

THE CHIMES

THE NEWS LETTER OF THE BAR HARBOR CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

29 Mount Desert Street, Bar Harbor, Maine 04609

Office Hours: Monday – Friday 9:00 – 3:00 PM

Telephone: (207) 288-3280 E-mail: office@barharborucc.org

Web Site: www.barharborucc.org

December 2008

From the Senior Pastor

Are we ever ready for Christmas? I don't know about you, but I am always surprised by the way the Christmas season sneaks its way into our lives. While some people complain that we start talking about Christmas earlier and earlier, I never feel as though I have enough time to get ready for the birth of the Christ Child. I do not believe I am alone in this. Several years ago I encouraged everyone to leave out their creche all year 'round, but even this is not sufficient to remind me, in the words of the old Christmas song, that "Christmas is coming, the geese are getting fat!" Perhaps the fact that I do not come in contact with many geese has something to do with that.

I am hoping that this year our church family will be doing a better job in getting ready for Christmas because of the new way we will be celebrating the Advent season. By making a special effort to attend Christian education events before church each Sunday and by engaging in a specifically family-friendly worship service each week, I don't see how we can help but be ready for Christmas. When you add to all of that our Christmas Festival, the Christmas Fair, Christmas carols, and our Advent candle lighting, we will be steeped in the traditions of the season. I encourage all of our members and friends to join in on the festivities. I promise you: **YOU WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED!**

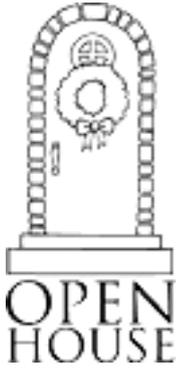
What do you do to prepare for Christmas? In my family while I was growing up it was always a time of more visits to and from the neighbors and relatives. We baked Christmas treats and my grandmother began her yearly preparations for our combination American/Italian Christmas dinner. We ventured out to the local shopping plaza for some gift shopping – there were always lots of

secrets as Christmas approached. One year I remember going to the Thruway Plaza with my Mom and Dad and wandering off to sing Christmas carols with the Salvation Army volunteers. My parents were frantic as they and the police searched for me, but as soon as my father heard the music he knew just where I would be. We didn't really attend church, but somehow I intuited the meaning of the holy season. As years passed church did become part of my celebration and I was deeply moved by how much more Christmas grew to mean in my life and the lives of the Christian friends I met.

Now, of course, church is the center of my family's celebration of the birth of Christ. As important as our family gatherings, our food, our parties, and our gifting are, there is no other reason to celebrate Christmas. Santa Claus is a wonderful part of the season as are the reindeer, the elves and the snowmen, but they are not the heart of Christmas. At the core of our celebration is the coming of the One we have waited for: Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

My prayer during this holy season is that our preparations here at the Bar Harbor Congregational Church will be pleasing to God and meaningful to those who are longing for the birth of our Savior. Please plan to be a part of the celebration. Don't be afraid of a little bit of change. To me, there is nothing more important we can do for ourselves, our children and the hope of the world. The road to Christmas is filled with blessings. May you and yours uncover them as you travel with us.

Sandra M Reed



The **Annual Christmas Open House** at the parsonage will be held on **Saturday, December 20, from 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM.**

Everyone is welcome to stop by 37 Hancock Street for some good food and conversation. Please come!

Getting Ready for Christmas

The Advent season will be quite exciting at our church this year. Everyone is warmly invited to attend any and all of the planned activities and worship services.

On November 30, December 7, 14, and 21 Sunday School will be held before church at 9:00 AM. During this time an adult Sunday School class will also be offered, led by Sandra Reed. The theme of the class will be Christmas Spirituals. We will be looking at various spirituals and welcoming them into our Christmas preparations. All adults of the church are welcome to participate.

The schedule of worship services for Christmas Eve is as follows:

5:00 PM The "Family" Christmas Eve Service, complete with candlelight

7:00 PM The "Traditional" Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

There will be no service on Christmas Day, but on Sunday, December 28, we will have a family friendly Christmastide service, complete with stories, scripture, music and prayer.

Youth Christmas Party

On Thursday, December 18 all youth, grades 3 - 7, are invited to a Christmas party. Please come directly after school and join in the fun. Parents are also welcome. There will be food, games, food, stories, and a craft. The party will be from 3:30 PM (or whenever the kids get there from school) until 5:30 PM. If you have any questions, please talk with Mary Swift or Sandra Reed.



