

Celebration News

December, 2013, Volume 23 - Issue 7



Nanette Dizney was elected Pastor for 2014 at the November 10th Congregation Conference. See page 2 for information regarding the Pastor Leadership Team.

LESSONS FROM THE ANGELS

To frightened shepherds on the first Christmas Eve, a host of angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). Nineteenth-century minister Charles Kingsley explained how these words tell the meaning of Jesus' birth and give meaning to our lives today.

- **Glory.** "That little babe, lying in the manger among the cattle, was showing the very highest glory of the great God who had made heaven and earth. To stoop, to condescend, to have mercy, to forgive -- that is the highest glory of God."
- **Peace.** "God is not selfish. He sacrificed himself for us. Sacrifice yourselves then for each other! Give up your own pride, our own selfishness, your own interest for each other and you will be ... at peace."
- **Good will.** "God loves you, and he wills to raise you out of this selfish, quarrelsome life of sin, into a loving, brotherly, peaceful life of righteousness. That baby in the manger at Bethlehem is a sign to you and me that God will freely give us that spirit of love if we ask for it."



*The
Christmas
tree reminds
us of the Christ;
its top pointing to
heaven, its light denoting
the Light of the world, and all
the presents beneath it reminding us
that every good gift comes from above.
Thanks
be to
God.*

*Christmas Eve
Worship*



Join us on **December 24** for a **Christmas Eve Worship Service** starting at **6:00 pm**. We will sing carols, laugh with joy, view videos, and praise God as we contemplate the meaning of Christmas. We will join with the angels in repeating, "Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace on earth."

All are invited to come and celebrate. Bring your friends and neighbors to this service of joy.

A Serious Situation

Our financial status is in a serious situation. In plain English we have spent more than we have taken in. Actual Operating Expenses as of the end of November were \$46,141 with an income of \$42,221 which means we are \$3,920 to the negative. If we are going to break even for 2013, we need to reduce



December's expenses and increase our December income. We have addressed the expense part by reducing our expenses by 73% from last year, however, our November income was down 47%

from the previous year. It is up to all of us to make up for the shortfall. May we all share the blessings that God has given us that others will know of his love.

Bob Beers, Congregation Finance Officer

Pastor Leadership Team

The **Pastor Leadership Team (PLT)** has been formed for the Bradenton/Sarasota congregation for the 2014 year.

It is as follows:

Invite People to Christ	Glenn Day
Abolish Poverty, End Suffering	Jo Willetts
Pursue Peace on Earth	Heather Devine
Develop Disciples to Serve	Dan Willetts
Experience Congregations in Mission	Melinda Creel
Spiritual Advisor	Bob Slasor
Pastor	Nanette Dizney

Each one of these individuals has committed themselves to helping our congregation live out Christ's mission in our community. They will be forming teams to begin their mission encounter. I hope that, if one of them asks you to serve on their team, you will consider it. Also, if you have a passion in one of the above areas, you can volunteer to go on the journey with them.

The other members of the Leading Congregation in Mission are **Karla Van Beek, Bob Beers, Fay Beers, and Ginger Robertson**. They will be supportive members of the PLT. We are truly looking forward to serving with you next year as we go together to discover Christ's mission for us.

Nanette Dizney, Pastor

Christmas Thoughts and Beyond

The cradle is where it all began. The cross is where salvation was assured. The empty tomb is where victory shouted out with glee, "IT IS FINISHED". In Christ's victory over death, hell, and darkness, the Holy Spirit asks Christ's disciples to consider the following.

Shall we take a defensive stance against the forces of darkness that seek to divide us and immobilize our spiritual power and purpose? Or will we take the offensive by reaching out to the unsaved and inviting them to Christ and our fellowship?

Confront evil with good by not addressing the evil but by demonstrating the righteousness that evil hates. Evil would have you focus on defending your position while goodness would invite the bruised and brokenhearted to God's divine banquet.

Feast on the things of the Holy Spirit and you will starve evil. Gather in spiritual worship with the Holy Spirit and evil will flee. Evil cannot exist with righteousness. If evil cannot overcome the good, it will move on to where it can.

Know where the evil is and witness of Christ's message of peace, joy, love, grace, forgiveness, and salvation. Which message do you think those who are hurting and spiritually hungry will hear, respond to and follow?

