
THE PILGRIMAGE HERALD

THE CHURCH OF THE PILGRIMAGE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST – CONGREGATIONAL
8 TOWN SQUARE, PLYMOUTH,
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Office Hours: Mon-Fri 8:30am-4:00pm

December 20, 2009

Dear Friends:

It is hard for me to believe that Christmas is so soon to be here. The Advent season somehow seems shorter every year. This is one of those years when the first Sunday in Advent followed just after Thanksgiving and that gives a rushed feel to the onset of the season, or at least it does for me.

We have, of course, had an eventful year during 2009. The year has seen many changes, the most dramatic one having been a reduction in our staff. It has felt very different being the sole pastor of the church. It is the first time that has happened in my long tenure here, except for periods of time between associate pastors. We are making things work, though, and that has been made possible by the involvement of energized lay leaders in various aspects of the church's life, including worship.

This is that special time of year when we think about the meaning of our faith centered around the birth of Christ in Bethlehem those many centuries ago. I know that it has become the expectation of ministers to rue the loss of the true meaning of Christmas in our society, indeed in our world. Yet, I've tired a little of fulfilling that expectation. I have also tired of saying "Happy Holidays" and I intentionally reply to that greeting with a heart-felt "Merry Christmas." No matter how the society and culture has watered down the central events of our faith and made them into a kind of self-celebrating consumerism, it doesn't have to be that way within the tradition and customs of our own biblical faith. I fully believe that the world needs our untiring witness to the true meaning of Christmas which still has the power to bring the redemptive vision of God's love to a world which is cascading toward ever increasing loss of purpose and meaning.

There is an old phrase about adhering to Christmas as the celebration of God's gift of Christ which I have always liked. It is, "keep Christmas." That means that we are invited to "keep" the Christmas faith for what it is and allow its power of love to sustain us in all times, good or ill.

It is my Christmas prayer that we as a community of faith, as families and individuals may truly "keep Christmas" so that we are enlightened by its redemptive power and thereby keep the light of hope glowing amid the darkness of the world. The darkness can never put out the light of Christ's birth.

With that, I wish you all a blessed Christmas.

Love,

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Moderator – Allen Hoyt; Treasurer – Elizabeth Hughes Campbell; Clerk – Lois Post; Collector – Tom Mudgett;
Music Director – Kelley DePasqua; Organist – Michael Eaton; Office Manager – Shellie Souza;
World Mission Emphasis – Heifer Project International; Church Building Telephone – 508-747-1341

On Our Calendar

Dec 20-Fourth Sunday of Advent: Morning worship 10:00am, Rev. Gary L. Marks preaching. The children will remain in worship today. There will be a special collection taken for the UCC Christmas Fund. Christmas Pageant rehearsal following worship. The Cherub Choir and Junior Choir will rehearse. The Pilgrim Festival Chorus sponsored Messiah Sing in the sanctuary at 4pm.

Dec 21: Rev. Marks will be in the office at 9:30am. Shellie is taking a vacation day. Monday Meals of Hospitality in Allerton Hall, 11am.

Dec 22: Rev. Marks will be in the office at 9:30am. There will be no Advisory Board meeting tonight.

Dec 23: Rev. Marks will be in the office at 9:00am. NO Choir Rehearsal.

Dec 24: Christmas Eve (The Church Office will be closed, but Gary will be in the office early on that day). Christmas Eve Family Service with Living Nativity, 7pm. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with Lessons and Carols and Communion, 11:30pm in the sanctuary.

Dec 25: Christmas Day (The Church Office will be closed). The Meals for Hospitality will be providing a turkey dinner for those who have no place else to go.

Dec 27: Morning worship at 10:00am, Rev. Gary L. Marks preaching

Dec 28: Shellie is taking a vacation day.

Dec 31-New Year's Eve: The church office will be closed.

Jan 1: Happy New Year!

CHURCH RECORD

Hospitalized: Judy Coutts is recuperating at home after a long stay at The Jordan Hospital. In fact, she was in worship on December 13th.

NOTES

There will not be an issue of the Herald for December 27th and January 3rd because of the holiday schedule.

Christmas Bonuses: It's a secret! As in years past, the Board of Trustees will be collecting your contributions to our salaried staff's (Sr. Pastor and Office Manager's) Christmas Bonuses. On 12/20 please see Verna Ross-Hoyt. Thanks!

We thank **Ryan, Cecilia and Patrick Daily** for leading the Advent Candle Service on December 13th.

We also thank **Peter Causton** for being worship leader on December 13th.

In January **Rev. Marks will be offering a course on the nature and makeup of the Bible.** The course will be a very basic introduction to the Bible. It will begin on January 17, 2010. The classes will be one hour in length and they will be held in the Robinson Center. If you are interested in such a course, please let Gary know or call the office.