The Living Nativity will return to the front steps of the church again this year on Wednesday, December 17th and Thursday the 18th at 6-7:20pm. Sign up sheets will be on the bulletin board the Sunday before Thanksgiving this year. It takes over 60 volunteers to have it run successfully. Newcomers to the church are encouraged to come and are most welcomed to this awesome Christmas event.

Please be at the church 5:15pm- 5:30pm at the very latest for the characters to get dressed. Dress in warm clothes. The costumes will cover most heavy outerwear. Supper will be provided for you.

Call Norma Spurling 288-9023 for any questions



Christmas for Kids gift tags are on the tree in the Narthex. This ministry provides Christmas gifts to children in local families who might not receive a gift without our help. Please help to make this program a success again this year with your generosity, your efforts to carefully wrap gifts, and by meeting imperative deadlines.

Each tag on the tree has an identification number and a gift item to be given to a particular child. Families and individuals are invited to take as many tags as they would like and to purchase and wrap the gifts. Please securely fasten the tags on the wrapped gifts and leave them under the tree no later than Sunday December 14th. Donations are gratefully accepted in lieu of shopping.

Envelopes will be available as well as a box to deposit them in.

There will be a sign up list on the bulletin board for volunteers needed to sort, distribute and shop for gifts. The Sunday school children will be a big help by making the tags for us to put on the tree. If you have any questions, please contact Karen McFarland at 288-5760 or Debbie Hammond at 288-8058.



Save the Date, Monday, January 5th, the first Monday following Epiphany Sunday, the Women's Auxiliary is having an Epiphany party, complete with a Yankee Swap. It will be held in the Church parlor at 6:30PM. All women are invited to attend and share an evening of good fun and good cheer. It may also be the opportunity you have been looking for to "regift" something that you received that you are still trying to figure out what it is, or whether you can use yet another one of...just wrap it and bring it along. You just never know what treasure you might bring home.

Please contact Ruth Rossi or Kathy Woodside to RSVP, if you would like further information, and to let them know if you planning to bring an appetizer or dessert to contribute to the festivities. Look for sign-up sheets in the Church parlor after December 14. Coffee, tea and soft drinks will be provided.

Kathy may be reached at Kcwoodside@roadrunner.com and 288-5160 and Ruth may be reached at rossiruth@aol.com and at 914-329-7704.

BYOCC 12/21 Coffee Hour

The Coffee Hour on December 21 will be B.Y.O.C.C. (Bring Your Own Christmas Cookies). Bring a sampling of your favorite cookies to share with others. The Church will provide juice, coffee and tea.

Tax-Free IRA Charity Distribution

The Pension Protection Act of 2006 that created "qualified charitable distributions" has been extended for this year and 2009. "So if you meet the age requirement, you can make charitable donations this year and next using IRA assets. The distributions are tax free—and can count toward the required minimum distribution that IRA holders who are 70 ½ and older must take from their accounts each year.

"Let's say you're required to withdraw \$12,000 from your IRA before Dec. 31, and you wish to give \$10,000 to several charities. If you direct your IRA custodian to send \$10,000 to the charities, that money would count toward your required distribution for 2008—and you would end up reporting only \$2,000 in IRA distributions (instead of \$12,000) on your tax return.

"Extracting money from an IRA without having it count toward your adjusted gross income is 'good for about 10 different reasons....' For example, your adjusted gross income can affect the size of your Medicare Part B premiums, taxability of Social Security benefits and eligibility to convert traditional IRA assets to a Roth IRA.

"...the gift has to go directly from the IRA to the charity. So, if you already have deposited your required minimum distribution for this year in your own bank account, you can't count a charitable gift from your IRA as your required withdrawal.

"... you have to make the gift to a tax-qualified nonprofit group. Some charities don't count, including charitable trusts, donor-advised funds and private foundations.

"...it is important to give clear instructions to your IRA custodian, and also to alert the lucky charity: You may want to ask for a letter from the charity acknowledging the gift, the date of receipt, the amount and language specifying that it came from your IRA."

“Any school, college, church, United Way agency—any group with 501(3) status--- counts.”

Please, where applicable, contact your income tax professional to see if an IRA gift to the Bar Harbor Congregational Church will work for you.

Source: *Wall Street Journal*



Christmas Fair

You are warmly invited to come to our 125th Anniversary Christmas Fair on Friday, December 5, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM. There will be something for everyone. We will have a luncheon serving crab rolls, chicken and egg salad sandwiches, soups, chili, and pies.

Our candy, cookies and baked goods tables will be filled with yummy goodies for your holiday gatherings. Our crafts and plants will make nice Christmas presents for that special someone on your list. Attic treasures, kids toys and books may entice you with an article that you've been looking for.

