



THE PILGRIMAGE HERALD

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December 24, 2006

No. 39

Dear Friends,

There is an Epiphany carol in Hymns of Truth and Light I'd not known before we selected that hymn book. I was attracted to it the more when I read the note included with it. It was written by a Harvard University student named Harry Farrington in 1910. The note indicates that Farrington wanted "to give modern expression in a skeptical age to the classic Christian faith in Christ." The first verse also contains the hymn's title and is as follows.

"I know not how that Bethlehem's babe could in the God-head be; I only know the manger child has brought God's life to me."

Sometimes a very simple expression of a basic tenet of faith is strikingly profound. Personally I started out in my faith journey with uncomplicated beliefs like the one above. I've moved through the rarified air of academe in my studies seeking a rational foundation for my faith. I've loved that leg of my pilgrimage, too, and I continue in pursuit of it today like some "hound of heaven." Almost all my travels have had a theme. In seminars and self-planned journeys' I've been focused on visiting holy places where people called holy have come up close to a loving divine presence, places where holiness lingers enticingly, almost tangibly.

In my relentless quest I've sometimes found a space I call sacred within myself which makes sense of my journey and the mission which flows of necessity from it. I often, daily in fact, return to affirming the gift of faith in terms something like, "...I only know that the manger child has brought God's life to me."

More than thirty years ago Kathy and I had the thought of starting a family Christmas Eve pageant which would be a simple rendering of the story of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. The first year the service attracted not many people more than the actors and their parents. Gracefully the pageant has become much bigger than that. Grace often enlists persistence in order to manifest itself.

In the years since that simple Gospel story portrayal began I've each year found in the sanctuary of The Church of the Pilgrimage an uncanny sense that Christ has not stopped, and will not stop, being born. I'm sure that I'll be present at the ongoing birth of holy love again this Christmas Eve when the Sears family journeys down Bethlehem's aisle to the platform at the front of the sanctuary where, for a brief shining moment, a heavenly light stands still over the manger child. Dressed up little kids will be there as shepherds, wise men, lambs and sheep. Others will for a moment, at least, be angels. Some will carry aluminum foil covered stars which will wondrously catch and reflect holy light, if you look for it.

Sometimes the divine is best apprehended in the simplest ways. Simply put, may Christ be born in us again and again.

I, along with Kathy and Heather and Shellie send you our love at Christmas.

Love,

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SHHHH...IT'S A SECRET!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The congregation would like to continue our holiday tradition of giving Christmas gifts to our pastors, our secretary, and our sexton. Any contributions you could make would be very much appreciated. Please see Judy Mitchell.



Flowers: Christmas poinsettias are given in memory of relatives, friends, and loved ones. Names are printed on a separate enclosure.

Ushers: Bill and Diane Harting, Susan Healy and Dawn Durmis.

Greeters: Alan, Jane, Haraden and McKenzie Bottomley.

Advent Candle Service: 10am, Glenda, Keith, Carolyn and James Richards. 7pm, Kara, Jeff, Isabelle and Maggie Mallon.

Clerk - Lois Post; Moderator - Steven Triffletti; Treasurer - Jonathan Porter; Collector - Debra Richters;
Music Director - William B. Richter; Secretary - Shellie McCormack; Sexton - Tony Nightingale;
World Mission Emphasis - Heifer Project International; Church Building Telephone - 508-747-1341

On Our Church Calendar

Sun, Dec. 24: Morning Worship 10am, Rev. Gary L. Marks, preaching.

-Christmas Eve Family Service with Living Nativity, 7pm in the sanctuary.

-Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service, 11:30pm in the sanctuary.

Mon, Dec. 25: MERRY CHRISTMAS. Church Office is Closed. Monday Meals of Hospitality in Allerton Hall.

Tue, Dec. 26: Because Christmas falls on Monday the church office will be closed. Happy Boxing Day! Also, December 26th is the beginning of Kwanzaa.

Wed, Dec. 27: Rev. Marks will be in the office, 9:30am. No Evening Prayer. The services will resume on January 3rd, 2007.

Thurs, Dec. 28:

Fri, Dec. 29: Rev. Marks will be in the church office, 9:30am.

