

THE BLACKSTONE VALLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Our Mission is to change peoples' lives
through a relationship with Jesus Christ

December 2008



From The Pastor's Heart

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Welcome to our first season of the church year --- Advent!

This is a season filled with action and preparation. Even our waiting is vibrant as we prepare for the coming of the Christ child. All of our senses are touched during this season of expectation --- we listen to favorite Christmas carols, we decorate our homes and the sanctuary, there is the aroma of cookies and pies baking. Most importantly, there is the promise of a closer relationship with God that will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

In the midst of all this, how will *you* fill this holy season? Will you fill these four weeks with busyness, holiday shopping, decorating, parties and gathering? Or will you take a deep breath and make the intentional decision to work on your relationship with God --- along with other holiday activities? I invite you to make this an Advent that touches your heart and soul, and that brings you into a closer relationship with God and others. I invite you to make this an Advent where you truly prepare yourself for the birth of the Christ Child --- not just for the arrival of Santa.

You know, this can be done! It's a matter of being intentional and revisiting your priorities! Journeying through Advent in this way will take energy and thinking out of the box on your part, but let me warn you, it could change your life!

So, what kinds of things could we try to do?

First, come to worship each Sunday. Make this a priority during Advent --- in fact by making it a priority during Advent, you might actually make it a habit throughout the year!

Second, try to read and follow the Advent weekly Scriptures. They will be included in this news letter. Sometimes reading and reflecting on the scriptures before coming to worship can give you a different and deeper perspective.

Third, pray as a family. Say a prayer before meals, before going to bed at night, as you get up in the morning, before decorating the tree, before beginning work. Pray for the person you are shopping for or for the person who blessed you with a gift. Let every breath be a prayer. Pray for each other and your friends. Pray for your faith community, the community in which you live. Pray for our leaders and the leaders of the world.

Fourth, you might consider as a family only giving one or two gifts this year and then giving money to different charities. I know families that have bought a goat, some bee hives, or roosters and hens for Heifer in lieu of gifts for each other!

If you have children, be creative! You might try making an Advent chain with one link of the chain for each day of Advent. On the inside of each link, write an activity that you can do as a family. For example, talk about a time when you had to wait for something, make cookies for someone who is homebound, make Christmas cards, shop for a toy to give to a child who's tag you took from the Giving Tree,

In this issue:

From the Pastor's Heart	1-2
Advent/Christmas Eve Scriptures	2
Confirmation 2009	3
Christmas Information	4
Identity Theft Workshop	5
Hi From Todd	6
Celebrations	7

Special points of interest:

- Advent/Christmas Schedule
- Key Points from Identity Theft Seminar
- Advent Psalm and Scriptures



(Continued on page 2)

(From the Pastor's Heart Continued)

say a prayer for a friend. As you remove each link, do the activity together as a family. You can also set up the Nativity set together. Start with an empty stable, adding 1 or 2 figures a week. As you add the figures, imagine their lives and how they might have been changed by Jesus' birth.

May your season of waiting be filled with expectation and awe, patience and action, compassion and love, and may your heart be fully opened and prepared to embrace the Christ Child on the day of his birth!

Grace & Peace,

Rev. Michele

Advent and Christmas Eve Scriptures

- November 30: Isaiah 64:1-9
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:24-37
- December 7: Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2 Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8
- December 14: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126 or Luke 1:47-55
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28
- December 21: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Luke 1:47-55 or
Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38
- December 24: Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-20

Advent Psalm

Advent Psalm

Taken from *Prayers For A Planetary Pilgrim* by Edward Hays

With prayerful pleas

and Advent song of longing,

I await the birth of God's Anointed One.

Come, O Gift of heaven's harmony,

and attune my third ear,

the ear of my heart,

so that I may hear,

just as Mary, faithful woman of Israel, heard.

O God, the time is short,

these days are too few

as I prepare for the feast

of the birth of Mary's son.

