

December 2011

Glimpses of Faith Newsletter

Faith UCC
970 N. Loop 337
www.faithuccnb.org
New Braunfels, TX 78130

Church Phone 625-6761

Rev. Scott B. Martin
Cell Phone 515-2866



Christmas is drawing close, the day we celebrate the birth of Emmanuel, God-with-us. Because birthdays are only ONE day and there is no way one day is adequate to fully explore, reflect on and celebrate Emmanuel's birthday, the Church in its wisdom came up with the idea of Advent. Advent lasts for four weeks leading up to Christmas. Christmas is about love, the love of God for us and our love of God and neighbor. As I contemplate the meaning of Christmas two short writings come to mind, the first a poem by Christina Rossetti and the second by the Apostle Paul from Philippians 2:1-11. I've never looked at them side by side before.

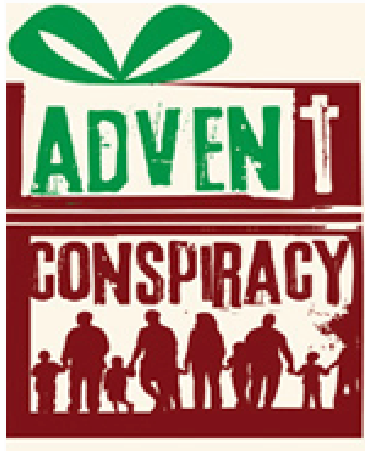
Take some time and join my contemplation....

**Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love Divine;
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and Angels gave the sign.**

**Worship we the Godhead,
Love Incarnate, Love Divine;
Worship we our Jesus:
But wherewith for sacred sign?**

**Love shall be our token,
Love shall be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.**

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.



Advent Conspiracy

The story of Christ's birth is a story of promise, hope, and a revolutionary love. So, what happened? What was once a time to celebrate the birth of a Savior has somehow turned into a season of stress, traffic jams, and shopping lists. And when it is all over, many of us are left with presents to return, looming debt that will take months to pay off, and this empty feeling of missed purpose. Is this what we really want out of Christmas? What if Christmas became a world-changing event again? Welcome to Advent Conspiracy, a movement calling us to proclaim Christ in how we celebrate Christmas.

First Sunday of Advent, November 27th “Worship Fully” It starts with Jesus. It ends with Jesus. This is the holistic approach God had in mind for Christmas. It's a season where we are called to put down our burdens and lift up a song to our God. It's a season where love wins, peace reigns, and a king is celebrated with each breath. It's the party of the year. Entering the story of Advent means entering this season with a n overwhelming passion to worship Jesus to the fullest.

Second Sunday of Advent, December 4th “Spend Less” Everyone loves giving and receiving gifts. We are not talking about turning into Scrooge here! Consider this, America spends 450 billion a year on Christmas! Have you ever bought a gift for no other reason than “obligation?” Ever given or received a gift that had “minimal thought givent to it?” What if we gave the gift of ourselves this Christmas? What if we gave more “relational” gifts. Looking for ideas for gifts that don't cost a lot of money but carry a lot of love? Check out this website <http://www.rethinkingchristmas.com/>

Third Sunday of Advent, December 11th “Give More” God's gift to us was a relationship built on love. So it's no wonder why we're drawn to the idea that Christmas should be a time to love our friends and family in the most memorable ways possible. Time is the real gift Christmas offers us, and no matter how hard we look, it can't be found at the mall. Time to make a gift that turns into the next family heirloom. Time to write mom a letter. Time to take the kids sledding. Time to bake really good cookies and sing really bad carols. Time to make love visible through relational giving. Sounds a lot better than getting a sweater two sizes too big right?

Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 18th “Love All” When Jesus loved, he loved in ways never imagined. Though rich, he became poor to love the poor, the forgotten, the overlooked and the sick. He played to the margins. By spending less at Christmas we have the opportunity to join him in giving resources to those who need help most. When Advent Conspiracy first began four churches challenged this simple concept to its congregations. The result raised more than a half million dollars to aid those in need. One less gift. One unbelievable present in the name of Christ. Faith UCC will give away its entire Christmas Eve offering to Living Water, which builds and repairs water wells in poor countries so poor people can have access to clean, safe water. Help us help them! Check out their website <http://www.water.cc/>

UCC Christmas Fund Special Offering

The Christmas Fund is one of our UCC 5 for 5 offerings. The generous gifts of UCC congregations and individuals to the Christmas Fund enabled the Pension Boards' Ministerial Assistance program to provide some form of Ministerial Assistance to approximately 1,600 person over the past year:

Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks were sent to approximately 900 persons in 2010. Of those who received the checks, 20 are over 100 years of age. The oldest person is 107. One person has received Christmas checks continuously since 1976. The 900 gifts totaled \$270,000.

Monthly pension supplementation is being provided to 434 persons. These gifts totaled \$103,401 per month. A significant part of the annual total of \$1,234,344 comes from the Christmas Fund.

