

December 2007

Glimpses of Faith Newsletter

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

830-625-6761
www.faithuccnb.org
Rev. Scott B. Martin



And you beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way,
With painful steps and slow,
Look now, for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing;
O rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing.
(*It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*, vs 3)

The words to this Christmas carol were written by Rev. Edmund Sears, a Unitarian minister in the Boston area in the mid 1800's. He wrote it to emphasize the social implications of the birth of Jesus and the Gospel he proclaimed.

One of the things that has struck me in my study of world religions is that at the core of all the major religions there is a call for compassion, for remembering and sharing with the poor, the orphan and the widow. It is precisely at those high points of the religious calendar, when we are most reminded of not just our "religious duties" but that the path to drawing closer to God in this world often takes us through the midst of the poor and the oppressed in our midst. Jesus saw this and reminds us that love of God is intimately connected to love of neighbor, especially those in with special needs.

In many ways "*It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*" is a very unlikely carol. It has so many depressing reminders in it. It speaks of this being a "weary world", a world filled with "sad and lowly plains", a world filled not with a voice of unity but a cacophony of "Babel sounds." It describes many of the earth's people being "beneath life's crushing load" weighed down with "toil" and taking "painful steps and slow." None of these are reminders you are likely to find on a Hallmark card or in our shops and stores.

Although the hymn is using the first century Christmas story as it's jumping off point it's author is clearly wanting to say that the world hasn't really changed much in this regard. There are still all too many people who find themselves "beneath life's crushing load." We are still a world that is "weary" with wars and rumors of wars, oppression of all kinds, and an economy that does not favor all the earth's peoples.

Christmas, then and now is meant to offer an "oasis peace". It's meant to show the world what the world could be like if we would all just listen for the "angel's song" "and all the world send back the song which NOW the angels sing."



Christmas Fund Offering

The Christmas Fund Offering (formerly the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross), one of four Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ (UCC), is an important way of sharing our joy at God's renewing and life-giving grace. The Offering, which is administered by the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance of the Pension Boards on behalf of the UCC, is an expression of joy and gratitude to, and for, those who serve the church.

Gifts to the Christmas Fund help provide pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retirees, emergency assistance to the families of clergy and lay employees and Christmas Gift Checks to hundreds of annuitants.

Facts taken from a 1953 publication indicate that: "In 1902, a little money was collected and special Christmas gifts were sent to ten older ministers." The same article also reports that \$121,054 was received for the Christmas Fund in 1952.

A little more than 50 years later, in 2006 the Christmas Fund received \$1,438,000 and nearly 1,500 families were assisted. Our goal is to be able to provide at least \$1,500,000 in assistance from the 2007 appeal.

Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees

whose low income annuities make it difficult to meet increasing living costs. This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care.

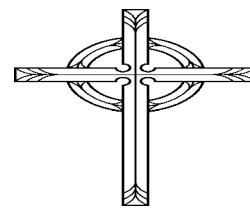
Special offering envelopes are in the pews and on the table in the narthex. December 23 is the official day for receiving the offering but you may contribute any time during December.



Anyone wishing to donate a poinsettia in someone's name may do so. Simply purchase one and bring it by the church and let us know in whose name it is being given. Please write the name down so that we get the spelling and any other particulars right.

Let's try and get as many poinsettias as we can to decorate the church sanctuary for Christmas.

Rev Jerry Metzger will be installed as pastor of Bethany UCC in San Antonio on Sunday afternoon December 2nd at 3:30 p.m. Contact Pastor Scott for carpool information.





- 12-6 Brandi Richter
- 12-11 Devyn Perry-Clark
- 12-12 J.D. Foster
- 12-15 Michael Ward
- 12-16 Candice Parker
- 12-22 Tiffany Gilbreth
- 12-23 Dennis Krueger, Jr.
- 12-26 Edna Elbel
- 12-26 Rick Leber

If we have left anyone off by accident, please let us know so we can add him or her to the list for next year.



December

Worship Assistants

Ushers

- 12-2 David & Sally Pena;
Steve & Nancy Foster
- 12-9 George & Mary Dare
Sol Fuss & Jim Gossett
- 12-17 Bennie Harst & Bruce Ridgley
Robert & Emily Deninno
- 12-23 Tim & Jennifer Marlow
Ray & Emma Lou Bizer
- 12-24 Julia Allison & Albert Hennig
Bennie Harst & Shari Haynes
- 12-30 Joe & Mikki Ward
Betty Triesch & Albert Hennig

Liturgist

- 12-2 Charles Stark
- 12-9 Betty Triesch
- 12-16 Mikki Ward
- 12-23 Curtis Leonhardt
- 12-24 Kathy Leber
- 12-30 Tim Marlow