Busy days, crowded to the brim,

with long lists of gifts to buy

and things that must be done.

Show to me also, your highly favored child,

how to guard my heart

from noise and hurry's whirl

so that I might hear your voice

calling my heart to create an empty space

that might be pregnant with heaven's fire.

Quiet me within,

clothe my body in peacefulness,

that your Word

once again may take flesh –

this time, within me –

as once it did in holy Mary,

long Advent days ago.

Advent/Christmas Schedule

November 30th - First Sunday of Advent

No Sunday School

Gift tags available from the Giving Tree

Sign up to provide a Christmas Basket

December 7th - Second Sunday of Advent

Celebration of Holy Communion

Sunday School Pageant Rehearsal

December 14th - Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday School Advent Fair

December 21st - Fourth Sunday of Advent

Sunday School Christmas Pageant

All gifts and food baskets are returned and distributed!

December 24th - Christmas Eve

7:00 Family Service

11:00 Candlelight & Communion Service



Good and Faithful Servant

We give our thanks this month to Lucille Gallagher, our good and faithful servant.

Lucille demonstrates her tireless love for small children as she coordinates the weekly church nursery. She works ever so cheerfully in many “behind the scenes” efforts.

So, many thanks to you, Lucille, for your talents and your service, you good and faithful servant.

Confirmation 2009

Confirmation 2009 classes are now underway! Make sure you look for the confirmands’ pictures! Don’t be surprised if you see them helping out in the Nursery or in Sunday School, as ushers & greeters, reading scripture or attending meetings! They might even ask to interview you! All of those participating have been assigned special mentors. They are as follows:

Abbey Barkley – mentor Peggy Codner

Zach Beauchaine – mentor Charlie Ewers

Grant Brown – mentor Steve Shangraw

Hunter Daigle – mentor Glenn King

Chloe Mawn – mentor Karen Albright

Cassie McKeon – mentor Becky Brower

Kellen Murphy – mentor Bethany Cammarano

Nathaniel Wilson – mentor Mike Sherry

Brandon Wood – mentor Dean Fortin

This is an important and exciting faith journey for our youth. Please keep the confirmands and mentors in your prayers! The youth will be confirmed on Pentecost Sunday, May 30, 2009!

Cookie Walk

Cookie Monster says “C is for cookie. That’s good enough for me.” Well, cookies are good enough for anyone and on Sunday, December 21st during fellowship, the church will have a “Cookie Walk”. For a \$3.00 donation (all proceeds go to the general church fund), you get a special cookie box and can fill it with yummy treats.

Where do the cookies come from? It all depends on the fabulous bakers of our congregation. Please consider baking a batch or two and sharing your favorite cookie recipe(s) with everyone. Contact Audry Sherry (audsherry@yahoo.com) if you are willing to provide cookies or have any questions.



THIS
CHRISTMAS
END A QUARREL.
SEEK OUT A FORGOTTEN
FRIEND. DISMISS SUSPICION,
AND REPLACE IT WITH TRUST.....
WRITE A LOVE LETTER. SHARE SOME
TREASURE. GIVE A SOFT ANSWER. EN-
COURAGE YOUTH. MANIFEST YOUR LOYALTY IN
WORD AND DEED. KEEP A PROMISE. FIND THE
TIME. FORGO A GRUDGE. FORGIVE AN ENEMY. LISTEN.
APOLOGIZE IF YOU WERE WRONG. TRY TO UNDERSTAND.
FLOUT ENVY. EXAMINE YOUR DEMANDS ON OTHERS. THINK
FIRST OF SOMEONE ELSE. APPRECIATE. BE KIND; BE GENTLE.
LAUGH A LITTLE. LAUGH A LITTLE MORE. DESERVE CONFIDENCE.
TAKE UP ARMS AGAINST MALICE. DECRY COMPLACENCY. EXPRESS YOUR
GRATITUDE. GO TO CHURCH. WELCOME A STRANGER. GLADDEN THE HEART
OF A CHILD. TAKE PLEASURE IN THE BEAUTY AND WONDER OF THE EARTH. SPEAK
YOUR LOVE. SPEAK
IT AGAIN. SPEAK
IT STILL ONCE AGAIN

Food Baskets and Christmas Gifts

The 12 Northbridge churches are joining together to provide Christmas food baskets for 200 needy families in our town. The churches will also give Christmas gifts to the children aged 17 and under in those families. The Northbridge Association of Churches is grateful for the generosity and goodwill of the parishioners in our town.

