

Cross Currents

Newsletter of the Haydenville Congregational Church
December 2010 *Open Hearts & Open Minds & Open Doors*



FROM THE PASTOR

I love decorating for Christmas and I recently went into my basement and stared at the Christmas decorations neatly labeled in boxes and wondered: how soon can I haul this stuff upstairs and start making the house ready for Christmas? While I was down there I saw an Advent calendar from last year. All the little teeny doors had been opened and so there were no big surprises behind each number. But I remember the tiny thrill I had opening the Advent calendar each day last December.

Seeing the Advent calendar made me think about all of us and what we will do during Advent to prepare for the coming of the Christ child. Like me, many of you will decorate your homes or apartments. Some of you will get a fresh new Advent calendar and you will open one of the teeny doors each day and see the picture/surprise waiting for you behind the number. It is hard to hold on to the real meaning of Christmas in a culture where Christmas advertisements, catalogues, music, wrapping paper, cards and so on bombard us when we leave our house from Thanksgiving time (even earlier) until Christmas Day. Those "trappings" of the holiday season have little to do with the real meaning of Advent and Christmas.

It is hard to remember that we are followers of a radical, loving, inclusive Jewish peasant, prophet, mystic who changed the world. Jesus often gets buried under the ribbon, the ornaments and the invitations to holiday gatherings. So I have been thinking...maybe we could reclaim a bit of what Christmas is actually about by being walking Advent Calendars ourselves.

By this I mean, maybe we could get up each day from December 1 through December 25 and find one surprising, loving, generous, Jesus-might-do-this thing to do daily. We could be quiet, sleuth walking Advent Calendars doing something sweet and special like we were the surprise behind the little Advent Calendar door! I rather like the idea. Here are some thoughts about things we could do each day to remind us of the meaning of Christmas and get us in the true spirit of this wonder-filled Christian holy day:

* go downtown with change and dollar bills in your pocket with the sole purpose of giving it all away to street people and street musicians

- * sign up for a shift to ring the Salvation Army bell at the bucket in front of Thorne's in Northampton
- * write thank you cards to people you know appreciating them for being wonderful human beings
- * take bagels with cream cheese and offer them to people standing at bus stops
- * give thick, warm socks to people on the street asking for money
- * call a local school and volunteer to read with or read to children there
- * bring a pie to the fire station and leave it there for the fire-fighters
- * stop a bicycle police officer on the street and thank her/him for doing fine work on our behalf
- * call Cooley Dickinson Hospital and find out if you can bring lollipops or popsicles to the children on the pediatric ward
- * buy a small toy, wrap it and leave it at Safe Passage
- * visit Cooley Dickinson Hospital and give chocolate hearts to random nurses you find on the floors
- * give blood
- * go to downtown Northampton, Holyoke, or Springfield and hand out sandwiches to people asking for money on the street and the street musicians
- * gather any extra hats, scarves, mittens and gloves you might have and leave them in places people in need might find them (bus stations, cot shelters, McDonalds bathrooms, library reading rooms or bathrooms)
- * go to a nursing home and ask if there is anyone who has not been visited in a long time and sit and talk to her/him
- * leave dollar bills in unexpected places....like tucked in the book you return to the library, under a can of soup at the supermarket, in the pocket of a coat you find hanging at church
- * put money in the meter for the next person when you leave a parking space
- * walk down the street and put money in the expired meters where cars are still parked
- * take a thermos of hot cocoa and cups and serve it to the young people hanging out in front of First Churches in Northampton

Have a wonderful time being a walking Advent Calendar! I would love to hear about your adventures!

NOTE FROM MATILDA

Children's Church and Youth and Family Ministries

The Church learned a long time ago that people need a way to get ready to enter or even come close to the mystery of Christmas. The Church set aside four weeks to get ready. Christmas is such a great Mystery that it takes that long to get ready. During this time, we are all on the way to Bethlehem. We are all making the journey. We are all getting ready to enter the Mystery of Christmas. So let's go with the prophets, the Holy Family, the shepherds, the angels, the Magi and all the rest to make the journey that was not just back then. It is also now...

-Jerome Berryman, Godly Play For Winter

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

-Matthew 1:20

ADVENT: A TIME OF DREAMS AND JOURNEYS...