Quarterly health premium supplementation is being provided to 267 families, totaling \$160,608 per quarter. All of the funding for health premium supplementation is derived from the Christmas Fund.

Emergency Grants totaling \$38,163.35 were provided to 24 individuals and families from January 1-July 31, 2011.

Updated information is available on the Pension Boards' website www.pbucc.org or visit the Christmas Fund section of the site directly at www.christmasfund.org



December Birthdays

12-1 Cody Allen

12-11 Devyn Perry-Clark

12-13 J.D. Foster

12-15 Mikki Ward

12-22 Tiffany Gilbreth

12-23 Dennis Krueger

12-26 Richard Leber

If your birthday is not here let the pastor know so it can be added for next year.



We currently have \$1,600.76 in loans outstanding. **To date we have loaned out \$9,475!** That means the money in this fund has been loaned and reloaned almost six times over! We have made 111 loans to date, including four in the last month.



\$50 was loaned to the Valentine Group in Kenya through the One Acre Fund. This is a different business model from all our other loans. It helps farmers buy seed, fertilizer, etc. in the off-season to plant for next year. This helps them save money. Unlike most loans the loan is not paid off monthly but at the end of the growing season when the farmers harvest their crops.

\$100 was loaned to the Milagro de Dios Group in Nicaragua. Reyna Elizabeth and her friends Priscila, Fidelina, Rosa Elizabeth, Evelia, Celina, Francisca and Sayda make up the “Milagro de Dios” (God’s Miracle) communal bank. In Reyna’s case, she sells soup. She started this way of life thanks to her mother who taught her this occupation so that Reyna could have a way of earning household income. The reason for this loan is to buy vegetables, meats, spoons and cups, to improve her business.



We loaned \$100 to the YHIRE Group in Bolivia. One member of the group is Senora Zenobia, who will use the money to purchase a refrigerator for her shop to help store grocery items to sell.

We loaned \$100 to Hugo Dario Delvalle in Paraguay to help him expand his orchid business. He has been in business for 15 years and began selling orchids with his mother, while his wife ran a small store from their house.



It’s Christmas. Why not give a Kiva gift certificate as a Christmas gift to a friend or family member. Check out this link for more info <http://www.kiva.org/gifts/kiva-cards#/print>

December Worship Assistants

December 4

Liturgist: Kathy Leber Acolyte: Quinn Perry Council Rep: Don Green
Greeter: Richard Leber Hospitality: Sheila Angerer Communion: Judy Anderson
Ushers: Don Green; Richard & Kathy Leber; Sheila Angerer
Children's Ch: Michelle Perry AV: Karen Kramm

December 11

Liturgist: Steve Foster Acolyte: Larissa Hunley Council Rep: Jan Hunley
Greeter: Nancy Foster Hospitality: (Potluck) Children's Ch: Mikki Ward
Ushers: Jan Hunley; Steve & Nancy Foster AV: Joe Ward

December 18

Liturgist: Julia Allison Acolyte: Charles Stark Council Rep: Charles Stark
Greeter: Joe Ward Hospitality: Kathy Leber AV: Tim Marlow
Ushers: Richard Leber; Charles Stark; Julia Allison Children's Ch: Lacey Clark

December 24

Liturgist: Curt Leonhardt Acolyte: Devyn Perry Council Rep: Nicolle Clark
Greeter: Don Green Ushers: Don Green; Curt Leonhardt; Nicolle Clark
AV: Jan Hunley

December 25

Liturgist: Jim Gossett Acolyte: Will Gossett Council Rep: Nicolle Clark
Greeter: Evelyn Krueger Hospitality: Mikki Ward AV: Sheila Angerer
Ushers: Nicolle Clark; Jim Gossett; Evelyn Krueger (no Children's Church today)

Notice: If you cannot serve on the designated date/dates shown, please try to find a substitute. If that is not possible, please call Joseph Ward (830-305-0214) or leave a message at the church office (830-625-6761) as soon as possible. If you would like to be added or removed from all or part of the Worship Assistant List, please contact Joseph Ward at 830-305-0214.





Faith Church to Ring Bells for Salvation Army

We will once again be ringing bells for the Salvation Army. This year we will be at Granzin's on Friday, December 9th from 1-7 p and again on Saturday, December 10th from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.. You can sign up for a 2 hour shift on the kiosk.

New Braunfels is one of the few if not the only place in Texas that staffs

its Kettles with volunteers only. This is the Salvation Army's primary fund raiser for the year.

By the way, if you have not seen the new Salvation Army building, stop by. It's on Business 35 (Eliot Knox) where Guenther runs into Eliot Knox.

Hayden Stewart to Be Baptized on December 11th

Hayden Stewart will be baptized on Sunday, December 11th. She is the daughter of Josh and Heater Stewart and the granddaughter of Kathy Hoffmann. Our best wishes and prayers go out to them.