Communion Assistants

- 12-2 Steve & Nancy Foster

Acolytes

- 12-2 Charles Stark
- 12-9 Jim Gossett
- 12-16 Bennie Harst
- 12-23 Tim Marlow
- 12-24 Albert Hennig
- 12-30 Joe Ward

Greeters

- 12-2 Michele Gilbreth
- 12-9 Sol Fuss
- 12-16 Bennie Harst
- 12-23 Albert Hennig
- 12-24 Bonnie Stark
- 12-30 Joe Ward

Council Reps

- 12-2 Michele Gilbreth
- 12-9 Jim Gossett
- 12-16 Bennie Harst
- 12-23 Albert Hennig
- 12-24 Bonnie Stark
- 12-30 Joe Ward

Notice: If you cannot serve on the dates shown, please try to find a substitute. If not possible, call the church office (625-6761) as soon as possible.



This year's Christmas Eve service will be Monday night December 24th at 5:30 p.m. There will be lots of Christmas carols and the traditional candlelight service at the end with the singing of *Silent Night, Holy Night*.

December 1st is World Aids Day



Salvation Army Bell Ringing

Thanksgiving is almost here – and the Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign will begin November 23rd the day after Thanksgiving. As we thank God for our blessings let us remember those who are less fortunate by signing up to ring the bells on Saturday,

December 8th. The sign up sheet is on the kiosk in the church entry way. We need 25 people to fill 25 two hour slots at five different locations around New Braunfels. Give a Christmas gift of your time to give blessings to others.

Lois Swander

New UCC Related Retirement Housing Project to Open In San Antonio

The Retirement Housing Foundation, a UCC agency with over 150 housing sites in the USA, will break ground for its newest Texas housing site, Bexton Place, in San Antonio, TX, on Tuesday-November 13. The Rev. Gerry Metzger, Pastor of Bethany Congregational UCC in San Antonio and also Associate Conference Minister of the Conference, will represent Rev. Anders and the Conference at the groundbreaking.

New Orleans Update

As of **October 17, 2007** the South Central Conference Disaster Ministry has **hosted 231 groups with 2473 people**. The groups have come from **36 states** and **5 foreign countries** to work in disaster relief.

They have **logged 62,059 hours of work valued at \$1,117,062!** What a great blessing to the people of New Orleans!



Continuation of the “UCC 100,000 for Peace” Campaign

Today, in response to many requests that the UCC do more peacemaking – not less – during the coming weeks, **we’re announcing the next phase of “100,000 for Peace.” It’s our most complex, most intensive effort yet. ...**

- **First**, in the next seven weeks, **we need to raise at least \$100,000 to provide shelter, food, clothing and education for Iraqi war refugees and their children.** At least four million people have been displaced by the Iraq War – two million internally and two million who are fleeing to Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.

Our ecumenical mission partners have asked that we respond urgently and generously, so we are bringing this emergency appeal directly to you. **Your gift of \$40 will feed an Iraqi refugee family of four for two weeks.**

We have pledged to gather \$100,000 by January 6, because it is a significant date. For western Christians, this is the day of Epiphany, the time in which Christians proclaim the light of Christ to the world. But it’s also Orthodox Christmas Eve, the time when most Iraqi Christians will gather to celebrate Christ’s birth.

- **Second**, also by January 6, we’re asking for an unprecedented show of support for our U.S.

service personnel in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. We are hoping to **lift and send more than 100,000 prayers, letters and signs of support to those serving in the military.** In the coming days and weeks, you’ll receive information, resources and online tools to help make this a reality. You’ll also be asked to advocate on behalf of returning soldiers. We will be calling on the U.S. government to provide for the health and welfare needs of our veterans.

- **Third**, we want our **Pastoral Letter on the Iraq War** to be delivered 100,000 times to the in-district offices of our U.S. Senators and Representatives. **What was delivered to Washington collectively must now be delivered – by each of us – to the local offices of each member of Congress.** In a massive wave, starting in December and going through January 6, we want the Pastoral Letter to be delivered through local visits, personal letters or phone calls. Together, we’ll use the UCC’s website to calendar our local visits so that we can visualize our collective efforts and pray for one another.

This is a busy season. And it’s just gotten busier. As it once was proclaimed by angels, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace.” **Let us be bold this Christmas to proclaim and advance peace for all of God’s people.**

Sincerely,
Rev. John Thomas
General Minister & President, UCC

Community Service Center is Looking for Volunteers

The Community Service Center is a local non-profit agency that helps needy families in New Braunfels and the Comal County area since 1976. The center assists with utility bills, food, clothing, convalescent equipment, and many other needs throughout the year as well as Local and National Disasters. We serve as a Clearinghouse and Resource bridge to connect the vast network of churches, charities, and organizations that provide assistance to the less fortunate residents of Comal County. We also have the Thanksgiving Care Program, Christmas Outreach and Holiday Express Program. These are all very important resources in our community.