Other Groups Meeting at Our Church

Monday: Aerobics, 9:15-10:15am, Allerton Hall; Pilgrim Festival Chorus, 7-10pm, Sanctuary; Brownie Girl Scouts, 4-5:30, Allerton Hall; Junior Girl Scouts, 6-7pm, Great Hall; Brownie Girl Scouts, 5:30-7:15, Stewart Room (every other week).

Tuesday: Brownie Girl Scouts, 3:30-5:30, Stewart Room; Aerobics, 6:30-7:30pm, Allerton Hall.

Wednesday: Aerobics, 9:15-10:15am, Allerton Hall; Cub Scouts-Boy Scouts, 6:30pm-10:00pm, Great Hall; Daisy Girl Scout Troop, 4-5:30pm, Stewart Room (every other week).

Thursday: Aerobics, 6:30-7:30pm, Allerton Hall; Brownie Girls Scouts, 5:30-6:30, Stewart Room; AA, 7-8pm, Great Room.

Friday: Aerobics, 9:15-10:15am, Allerton Hall.

Coming Events:

December 31: Morning Worship, 10:00am

January 1: Happy New Year. The church office will be closed January 1st and January 2nd.

January 6: Epiphany. Medical Screening in the John Robinson Center. Epiphany Dinner and Carol Sing, 5:30-6:30pm in Allerton Hall (see "Missions/Outreach News")

CHURCH RECORD

In Memoriam

- On December 19, 2006 Rev. Marks conducted a memorial service for Jennette McKay in the sanctuary. Jennette had been a member of The Church of the Pilgrimage for many years. Our sympathies are extended to her family and friends.
- Our sympathies are extended to Sheldon Peavey whose brother Keith died last week.

Baptism

- On December 17, 2006 Blayke Elizabeth Burns, Bowen Grace Burns, daughter of Craig and Susanna Terrell Burns and Jack Read Burns, son of Putnam Read Burns Jr. and Jennifer Dranov Burns, were baptized during the morning worship service.

Pilgrimage Herald

There will be no Pilgrimage Herald for December 31, 2006. The next issue will be for the week of January 7th.

Christmas Eve Pageant Information

All children participating in the Christmas Pageant need to come to church at 6:30pm on Sunday, December 24th to prepare for the 7:00pm Family Worship Service.

Please contact the Church Office if you know of someone hospitalized or in need of pastoral care.

Confirmation News:

All Confirmands need to be at the church at 6:30pm on Sunday, Dec. 24th to prepare for the 7pm Christmas Eve Service. Confirmands and Mentors—our next Confirmation meeting will be Sunday, January 7th from 11:45-1:15pm.

Junior High Young People Wanted!

Junior High Fellowship meets the first and third Sundays of the month from 4-5:30pm. Our next meeting will be Sunday, January 7th. We welcome all 6th, 7th, and 8th graders to come and enjoy creative activities, lively discussion, and a tasty snack. Share the good news about Junior High Fellowship and bring a friend!

Senior High Fellowship News

Our next meeting will be January 28th at 4:00pm. This event will include creative shopping and a culinary adventure. Intrigued? We hope you'll join us in January, and bring a friend!

Gift Idea

The gift of a hymnal dedication is a unique honor. Please consider the gift of a dedication or the purchase of a new hymnal for Christmas. For the donation of \$25 to the church, a bookplate in your name will be affixed to a hymnal. A list of new dedications will be published in the bulletin on Christmas Sunday, December 24. A small number of uncirculated hymnals remain for purchase, also \$25. Call the office or Bill Harting (508-746-4097) for more information.

Theological Discussion Group

Interest has been shown in a theological discussion group. The group would address questions and issues appropriate to the spiritual life and ministry in progressive churches. The group would meet at least on a monthly basis. Gary is willing to organize The group and share in its leadership. Please call the church office or speak to Gary to indicate your interest.

Notes—

Thanks to John Blomberg and Eugene DiFrancesco for producing a CD recording of the "Pilgrim Canticle" copies of which will be on sale after worship.

We thank the Verdugo family, Pedro, Megan and Gracie for conducting the Advent Candle Service on December 17, 2006.

