



News of the Apostles

Presbyterian Church of the Apostles
701 East 130th Street, Burnsville, MN 55337
www.burnsvillepresbyterian.org
952-890-7877

December 09/January 2010



Thoughts from Pastor Joy

When you read this we will be at the end of the church's year and at the beginning of a brand new one. And as I mustered the courage to prepare for whatever comes next for all us, I came across this essay written by Howard Thurman, in 1953. Thurman was born in Daytona Beach, Florida in 1899 and grew up in the segregated south. The title of this essay is Long Live Life! As I prepare my heart to turn the page of new lectionary texts, new calendar, and the beginning of 2010, Rev. Thurman's message, gave me pause, and I remembered the significance and gift of the passing of time.

"There is something which seems utterly final about the end of a year. It means that we are one year older; this is a fact definite and inexorable. We are twelve months closer to the end of our physical time span – one year closer to death. It means that in some important ways we are taken farther from, or brought closer to the goal of our living, whatever that goal may be. It means that some crucial questions which were unanswered twelve months ago have been fully and decidedly answered, and whatever doubts these may have been about the result are completely removed; now, we know. It means that we are in fuller or lesser in possession of ourselves and our powers than ever before.

During the passing of the twelve months, experience has come into our lives which revealed certain things about ourselves which we had not suspected. Some new demand was made upon us which caused us to behave in a manner that was stranger to our established pattern of life, and we felt shocked, surprised, enraged, or delighted that such was possible for us. We met someone with whom we built the kind of relationship which opened up to us new worlds of wonder and magic, which were completely closed to us a year ago. It means that we are wiser by far than we were at year's beginning.

The circling series of events upon whose bosom we have been wafted cut away our pretensions, stripping us bare of much beneath which we have hidden even from ourselves; when we saw ourselves revealed, there was born a wisdom about life and its meaning that make us say with all our hearts, this day, that life is good, not evil. It means that we have been able to watch, as if bewitched, while the illuminated finger of God pointed out a path through the surrounding darkness where no path lay; exposed to our surprised gaze a door where we were sure there was only a blank wall; revealed the strong arms and assuring voices of friends when we were sure that in our plight we were alone, utterly and starkly alone.

All of these meanings and many more counsel us that because life is dynamic and we are deeply alive, the end of the year can mean only the end of the year, not the end of life, not the end of us, not even the end of time. We turn our faces toward the year being born with a riding hope that will carry us into the days ahead with courage and with confidence. The old year dies; the New Year is being born – Long live Life!" Amen.

Peace on our journey to the New Year God has called us.

Pastor Joy



Advent & Christmas Season 2009-10

The Season of New Birth: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Baptism of the Lord

November 29 – First Sunday of Advent – Promise

The Sacrament of Communion

Welcome The Reverend Paul Moore; pastor at Chain of Lakes PCUSA New Church Development

December 6 – Second Sunday of Advent - Preparation

The Sacrament of Baptism – Kyla Campbell daughter of Carrie and Chris

Text: Luke 3:1-18 John the Baptist in the wilderness: “The voice of the one crying into the wilderness”

Special Music: Ron Rasmusson and Bob, and Arnie Roos

PCA Worship Band will lead our music today.

December 13 – Third Sunday of Advent – Joy

10:30am Special Intergenerational Christmas Program: *Matt and Lucy’s Version Births*

There are two different stories of Jesus’ birth, and their stories are very different from each other. Come and see how having two stories gives us an appreciation of the diversity of ways early Christians expressed their understanding of who Jesus was.

Children & Adult choirs and Tone Chimes will bless us with Sounds of Christmas

December 20 – Fourth Sunday of Advent - Birth of the New Creation

10:30am The PCA Choir presents a Christmas Cantata: Emanuel by Eugene Butler

Narratives and beautiful music to inspire us for the Christmas Season

3pm – 5pm “A time of Christmas Quiet” Enter into a peaceful, candlelit setting for music played by Paul Berry and Sue Carlblom.

4:30pm There will be a brief reflection on the Christmas story.

December 24 – Christmas Eve

5pm A Family Christmas Eve Service – stories and special children’s time and carols

10pm (Note time change) The Communion and Candle lighting Christmas Service

11pm Christmas Eve “Midnight” Café

December 27 - First Sunday after Christmas

Lessons and Carols – come and sing more Christmas Carols!

Text: Luke 2: 41-52

January 3 – Epiphany Celebration and Communion

Text: John 1: 1-18

January 10 – Baptism of the Lord Renewing our Baptismal Vows

Text: Luke 3: 15-22

<p><i>In This Issue...</i> Pastor Page Pg 1</p> <p>Advent Schedule Pg 2</p>	<p>Announcements/News & Celebrations Pgs 3 - 4</p> <p>Session News Pg 5</p>	<p>Council News Pgs 6 - 11</p> <p>Apostle Group News Pgs 11- 13</p>	<p>December/January Calendar Pg 14 - 15</p> <p>Special Christmas Devotional booklet Section</p>	<p>Church Leadership & Information Pg 16</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Announcements

We welcome our newest members!

*Cathy and Andrea Sherwin
Linda Jesness
Lynne Westphal*

New Member Class

Are you interested in exploring your faith journey with the Presbyterian Church of the Apostles? New Member Classes will be held on Sunday, January 24 and January 31.

Those interested in joining the church will meet with the session on February 7 and be received publically into this wonderfully diverse faith community on February 14 during worship. A letter with more information will follow in January 2010.

The Meaning of Church Membership
by Susan Andrews

Becoming a church member is a commitment to a covenant relationship—a relationship with a living and risen Jesus, and a relationship with a vulnerable and growing community of faith. Or, as the Book of Order says: "One becomes an active member of the church through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and acceptance of his Lordship in all of life." (G-5.0101)

Midnight CAFÉ *has a new start time!*

Young Adults, please join us at the ***Midnight Café*** in the Youth Room immediately following the Candlelight Christmas Eve service (**Please note: New start time of 10:00pm for the Candlelight Christmas Eve service**) It's a great opportunity to reconnect & catch up with your church friends! Warm food & beverages will be served.



The youth need donations!