An angel appeared to Mary and told her that she would have a baby. Joseph dreamed of an angel, telling him he should wed Mary, for "what is conceived of her is from the Holy Spirit." Angels visited the wise men in a dream telling them to go home a different way from the stable where they visited the baby Jesus, so as not to reveal to Herod the child's location. Advent is a time of dreams... We know that Advent is a time for children, a time when things they love—magic and music and festivity and color—are in abundance... But it is also a great opportunity for us all to take seriously the stuff of dreams, which are at the center of the stories of Jesus' birth in the Bible, and at the center of what this celebration is all about. An opportunity to take seriously the dreams of children, and our own dreams... Dreams emerge from the depths of sleep. They emerge from the quiet dark of early winter, the time when the light is the sparsest and the earth at its most dormant. The lights, the sound, the festivity of Christmas-time could be seen as a way that we all confront the uncertainty of such a dark time of year, as the ancient pagans, from whom we get the tradition of the solstice, did.

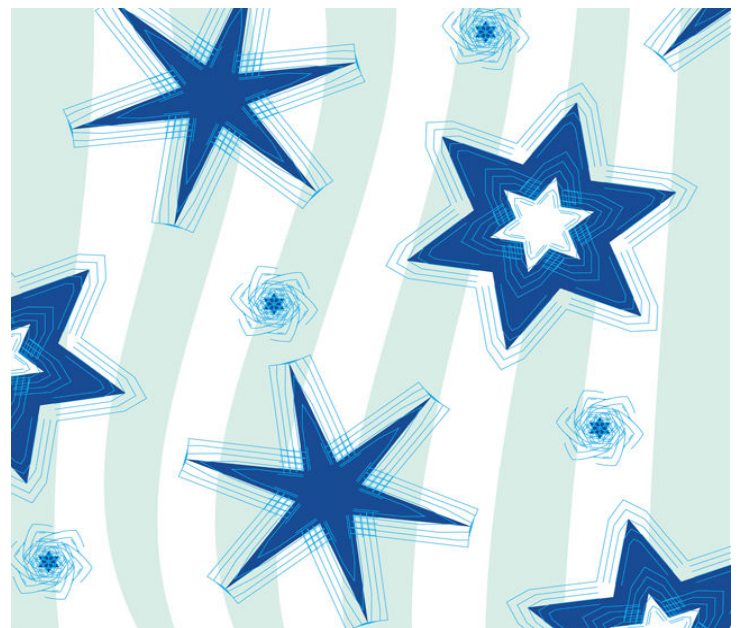
But as we busy ourselves with lighting up the dark world, I think that at this time of year God asks us to take seriously what emerges from darkness. To take seriously our dreams... Maybe this might mean that amongst all the hustle and bustle of the season we ask our children, "What did you dream about last night?" Or perhaps as a spiritual practice for ourselves, we keep paper and pen by our bed and record our dreams over the Advent Season. Or maybe we consider with quiet seriousness the dreams that brew inside us while we are awake. Are we, like Mary, waiting to

give birth to something divine? Jesus, the incarnation of God in human form, was the world's dream becoming true. Joseph listened closely to his dream in which an angel told him "do not be afraid." It was this same sort of voice that told Mary to take heart and take courage... Mary took seriously, at the behest of an angel, her dream that what was waiting to be born from within her was divine. Perhaps the message to us is, "Do not be afraid of your dreams... They may have something to teach you about what of the divine is waiting to be born in you."

To be sure, children and adults alike have frightening dreams; dreams that we are glad are not true. And dreams can be messy, and seemingly incoherent—but so was the birth of Jesus, at first glance! So perhaps there is a moment of truth in all our messy, confounding dreams and imaginings... For children sometimes awakening from a bad dream can be a reassurance that life is all right after all, an opportunity to feel their own bravery, a time to experiment with trusting in the benign force which we believe cradles them, cradles all of us, in our darkest hours. And this benign force is mysterious indeed, yet palpable and real love made flesh. As Jerome Berryman, Godly Play story writer says, "Christmas is a time of Mystery, a time of Journey. The mystery of how we all journey to Bethlehem to learn that God is incarnate in human flesh is not just then, it is also now..."

So blessings to all children, all families, all grandparents and all great-grandparents and all single people as we take this Advent journey, and may we take seriously dreams—those we have in sleep and those that happen in prayer and imagination—our children's dreams, our own dreams, and the dreams of one another, this season.

In Faith and Gratitude,
-Pastor Matilda



TRICK OR TREAT FOR SOUP AND BEANS!