We thank Bill Harting for making the crosses we present to the children at the time of their baptism. We are blessed to have as many baptisms as we do and that keeps Bill busy! Thank you, Bill!

We thank Paul and Rosalee Sinn for producing such beautiful and reflective Advent/Christmas bulletins this year. They have greatly enhanced our worship experiences.

It was wonderful to see great numbers of Christmas gifts brought forward on December 17th during morning worship. The toys will make many children happy on Christmas. As a matter of fact, when the toys were being delivered, Meg Bross had met a mother who was hoping to give her child a sled this Christmas. When the woman saw the wonderful green sled that had been donated she was overjoyed. The toys are being distributed through the Old Colony Memorial Fund for Families in Need.

Rev. Marks conducted a worship service at the Newfield House on December 12, 2006.

The Women's Fellowship thanks all who purchased baked goods during the Coffee Hour on December 17th.

We have learned that Cliff and Laura Sampson are celebrating 62 years of marriage this past week. We extend to them our hearty congratulations.

MISSIONS & OUTREACH NEWS

Save the Date: The Missions and Outreach Epiphany Dinner and Carol Sing for the congregation will take place on Saturday, January 7 2007 from 5:30pm-6:30pm. We ask everyone to bring a bag of non-perishables for the Plymouth Area Food Warehouse. The children will march and place our collection under the tree in Allerton Hall. Please sign up for this event during the coffee hour.

The Plymouth Food Warehouse: The Plymouth Area Food Warehouse, now in a new location at 14 Apollo 11 Drive (the 2nd left after Plymouth Fitness in the Industrial Park) relies on food drives and other donations to keep its shelves stocked. We continue to collect non-perishables each week. The following items are needed: canned fruit, baby food (with current dates), ketchup, relish, mustard, soups, coffee, tea, crackers, cereal, juice, peanut butter, jelly, pasta and sauce, and canned tuna and chicken and ham. With each gift we are helping "Our Neighbors in Need."

UCC Equal Exchange Coffee

You are probably aware that fair trade Equal Exchange organic coffee has been served at coffee hour following the service since October. Now you can purchase organic coffee and hot cocoa for home use and gift giving following the service today. Prices are exceptional. This is a project of the Missions Committee and the United Church of Christ. Enjoy!

Dishes Returned and Thank You

If you have made a meal for somebody through the meals program, you can find your dishes in a box on the window sill in Alleton Hall near the jelly jar return box. And a very heartfelt thank you to all who are making this program possible. It means so much to those who have been helped by it. It is an important ministry for us all. If you would like to join the ranks of the meal makers, it is never too late. Call Jenny Healy (508) 747-7168 and we'll add you to the list.

Stewardship Moment for Dec. 24, 2006

At this time of year we are often thinking about gifts: gifts for our children, grandchildren, parents, siblings, nieces and nephews, friends and so on. We remember the Three Wisemen bringing gifts to the Christ Child. We know Santa quietly brings gifts to "good" little boys and girls, and to some of us who are not so little! It's also the time of year we think about our goals and resolutions for next year.

We have this time to think about the gifts we receive from the church, not just the spiritual growth, the wonderful services and music, but the friendship, the caring and the many things people in our church community do for us and others. We have so many things to be thankful for. This is the time to think of what gift we can give the church. Try, once, putting the church at the top of your giving list and you'll be surprised at how blessed you will be. At this Christmas season, why not remember your church with a gift that will keep this community growing. Think of it as a gift to your faith community out of gratitude for the very greatest gift we all have been given.

Merry Christmas, and God bless us everyone!
Your Stewardship Committee

The Missions and Outreach Committee

Cordially invites everyone to come for dinner and a celebration of Epiphany on Saturday, January 6, 2007 5:30-7:30pm in Allerton Hall

Each family should bring one bag of non-perishables for the Plymouth Area Food Warehouse

PROGRAM

5:30 pm Craft for Children
5:45pm Puppets with Sheldon Peavey
6:00pm Dinner
6:45 Children's March
7-7:30pm Carol Sing led by Rev. Heather

Please sign up for this event in Allerton Hall during the coffee hour.