Can you spare a few baking ingredients during this holiday season to assist the youth to prepare terrific holiday treats? We are looking for eggs, sugar, sprinkles, flour, brown sugar, butter, powdered sugar, decorative frostings, etc. Drop donations in the kitchen and clearly mark them with the word "youth". The youth are thrilled to take your unused pantry goods and turn them in delectable treats. If you are interested in ordering your holiday cookies to be prepared by our completely supervised youth please sign up in the Narthex to complete your special order, free will donations will be accepted to sponsor our mission trip and other programming. We are capable of completing large or



small orders. Speak with Jill Carlson if you have any questions (office@presbyterianapostles.org or call 952-890-7877)



Join the choir for the Christmas season!

If you kinda sorta want to be in the choir but not sure you can make a lifetime, full-time, for-all-time commitment - why not just join for a season?

And what better season than the beautiful Christmas season replete with carols and traditional music? The choir is participating in the all-church Christmas program Sunday morning December 13, and is putting on a whole cantata on Sunday morning December 20. Plus, we will sing other Sunday mornings during Advent and at the Christmas Eve service. Rehearsals are Wednesday evenings (times somewhat variable).

Join us!

Contact Jerri or Steve Johnson,
Choir Director & Special Music
Coordinator at 952-890-7877.



Announcements

The Property Council

A volunteer is needed to shovel the sidewalks around the front doors of the church and office, as well as the walkways in the parking lot. Volunteers are asked to come to the church after any snow storm to help out. It would be helpful to bring your own snow shovel, as the church has some shovels, but not many.

If this would be of interest to you, please contact Lee Simonson at office@presbyterianapostles.org or call 952-890-7877



AARP INCOME TAX PREPARATION ASSISTANCE 2010

AARP TaxAide will again offer **free** income and property tax assistance and e-filing for senior adults and low-income persons and families. Help will be available at PCA on Tuesdays, Feb. 2nd through Apr. 13th, 5:30 PM to 8:30 PM. Individuals with complex returns or more intricate needs may be referred to professional tax preparers. All returns will be electronically filed. Help will be by appointment only. Call 952-707-4120 (Burnsville Senior Center) for appointments.

There will be a sign posted on the kiosk advising what to bring with you. Also bring any Minnesota state returns from last year, and 2008 & 2009 property tax statements or 2009 renters CRP if applying for a property tax refund. Please contact Jim Peterson office@presbyterianapostles.org or call 952-890-7877

if you have any questions.

Celebrations



LOOK WHO'S CELEBRATING...

December Birthdays

Grace Mitchell 1
 Michael Lee 2
 Lou Cooper 3
 Matt Kalmes 4
 Ami Gilbert 5
 Carla Maslonka 8
 Paula Naill 10
 Chris Campbell 11
 Walter Fuchs 12
 Eleanor Gibson 13
 Sue Spector 15
 Kevin Cooper 16
 Danica Den Hartog 18
 Callen Fuchs 19
 Betty Walker 19
 Marjean McGuire 20
 Denise Tooley 20
 Katie Mitchell 21

Jay Scovil 21
 Gerald Johnson 23
 Valerie Breitbarth 27
 Marshall Berg 28
 Sheri Frette 28
 Josephine Heuer 30
 Alison Lutcavish 30
 Merry Daher 31

December

Anniversaries

Terrie Tischer-Hallberg
 & Lars Hallberg 22
 Kay & Jerry Johnson 23
 Daniel & Sue Carlblom 28

January Birthdays

Bethany Eighmy 2
 James Pederson 5
 Shane Swanson 8
 Wendy Jensen 9
 Jane Kalmes 12
 Scott Getty 13
 Joy Smith 18
 Jennifer Kalmes 19
 JoAnne McKim 19
 Daniel Armstrong 22
 Jessica Molk 24
 Melissa Mager 25
 Julia Scovil 25
 Daniel Kurdziel 26
 John Eichinger 28
 Lynne Kurdziel 29

January Anniversaries

Jared & Karen Dahl 9
 Chad & Lou Cooper 19

Did we miss your birthday or anniversary date?

Submit your dates to the church office or e-mail to: office@presbyterianapostles.org

Session News

Attention:

Change in Expense Voucher Procedures

PCA has employed David Shabaz, CPA, as our bookkeeper to process all check disbursements. Expense reimbursement vouchers will be forwarded electronically to his office on the 10th and 20th of each month. Completed checks will be returned to the church office 5 days later. Therefore, if you have an expense due date to meet, you need to make sure that is in the Treasurer's box on the appropriate cut off date to ensure the check will be received for distribution before the due date.

To ensure prompt processing of your reimbursements, be sure to complete the expense vouchers to include the proper amount, the full name of the check recipient and the authorization signature, and the proper account # to be charged (The vouchers list all line item accounts on the reverse side.)

The voucher process is being handled by Joel Frette, Assistant Treasurer. If you have any questions, please contact Joel or Jerry Johnson, Clerk of Session

Annual Congregational Dinner & Meeting

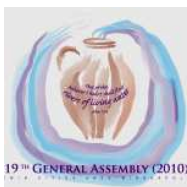
January 29, 2010

6:30 Dinner

7:30 Meeting

Council & Apostle Groups' Annual Reports

will be due in the church office by January 8, 2010



General Assembly is Coming to Minneapolis!

The 219th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) is a gathering very much like a family reunion of Presbyterian brothers and sisters from across the country and around the world. On July 3-10, 2010 (next summer) the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, the Presbytery of Northern Waters and the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys will host this bi-annual event in Minneapolis.

Planning is underway and **YOUR HELP IS NEEDED**. Here's how:

Volunteer to **SERVE ON A COMMITTEE**. If you're interested, sign up now! Contact: Paula Sanders, paula.sanders@pcusa.org or 612-839-7465; or Rallah Madison, rallah@hickorytech.net or 507-380-1488.

- Mark the dates and **PLAN TO VOLUNTEER DURING THE ASSEMBLY**. Ushers, singers for a mass choir, communion servers, information disseminators, greeters at the airport, hotels and convention center, tour leaders, and all sorts of other help is needed. You can find out more about the 219th General Assembly by going to the new GA 219 website at www.pcusa.org/ga219/.
- Encourage attendance at the **JULY 4, 2010 WORSHIP AT THE MINNEAPOLIS CONVENTION CENTER** to join 6,000- 8,000 other Presbyterian in celebration of worship and the Lord's Supper.