You overcome the evil in the world by the power of living in righteousness. A community, a Holy Community, is a light in the darkness. It is the holy GPS to salvation. The hungry, the hurting, the lost and broken sinners will seek the light, because they have experienced the ugliness of darkness. They will grasp the hope the Holy Spirit offers freely to them.

Christ is much more than the story of a little baby in a manger, shepherds hearing and going to see, and wise men on a long voyage. Christmas is the love of God fleshed out in human form sent to save humankind. Praise God for the cross. Praise God for the empty tomb. And now live that praise by daily seeking the presence of the risen Christ who calls us to share the good news of God's call to all to "Come Unto Him."

Bob Slasor, Evangelist

Journey to Bethlehem

Every year, as we approach Christmas, we celebrate the season of Advent. For four weeks we eagerly await the birth of Jesus. We consider the blessings we and the world receive from Jesus' coming: peace, hope, love, and joy.



Advent doesn't celebrate only the upcoming Christmas -- we celebrate the Jesus of yesterday, today, and tomorrow! We are thankful that Christ has come in the past and that we have already experienced him working in our lives. We celebrate that he lives in us today. We reflect on his upcoming arrival at Christmas, and we anticipate the coming kingdom of God he initiated.

With the start of each Advent season we begin a new journey through the stories of Bethlehem and claim God's promises for us today. Join us at our morning worship services in December as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior.

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT - December 1

Pray for Peace

Today we focus on **PEACE**. Christ is the Prince of Peace and has shown his followers the path to peace. He brings us peace now, today, and he promises peace in the future. Advent is a time of preparation, and the idea of preparation means preparing for a journey, preparing for peace, preparing to be peacebuilders, and preparing to receive the gift of peace in Jesus Christ. Deacon **Melinda Creel** and Elder **Dan Willetts** will share their ministry during this Communion/First Sunday of Advent service. There will also be two ordinations on this Sunday.

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT - December 8

Prepare the Way

Today we focus on **HOPE**. Christ is our Living Hope. His birth, life, and resurrection demonstrated that God promises a future of reconciliation for all the creation. He brings us hope now, today and he promises hope in the future. In the 3rd chapter of Matthew, the author describes John the Baptist and his role in introducing Jesus. Elder **Ginger Robertson** will bring the message on this Sunday with Priest **Carolyn Deering** presiding.

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT - December 15

Tell What you Hear and See

Today we focus on **LOVE**. Christ is the Lord of Love. He was the living, human expression of God on Earth. Jesus demonstrated just how generously God loves all of creation. He brings us love now, today and he promises love in the future. The acts of Jesus were ones of compassion and love. The deaf could hear, the blind regained their sight, the lame walked again. Teacher **Nancy Skene** and Ordinand **Al Perrin** will tell us how love was first demonstrated by the faithful John and then by the loving Messiah.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT - December 22

Jesus Is Born

Today we focus on **JOY**. Christ brings joy to the world! He taught his disciples to abide in God's love "so that joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete". It is the bountiful fruit of discipleship! He brings us joy now, today and he promises joy in the future. Priest **Heather Devine** and Evangelist **Karen Palko** will lead us in celebration. Jesus Is Born.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS DAY - December 29

Listen to the Voice

Today we focus on remembering that, as followers of Jesus, we are called to listen to God's voice. On this first Sunday after Christmas, we realize that Joseph and Mary's faith adventure with God is not yet finished. They have been given the responsibility of protecting God's Son. Elders **Ginger Robertson** and **Jim Brougner** will share the stories of how Mary and Joseph continued to be lead by God's voice as they carried out their task.

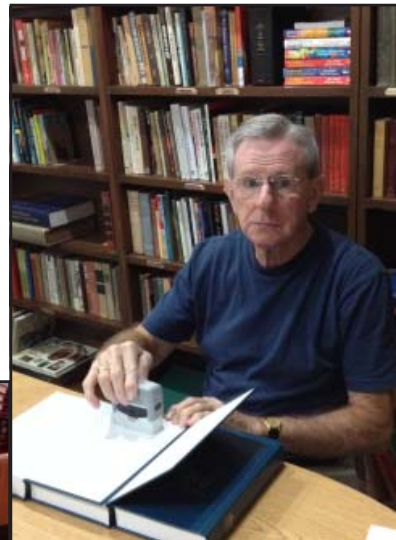
Wednesday night Prayer and Praise services offer opportunities to renew and refresh your relationship with God during this busy season. Take time to attend and see what it can do for your week.