We are in need of dedicated people who would like to join our team. If you might be interested in becoming a

Board Member, please call me at 210-414-3753. Or if you would like additional information, check out our websites: www.nb-csc.org
www.wor.nb-csc.org

Thank you for your consideration,

Michele Gilbreth

Women's Circle News

At our October meeting, Lois Swanders spoke of the Comal County Church Women's program, to be held here at Faith Church, on the 16th. The title of the program is "Embracing Justice, and hopes to show that not everyone moving to the U.S. is a drug dealer or terrorist. Many from Mexico are seeking a new and better life for themselves and their families, and they are making a contribution to life here in the States. The ladies will make a "tent" and have a box of food, to show how Christians can welcome people with generous hospitality, shelter and something to eat.

Eleven ladies were in attendance, plus Pastor Scott.

Elections were held: **Karen Dietz** will be President; **Lois Swanders** Vice President; **Sandy Ludwig** Secretary; and **Norma Gilbert** Treasurer.

We also planned our Christmas Shut-in Program for Eden Home, and were assigned our various duties. The women are all looking forward to it.



RAVE:

Renewal & Vitality Endeavor

The RAVE (Renewal and Vitality Endeavor) task force gathered recently to discuss priorities for the coming year and for the long term life of Faith Church. Bonnie Stark, Nancy Foster, Karen Kramm, Kenneth Triesch, Sherry Haynes, and Nicole Perry-Clark were present. Three areas of emphasis were discussed for our short-term focus. Everyone agreed that renewal and vitality must always begin with worship as priority number one and with fellowship and other activities as a second priority. Although evangelism, and community outreach is always a top priority in the life of the church, the task force decided that revitalization must start from within our own congregation. Therefore, our focus for the coming months will have an emphasis on worship/music, and fellowship. We hope to continue to welcome the greater community to worship with us, as our long-term plan unfolds with specific evangelism activities and advertising activities planned for Spring.

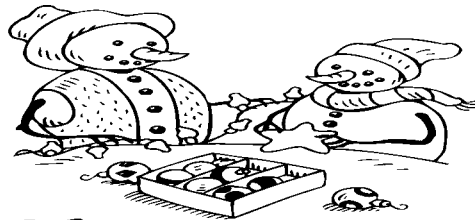
Bonnie Stark

Adult Sunday School Will Not Meet In December

We have reached the end of the church year and the Pentecost season. Because of the business of the holiday season the adult class will not meet in December. Our thanks to Curt Leonhardt, Charles Stark and Mikki Ward for teaching.

As we head into the new year we will be evaluating the adult education component of Faith UCC. Adult education is VERY important in the life of the church and of individual Christians. We will be seeking your input on what you would like to study and when you would like to do it. We also will be looking at a variety of models for engaging in adult education in this church. If Sunday morning for nine months of the year doesn't work for people, what will: weekend retreats, short term (6 week classes); midweek evenings; current book study; DVD study on a variety of topics; etc.

Let's be creative. Be thinking about what YOU would like to study together and when would work best for YOU.



Christmas Party

Robert and Emma Deninno are inviting their Faith Church family to come to their house for a Christmas party on Friday December 14th. The party will begin at 6 p.m. EVERYONE is invited! Come on out for some holiday cheer!

We will pass around an RSVP sheet in church on Sunday December 2nd and 9th. Please sign up if you plan to attend. This will help greatly in determining how much food to have on hand. You can also RSVP by phone: 214-0718. Their address is 1805 Crystal Springs Bend, located in Gruene. A map is available at the church.

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September Treasurer's Report

General Fund	Balance	8/31	\$1,283.24
Income & Deposits	September		6,163.50
Disbursements	September		8,629.53
	Balance as of	9/30	(\$1,163.53)
Building Fund	Balance	8/31	\$2,922.32
Income & Deposits	September		912.50
Disbursement (ck # 400)	Regular payment		\$1,214.00
	Balance as of	9/30	\$2,834.73
Memorial Fund (Unchanged)	Balance 8/31	\$1,214	Balance 9/30 \$1,214
Savings Account	Balance	8/31	\$7,250.63
Deposit	Sign Rental Income		208.33
	Balance	9/30	\$7,458.96
Loan Balance on Building	Approx.	9/30	\$44,502.69

Respectfully Submitted: Terri Armstrong, Financial Secretary