- Plan to **ATTEND AS MANY EVENTS AS POSSIBLE**. See your denomination in worship and prayer both on Sunday and throughout the week; hear discussions of issues before the Assembly in committees and in plenary (all meetings are open); take advantage of special concerts and other events; learn about denominational organizations and agencies in Exhibit Hall; join us at the 4th of July picnic and fireworks on Nicollet Island, Minneapolis.
- **PRAY** for the work of the PCUSA, the Assembly and the Committee on Local Arrangements.

This is a VERY special opportunity to learn about your church and take advantage of an unbelievable number of resources gathered in one place and at one time. This is a HUGE undertaking and we need YOU. If you have ties to Minnesota, help us show a warm welcome as the family gathers at our house for its biennial reunion! Volunteer to serve on one of these committees for General Assembly 2010!

Volunteer to serve on one of these committees for General Assembly 2010!

WORSHIP COMMITTEE
SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE
VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE
HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

Christian Education Council

CE1 Sunday school news

Merry Christmas!

Our inter-generational Christmas Program, Matt and Lucy's Version Births, is scheduled for December 13 during worship service. We are going to practice for this program every Sunday during Sunday school until then. A dress rehearsal is planned for Saturday, December 12th at 2pm. We will gather at 9:30am on the 13th for costuming and rehearsal.



ALL children/youth, Pre-School through High School, are invited to join us. There are parts for anyone who wants to participate.

Please contact Roxann at office@presbyterianapostles.org or call 952-890-7877

There will be a Christmas party for Sunday school on December 20 we will be crafting and snacking. Please bring a small snack to share.

Sunday school will resume after the holidays on January 3.

We have a brand new curriculum titled *Godly Play*. With some training and preparation we hope to launch *Godly Play* very soon. Please contact Roxann or Pastor Joy if you are interested in learning more about this curriculum.

CE Council News

CE Council is in dire need of more members. I have always believed in more hands make light work. As chairperson of CE Council I have not done a good job of making room for more people to join me. I am in the tough position of too much to do and not enough people to help. I'm sure that this congregation is full of people willing to do many things to help me but I'm not gifted in asking and you can't read my mind.

Joining this council does not require you to teach Sunday school or even attend meeting every month; we meet every other month. We need a council that is made up of enough people to have a team for: Adult Education, High Y, Sunday school, LOGOS, and VBS some overlap would be OK. In an ideal world these people would manage the calendar and activities for each division of CE and meet every other month to coordinate larger events and work out any kinks.

If you are interested please come to our next meeting on January 7th at 7pm or contact me at: office@presbyterianapostles.org or call 952-890-7877

Thanks for your time!

CE2 Youth

Youth Update from Jill Carlson

Are you a student in 9th through 12th grade? Would you be interested in traveling to a culturally unique part of the country? The Senior High mission trip is scheduled for June 13th to June 18th, 2010. Please make sure your spot is reserved if you want to be apart of this epic journey to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in Lyle, South Dakota. The deadline for PCA's final count with YouthWorks! is January 14th and spots will be issued on a first come, first serve basis. Speak with Jill Carlson with any questions.

Youth Holiday Party at PCA!

Mark your calendars for Saturday, December 12th at 1PM to 3PM in the Fellowship Hall to bake cookies and make candies. The ingredients for gingerbread houses will be on site too. This party will be casual and feel free to drop in when you can. If you can, please bring cookie making ingredients to share like butter, eggs, sugar, flour, sprinkles or chocolate chips. Some treats will go home with youth, other treats will be shared with the congregation. Any adults that might want to share in the holiday fun please see Jill Carlson to volunteer. Sign up will be available in the Narthex.

Confirmation
Classes

Parent meeting
Sunday, February 14, 2010
4pm in the Youth Room

Open to students in the 9th grade and any other youth who wish to participate in an exciting journey about faith.

Call Pastor Joy if you have any questions.

Christian Education Council

LOGOS SCHEDULE

(2nd Semester)

Wednesday Evenings

5 - 8pm

Jan 13 Around the World

Jan 20 It's Your Birthday

Jan 27 Crazy Nails

Feb 3 Winter Carnival

Feb 10 St. Valentine's Ball

Feb 17 **NO LOGOS** (Ash Wednesday)

Feb 24 Favorite Hat Night

Mar 3 Fiesta!

Mar 10 Bermuda Triangle

Mar 17 LOGOS Banquet at 6pm

CE3 Adult

Christian Education Program

9AM in the Youth Room

December/January Programs

The first three Sundays in December, Adult Education will be exploring the Palestinian/Israeli situation. Once again becoming a high profile issue on the international scene, we will explore the situation, the negative impact it has had on everyone involved, why it persists, and how it may be resolved to the point that conflicts subside.

The fourth Sunday of December and January will be dedicated to Bible study with Rev. Joy Smith.

January 3 (New Year's Resolutions Sunday)

The Calvin series concludes with a discussion on the questions: "Are we all Calvinists now?" Do the doctrines Calvin championed help you be a better Christian today? You may be surprised by the answers.

January 10

Experiencing Sunday School through Godly Play, a teaching system that draws it's power from children's normal play habits to learn and talk about religious issues and spiritual growth.

January 17

We will celebrate Martin Luther King and part of America's diverse Christian heritage through singing Gospel Music.

January 31 **TBA**



Theology on Top

7pm Monday, December 21, 2009

Location: Jo Jo's Rise and Wine

Attention Young Adults...Ages, 20s -You're invited to a round table discussion to talk about "How does our faith engage contemporary issues?"

We will meet every third Monday — at Jo Jo's Rise and Wine. Each event will feature an engaging speaker who will present a relevant theological topic, time for discussion and faith sharing, and creating community. Come, and join us and bring a friend!



Jo Jo's Rise and Wine

is located at 12501 Nicollet Ave., Suite 100, Burnsville - just north of Nicollet & Burnsville Pkwy on the lower level of the Park Crest condominiums, across from Nicollet Commons Park.

Church in Society Council

Alternative Christmas Gift Market December 6, 13, and 20

Church in Society Council will once again be sponsoring an Alternative Christmas Gift Market in the fellowship hall after worship on December 6, 13, and 20th. Are you looking for a meaningful gift for that special person on your gift list that has everything he/she needs? A pastor who was once asked the meaning of contentment replied "it is sacrificing a want for someone else's need". This year give a gift to someone in need in honor of that special person on your list.