Don't forget the raffles! Our local businesses and crafters have donated many wonderful items. See you there! The Honduras group will be selling wreaths for their trip; they are exceptional, so remember to put them on your list!

HELP Wanted!!!

The Women's Evening Auxiliary needs your help to make the annual Christmas fair on Dec. 5th a success! Please check the sign-up sheets in the parlor to see where you can help out.

We need homemade pies, candy, cookies and baked goods for our food tables. The attic treasures table needs items that you no longer have a need for, but someone else would want to buy. Children's toys and books (gently used) are needed for our kid's table. We will have a plant

table this year and need plants of all kinds. We are making raffle baskets and need new items to put in them. Craft items are needed for our craft table.

We need helpers for set up on Wednesday, Dec. 3rd, helpers the day of the fair at the different tables, and helpers to clean up right after the fair. If you don't have time to sign-up this morning you can come in during the week and do it. We are hoping the men will add their names to the sign-up sheets!

Please Help Our Church Office

Our church office is a working office, and one of the things we try to do is work as efficiently as possible. When things take longer to do than they should, I work more hours, which translates into greater payroll expense for the church. I think a review of a few basic ground rules from time to time is helpful.

- 1) If you borrow something, put it back (where you found it, please). If you take some supplies, let me know so I can replenish them.
- 2) If you put card stock or other 'non-standard' paper in the input tray of the copier, take it out when you're done.
- 3) Please do not deposit large items in the office without talking to Paul or Sandra first. Space is at a premium. We can probably find a place for your item, but please talk to us first.
- 4) If you need to leave an envelope or other small item, please either tell me about it beforehand or leave a note on it so I know what it's for. It may seem obvious to you what I should do with the item, but I'm not always kept 'in the loop' about every project in the church, so I need to be informed.

Thanks for your help!

Paul Dickson
Sandra Reed



Come and Celebrate Christmas

Our Christmas Festival showcases the talent that God has bestowed on members of the church and community. We have vocalists, choirs, instrumentalists, and readings; everyone who attends thoroughly enjoys the concert. Since our first Christmas Festival in 2005, our audience has grown from 25 to 150; we hope to have even more this year (my goal is 200!), so please mark your calendars for December 14 at 2:00PM! What better way to begin your Christmas celebrations?

We welcome any singers who wish to sing with the Adult Choir for the 7:00PM Christmas Eve service (and the Christmas Festival, as well!). We will continue our rehearsals of this special music from 7:00-7:45PM on Thursday nights (December 4th and 11th), so please join us!

Faithfully Yours,
Kimberly Haller

What to give?

After complaining that I never knew what to give people for Christmas, my pastor sent me this list:

- To your enemy, forgiveness.
 - To an opponent, tolerance.
 - To a friend, your heart.
 - To a customer, service.
 - To all men, charity.
 - To every child, a good example.
 - To yourself, respect.
- Oren Arnold in The Head Man

Christian Education

Special Sunday School during ADVENT

We will be spending Advent together this year as one big church family. On the four weeks of ADVENT starting Sunday, November 30, we are going to have Sunday School an hour before the church service. It will start at 9AM sharp and end at 9:45. Sandra is offering a class for the adults during this time. Church, as usual, will start at 10 and everyone, except for those in the nursery, will attend the entire service.

On December 28, the Sunday after Christmas, we will gather at 10AM for a joyous Christmastide service. There will be no Sunday School that day. Sunday School will resume at the usual time, 10AM, on January 4.

Helping Hands

Our youth have been busy with service projects for the shut-ins. The 6th & 7th Grade Youth Group made Halloween cards to send to shut-ins for Halloween. They all did a wonderful job sharing their creative talents. The cards were great!

The younger youth group, 3rd-5th grade, made Turkey Mint cups to put on the trays for the residents at Sonogee. The turkeys were colorful and fun to make, and will hopefully add a festive touch to Thanksgiving dinner for those at Sonogee.

This past Sunday, the Sunday School classes helped sort the food for the Thanksgiving Baskets. Each class, under the direction of Kate St. Denis, helped sort and count the food items.

Our children are learning, through small actions, the satisfaction of reaching out and helping others in our community.

Upcoming Events

Practice for Christmas Pageant: December 3rd, 4:00-5:30. This year the children will be performing "Jesse, the Little Shepherd" at

11:30 on December 14th. Join us as our Sunday school children reenact the Christmas story through the eyes of a young shepherd boy.