Choir Practice

The choir is holding choir practice on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. They are practicing music for the Christmas season. Come out and join in!

Taize Services 11/30 & 12/31

We have two Taize services coming up. We have an Advent Taize service on Wednesday, November 30th at **7:45 p.m.** We will also have a New Year's Eve Taize service at **5:30 p.m.** Don't miss these opportunities for quiet meditation during this very busy season!



Thank You from Wendy Reinke

Dear Faith Family,

My heart is filled with gratitude for the generous gift that you gave to my son Josh and his family. With medical bills and limited work, their finances are an on-going struggle, and the money is a huge blessing to them.. I know how much work it is to put on a garage sale, and for all the proceeds to go to them is a very loving gift indeed. Thank you. Thank you. Faith Church may be small in size, but it is extremely large in heart and Christian outreach. I was honored to have been a part of it while I lived with Dad. I miss you all and look forward to seeing you at Christmas.

Again---I appreciate your kindness. You have given me one more thing to be thankful for this year. Happy Thanksgiving to you all.

Love, Wendy Reinke



UCC Hope Shall Bloom Concludes Work in New Orleans



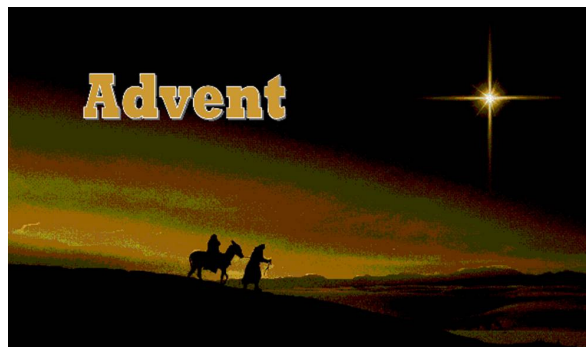
This program, headed up by Rev. Alan Coe, helped rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. The hurricane hit in 2005. Since then 572 groups (mostly church groups) with 7,035 volunteers have worked in this UCC program to help New Orleans recover. 113 housing projects have been completed by the estimated 175,875 volunteer hours put in. The estimated monetary value of these volunteer hours is \$3,738,505!

Of course you can not begin to measure what this program meant to the 113 families that received help and the thousands of volunteers and the people they touched when they went home and told their stories! This program represents the UCC at its best.

Vehicles and equipment used in this program are being distributed to local agencies, Back Bay Mission, Fuller Center of Housing in San Antonio and Slumber Falls Camp.

Advent Devotionals Available

Our thanks to Sheila Angerer for editing this year's Advent Devotional. The theme is *Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel, Shall Come to Thee, O Israel* You can pick one up on the literature table in the entry way. Sheila writes, "**Advent 2011 can best be experienced through the wonder of images, metaphor, music, poetry, art, silence and spiritual practices.**" Make this part of your Christmas preparations.



Advent/Christmas Calendar 2011

- 12-27 **First Sunday of Advent: Worship Fully** -Adult SS 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30
- 12-29 SCC Annual Meeting Planning Committee in New Braunfels 7 p.m.
- 12-30 12-30 Eden Hill Pastoral Care Luncheon 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Choir Practice 6:30 p.m.
Advent Taize Service 7:45 p.m. (30 min)
- 12-1 **World Aids Day**
- 12-2 UCC Clergy/Spouse Lunch at Eden Hill noon
- 12-4 **2nd Sunday of Advent: “Spend Less”** Adult SS 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m.
- 12-7 **Church Council 6:30 pm.. Choir Practice 6:30 p.m.**
- 12-9 Faith UCC rings bells for Salvation Army at Granzin’s 1-7 p.m.
- 12-10 Men’s Breakfast at 8 a.m.**
Faith UCC rings bells for Salvation Army at Granzin’s 9 am. To 6 p.m.
- 12-11 **3rd Sunday of Advent: “Give More”** Adult SS 9:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30 a.m. **Hayden Stewart baptized**
Second Sunday Potluck after church
- 12-14 **Choir practice at 6:30 pm.**
- 12-15 PFLAG in Seguin at 7 p.m. Contact Carol Gates for further info.
- 12-16 Faith UCC staffs the **SOS Food Bank from 1-4 p.m.**
- 12-18 **4th Sunday of Advent: “Love All”** Adult SS at 9:30 a.m.
Worship at 10:30 a.m. **(Children’s Christmas Program)**
- 12-21 First Night of Hanukkah
Choir Practice at 6:30 p.m.
- 12-24 **Christmas Eve Service at 5:30 p.m.** (candlelight service)
- 12-25 (no adult SS at 9:30) Worship at 10:30 (communion) (no Children’s Church)
Merry Christmas!
- 12-31 New Year’s Eve **Taize Service at 5:30 p.m.**
Happy New Year! May 2012 be a blessed year for all!