We will offer gifts from three different organizations: Loaves and Fishes, Heifer International, and Church World Service.

Loaves & Fishes...more than just a meal... Loaves & Fishes is a non-profit, volunteer-driven agency fulfilling a basic need by feeding the hungry. Their aim is to treat everyone with dignity and respect. Loaves & Fishes provides coordination, facility rental and maintenance, oversight, public relations, emergency food, advocacy, and volunteer training to over 4,000 volunteers annually. Volunteers working in 300 serving teams provide food, cook dinner, and help with the cleanup in a warm welcoming atmosphere. Over 347,000 meals were served at their 8 sites in 2008, an increase of 8% over 2007.



Heifer International is a nonprofit, humanitarian organization dedicated to ending hunger and poverty and caring for the Earth. Heifer International currently provides 30 kinds of livestock, trees, seeds and training in environmentally sound agriculture to families in more than 50 countries, including the United States. Since its inception, Heifer International has helped 9.2 million families in 128 countries move toward greater self-reliance. Heifer International partners with community groups to form development plans and to train them in animal well-being, agroecology, water quality, gender equity, and community development. The training enables them to care for livestock, grow crops sustainably and to further help participants lift themselves out of poverty. In addition to training in sustainable farming practices, recipients agree to share one or more of their animals' offspring with others in need in what Heifer International calls "passing on the gift," which multiplies the benefits of the original gift. Heifer International partners also are taught to prevent overgrazing, and collect manure for organic fertilizer, plant trees and manage resources for long-term success.



Church World Service works with partners to eradicate hunger and poverty and to promote peace and justice around the world. Together we reach out to neighbors in need near and far--not with a hand out, but a hand up. Around the world, Church World Service supports sustainable grassroots development, disaster relief, and refugee assistance, and we educate and advocate on hunger-related issues. In the U.S., we help communities respond to disasters, resettle refugees, promote fair national and international policies, and provide educational resources.



Church in Society Council

The angels on the Armful of Love Christmas tree in the narthex await you.

Community Action Council's **ARMFUL OF LOVE** is celebrating 37 years of service to our community, a program PCA has supported for many years. Once again, **ARMFUL OF LOVE** is collecting and distributing holiday gifts for families who are facing financial hardships. PCA will be sponsoring 4 families, the gifts requested by the families can be found on the Angel tree in the Narthex. The instructions are simple and the results bring enormous help to families in Dakota County:



Just pick an angel:

Take one part of the angel and leave the other on the tree.

Sign your name on the one left on the tree.



Purchase the item requested:

Put the angel family number on the wrapped gift.

Return the wrapped gift with the angel attached to identify the gift. Gifts should be placed under the tree no later than December 13.

You can also donate \$25-50.00 grocery gift cards. They should be placed in the manila envelope on the kiosk in the narthex by December 13.

We are also collecting mittens and hats for children which will be distributed through CAC. Place them on the tree in the fellowship hall by December 13.

Questions should be referred to Estella Banham 952-890-7877.



The Christmas Joy Offering

A Presbyterian tradition for almost 70 years, the Christmas Joy Offering is one of the four special offerings designated by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to provide congregations direct ways of supporting specific causes that help those in need. The offering is split 50/50 to the Board of Pension and Presbyterian Racial Ethnic Schools and Colleges. We will be taking the offering on December 13, 20, and Christmas Eve. Place your gift in the envelopes provided or write Christmas Joy in the memo line on your check.

Through the Board of Pensions' Financial Assistance Programs, the Christmas Joy Offering recognizes the faithfulness of current and retired church workers by providing funds to help them through difficult times.

To help retired church workers and their surviving spouses, the board offers Income Supplements to raise incomes to a level where retirees can live modestly and continue to maintain their independence by proving Housing Supplementing, Shared Grants and Emergency Assistance Grants meet needs that might be considered routine, such as additional medical or dental expenses not covered by insurance. Perhaps a retiree needs a little help paying for equipment or services not covered by traditional insurance. Other times, grants may help a church worker meet unexpected financial needs or recover from a natural disaster.

The **Presbyterian Church** has long promoted education through establishing and supporting **racial ethnic schools and colleges**. Christmas Joy Offering funds provide scholarships to deserving students as well as help with basic operating costs. These institutions develop leaders in the church and in society, and they enable students to discover and pursue their professional goals. All Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)-related schools and colleges are open to any qualified student regardless of race.

Stewardship Council

What We Learned at the 2009 Fall Stewardship Gatherings



Six homes invited each congregation member to participate in a small group discussion and over thirty of you attended one. We asked you: What brought you to PCA? What keeps you at PCA? Where do you think God is calling PCA next? Your responses will be tools to help the session with their strategic planning for the next year. I have attempted to catch your spirit and responses in the following lists. If you did not have an opportunity to respond to the questions, please take a moment and do so either in an email or put in Pastor Joy's mailbox. Special thanks to our hosts and those who participated in the gatherings.

1. What brought you to PCA? We are lifelong PCUSA, location, over and over you said PCA is a friendly and caring community and you like the progressive and open theology here; spouse brought you here; many of you talked about PCA's mission to put "Faith into Action", Logos; MoreLight commitment; the diverse and informal worship, youth programs, needed raise our children in the church – lots of kids in their age group; and of course our beautiful music; after hitting the bottom found PCA in the yellow pages; looking for a spiritual journey, social and justice issues addressed here, welcoming people, sermons; Jim and Marjean, Tom and Emily Soelter, Bill and Frances Potts, the Peakes, looking for a church where what was preached was actually practiced, creative use of liturgy/informal; social outreach, Steve Van Kuiken, inclusive to gay and lesbian folks, family here ; the yellow pages, a good place to raise our children in a church setting; greeted by friendly people, a friend invited me.