Merry Christmas!

Jo Fenn-Martin for the Worship Team



Our new hymnals, *Community of Christ Sings*, arrived a few weeks ago. Before Thanksgiving, five people gathered at the church and worked quickly to unpack the boxes, stamp all the new hymnals, empty the pews of the many 'old' hymnals, and place the new hymnals in the pews so that we would be able to use them for the First Sunday of Advent. "Thank you" to Bob Beers, Jo Fenn-Martin, Nanette Dizney, Cole Van Beek and Brad Martin.



Looking Forward to Singing

After receiving my copies (yes, it is plural as there are two books) of the musician's *Community of Christ Sings*, I have been going through them, playing the tunes and reading the texts. I will admit right up front that I have not become proficient in the new tunes, but I have heard some beautiful new tunes. I also do not know every word of the hymns, but I have been touched by many of them.

I played and sang through the sections with the headings of God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, and Praise. I then entered the section of Confession and Renewal. I enjoyed singing two favorites in the Centering section, *As the Deer pants for the water* and *Soften My Heart*. I am now in the Lament section of the hymnal. I began playing and reading the words of one particular hymn when I was blessed. I had been wondering what I could do or say to give assurance to loved ones that I have been very concerned about. There before me were the words of assurance that I could pass on to them.

The concerns we have in today's world may be answered in some of our hymns. As we have been concerned about the devastation in the Phillipines, we may gain better understanding in the hymn *The Storm Came to Honduras*. Maybe the hymn *We Calculate Our Giving* will help us become better stewards.

Our new hymnal looks a little different in that there are quite a few texts written in Spanish and French and few in Swahili, Tahitian, Zulu and German. Just imagine how exciting it would be for someone from another country to open our hymnal and see texts in their language! What an outreach tool.

I look forward to learning and singing new hymns. If we can't sing them right away, we can talk them. Our new hymnal, *Community of Christ Sings*, can take us, as a congregation and as individuals, on a new journey of sharing and praising the love of God through song.

Elaine Gregg

P.S. I have been requested by pianists/organists to ask for your patience as we go through the learning process of new hymns, and it may take some of us longer than others!

Photos by Brad Martin

A Special Blessing

Every day of every year has been a blessing for Linda and me; even those days when everything seemed to go awry we were blessed for as we look back, we see where our Loving Lord was at work. One of this years special blessings that we are thankful for is Linda's health and escape from a planned major surgery.

Linda was scheduled to have a five hour operation to remove her stomach and attach her esophagus to her intestine. Linda had lost a lot of weight in less than eight months as hardly any food would stay down. Following the anticipated operation, there was a long recovery period ahead for her. Lisa Palko Spiguel recommended a doctor at the University of Florida to do the surgery. Dr. Ben-David was only 45 minutes into the scheduled long surgery when I was told, (along with Karen Palko who was with me) that the doctor wanted to see us. The doctor told us that the operation was finished as he had found a small band at the entrance of Linda's stomach that was covered with scar tissue. It was fortunate that he even saw it. The band was removed, Linda spent one night in the hospital and then went home. She has been fine ever since.

Linda and I thank God for doctors like Spiguel and Ben-David who use their God given intelligence and highly trained skills to bless so many. We thank God for your prayers as our church family for without them, maybe, just maybe, there would have been unnecessary surgery. And so we give thanks to God for Linda's health, but we especially thank God for being our God and for the peace he brings to our hearts even when things seem to go awry, not because he has to but because he loves us and so we love Him back and give our thanks.

Al Mount



Amy Smeralda, Kayla Smeralda and Jacob Rodriguez pose in front of the bus after making a difference in the life of a family by donating new toys, clothing and food to "Stuff the Bus".

I Am Thankful for...

I am thankful for the birds,
I am thankful for the trees,
I am thankful for the gentle summer breeze.
I am thankful for a job,
I am thankful for my home,
I am thankful for never
having to live alone.
I am thankful for the day,
I am thankful for the night,
I am thankful for the sun's
ever faithful light.
I am thankful every day
For my family and my wife.
I am thankful to God
For giving me my life.

