthday Party for Jesus on December 20th.
5. Children & Youth Ministry/Session Partnership: Session discussed ideas and possibilities for forming stronger connections between the Elders and the children's and youth Sunday School classes/teaching teams. Further discussion of a workable plan to accomplish this will continue at the December Session meeting.
6. Youth Area Leader Job Description: Session approved the job description for the Youth Area Leader we are hoping to hire in 2010, assuming an approved budget that permits us to do so. This position is an investment in the future of our church and our youth, and Session encourages members of the congregation to support funding this staff position through their commitment to giving.

7. Employee Annual Reviews: Session will be implementing annual reviews for all paid staff and the Pastor before the end of the year. Members of the congregation will be randomly selected to give feedback on the Pastor's performance.

8. New Member: Session met with new member candidate Kathy Jones on November 15, 2009 and voted to receive her into active membership at Community of Grace. On Sunday, November 22nd the congregation will be able to meet her at both services and welcome her into our church family.

October Financial Update

by Tim Fluetsch
Treasurer

2009 Income & Expenses	 Financial Update	
	Year To Date	Current to 10-31-2009 Budget Year To Date
<u>Income</u>		
Pledges	\$247,173	\$280,330
Other	\$30,178	\$41,000
Total Income	\$277,351	\$321,330
<u>Expenses</u>		
Personnel	\$162,643	\$155,295
Outreach & Mission	\$15,574	\$35,050
Operations	\$100,689	\$100,757
Children & Youth	\$4,623	\$7,375
Adult & Family	\$3,126	\$4,292
Worship	\$1,762	\$2,917
Total Expenses	\$288,416	\$305,686
Surplus (Deficit)	(\$11,066)	\$15,644

Stewardship Update

by Tim Fluetsch
Treasurer

As of November 18 we received 94 pledges totaling \$297,560. This recession year some of our families have had to cut back their giving due to economic or other conditions. Some other families have relocated (and this is having a real impact on our 2010 budget). That said, the 94 pledges received represent an increase of \$27,846 above the giving by the same families in 2009.

We still hope and expect to receive pledges from a few remaining families before Session finalizes the 2010 budget. If you wish to make a pledge, please contact me at timfluetsch@xmission.com or 801-733-6111 or deposit a pledge card in the worship offering plate on Sunday.

The 2010 budget will be very tight. The reduction in the number of pledges and our relocated families will have a material impact on next year's budget. To add to this impact, in 2009 we had a pastor for only 8 months, where we expect to have a pastor throughout the year in 2010.

Again, thank you for blessing our community with your financial support.

Presbyterian Links

Here are some helpful links for those who are interested in our denomination's work at the national level:

Home Page, PCUSA (www.pcusa.org)

Presbyterian 101 [Facts about Presbyterians] (www.pcusa.org/101)

Expressing Our Faith: National and International Service

(www.pcusa.org/navigation/mission.htm)

What Presbyterians Believe (www.pcusa.org/catech/studycat.htm)

Church Officers

Board of Deacons

Deacons Moderator: Lisa Wiscomb

Class of 2010

Debbie Bybee
Denise Harris
Brooke Holyoak
Tom Keene
Bonnie Sackett

Class of 2011

Kim Beaslin
Barb Gentry
Elaine Nordberg
Linda Page
Lisa Wiscomb

Class of 2012

Erica Adamson
Scott Adamson
Sherry Britt
Wes Starkenburg
Keith West

Session

Moderator: Rev. Bill McGuinness

Clerk: Jane Cooper

Treasurer: Tim Fluetsch

Class of 2010

Class of 2011

Class of 2012

Pat Holmes
Chuck Stolfa

Kelly Harris
Debbie Colt

Jane Cooper
Alwyn Vanderwalt