



The Herald

First and St. Stephen's United Church of Christ
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A Message From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

I confess that Advent is my favorite liturgical season. Advent's themes--of an earth pregnant with the coming fulfillment of Christ-spirit, of our watchful waiting in the winter darkness for the coming of the light--are powerful images that connect with our deepest longings.

Each time the cycle comes around to this time of year, we inevitably experience a jarring contrast between the quiet spirit of Advent and the commercial madness of the wider world's observance of the Saturnalia (a.k.a. "Christmas"). The strains of Advent hymns in a minor key seem disharmonious with the Christmas carols we've been hearing piped into every store for weeks. Advent's invitation to wait, keep watch, and prepare for the coming of God into the ordinariness of our life sometimes seems a foolish and impossible dream.

Father Andrew Greeley suggests, though, that the tension between Advent and secular Christmas is not necessarily an either-or proposition:



It might be easy to run away to a monastery, away from the commercialization, the hectic hustle, the demanding family responsibilities of Christmas-time. Then we would have a holy Christmas. But we would forget the lesson of the Incarnation, of the enfleshing of God—the lesson that we who are followers of Jesus do not run from the secular; rather we try to transform it. It is our mission to make holy the secular aspects of Christmas just as the early Christians baptized the Christmas tree. And we do this by being holy people—kind, patient, generous, loving, laughing people—no matter how maddening is the Christmas rush.

During each Sunday in Advent, our worship will symbolize our waiting and the growing light of God's approach with the ritual of lighting candles in the Advent wreath. Perhaps you will light candles at home or open windows in an Advent calendar with your children. You are invited to take home one of the devotional booklets for your Advent meditations.

Throughout Advent, whether at home, at work, or waiting at interminable traffic lights, may we each pause to allow the awareness of our essential holiness permeate the moment.

Blessings and peace,

Linda McFadden

Church Calendar

Friday, Dec. 4

10:00 8th Day Study Group at Pickersgill

Sunday, Dec. 6

9:00 Choir Rehearsal

9:30 Church School

10:30 Service of Worship - Communion

Second Sunday of Advent: the Peace Candle will be lit.

Congregational Meeting following the service

Habitat Build

3-5:30 Girl Scouts

Friday, Dec. 11

10:00 8th Day Study Group at Pickersgill

Sunday, Dec. 13

9:00 Choir Rehearsal

**10:30 Service of Worship—
Children's Christmas Program**

*Third Sunday of Advent: the Love
Candle will be lit.*



Tuesday, Dec. 15

7:30 Consistory

Nominations due for the Search Committee

Wednesday, Dec. 16

Supper Club

Friday, Dec. 18

10:00 8th Day Study Group at Pickersgill

Sunday, Dec. 20

9:00 Choir Rehearsal

9:30 Church School

10:30 Service of Worship

Fourth Sunday of Advent: the Joy Candle will be lit.

Thursday, Dec. 24 - Christmas Eve

7:30 Organ Recital

**8:00 Christmas Eve Services with carols
candle lighting, lessons, and
communion**



Friday, Dec. 25

Office closed

Sunday, Dec. 27

9:00 Choir Rehearsal

9:30 Church School

10:30 Service of Worship

Looking Ahead

Sunday, Jan. 17 Annual Meeting

Sunday, Jan. 24 Dr. Barrett will be discussing
The Shack

Sunday, Feb. 14 John Deckenbeck will preach
and discuss the search process.

8th Day Study Group

On **Fridays at 10 a.m.**, the 8th Day Study Group meets in the Pickersgill Library. We are currently discussing the book, *Misquoting Jesus*, by Bart Ehrman.

Supper Club

The Supper Club is **December 16**. Meat loaves can be left in the church freezer at your convenience. Please contact Barbara Joellenbeck, 410-532-0309, if you have any questions.

Giving Tree

Gift tags are still available on the Giving Tree in the Gathering Room. Tags indicate some of the needs we will be collecting for a resident who will be moving into his own apartment.



First & St. Stephen's United Church of Christ Community Blood Drive

Sat. Dec. 19, 2009

10:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Fellowship Hall



Please call 1-800-GIVE LIFE (448-3543)

To schedule your life-saving donation.

Friends and Family Welcome

WARNING.....WARNING: ADVENT VIRUS

Be on the alert for symptoms of inner **Hope, Peace, Joy and Love**. The hearts of a great many have already been exposed to this virus and it is possible that people everywhere could come down with it in epidemic proportions. This could pose a serious threat to what has, up to now, been a fairly stable condition of conflict in the world.

Some signs and symptoms of **The Advent Virus**:

- A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experiences.
- An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.
- A loss of interest in judging other people.
- A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others.
- A loss of interest in conflict.
- A loss of the ability to worry. (This is a very serious symptom.)
- Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation.
- Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature.
- Frequent attacks of smiling.
- An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen.
- An increased susceptibility to the love extended by others as well as the uncontrollable urge to extend it.

Please send this warning out to all your friends. This virus can and has affected many systems. Some systems have been completely cleaned out because of it.

Advent Calendars are in the Gathering Room

Invitations to Celebrate with other Chesapeake Association Churches

December brings opportunities to worship and celebrate with other UCC congregations in Baltimore:

Service of Installation for the **Rev. Gene Bartell** as Pastor of **St. Matthew UCC, Sunday, December 6 at 2:30 pm**. Location: St. Matthew Church, 3400 Norman Ave., Baltimore, MD 21213.

Service of Installation for the **Rev. Jennifer Sowell Glover** as Pastor of **St. John's UCC on Saturday, December 12 at 1:00 PM**. A reception at Overhills Mansion will follow the service. The church is located at 1000 South Rolling Road, Baltimore, Maryland 21228.

First United Church is celebrating 160 years of ministry with a series of events **Dec. 4-6**. First United is located at 1728 Eastern Avenue. (You will be familiar with it if you have ever volunteered for Supper Club.) Events include an evening of music and prayer by candlelight on **Saturday, Dec. 5 at 7 p.m.**



December Birthdays

- | | |
|-------|-----------------------------|
| 12/2 | Ruth Hellmers |
| 12/3 | Pat Faw |
| 12/5 | Lydia Wisner |
| 12/11 | Jack Faw |
| 12/16 | Mildred Poehlitz |
| 12/17 | Audra Wisner
Ava Conjura |
| 12/28 | Howard Hellmers |

If you wish to have your birthday in **The Herald**, please contact Joyce Kruse, church secretary, at 410-377-5224.



Best Wishes for Advent and Christmas

from the staff


Linda, Jeff, Joyce, Sam & Grace

Dinner Honoring the Rev. Geoffrey Black

On Friday, November 20th, Rev. McFadden and I had the privilege and pleasure of representing the congregation at a dinner hosted by the Central Atlantic Conference and honoring the Rev. Geoffrey Black, the newly elected General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. The event was part of a series of "ten listening sessions" that President Black is currently conducting to introduce himself to churches, associations, and conferences around the country and to discuss with them the journey to his new call. The main focus of the evening, however, was President Black's invitation to all in attendance to share with him *their* vision of the U. C. C. In so doing, he modeled for each and every one of us the kind of servant leadership that is not only truly indicative of authentic Christian ministry but also vitally needed in such a narcissistic world as ours. In my judgment, the structure and character of this gathering bodes well for the kind of leadership we can expect from General Minister and President Black in the coming years.

Alex Vishio

December Lectionary Readers

Dec. 6	Brian Barr	
Dec. 13	Rachel Ezell	
Dec. 20	Peggy Cook	
Dec. 27	Barbara Joellenbeck	



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