By Rhonda Mariani

As we were looking over the Blue Moon projects on Sunday, Marilyn and I talked it over and decided we wanted to be part of the trick or treating for food option. The only problem was, that we were not going to be able to do the actual trick or treating on that day. We mentioned to Andrea that instead of going from house to house we were going to call our friends and ask them to donate food (a case each!) and bring it to our porch or if needed, we would go pick up their goods during the week. Our friends happily delivered and then on Sunday, the kids along with Andrea hit her neighborhood, in costume. This mighty group all had a great time ringing doorbells, trick or treating for the food, and sometimes calling out to her neighbors by name, looking for food donations. We are proud to say that together on that Blue Moon Sunday, we collected **383 pounds** of food! When we delivered the Haydenville Congregational Church's Halloween stash to the Northampton Survival Center they said we single-handedly restocked their back storage shelves. What a great feeling! A big thank you to all who participated and donated.

We have enclosed a picture and hope that next year, all together, we could collect that amount tenfold!



Only some of the 383 pounds of food collected!

*The test of our progress is not whether
we add more to the abundance
Of those who have too much...
it is whether we provide enough
for those who have too little.*

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

ANGEL TAKE-OUT

Dear Church Family! We have this wonderful program called Angel Take-Out that many of you have been involved in over the years. The Head of Angel Take-Out, and it has been Deb Edwards for a while, keeps a list of possible cooks. Then when a church member or friend is sick, or just back from the hospital, or just had a baby or in need for whatever reason, the Head of Angel Take-Out calls the cooks on her list until she can find someone who will take a meal over to the person in need. Sometimes an Apple Pie is needed (that truly has happened) but usually it is a simple meal or part of a meal.

Our loyal and lovable Deb Edwards needs to step down from this leadership role. Is there someone out there who would like to be the Head of Angel Take-Out? Does anyone feel called to take this on? Please let Pastor Andrea know if you would like to assume this role! Let's keep Angel Take-Out going!

**SAVE THE DATE! March 4, 2011!
COME HELP US CELEBRATE**

The 160th anniversary of the founding of the Haydenville Congregational Church is Sunday, March 4, 2011. We will commemorate this day with a special service and celebration. Plans for this grand occasion are presently being crafted and will be announced in the New Year.

THE SHORTEST DAY

And so the Shortest Day came and the year died
And everywhere down the centuries of the snow-white world
Came people singing, dancing,
To drive the dark away.
They lighted candles in the winter trees;
They hung their homes with evergreen;
They burned beseeching fires all night long
To keep the year alive.
And when the new year's sunshine blazed awake
They shouted, revelling.
Through all the frosty ages you can hear them
Echoing behind us - listen!
All the long echoes, sing the same delight,
This Shortest Day,
As promise awakens in the sleeping land:
They carol, feast, give thanks,
And dearly love their friends,
And hope for peace.
And now so do we, here, now,
This year and every year.

~ Susan Cooper

News and Notes!

** Great News! Deb and Jeff Luekens are moving back to Northampton and will be once again attending our Church! Wow! Cause for celebration! You'll see them in Church in January!

** In the interests of fire prevention and fire safety, the Trustees have decided that no candles should be burned in the Dining Room except during special services and occasions (like the Blue Christmas Service that will be held in that room). Thank you for being attentive to this change. (Please see Pastor Andrea if there are any questions about candle usage in the Church.)

** Friends, please do not park on the "playground" at the far end of the parking lot. The Town does not want us parking on the grass there. ALSO the Trustees ask that we avoid parking on the grass area next to the Church (on the left) when you pull into the parking lot. That area next to the church should be kept clear. Thank you!

** Heartfelt thanks to: Cate Wilson for the BEAUTIFUL Altar Cloths she brought back to us from her trip to Turkey, they are lovely; and to Ellie Loomis and Sue Carbin for making 130 wooden crosses for us to use in our All Saints Day Service.

** Final numbers! You are a generous and faithful congregation!
The Capital Campaign raised \$90,000!!
The October Church Fair raised \$ 3,868.
Thank you one and all!

** Our Advent Wreath, which is so lovely and fragrant, was made for us again this year (with love) by Russ Billings who works in the Greenhouse at Mount Holyoke College and is a friend of Pastor Andrea's and several MHC people at our Church. We appreciate so much that Russ makes and donates this beautiful wreath to our Church each year!

** ROCK ON! Parents and anyone who wants to rock during our worship services, there are now two comfortable rocking chairs at the back of the Sanctuary with pillows and blankets ready for you to rock and dream, rock and nurse, or just rock and listen! Enjoy!

** Wi-Fi YES!! The Trustees voted that Wi-Fi will now be accessible throughout the Church. The password will be posted in the kitchen near the phone, and the router will be visible to your laptop if you have wireless set up. See Lynn Goodhue if you need help connecting your computer. Typically, the setup needs to be done only once on your computer. The password hasn't changed, so if your

computer has already been set up for use with the church's wireless router, it should still work.