Al Perrin



FL Mission Center's Events

Florida Mission Center has two events scheduled for January, 2014. The first one is **Winter Reunion** which will be held at Deerhaven Retreat Center from Saturday, January 25th through Friday the 31st. The guest ministry will be offered by Barbara and Dick Howard. Worship, classes, and good food and fellowship are always on the schedule. The second event, **Youth Retreat**, will be held at Deerhaven Retreat Center from January 31st through February 2. More information is available on FMC's website www.cofchristfmc.org.

Youth Update

As the year 2013 comes to an end, the youth will be having a **Soup and Dessert Fundraiser on Sunday, December 15th after church**. The money raised will go towards the campership fund. We had a total of six youth attend Junior Camp and one who attended Senior High Camp this summer. In September the youth went to Rock the Universe at Universal Studios in Orlando. Rock the Universe is a Christian Concert event. There was a total of 15 who went. It was a great night of music and fun.

The youth are also continuing to participate in the **Shoe Box Project**. Donations of small personal hygiene products and shoe boxes are always needed. There is a green plastic container in the information center to put your donations in. Many of you have heard about the project, but for those who haven't, we would like to share with you what it is all about. We are collecting personal hygiene items to put into shoe boxes. When we have filled around 20 boxes, we take them to The Family Resource Center in Bradenton. It is a shelter for troubled and runaway teens. We chose to donate our shoe boxes there, because they do not receive the same amount of government funding as some of the larger shelters. This means that they have to raise money and get donations from the community to buy personal hygiene items and clothes. Many of the teens who come to the shelter come with only the clothes on their back. We have been doing this project for a little over three years. The staff at the shelter are always happy to see us and have said that the shoe boxes have been a blessing to the shelter and the teens who receive them. To everyone who donates items for the shoe boxes, thank you. You are a blessing to us.

2013 has been a great year, and we are looking forward to 2014. The youth are beginning to plan what fundraisers and events they will be doing in 2014. We will keep you updated. We look forward to seeing you on **Sunday, December 15th** for our end of the year fundraiser.

Heather Devine, Youth Leader



A collage of pictures taken at the Hanging of the Greens is shown on the left. Seventeen people, representing all age groups, worked together to decorate the sanctuary, narthex, fellowship hall, and the education wing's hallway.

Photos by Amy Smeralda and Brad Martin



Your help is needed to keep the shelves of **Our Father's Cupboard's** stocked. The Food Pantry will be open this month the weekend before Christmas, **Saturday, December 21st**. If you could help out by purchasing food items such as peanut butter, jam, cereal, and powdered milk or

make a monetary donation, it would be greatly appreciated. Monetary donations can be put in your church envelope and marking "Pantry" on the left side. If you donate food items, they can be put in the "red wagon" in the Information Center. Let's make sure the shelves are full so that families will be able to have food during the holiday season.



December

- 03 Genevieve Wenzel
- 07 Daryl Quinn
- 09 Bob Slasor
- 13 Rosalee Long
- 22 Jerilyn Gregg-Chlebina
- 26 Jim Brougher
- 29 Shirley Clow
- 30 Carol Law
- 30 Nancy & Lee Peters (anniv)

January

- 05 Jean Botelho
- 06 Nancy Skene
- 09 Lee Peters
- 19 Lennon Quinn
- 13 Nanette Dizney
- 13 Kaitlyn James
- 17 Heather Quinn
- 19 Patrick James
- 20 Elaine Gregg
- 21 Rebecca Creel
- 21 Heather Devine
- 26 Patti & Larry Bell (anniv)
- 30 Dawn Kolquist

Urgent Notice

If you have changed your address, phone or cell number or your e-mail address, please notify the church recorder, **Elaine Gregg**, by **December 18th**. Current information is needed for World Church records as well as for our 2014 congregational directory.

Whenever any of above information is changed, plus any changes of name or marital status, it is your responsibility to notify the recorder. Information gathered by the recorder for church purposes is confidential.

Come to the Coffee Cafe

Enjoy an evening at the **33rd Street Coffee House** in the Fellowship Hall from **6:30-9:30 pm**. Live acoustic music will be provided by **Carey Chaney** and his musical friends. If you like music, coffee, snacks or good company, this is the place to be this **Saturday, December 7th**.

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

MERRY CHRISTMAS

COME AND
WORSHIP
WITH US.

