



celebration News

Bradenton/Sarasota Community of Christ

December, 2008

Volume 19 - Issue No. 8

Love ... 1 Corinthians chapter 13 tells us that speaking in tongues, the gift of prophecy, having faith to move mountains, giving all our possessions to the poor, and offering ourselves as martyrs are considered worthless without **love**. We must have faith, hope, and **love**, and the greatest of these is **love**.

If the **love** of Jesus has made a difference in our lives, how can we keep from sharing that **love** with others? When the Holy Spirit stirs within us, how can we keep from sharing the message of God's **love**? We are called to be a people of faith, hope and **love** in a world of need.

Our congregation has extended God's **love** to people in the community through **Our Father's Cupboard**. It is important that we strive day by day to show God's **love** to one another. Remember that no part of the church is more important, and the greatest commandment is to **love** God with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves.

During this advent season, may we allow the **love** of Jesus to be born in us again. May we be filled with faith, hope, and **love** as we celebrate and offer thanks to God for the gift of his son, Jesus.

Charyn Walker, Outreach Pastor



The honor of your presence is requested at

THE ANNUAL

CHILDREN'S

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Children from the nursery class all the way up to the youth from the senior high class will present a program that is sure to delight.

Sunday, the twenty-first of December

Two thousand and eight at 9:45 am

*at the Bradenton/Sarasota
Community of Christ's Sanctuary.*

Refreshments will follow in the Fellowship Hall.

CHRISTMAS EVE



A joyous service of celebration will be held on **Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24. Starting at 6:30 PM** Christmas carols will be sung and scriptures explored as we wait with anticipation the birth of our Savior. Ruth, David, Moses, Noah, Jonah, and Sara are some of the Biblical visitors who will share their stories with us. Join us for the worship service and a time of fellowship following the service.

"O Come, All Ye Faithful". During the season of Advent, preparation is made to welcome the birth of God's son, Jesus. The word Advent is a Latin word meaning "coming." The last Sunday in November was the first Sunday of Advent, and the theme was centered around LOVE. Each Sunday we will light a candle in the Advent wreath representing Love, Peace, Hope, and Joy.

The following opportunities will help you in your spiritual preparation for the celebration of the birth of Christ.

December 7 is the second Sunday of Advent, and the theme is centered around PEACE. We long for peace for ourselves and for our world. Priest **Don Fant** will bring the message on *The Lord Will Come*, and Elder **Elaine Gregg** will preside over this Communion Service.



The theme for the third Sunday of Advent is *Make Straight the Way of the Lord*. HOPE, the topic of emphasis, will be explored as the lesson from the book of John tells us who Jesus really is. He is not only a carpenter, but is creator of the whole universe. Jesus is life and light and so much more. Priest **Ginger Robertson** and Elder **Jim Deering** will present the lesson on December 14.

He Will Be Called the Son of God. The angel Gabriel brought this message to Mary so many years ago. We will celebrate with JOY on December 21 as the fourth Advent candle is lit. Evangelist **Bob Slasor** will bring the Christmas message, and Priest **Heather Devine** will preside.

On December 28, the first Sunday after Christmas, Priest **Scott Cramer** and Elder **Charyn Walker** will share their ministry on the theme *God Sent the Son*. God sent Jesus, and with his coming, codes of behavior were overthrown. Jesus came to redeem God's children.

The Prayer and Praise services on Wednesday evening will be led by Evangelist **Bob Slasor** and Elder **Larry Bell** in an informal service of music, prayer, and praise. A special Christmas Eve service will be held on Wednesday, December 24. Christmas carols will be sung, and we will hear from Biblical characters as they bring ornaments to decorate the tree.

"O Come, All Ye Faithful" and worship with us in the month of December.

Jo Fenn-Martin, Worship Coordinator

Financial Update

Our annual budget is \$66,600. Our contributions through October should have been \$55,278. We are short \$10,360. Our income through October is \$44,918. Expenses for the same period are \$45,202. The net balance is a negative \$284.

Our contributions are appreciated and go toward supporting our congregation and making it possible for outreach projects. May you be blessed in your efforts to contribute to these programs.