** Let's keep the momentum going! Please consider car-pooling to Church. Let Pastor Andrea know if you would like to know of others in our Church family who live near you. We'd be happy to team you up with people from your town or neighborhood so you can reduce your carbon footprint and car-pool to Church!

** Looking WAY ahead: The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, the Minister and President of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ, will be our Guest Preacher on Sunday, February 13. It will be great to welcome him to our Church!



FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD!

Here is the calendar for bringing Coffee Hour goodies in December. Please remember: when it is your turn to bring something to share, you also help set up and clean up. The calendar goes by last name. All edible foods are welcome including unusual surprises! And we LOVE to have protein snacks to give to the children. Thank you!

December 5: T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z

December 12: A, B, C

December 19: D, E, F, G

December 26: H, I, J, K



O God of all youth, we pray to you:

We are young people, and we want to celebrate life!

We cry out against all that kills life: hunger, poverty,

unemployment, injustice. We want to announce

fullness of life: work, education, health, bread for all.

We hope against hope. With the Lord of history we

want to make all things new.

A group of Brazilian young people

FOUND THIS IN OUR WALLS

By Kathleen Kent

I was digging in the filing cabinets for a little treasure for the December newsletter. About to quit, I opened one last drawer that apparently has all the things no one dares to throw away. But close to the bottom was an article about the 1939 Christmas Pageant with the following note attached: *"Found this in our walls and thought that you might get a boot out of it or know someone who would."* (Len Austin, 1963).

Well, I don't know if Len really found it in the walls or if it's a figure of speech. But I do know that pageant was many years ago, that Ruth Beebe was young at the time, and that she and I were just lugging watering cans to the garden together last summer...2010.

Springfield Union, December 23, 1939

TO PRESENT PAGEANT

Haydenville Congregational Church to Entertain Tomorrow

WILLIAMSBURG, Dec. 22 – A pageant, "Adoration of the Shepherds and Kings," will be presented in the Haydenville Congregational Church Sunday evening at 7, with the following cast: **Ruth Beebe**, Carlton Field, Richard Bates, Henry Wilson, Donald Howe, Norman Bates, James Graham, Donald Smith, Ralph Bates, **Roger King**, Joseph Hague, Doris, Arlene and Irene Dewey, Dorothy Sanderson, Audrey and Lorraine Jones, Irene Metz, Betty Damon, Virginia Wyckoff, **Viola Frazer**, **Esther Loomis**, Marilyn Howe, Joan Damon, Shirley Smith and Russell Loomis. This will be followed by a communion service at 8. At the Sunday morning service Rev. Clarence Fuller will take for his sermon theme, "The unspeakable gift," and for the children's talk, "Jesus' 10th Birthday." Saturday evening at 7:30 the church school Christmas tree will be held and an entertainment given by the small children.

Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.

Vaclav Havel
Submitted by Lynn Fogg

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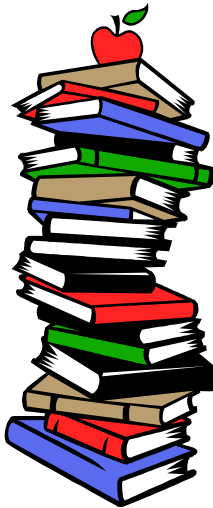
By Mae Emerson Smith

Wednesday, October 13, 2010

Today, I am '90' the numbers say
But I can't believe it's my 90th birthday.
I ought to be grumpy and tottery and old,
At least that's what the stories told.
And probably some days I am, I'm sure,
But I try to be pleasant and helpful and true.
There's one thing I'm sure of, as long as I live,
I'll enjoy each day, whatever it is.
I love blue sky, sunshine, moon, stars and rain,
We need each one to keep us sane.
I love each flower, bird, animal and tree,
Every butterfly and moth and our land and sea.
We have such beauty on this earth of ours,
We need to love and protect it so all can enjoy.
I love family, friends and people; memories, music and
laughter,
Lord, help me do my best today and ever after.

BOOK GROUP IN DECEMBER

By Paula Spencer



Our reading selection for December will be, appropriately enough, a book by Jesus scholars Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan called The First Christmas: What the Gospels Really Teach Us About Jesus's Birth. Borg and Crossan will be familiar names to those of us who've participated in Living the Questions or the First Light series.