Christmas Caroling

On Sunday, December 7 at 5:30pm there will be Christmas caroling at St. Patrick's nativity scene, Cross Street, Whitinsville, following the tree lighting on the Town Common. All are invited and the event is sponsored by the Northbridge Association of Churches.

Key Points from the Identity Theft Workshop

On Wednesday November 5th, Mike Tivnan and Jim Taylor presented information about this growing crime and how we can better protect ourselves. They emphasized that while we can never be perfectly safe, we can take action to make ourselves tougher targets to identity thieves. First, some surprising statistics: in the U.S., 1 in 20 people has had their identity stolen; more than half of the thieves are known to the victims; and 90% of identity theft occurs through paper transactions, not electronic. Got your attention?

Mike and Jim gave some great tips on things you can do to reduce the likelihood that you will become one of the statistics.

Stop carrying your Social Security card (or number) in your wallet or pocketbook. **CAUTION:** Your Medicare card has your Social Security number on it.

Get a locking mailbox for your house. Thieves take bills, statements, and credit card offers and use them to get new loans or credit cards in your name.

Start getting your monthly statements online instead of through the mail.

Shred, shred, shred. Don't throw out old statements, bills, or unwanted offers for credit without shredding them first. If you don't have a shredder, get yourself one for Christmas!

NEVER give personal information over the phone or email unless **YOU** initiated the contact and you are **SURE** who you are dealing with. Jim mentioned two scams – one claims to be your credit card company checking on suspicious activity, and the other claims they are investigating why you failed to arrive for jury duty. Both these scams try to instill fear by warning you of something bad, and then gain your trust by offering to help you resolve things.

Visit www.privacyrights.org for more information about how to protect yourself. This is a non-profit, consumer protection website that will explain more about identity theft and how you can avoid becoming a victim. It includes a wide array of information about all types of privacy (financial, medical, personal, etc.), but there is a link on the left side of the main page for "Identity Theft". You'll find fact sheets on protecting your identity and what to do if it should happen to you

Mike and Jim offered to present this workshop again if there are enough people interested. Get started now with the tips above, and contact Dean Fortin if you would like to attend a future workshop.

deanfortin@charter.net (include ID Theft in the subject line)



Hi From Todd

(As you know, our director of Music Ministry, Todd Marston, is now in China for five months playing with a band at The Shanghi House of Blues. Here is a latest update from him.)

Where to start? The weather here is just starting to get cold. Jordan and I bought winter jackets from a store called Hot Snow a few days back. Everywhere you turn, there are stores selling imitation western goods. The jackets were imitation Columbia brand. We bought them for 200 rmb each. That's about \$30. The conversion rate is 6.8 rmb to 1 US dollar. I'm slowly learning about the way things work here. It seems like one can negotiate for lower prices on all imitation goods. Often times there are no prices written on imitation goods, so you know that you can negotiate. Some people have told me that you can negotiate for everything, however, I tried to negotiate for a better price on the bike that I bought, and almost got kicked out of the store. I did pretty well on a pair of Diesel shoes yesterday. I talked them down to 200 rmb from 380. Jordan and I keep joking about who is becoming Chinese faster.