Bob Beers, Congregational Financial Officer



Youth Group

The Bradenton/Sarasota Youth Group will be going to Orlando on December 27th to visit the Holy Land Experience. The purpose of this event is to give them an opportunity to learn about the Old Testament, the history of God's chosen people, and the promise of salvation God told Abraham about in Genesis 12:1-3. The promise will be witnessed by the youth in a live performance just prior to leaving the Holy Land experience to head back home.

To prepare for this event both the senior high and junior high Sunday school classes will be studying the *Tabernacle* and how it leads to Jesus' coming and being the final sacrifice. Please pray for our youth that the Lord will greatly bless them.

Charyn and Charlie Walker

Luke 2:14 says "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, PEACE; good will to men."

The playing of Christmas songs has begun. I love to hear that music. There is something about Christmas songs that makes me happy. Maybe it is

because they always bring back such wonderful memories. I talked with my Mom and Dad last week, and they already had some snow in Ohio. It has been an adjustment for me when we have been in Florida for Christmas, because I grew up with white, snowy Christmases. Jim always reminds me that there was no snow at the first Christmas, but it is one of the ways I feel the spirit of the season.

I think I love the music at this time of year so much, because the messages bring comfort, and above all, a sense of *peace*. One of my best memories of Christmas was the year we decided to have a live manger scene in Kirtland around the Temple during the Christmas Eve service. The cast was made up of two to three people for each part so they could take turns and get out of the cold to warm up. I will never forget that night. I can see it in my mind's eye. Picture it -- the darkness of the evening brightened only by the moonlight and a few street lamps; a wooden manger with fresh hay, a creche, live goats and sheep, three wise men, shepherds, Joseph, Mary and a baby Jesus.

We had just finished the service inside the Temple, and the bell began to ring. We looked out the windows, and a light snow had begun to fall gently upon the ground. I get chills just remembering the perfectness of that scene. We stood and sang and soaked up the beauty and the realization of what we were celebrating. Jesus Christ was born!! I can feel the sense of *peace* that was present with us that night. I will never forget it.

I guess I love Christmas songs the way I do, because they speak of all the good things. They make people happy, and everyone is in the mood to be just a little bit kinder to each other. The Lord sent us His Son that we might have *peace* on earth and good will toward men. Let us take the good will and uplifting spirit that we find in the music and songs of Christmas and try to make it last all year long is my prayer. In Christ's love,

Carolyn Deering, Pastoral Care Pastor

Children's Responses:

A request was sent out to all our children to share what Christmas means to them or something that their family likes to do at Christmas time. The responses are as follows.

Dani Cosgrove: "Christmas n' toys go together like bread and butter." The holiday tradition her family enjoys is "drinking hot chocolate."

Cole Van Beek: "It is a time to play and shout because it is Christmas and because it is Jesus' birthday."

Zoe Van Beek: "Christmas means Jesus' birthday and family time and fun together."



Joy sounds like the belly laugh of a baby. It looks like a toddler being licked by a puppy. And it feels like something you can not keep inside! *Joy* to the world - repeat the sounding *joy* - and joyful and triumphant are all expressions of the *joy* we feel at this time of

year and are found in many of our favorite Christmas songs.

Some might make the argument that with all that is going on in our world today, it is difficult to feel *joy*. Maybe difficult, but not impossible! We are still a very blessed people. It is the same as it has always been. When times are most challenging, we find ever great *joy* in the comfort of the

Christ child's love. When all seems dark, we find the most comfort and *joy* in the light in each other's eyes. When we are most overcome with burdens, we fully find *joy* in the presence of friends and family.

As we embark on our own spiritual journey with Joseph and Mary this season; let us remember the simple *joys* that line our path. Take special delight in the companionship of those you love and the gift of God's great love to each of us this Christmas. Have *joy*!!

Jim Deering, Administrative Pastor

Charyn Walker, center, is shown with her sister and brother-in-law, Marilyn and Dale Lick, who came from Tallahassee to share in her ordination service. Charyn was ordained to the office of Elder on November 2nd.