2. What keeps you at PCA? Relationships, sense of community; the mission here, apostles groups, music and choir, Hungarian partnership, sense of belonging, diversity, inclusiveness, logos, opportunities for service, caring people, mission of justice and openness to diversity, involvement of everyone, the spirit here, preaching, HIY, family is here, friendly people, community commitment, the warmth and genuine care of the congregation, sermons, PCA is my spiritual life, my involvement in the work of PCA, a place to share ideas and be heard, a place to stay God- centered; the progressive theology, Christian role models for my kids, outward focus, the Soelters, open set of values, allowed me to take communion; welcoming and warm, tools for my spiritual journey, location, education, music and music, livewires, pastor Joy, children's programs, worship style, investment, wife is the choir director, compassion, "the church with purple doors", Mary Peake and Wendy Jensen remembered us, for wholeness,

3. Where is God calling PCA next? outreach to young families/ youth, to increase our membership because – we have an important message to share; to be apostles of Jesus Christ, continue to live out our commitment to love God and love our neighbors, to explore a relationship with Muslim community; to increase our presence as a MoreLight (welcoming of gay and lesbian friends), no more programs just being faithful to those we already have in place; living out with strength with our MoreLight commitment; help the least and more vulnerable in our midst; recover a volunteerism spirit, youth, draw in more people, claim roots and tradition as we move into the future, strong role in the community for progressive Christianity, God wants us to be less centered on ourselves and more with those on the outside; search for injustice in the world and do something about it, growth and mission, to work more closely together in worship, be a role model for youth and the world, to expand our worship, reach out to families, be Christ's representation to the world, be willing to grow and change and allow for new and young leadership, to be the future church.

The Center for Wholeness & Sisters of Sophia Apostle Group
Spirituality Event...

The Center for Wholeness and the Sisters of Sophia Apostle Group
of Presbyterian Church of the Apostles

**Invite all Women to treat themselves to a
Women's Day Out!**

Saturday, February 6, 2010 11:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

What: *Chasing the Joy: A Journey to Wholeness*, presented by New Wings, a nonprofit walking with women in transition

Where: Presbyterian Church of the Apostles, 701 East 130th Street Burnsville MN 55337

Who: Women seeking a day of renewal, centering, connection, and the awakening of new possibilities

Why: Because life is a journey of transitions, this day is an opportunity to come where you are on life's path, and see where you can go. *Where you are today is not where you must stay!*

Cost: No charge for the day; lunch will be provided.

The day features New Wings Executive Director JoAnn Molitor, a gifted speaker with a heart for women in transition and a rare ability to connect with people on a deeply personal level. JoAnn's life journey has led her to create *Chasing the Joy* and establish New Wings, a nonprofit that walks with women wherever they are, treating them with dignity, and respect, providing them with hope and walking with them as they take their next step, and the next.

Call a friend, sister, mother, daughter, or neighbor and set aside this day for YOU!

Apostle Group News

SISTERS OF SOPHIA APOSTLE GROUP

The Sisters of Sophia meetings are on **2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m.** Meeting place is now at the church in Fellowship Hall. In November we finished discussion about the book *The Shack* by Wm. Paul Young. We found the following quote from the book applicable to us and all the church: "...if anything matters then everything matters. Because you are important, everything you do is important. Every time you forgive, the universe changes; every time you reach out and touch a heart or a life, the world changes; with every kindness and service, seen or unseen, my (*God*) purposes are accomplished and nothing will ever be the same again."

The next meeting, December 14 at 7 p.m. will be our Christmas party with the hilarious White Elephant Gift Exchange. Everyone is to bring a wrapped white elephant and a treat to share.

Apostle Group News



Earth Angels Global Warming: Beware of Misinformation

Is global warming real and serious? Most climate scientists say yes, but the number of Americans who agree seems to have dropped sharply. A recent poll by the Pew Research Center shows that the proportion of Americans who think there is solid evidence of global warming has dropped to 57%, compared with 71% in April 2008. This may be due in part to recent claims by columnist George Will and others that the warming trend has slowed or even stopped in the past decade. It would be comforting to believe that warming is taking a break, but it's not true.

Climate scientists who write the respected blog RealClimate.org write that the observed warming trend over the past decade has been fully consistent with the expected trend and does not differ from the two previous decades. In fact, they say the years from 2001 through 2008 were all warmer than every year of the 20th Century except 1998, the year of El Nino. The data that supposedly show a "pause" in the warming trend, which come from Britain's Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction, have a major flaw, the scientists write. The Hadley Centre researchers left out the Arctic, which has seen the greatest warming of any region over the past decade.

The bottom line is that the evidence continues to show global warming—a trend that disproportionately affects many of the world's poorest people and threatens to exterminate myriad animal and plant species. In line with our call to be wise stewards of God's creation, it still makes sense to do all we can to conserve energy, support renewable energy development, and work for limits on carbon emissions.



AN INVITATION TCGMC Concert December 11

The Vnhisvlke apostle group has reserved a block of tickets for the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus Christmas concert Friday, December 11, 8:00pm at the Ted Mann Concert Hall at the University of Minnesota.

You are invited to join us for this special holiday performance. This year's theme is: "Celebrating the Wonder of our Inner Child". A sign up sheet is posted on the kiosk in the narthex. Tickets are \$23.00. Please make checks payable to Donald Bennett and place in the envelope in the Bennett's mail box. The invitation is open to PCA members AND friends. We will carpool from the church parking the night of the concert. Questions: Contact the Bennett's or our Vnhisvlke Apostle Group leader, Sheri Frette 952-8907877.



***The PCA Staff
wishes everyone a Merry
Christmas & a Happy
New Year!***



Apostle Group News



Feed My Starving Children (FMSC)
“For a long time now, to this very day you have not deserted your brothers but have carried out the mission the Lord your God gave you” (Joshua 22:3)

Let's continue God's work to care for all our children. Come, join other PCA members, and fill those bags with food. Haiti has requested 2.3 million meals for the Haitian students this school year. We have lots of work to do!

See the kiosk sign up sheet for one or *all* of the following Thursday evenings:

December 17 6:00 - 7:30pm
 January 21 6:00 - 7:30pm
 February 18 6:00 - 7:30pm

**Remember...we meet at the packing facility:
 990 Lone Oak Road, Suite 160, Eagan**



LIVEWIRES

The Livewires Apostle Group has ended the 2009 activities with a Karaoke Evening on November 20

All that is left to complete the 2009 activities is the Annual Christmas Party on 4 December.

It will begin at 7 PM with Carols and Cookies and if the past holds true- - -there may be a surprise visitor.. The volunteers will come to the Church at 6 PM on 3 December to set up for the Party and to share a Pizza dinner to celebrate a good beginning to the 2009-2010 Livewire season.