We congratulate and send our best wishes and prayers to **Sydney Rowland** who celebrated her 104th birthday on December 9, 2009! Sydney resides at Stafford Hill. Gary visited her on her birthday and brought greetings from the church she loves so much.

A note from Gary: In the last edition of The Herald you may have read an update on our Monday Meals of Hospitality outreach program. It was an excellent article and it touched me deeply. I usually go to those meals and often have lunch there. It is a moving experience to be among needy people and the wonderful workers in the kitchen as they truly enjoy the pleasure of one another's company around a warm and nutritious meal. The volunteers have my abiding respect! They are dedicated people, and cheerfully so, as in quiet ways they carry out the vision of faith given to us by Jesus in The Sermon on the Mount. I love you all! God Bless you!

The rather hastily planned **toy drive** this year was nonetheless a success. Many new toys were brought into the sanctuary by children of our church school in an impressive procession during the service of worship on December 13th. The toys will be most welcome to those who distribute them since reports are that such gifts are in short supply this year. They will be especially welcome by those kids who otherwise would have, in any, gifts on Christmas. We thank all who donated the toys!

We are experimenting with placing our **“Welcome and Announcements”** segment of our service at the beginning of the order just after the prelude. That arrangement seems to have met with general approval on the previous two Sundays. It helps with the integrity, the unfolding and flow of worship. Please be sure that Gary has any notices you have well before the service begins.

We thank **Paul Sinn** for designing and producing the lovely bulletins we’ve been enjoying during Advent. Paul also has provided the readings for bulletin covers. Thank you, Paul!

Attention Senior High Youth! Our next youth group activity (Christmas caroling and party) is scheduled for Sunday, December 20th, from 4-6pm. Please call Joyce at 508-746-1077 by Wednesday, December 16th, if you plan to attend. We need to know who’s coming in order to plan rides between Radius and Second Church.

Christmas Fund Offering

The mission of the Christmas Fund is to provide assistance dollars in situations of critical need, while preserving the dignity of those who receive aid. Gifts to the Christmas Fund will help Veterans of the Cross, who dedicated their lives to the ministry of the church in their years of active service. Gifts to the Christmas Fund provide resources for the Emergency Fund, which offers assistance to those who serve the church today. Gifts to the Christmas Fund help provide Pension and Health Premium Supplementation to lower-income

retirees and Christmas “Thank You” Gift Checks to hundreds of annuitants.

Allen Hoyt, Moderator, has received from the Nominating Committee the **nomination of Joen Blanton** to fill an unexpired term on the Membership and Evangelism Committee.. The Moderator has approved the nomination and appoints the nominated to fill the vacancy.

Choir News

December 23rd: No Choir rehearsal.

December 24th: Both the Junior Choir and the Cherub Choir will sing at the 7pm Family Service. The Sanctuary Choir will sing at the 11:30pm service.

December 27th: The Sanctuary Choir will not be singing during this service. Our organist, Michael Eaton will be providing organ music.

Christmas Dinner at The Church of the Pilgrimage

Many thanks to Mike Morway, Chef at T-Bones Restaurant on Main Street, who will be providing us with a complete Turkey dinner—with all the trimmings—for our guests on Christmas Day. We will again offer Christmas dinner to our neighbors in need, or anyone who would just like a pleasant place to be on Christmas.

Mike and Katheryn Runnels (daughter of Terry Runnels) have a four month old son, Brady. We especially appreciate that Mike is taking time to prepare dinners for us on Brady’s first Christmas.

Coffee will be served at 11:00am and a buffet dinner from 11:30-1:30.

Extra pies, desserts or cookies would be so welcome.

Advent and Christmas Worship Services

December 20: Christmas Sunday – Family Worship (no Sunday School), 10am.

December 24: Christmas Eve Family Service with Living Nativity, 7pm

December 24: Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols with Communion, 11:30pm.

December 27: Regular Worship and Sunday School, 10am.



Taken from the blessing tree displayed in November:

“We have been blessed with our first grandson”

“Al teaching me to drum”

“The love of this congregation on my journey”

“I am grateful for Jenny Healy”

“I am thankful for the awe inspiring beauty of our New England”

“My blessing was to find this wonderful church which is now a very special part of our life.”

“My kitty”

“Jesus’ sacrifice”

“I am thankful for my family”

“Thank you for all blessings...the song of birds, the beautiful flowers and more including life itself.”

“Blessing of the devotion and health of the hard work everyone is doing to sustain and regain the financial health of this church.”

“The light.”

“I am blessed to have this church. I have been a member for over 70 years. It means everything to me.”



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SUNDAY WORSHIP – 10:00 AM
CHILDCARE AVAILABLE



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