An Opportunity

Let's make 2009 The Year of the Steward! Many folks in all walks of life are finding themselves stretched as they try to make it from paycheck to paycheck. Even as we struggle with the economic woes that seem to have rested upon our society, we must acknowledge the abundant of blessings that have been poured out upon us. We have been called to generosity:

Faithful disciples respond to an increasing awareness of the abundant generosity of God by sharing according to the desires of their hearts; not by commandment or constraint. Break free of the shackles of conventional culture that mainly promote self-serving interests. Give generously according to your true capacity. Eternal joy and peace await those who grow in the grace of generosity that flows from compassionate hearts without thought of return. Could it be otherwise in the domain of God, who eternally gives all for the sake of creation? Doctrine and Covenants 163:9

The Florida Mission Center is sponsoring the first **GoodSense** budget workshop to be held at the Tampa Congregation on Friday evening and Saturday, **January 16 and 17**. This course along with a 13-week course of Dave Ramsey's *Financial Peace University* will provide savvy advice for how to get out of debt, stay out of debt, and manage your money (rather than your money managing you!). This is a great opportunity. If you are interested, contact the Mission Center office for more information. Call (800.900.5070) or check their website at cofchristfmc.org.



HOPE

The Four Candles burned slowly.

Their ambiance was so soft you could hear them speak...

The first candle said, "I Am Peace, but these days, nobody wants to keep me lit." Then Peace's flame slowly diminishes and goes out completely.

The second candle says, "I Am Faith, but these days, I am no longer indispensable." Then Faith's flame slowly diminishes and goes out completely.

Sadly the third candle spoke, "I Am Love, and I haven't the strength to stay lit any longer. People put me aside and don't understand my importance. They even forget to love those who are nearest to them." And waiting no longer, Love goes out completely.

Suddenly...A child enters the room and sees the three candles no longer burning. The child begins to cry, "Why are you not burning? You are supposed to stay lit until the end."

Then the Fourth Candle spoke gently to the child, "Don't be afraid, for I am **Hope**, and while I still burn, we can re-light the other candles."

With shining eyes the child took the Candle of **Hope** and lit the other three candles.

Never let the Flame of **Hope** go out of your life. With **Hope**, no matter how bad things look and are...Peace, Faith and Love can shine brightly in our lives.

Author Unknown,

Submitted by **Stuart Skene**, Stewardship Pastor

Keeping Informed

Have you found yourself wondering....

- Is there a pancake breakfast this coming Sunday?
- What time does the Hanging of the Greens start?
- When is the next training session at Deerhaven?
- What was I going to remember from Bob's sermon last Sunday?

The answers to those questions and many more can be found on the congregation's website. There you will find the *Celebration News*, past bulletins, and links to the websites for the Mission Center and the World Church. You can also listen to past sermons.

If you are having trouble remembering to check the website often for the latest information, perhaps putting a shortcut on your desk top would be a good reminder. To make it easier to get to the website, follow these instructions to set up a shortcut on your desk top:

- Right click on your desk top
- Select **new**
- Select **shortcut**
- Type **www.cofchristbradenton.com** in the item box
- Click **next**
- Enter the name for the shortcut
(example: church's website)
- Click **finish**

Once the shortcut is set up, you are only a click away from being connected to the current and prior information about the congregation.



It is hoped that you will start using the website as a means of being instantly informed. In the future a calendar with activities and events for the month will be added to the website and possibly pictures of activities and people. The desire is to keep our church family and friends "in the loop" of what is going on in the Bradenton/Sarasota congregation. We are still endeavoring to enter into the 21st century with its convenience of information at your fingertips. If you have ideas for the website, please contact **Elaine Gregg** or **Jason Van Beek**.



The Future Beckons

What does it mean to be a "chosen people of God?" A light shining in the darkness? A source of healing ministry of body, mind and spirit for all who come into our midst? A people alive in the Spirit of Jesus who find joy and peace in the midst of a troubled world? A people who invite all to come and discover and experience that joy and peace that Christ promises and gives so freely? O yes, that and much more. But how do we become a "chosen people" in more than theory?