As usual, everyone is invited to join this FUN Group.

LIVEWIRES SCHEDULE

Dec. 3 (Thu) Christmas Party Setup & Pizza (6-8p)

Dec. 4 (Friday) Christmas Party (7-9p)

Jan. 15 (Friday) Board Games (7:30-9p)



Tee Shirts to Diapers Apostle Group now meets on the 2nd Sunday of the month in room #6.

The next gathering will be **Sunday, December 13.** For more information please contact Donneen McKay or Merry Daher. Diapers made by this group will go to children in Honduras by a mission group from the Prince of Peace Church in Burnsville.

Those interested should bring:

- Pins
- Shears
- Rotary cutters and mats
- Portable sewing machine and serger
- Power strip (optional)

For more information, please contact Donneen McKay at: office@presbyterianapostles.org

Livewires Providing friendship and social activities for mentally and physically challenged persons living in Dakota County. Contact: Carla Maslonka

T-Shirts to Diapers In partnership with the mission group from Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, the diapers made will be given to children in Honduras. Contact: Donneen McKay and Merry Daher

DECEMBER 2009

PCA's December Calendar of Events

can be accessed on our website at www.burnsvillepresbyterian.org

(Scroll to bottom of the Leadership page to view)

JANUARY 2010

PCA's January 2010 Calendar of Events

can be accessed on our website at www.burnsvillepresbyterian.org

(Scroll to bottom of the Leadership page to view)

Council Chairs

Administration

Dawn Baddeley, Chair
Frances Potts, Co-Chair

Christian Education

Roxann Evans, Chair

Church in Society

Ken Rood, Chair

Growth

Phil Finch, Chair

Nurture

Duane Sweep, Chair
Tom Soelter, Co-Chair

Property

Lee Simonson, Co-Chair
Gene Kurata, Co-Chair

Stewardship

Chris Baddeley, Chair

Worship

Kathryn Breitbarth, Chair
Cris Kallas, Co-Chair

PCA Staff

Pastor Rev. Joy Smith
Youth Director Jill Carlson
Organist Paul Berry
Pianist Sue Carlblom
Choir Dir. Jerri & Steve Johnson
Clerk of Session Jerry Johnson
Treasurers Fran Eichinger
..... Coleen Christenson
Financial Secretary Dan Carlblom

Secretary & Newsletter Production

Lisa Bellefeuille

Newsletter Collating & Mailing Team

Jim & Judy Peterson

JoAnne & Dana McKim

SESSION ELDERS

Elder Class of 2010

John Alabach
Jerry Johnson
Carla Maslonka

Elder Class of 2011

Doug Heuer
Marcia Lewis
Lisa Simonson

Presbyterian Church of the Apostles is located at 701 East 130th Street, Burnsville, Minnesota 55337. Anyone having questions or concerns may call the church office Tuesday through Friday at 952-890-7877 or leave a message on the answering machine at any time.

Sunday Worship is held at 10:30 a.m. preceded by 9am Adult Sunday School classes in the Fellowship Hall.

Newsletter: The "News of the Apostles" is published monthly as the voice of the Presbyterian Church of the Apostles. News and articles should be submitted via email (preferred) at:

office@presbyterianapostles.org

Article Submissions

Please submit your article for the February issue to the church office no later than Friday, January 15, 2010.

Small Group Ministries - We Welcome Your Participation

For more information on any of our Apostle Groups listed below, please contact the church office by phone at: 952-890-7877 or by e-mail at: office@presbyterianapostles.org

Arts Circle Bringing together those who are interested in the arts and how they promote worship. Contact: Karen Eighmy

Choir Ministry through Music. Contacts: Jerri Johnson, Choir Director & Steve Johnson, Special Music Coordinator

Christians in Action in the Community Provides Nurture Council support with church dinners and designated church maintenance projects. They meet for fellowship and Bible study on the third Sunday of each month for brunch. Contact: Lisa Simonson

Earth Angels Working to protect the environment through education and action. Contact: Betty Walker

Feed My Starving Children Volunteers at the FMSC location in Eagan hand-pack specially designed meals to be shipped to starving children in over 50 countries worldwide. Contact: Marjean McGuire

Livewires Providing friendship and social activities for mentally and physically challenged persons living in Dakota County. Contact: Carla Maslonka

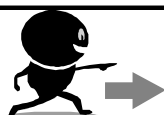
Sisters of Sophia Serving a meal at a Loaves and Fishes site in St. Paul. Contact: Marcia Lewis

Stewart Leisure Socializing and meal service to senior members of our church. Contact: Joan Rood

T-Shirts to Diapers In partnership with the mission group from Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, the diapers made will be given to children in Honduras. Contact: Donneen McKay and Merry Daher

Vnhisvlke (pronounced, An-hi-SUL-gey, is a Native American word from the Creek/Seminole language, meaning a gathering of friends.) A gathering of friends to study, share, and reach out to others. Contact: Sheri Frette

Detach the following Christmas Devotional pages from the newsletter and fold in half to make your booklet.



2009

Christmas Season

Devotionals

The First Sunday of Advent

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Keeping a Promise

Written by Karen Kennerly

“The days are surely coming when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. I will Cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”

Have you ever made a promise and then wished you hadn't?
Maybe you wanted to renege on it because you weren't sure you could keep it.

*“The whole world waits in December darkness
for a glimpse of the Light of God...”*
([Kneeling in Bethlehem](#) by Ann Weems)

God promised to send a Savior to redeem the world. And God's *promise* was kept in Jesus the Christ, the baby whose birth we anticipate in this season. God did not renege on that promise as difficult as God knew it would be.

Advent is a time of anticipation and expectation. We wait for the promise we read in Jeremiah – the righteous Branch to come and redeem the world even as we remember that our Lord, our Branch has already come and conquered death so that we will live forever.

*“In the December darkness
we peer from our windows
watching for an angel with rainbow wings
to announce the Hope of the World.”*
([Kneeling in Bethlehem](#) by Ann Weems)

Because God kept that promise to redeem our world, we, too, can keep the *promise* we have made to love and serve all God's people.

Prayer

God without beginning and without end, your promise comes to us, bringing hope. May we in turn come to your mountain, bending our swords and spears, seeking instruction, and walking in your light; in the name of Jesus the Christ, the light of the world. Amen.