Amazon.com says that the book "show [s] how history has biased our reading of the nativity story as it appears in the gospels of Matthew and Luke.... Borg and Crossan help us to see this well-known narrative afresh by answering the question, 'What do these stories mean?' in the context of both the first century and the twenty-first century. They successfully show that the Christmas story, read in its original context, is far richer and more challenging than people imagine."

We'll meet on Saturday, December 11 at 10 a.m. in the Church dining room. A reminder that this is an open group that welcomes new participants. We enjoy sharing our thoughts on the book we've read but the discussion usually ranges far and wide while we enjoy tea/ coffee and a snack.

Please let me know if you'd like to join us, or if you have any questions. My e-mail is prspencer1@comcast.net.

BOYS TO MEN TEEN MENTORING PROGRAM

By John Berkowitz



The nation-wide Boys To Men Teen Mentoring Program has been growing in the Pioneer Valley this year, and now has 11 boys between the ages of 13 and 17 meeting in two separate groups with 6 mentors. There are also 2 other groups that meet in Greenfield.

A few more men are needed to fully staff these groups, and start new ones. One meets every other Sunday afternoon for 4 hours; the other meets every other Wednesday evening from 5:30 to 7:30pm. Men can choose to mentor either once or twice a month. There's also a monthly mentors' meeting on a weekday evening after work.

The groups include fun outdoor and indoor games and activities, as well as a 1-hour check-in circle where each boy and man shares both the good things in their lives during the past two weeks, and the difficult and challenging things.

Mentors feel they get as much as they give from their connection with these teen boys. And by listening to, accepting, and supporting these boys now, they are helping to

make our society safer and more peaceful as boys grow up into healthier men who won't resort to physical or emotional violence to resolve their difficulties, and who will nurture and protect their families, communities, and the environment.

For more information, including a copy of a Gazette news story with photos that really captured the essence of Boys To Men, contact Sam Rodgers at 413-367-2447 or sam-rodgers@wildblue.net.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS! HOORAY!

December 2	Laurie Priest
December 6	Maureen Mathers
December 8	Sean McElligott
December 9	Cathy Strader
December 10	Lynn Goodhue & Ann Turner
December 12	Jerry Roberge
December 13	Talya Gilman-Solomon & Kaliah Pilot
December 14	Nate McElligott & Anna Faye Morin
December 21	Grace Molano
December 23	Julianna Donofrio
December 27	Robert Anderson & Regina Kaufman
December 31	Martha Smith



Haydenville Congregational Church



Saturday, December 4, 2010
~~Men's Brunch~~

Doug Renick and Tom McCabe invite the men in the church to Brunch
On Saturday, December 4th at 9:30 AM

Menu: Eggs, Bagels & Cream Cheese, Coffee Cake, Juice, Coffee and Tea

All men who are members and friends of the Church are most welcome – come, share a relaxed meal together and visit with the other men in the church.



DECEMBER 2010 CALENDAR

Wednesday, December 1:	7 PM	Confirmation Class, HCC Dining Room
Saturday, December 4:	9:30 AM	Men's Brunch! All men in the church welcome to attend
Sunday, December 5:	10 AM	Worship Service with Communion, Advent 2, lighting the Advent Wreath, Confirmation Class and Kick Off Advent "Stockings for Change" Youth Campaign to Benefit Local Homeless Children
Monday, December 6:	6 PM	Diaconate Meeting
Tuesday, December 7:	4 PM 5:30 PM	Charity to Change, HCC Dining Room. Children's Church Committee and Sub-Committee Meeting, Church Dining Rm
Thursday, December 9:	6:30 PM	Shepherds' Hosting a Blue Christmas Service
Saturday, December 11:	10 AM	Book Group Meeting, HCC Dining Room Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan's <i>The First Christmas: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus' Birth</i> Contact Paula Spencer for questions at prspencer1@comcast.net
Sunday, December 12:	10 AM	Worship Service, Advent 3, lighting the Advent Wreath. Daniel Guiel Baptism
Tuesday, December 14:	6:30 PM	Trustees Meeting
Thursday, December 16:	1 PM	Ladies Aid Christmas Party, HCC Dining Room
Sunday, December 19:	10 AM	Worship Service Christmas Pageant with Tom McCabe Advent 4, lighting the Advent Wreath Children's Church Lunch/Party in Coffee Hour, donations accepted to support CC families
Friday, December 24:	7 PM	Christmas Eve Service with Guest Harpist and singing Silent Night by candlelight
Sunday, December 26:	10 AM	Worship Service





Haydenville Congregational Church

United Church of Christ
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