Jesus says, *This is the way:*

- ★ By loving God above *all* else. Loving God with all our heart, mind and strength.
- ★ By praying unceasingly for the needs of the congregation and the world.
- ★ By being open to the Holy Spirit and the change in us that the Spirit seeks to bring.
- ★ By growing spiritually both as individuals and also as a congregation so that we reflect the love and compassion of Christ more and more...so that we can live the Christ-life and not just talk about it.

If ever a New Year beckoned us to "crossover" into the spiritual "promised land", 2009 certainly does. With a world hurdling toward who knows what, God needs a people filled with hope...a people who trust God completely to provide all of their needs no matter what... a people who do not fear, do not worry about what might happen but stand prepared and ready to be the voice of hope, the hands of healing, the presence of spiritual power no matter what happens in the world around them.

The priesthood ministry of the Evangelist in this congregation is to help God grow a spiritual people, a righteous people, and a faithful people. It is the desire of the three evangelists in this congregation, **Glenn Day**, **Karen Palko** and **Bob Slasor** to do just that. Our commitment is to work tirelessly to accomplish that goal in 2009. So we ask you, the congregation, can we make 2009 a year of remarkable growth, spiritually and numerically? Can we experience unity greater than ever before? Brothers and sisters, God needs you and me. The community around the church needs us. We need each other. Can we? Will we? What is your answer?

Bob Slasor, Evangelist



Trying to "pop" the balloon blind-folded isn't easy, but it sure is fun!



Pictures taken by Megan Chlebina

The Youth had a great time at their Lock-In on the weekend of October 24. Thirteen youth and three adults ate, played games, enjoyed music, watched movies, and shared in devotion time.



Those standing are endeavoring to get toothpaste in the cups which are in the mouths of those lying on the floor. The second picture shows that some of the youth missed their mark!

December

- 03 Genevieve Wenzel
- 09 Bob Slasor
- 13 Rosalee Long
- 16 Michael Vaughan
- 22 Jerilyn Gregg-Chlebina
- 22 Jack Wilkins
- 26 Jim Brougner
- 29 Shirley Clow
- 30 Cody Morgan
- 30 Carol Law
- 30 Nancy & Lee Peters (anniv)



January

- 02 Roberta Hamilton
- 02 Lonnie Cooper



DID YOU KNOW ???

◆ **Larry Bell, Scott Cramer, Jim and Carolyn Deering, Jerilyn Gregg-Chlebina, Bona Lee, Karen Palko, Bob Slasor, and Nancy and Stuart Skene** participated at the October Spiritual Growth Retreat held at Deerhaven Retreat Center?

◆ **Pat Benjamin-Bovee, Nanette Dizney, Don and Zee Fant, Karen Palko, Ginger Roberston, and Charyn Walker** attended the Florida Mission Center's Training Conference held at Deerhaven Retreat Center?

◆ "Bells" have been heard in the church?

◆ **Bona Lee** will be traveling by Amtrack to West Palm Beach for Christmas and is looking forward to the four hour train trip (\$24.00)? Beats flying!

◆ **Thanksgiving Dinner** held at the church hosted 48 people who gave thanks while enjoying delicious food and great company?

THE CHRISTMAS Story



And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared... "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."... "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men..." Luke 2:8-10,14



Congratulations to **Karen and Charles Palko!** They are the proud grandparents of grandson Cristian Palko Spiguel born November 21st in Chicago. Pictures are already circulating of newborn Christian.

Our sympathy goes out to **Deena Symonds, Jessie Benjamin, and Joanne Wooderson** at the death of Don Benjamin, father, son, and brother respectively. Services will be held at the church on Thursday, December 4 at 2:00 PM.



Community of Christ
% Elaine Gregg
8075 36th Street Cir E
Sarasota FL 34243-6309

Address Correction Requested



The Advent wreath is a symbol of watchfulness and increasing joy as we anticipate Jesus' birth. The wreath's circular shape symbolizes eternity, or life without end. The candles remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World -- he brought light and life to a dark world. On each of the four Sundays of Advent, we light a new candle. As the light grows, so do our hope and joy.