Epiphany

Isaiah 60:1-6 and Matthew 2:1-12

Written by Marcia Lewis

It's January 3, 2010: New Year's Day has come and gone, and Christmas festivities are fading into the background of memory. The cooking, baking, decorating, shopping, the hurried pace, the striving to get done, the deadlines, the social, family, and church commitments are over (whew!) and in their absence, I often feel...a sense of letdown and emptiness. Every year I struggle with the gnawing question deep in my soul of how I will choose to live my life each new day; of how I will answer the call to be a good and faithful servant in this place. I sense from others at PCA that they too struggle with how to respond to the call for action in this needy and hurting world. I offer you this story told by a friend of mine: A hospice care volunteer was at the bedside of a woman living her last few moments of this life. The chaplain had been called but had not yet arrived. The caregiver held the woman's hand as she lay in a comatose state, her eyes closed, her breath shallow, unaware and unresponsive. As the spirit prepared to leave her physical body, the woman opened her eyes and in a moment of presence and clarity, asked the hospice caregiver, "Are you Jesus?" With her hand tenderly clasped in his, and smiling into her eyes, he replied, "No, I'm not Jesus, but he sent me."

As we begin 2010, reborn this Christmas and each new day in Christ, I believe that is the answer we at PCA have been called to give individually and collectively—that we are sent by Jesus to answer the call to love, to give, and to be for others, serving with gladness, feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, speaking for the voiceless and downtrodden. How will we be equipped to carry this awesome responsibility and opportunity? Oswald Chambers (I had never heard of him either) wrote in 1936, "If you are going to be used by God, he will take you through a multitude of experiences that are not meant for you at all, they are meant to make you useful in His hands... We never realize at the time what God is putting us through; we go through it more or less misunderstandingly; then we come to that luminous place, and say—"Why God has girded me though I did not know it!" (from My Utmost for His Highest)

Prayer

Dear Creator and Loving God, open our hearts and souls to the work you would have us do, for we know you have equipped us well and that you will walk with us every step of the way. Help us accept that we need not know the answers; that we openly and faithfully commit ourselves to you in the name of Jesus Christ and that you will show us the way; that together may we joyfully and humbly respond, "**We are not Jesus, but he sent us.**" Amen.

The Second Sunday of Advent

Malachi 3:1-4 and Luke 1: 68-79

Preparation

Written by Rev. Joy Smith

Advent, the season when our northern hemisphere moves deeper and deeper into shadow, is a time to acquaint ourselves theologically with the blessed dark ... and perhaps to reenter our own dark places as we wait once more for Emmanuel to be born in us. What may initially seem frightful to us, as her pregnancy must surely have seen to Mary *can* be transformed into sacred space.

In her book, *Godding*, Dr. Virginia Ramey Mollenkott reflects on "Godding in the Dark". She recommends that we recover a positive theology of darkness, with its creative and healing significance, and thereby deepen our connection with the often-neglected right brain. It is this right side of the brain that directs the "feminine" or "dark" side of the body, according to the ancient theology of bodily "humors". Since the "masculine" elements were believed to be air and fire and "feminine" elements earth and water, Mollenkott writes, "what a relief to realize that roots grow and thrive in the dirt, in the moist cold darkness of the earth, and therefore suggest that God, the Ground of our Being and Becoming, is darkness as well as light!"

So as we honor the darkness during this time of holy expectancy, let us seek to nurture those roots that ultimately will yield the fruits of God's spirit for our ministry in the world.

(Birthing and Blessings by Rosemary Catalano Mitchell and Gail Anderson Ricciuti)

Prayer

Gracious God, we hear the promise of the coming of Jesus into a manger and into our hearts and homes. Bless our Advent waiting; fill our darkness with anticipation of your light; and bless us to prepare your way by lifting up the valleys in our lives and making smooth the rough places of others. For we pray in the name of Emmanuel — God with us. Amen.

The Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 12:2-6, Zephaniah 3:14-20, Luke 3:7-18

Joy

Written by Rachel Jevne

In today's society, we always seem to be rushing from one place to another: to work, to the gym, to a meeting, driving our children from one activity to the next. We are always finding something to worry about or get stressed about. We worry about finding time to get some project done at work or some home improvement project done at home. If we are students, we get stressed about a grade on a test. If we are sport enthusiasts, we worry that our team won't make it to the playoffs. We worry about wearing the perfect clothes or having the perfect haircut. Some of us have more serious issues, like worrying about the illness of a love one, or wondering how we are going to pay this month's mortgage or how we are going to afford to put food on the table.

The holidays are one of the most stressful times of year. We try to find the perfect present for that special someone or plan the perfect holiday meal. We stress about finding the time to decorate our homes. Some of us worry about finding the money to buy presents for our children, while some dread the loneliness of the holidays if we are far from our family and friends.

Whether our worries are frivolous or more serious, during this holiday season, we need to attempt to slow down and find ways to choose joy instead of anxiety. Find joy in those simple things like making Christmas cookies with the little ones in your life. Having a game night with friends or family. Sitting down to a holiday meal with family that you have not seen for awhile. Reading a good book and finding someone to talk about it with. Taking a walk in the woods and enjoying the beauty of the snow during a light snowstorm. Spending an afternoon going sledding or building snowmen. Listening and singing along to your favorite Christmas song. Just finding those simple things that make you smile.

Prayer

Dear Lord, please help us to choose joy instead of stress. Help us to find ways to relieve the worries and stress in our lives. Help us to focus on those simple things that make us happy. Amen.

The Second Sunday of Christmas

Psalms 147:21-20 and Luke 2:40

Written by John Eichinger

Pure Starlight from Angels

What must it been like, first seen in night's sky,
That Heavenly Star, the born Savior is nigh;
As wise seek the Christ Child, in heart, spirit, mind,
Let's too travel back, our quiet hearts find.

Like passage back then, steep mountains, sand paths,
Blessed is our journey, away from king's wrath;
Though dusty our feet, we're cleansed in our hearts,
We find the Christ Child, now all a new start.

We join Mary, Joseph, with breathtaking sighs,
Pure starlight from Angels reflects from His eyes;
We kneel to Christ Child, who'll forever change lives,
In His Name offer gifts, from our hearts deep inside.