Riding bikes around the city has really opened up my whole world here. We took a bike ride to Pu Dong which is on the other side of the river. "Dong" means east. "Pu" means river. We live in Pu Xi which is "east of the river". There's a road that's shaped like a circle very close to the river on the left side of it, towards the lower part of the map. We live on the upper left part of that circle, on Ren Ming Road. It's not labeled.

Anyways, we road our bikes to the ferry that carries people from side to side for about 15 cents. We rode to a government building on the Eastern side of the river to get visa stuff done, then we rode to the World Financial Center. We call it the bottle opener. While on this bike ride, we ran into two people that we met at the House of Blues...very interesting in such a huge city.

Pu Dong is also where my cousin Tracy and her family live. They're awesome, and it's been great to spend time with them. The whole band will be going to their community hall for Thanksgiving dinner.

Unfortunately, everyone smokes here, and the club

is always smoky, especially on Fridays and Saturdays. Seems to go along with the blues club thing. Sam, a member of the band, was out for two weeks with acute laryngitis. He just starting performing with us again on Friday. While he was out, we had a few different folks sit in, a French singer named Jessica, an American trumpeter named JQ, and an Australian sax player named Willow. There are a TON of super talented musicians here, mostly imported from different parts of the world. I have to say though, it was a challenge to put together a real show, and Jordan played a HUGE part in keeping it together, making all of the phone calls, and helping to write all of the set lists. We played as a piano trio a few nights, which was a pretty monumental experience for me. I haven't played in a jazz piano trio on stage in front of a large audience in years. It was a lot of fun, and really opened my eyes to what it means to lead a small improvisational group. Besides that, it really is great to have Sam performing again. We had a real momentum growing before he got sick, and now the energy is much more focused, so I'm excited to see what we do next. We're making an effort to learn a few new songs each week.

We all flew to Beijing last Monday. It was amazing. I'm going to post pictures at some point, so I'll let you know. We went to the Great Wall, and then ate at Chef Dong's Braised Sea Cucumber. That's really the name of the restaurant. I'm not joking. It was one of the best meals of my life, despite the name. We had traditional Peking (Beijing) Duck. Hiking on the Great Wall really gave me a huge appetite, so I had no problem eating duck feet, heart, and even the duck skull. It was all really really good. Seriously.

So there you have it. If you made it through the whole email, congratulations! I think that was a long one. It's been great to hear from some of you about life back in the Western hemisphere, so please don't hesitate to keep in touch.

Alrighty, take care everybody.

-T



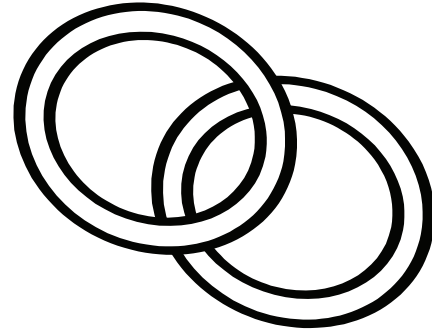
Celebrations



December Birthdays

December Anniversaries

- 1 - Bill Dalrymple
Christopher
Leighton
- 4 - Nicole Belle
Wesley Mawn
Kirby Mitchell
- 6 - Laural Plourde
Viki Viana



- 7 - Grace Pimentel
- 8 - Trinity DiStefano
Kaitlyn Mochu
- 12 - Ingrid Murphy
- 13 - Grace Burns
Bunny Shangraw
- 14 - Kevin Spencer

- 13 - Shannon & Dan Wheeler
- 30 - Kim & Dave Nadreau

- 17 - Charlie Ewers
Gabrielle Muscatell
- 18 - Myrt Doble
Lou Squier
- 23 - Roberta Trier
- 24 - Paula LaFlamme
- 26 - Kerri Radcliffe
- 27 - Darlene LaBonne
- 28 - Sherri Grazulis
- 29 - Nate King
- 30 - John Fairhurst
- 31 - Ginny Hammer



Please help the Communications Team keep the Birthday/Anniversary list up-to-date. Should you notice an error or omission, please let us know.