Gingerbread Houses: December 6th, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. This has become a traditional favorite with our children. Kathy MacCulloch and Leslyn Shea will be sending out letters with a recipe to make the gingerbread pieces for the houses. Please bring them with you when you come and decorate your gingerbread houses. This is an wonderful event and everyone has a great time.

Christmas Pageant: December 14th at 11:30 in the Sanctuary. Get your coffee and sit back and enjoy our young people as they retell the Christmas story.

Mary Swift

His Birth and Our New Birth

His Birth in History, "...that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). Jesus Christ was born into this world, not from it. He did not emerge out of history; He came into history from the outside. Jesus Christ is not the best human being the human race can boast of---He is a Being for whom the human race can take no credit at all. He is not man becoming God, but God Incarnate---God coming into human flesh from outside it. His life is the highest and the holiest entering through the most humble of doors. Our Lord's birth was an advent---the appearance of God in human form.

His Birth in Me. "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you..." (Galatians 4:19). Just as our Lord came into human history from outside it, He must also come into me from outside. Have I allowed my personal human life to become a "Bethlehem" for the Son of God? I cannot

enter the realm of the kingdom of God unless I am born again from above by a birth totally unlike physical birth. "You must be born again" (John 3:7). This is not a command, but a fact based on the authority of God. The evidence of the new birth is that I yield myself so completely to God that "Christ is formed" in me. And once "Christ is formed" in me, His nature immediately begins to work through me.

God Evident in the Flesh. This is what is made so profoundly possible for you and for me through the redemption of man by Jesus Christ.

"My Utmost for his Highest,"
Oswald Chambers



Janna Elizabeth Pelletier
daughter of Rachel and Jay Pelletier,
born November 12, 2008.
Granddaughter of
Jack and Nancy Pelletier.

Make a Happy Christmas

How can you make this the happiest Christmas of your life? Simply by trying to give yourself to others.

Put something of yourself into everything you give. A gift, however small, speaks its own language. And when it tells of the love of the giver, it is truly blessed.

—Norman Vincent Peale

December

Sunday Worship Contributors



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

2 Michael Breen
2 Patrick Breen
4 Eric Kelley
4 Terrance Kelley
6 Bill Fuller
6 Jefferson Hobbs
8 Emily C. Allen
11 Beth Paradis
11 Mary Elizabeth Kelley
14 Linda Kelley
15 Fran Fry
16 Jean Kief
18 Ian Hepburn
18 Deb Wade
18 Mark Reece
19 Marilynne Marino
19 Isabella Webster
23 Tom Shea
26 Kathryn Mittelberger
27 Mary Drury
27 Dean Bryer
29 Dusty Warner



Head Deacon – Mary Dudzik
Assistant Deacon – Tim Beals

Liturgists-

Our youth will serve as liturgists in the month of December

Flowers –

7:
14: Doadie White
21: Poinsettias
28: Poinsettias

Coffee Hosts -

7: Soup and Sundae Sunday
14: Alice and Tom Hobbs
21: **Bring Your Own Christmas Cookies**
28: Sandra and Wally Reed

Lectionary -

7 Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2nd Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8

14 Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126
1st Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

21 2nd Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

28 Isaiah 61:10 - 62:3
Psalm 148
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:22-40

**Bar Harbor Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
29 Mount Desert Street
Bar Harbor, Maine 04609**

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Special dates

- Second Sunday of Advent, December 7, 2008
- Third Sunday of Advent, December 14, 2008
- Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 21, 2008
- First day of winter, December 21, 2008
- Christmas Eve, December 24, 2008
- Christmas Day, December 25, 2008
- New Year's Eve/Watch Night, December 31, 2008

Advent Wreath



The Advent wreath is a symbol of watchfulness and increasing joy as we anticipate Jesus' birth. The wreath's circular shape symbolizes eternity, or life without end.

The candles remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World – he brought light and life to a dark world (see John 1:4-5). On each of the four Sundays of Advent, we light a new candle. As the light grows, so do our hope and joy.

The Heartfelt Christmas Tree



There is a special Christmas tree
That lives within the heart.
It isn't pine, and can't be bought
At any store or mart.

Each branch holds some fond memory
Of joyful Christmas cheer,
Reminding us of those we love
And always will hold dear.

The gifts beneath this Christmas tree
Are stacked up very high
With kindly deeds of thoughtfulness
That one could never buy.

The Heartfelt Christmas tree expands
Through every passing year
With lovely gifts and blessings
Having come from far and near.

Atop this tree a star shines bright,
While angels sing God's praise;
Rejoice! The Christ-child's Love is shared,
And blesses ALL our days.

—Peggy Ferrell