Then find our way back, straight paths no malturns,
Keep present in Spirit, so lessons we'll learn;
And each in their heart, hold Christ Child near,
Then share Blessed Love, that's why we're all here.

Prayer

O Christmas God – the tinsel falls, the year turns, and the carols fade. The blessing of Bethlehem that touched all the gray in our lives with star silver is past. We read that the holy child grew and became strong and God's favor was with him. In this string of nameless days we long for just such steady becoming – for renewal and the routine, for courage in current events, for the assurance of God's presence beyond our holidays and into the wintering times of our lives. Amen.

The First Sunday of Christmas

Luke 2:41-52

Written by Steve Johnson

Luke 2:41-52 is the story of Jesus wandering away from his parents and spending three days in the temple “sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.” This passage summarizes the growing up years of Jesus, his education and first separation from his parents. We can identify with this family both as teen-agers and as parents. If only our own adolescence had been so uncomplicated. And what parent doesn’t suffer anxiety over the natural separation of a child. In this day of helicopter parents, a twelve year old child’s three-day disappearance would be gut-wrenching, worthy of a one hour television documentary.

Jesus and his parents seem to be conscious of his unique relationship with God, the Creator. Part of the parents’ concern was the obligation they felt for raising God’s son. We would be nervous wrecks if entrusted with the safe-keeping of someone with immeasurable importance. How would you answer God if you carelessly lost His Son? It’s no wonder why Mary and Joseph cry when finding Jesus, “Child, why have you treated us like this?” Jesus’ response also reveals his understanding of his position in the world. “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” It seems Jesus, Mary, and Joseph had had earlier discussions of Jesus’ giftedness, which then also became apparent to the teachers in the temple.

The third verse in the carol “Once in Royal David’s City” expresses our identification with Jesus and his parents.

Jesus is our childhood’s pattern,
Day by day like us He grew;
He was little, weak and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us He knew;
And He feels for all our sadness,
And He shares in all our gladness.

Prayer

Lord, you have presented to us a mystery of an omnipotent God made into human and limited form but with boundless potential. Enable us to see and value that potential in fellow human beings. Amen.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Micah 5:2-5, Psalm 80:1-7, Luke 1:46-55

Birth of the New Creation

Written by Jevne Kloeber

In Psalm 80 the people cry out for mercy and the Lord’s strength to save them from their enemies. In Micah 5, Jerusalem is besieged by enemies and they are told a ruler will come out of Bethlehem whose strength will come from the Lord and he will bring Peace. Luke tells us of Mary’s visit to Elizabeth. Mary praises God’s greatness and mercy, who has scattered the proud, brought down the mighty and lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry and sent the rich away empty handed.

The story of the coming of Jesus is a story of a people who had long awaited a Savior who would bring them safety from their enemies. Many expected a strong and majestic king. But Jesus is born to common people, in the humblest of surroundings. He brings a message of hope and peace to the poor and one of rejection to the rich and proud. Jesus did not grow up to be a mighty warrior who would slay their enemies, but instead would bring a message of love, justice, forgiveness, and peace. What is the message for us today? Jesus would not be impressed by our wealth, personal success, our big homes or magnificent churches. He would not be impressed with our powerful weapons and mighty armies. Jesus’ way was nonviolence. His was the way of Gandhi, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa or the Dalai Lama. We have a choice. How will we pursue peace?

Prayer

Dear Creator God, Mother, Father of us all, we yearn for peace. We pray for peace. We are heartsick with the brutality and death of wars, the needless hunger, sickness, death and injustice caused by the greed of the few. As we anticipate the coming birth of the Prince of Peace, help us to see what our responsibility is and what we can do to bring your peace to a hurting world. In the Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7 and Luke 2: 1-20

The Night is Finally Here

Written by Ken Rood

Here is my story:

It was Christmas Eve, 1946. I know it was 1946 because next door, Johnny Crookshank's dad had just taken delivery of a new 1946 Ford. It was one of the first available after the war and he had waited six months for it. Even in December he would sit on his front steps and admire the Ford's freshly waxed maroon paint job, while smoking a Harvester cigar.

We didn't have a car because both my parents were blind. We also didn't look forward to Christmas Eve because we had been told there was no Santa Claus. I was five, my younger brother was two, and my older brother was eleven. My parents had no money for gifts, so they were being kind when they told us not to expect gifts under the tree on Christmas morning.

We lived in the upstairs of a duplex at 2711 Oliver North in Minneapolis so we were surprised when the narrow, twisting stairway to our front door filled with a five piece brass band from the Volunteers of America. Mom opened the door and we were greeted by "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" and a basket of groceries including a Turkey and canned vegetables from the Bar-None Ranch. Then they offered a pumpkin pie and said "Merry Christmas" which made mom cry.

Only a few minutes after the band left, a uniformed group of carolers from the Salvation Army appeared at the door. They sang, "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem" and before leaving they gave us wrapped gifts that Santa had left with them by mistake. Mom cried again.

Christmas morning I opened my package. It was a large toy truck made of metal with a red cab and a blue trailer. We were told that boys don't cry, but I did anyway. I learned that Christmas that there is "Peace on Earth and Goodwill Toward Men" and I learned that the giving spirit of the Christ Child is sometimes as close as the Volunteers of America or the Salvation Army Kettle at the corner.

Prayer

Dear God, who comes to us in Jesus, on this night as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, let the power of Christ come into our hearts that we might find peace with you forever. Amen.

Christmas Day

Luke 2:1-20

The Birth of Jesus

Written by Betty Walker

GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY

"And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid: for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased." Luke 2:10-11; 13-14.

But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.

Luke 2:19.

Amidst the busyness of this Holy season - choosing the right gift for family and friends, selecting the right tree to be trimmed, preparing that special dinner and so on, sometimes it becomes difficult to find the time as Mary did to ponder what this joyous event means to each of us.

As Mary pondered this in her heart, we, too, should ponder what the birth of Jesus means to each of us and the blessings and gifts given us:

The blessings and gifts of:

Friends and family

Our church family

Our homes

God's creation

Life itself

And all that God has done for us.

Merry Christmas

Prayer

May the Hesaketywese (Creator God) continue to shower blessings and gifts on each of you and may you ponder in your hearts, the meaning of this Holy and Blessed Day. Amen.