

Christmas Eve

By Nancy Rockwell

The reason for the season:

In northern Europe, where the days get the shortest, solstice festivals were kept with holly and mistletoe and evergreen trees and singing and plays and stories about the promise of spring, for thousands of years before Jesus was born. As the people there became Christian, the theologians decided this season was the perfect time to celebrate the birth of Jesus, whose actual birthday no one knew.

This joy at the returning of the sun, they said, is the same joy we know in the life Jesus brings. And this promise of new life, this hope, is what Jesus gave to us and to everyone. And we understand Jesus, said those early theologians, as filled with the life that creates and keeps on creating the world. Therefore, he is not a mere 'reason for the season'. His is the grace that sustains all living things, born in human form, so that love can bloom.

His birth, in the midst of the reign of Caesar (who even now is the icon for terrible tyrants everywhere) is as portentous as the first day that becomes longer than the day before, and heralds good tidings of life to everyone.

Even in deep darkness, there is light is at work in the world, warmth growing the roots of things. Politicians may rise and fall, economies wax and wane, but oh! where would we be if the sun did not return to our days?

This sun, this grace, this mystery, is not won by war or by anyone's might, is not owned by the rich nor withheld from the homeless, is not dependent on whether you are naughty or nice. It is not just for Christians, but is equally there for Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, and people of no faith at all. Corporations cannot buy it, market it, and exploit it. It does not set limits on who can be loved, and by whom, and how much. It is the hinge on which this world relies.

The magnificent free gift, to which Christmas calls us, given in God's good time, is so hard to celebrate, rather than the competitive, earned, won, fought for, power filled aspects of life in which we immerse ourselves. We are invited to become children of this light. Christmas, like the solstice, is so humble you might miss it, no longer than a minute in visibility, but is the harbinger of all the life of the world. Jesus, like the sun, is never extinguished. His light shines in the darkness. And the darkness, according to the gospel, does not overcome it. Truly, the air is awash with angels.

LECTIONARY FOR DECEMBER

December 1

Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122
Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44

December 8

Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7,18-19
Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12

December 15

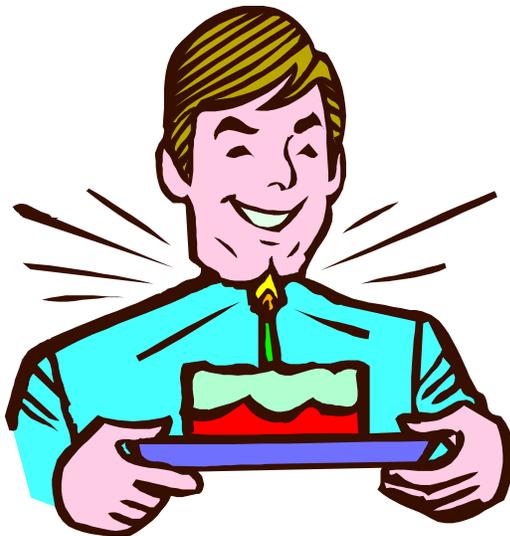
Isaiah 1:10; Luke 1:47-55
James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11

December 22

Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7,17-19
Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25

December 29

Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148
Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23



HAPPY DECEMBER BIRTHDAY TO:

- Beatrice Hanger* 3
- Steven James Mannino* 4
- Michael Dziamba, Jr.* 5
- Gissela Roberts* 10

- Robert Long* 11
- Nicole Scott Vietiello* 17
- Wayne Hanns* 20
- Diann Schwankerdt* 24
- William Chavan, Sr.* 25
- Debra Loiselle* 26
- Gay Kulberda* 26
- Matthew Keith Martinson* 29

.....and many, many more!!!

CROP WALK

The annual Crop Walk sponsored by the Interfaith Council was held on October 20th at Wilson Park. Because of a health problem, our representative Carolyn Franz, was not able to attend the meeting when the literature was given out to the members. Consequently, no one from our church could sign up people or walk on the scheduled date.

About 32 people did walk from the other churches and we will let you know when we receive the information about how much money was raised.

If you would like to contribute, please speak to Carolyn or put your donation in a pew envelope and mark it "Crop Walk" (put it in the offering plate) and she will receive it and turn it in to be added to the money already received.



INTERFAITH  THANKSGIVING COMMON WORSHIP SERVICE WILL BE SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24TH AT 3:00 PM IN THE REFORMED CHURCH. ALL MINISTERS, CHOIRS AND CHURCH MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND.



We were saddened to read in the Star Ledger that Theresa DeGisi Heinaman died on November 5, 2013 in the United Zion Retirement Community in Lititz, Pa. She and her husband Bill were long-time active members of our church until they moved to Lititz, Pa. when they retired. Services were held at the Faith UMC in Lititz on November 23, 2013 at 10:30 a.m. with Rev. Jason Perkowski officiating. Interment was private.

Theresa was the daughter of Anthony and Minnie Sarno DeGisi and was born in Lyndhurst, N. J. She attended Fairleigh Dickinson College and retired from Best Foods International as an administrative assistant.

Theresa loved reading, garage sales, thrift shops and buying and selling antiques and Collectibles. While in our church, she started the Pump Room Gift Shop which was opened, for a number of years, a few days each week. Many gave her items to sell on consignment. People walking Wood Avenue got in the habit of stopping in to purchase items and to see what else was on display.

Both the Heinamans were very active in our Church. Theresa was a member of the United

Methodist Women, and Bill sang in the choir every week. They also knew exactly how to run yard and house sales, and did many successful ones for the church and church members. Theresa is survived by her loving husband Bill, with whom they celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary on June 2, 2013. She is also survived by her sister, Maria Bianculli, and a number of nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her two brothers, Anthony and Carl.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be sent to **Faith UMC, attn: Capital Expansion Fund, 1290 Fruitville Pike, Lititz, Pa. 17543.**

We extend our deepest sympathy to Bill and their families on the loss of Theresa. She will be missed by all but always be in our hearts.



CHANGE IN THE TIME OF THE CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

When the Nurture Committee met recently, they reviewed the attendance at our Christmas Eve service last year at 10:00 p.m. They felt that many of our members do not like to come out in the evening and so they decided to change the time this year to 7:00 PM and see if that might improve the attendance. PLEASE MARK THIS NEW TIME ON YOUR CALENDAR. If this works, we will be very happy and if not there might be another change next year!

BITS AND PIECES

Jane McCarthy (our former organist) and her husband have been doing a lot of traveling visiting family and friends around the country, They are not sure when they will return home – they are having a great time!!

Diane Dziamba Drahos is on her 3rd visit to Boston since her new grandchild was born. She loves being a grandmother and wants to be sure she will always be recognized whenever she shows up again. We hear she is also returning in December, also!

Doris Henel is thrilled that almost all her family was together for Thanksgiving. John, Julie and Alec came from California, Nina from school in Washington State, Tessa and boyfriend, from Colorado, Zachary and girlfriend from Michigan, and Andrew from school in Pennsylvania. Matt and Jamie stayed home because her mother was having an operation. Everyone including Tom, Bill and Sue, if she doesn't have to work, and Doris joined together at the home of Jeanne and Rob in Yardley, Pa. for a delicious Thanksgiving dinner (turkey and all the trimmings). The family is all over the country and it is really great to be together for the holiday.

Stephen and Sue Zahorbenski are hoping to pick up his aunt, Gertrude Baldwin, and they will celebrate Thanksgiving on Friday at the home of her son, Walter and Sue, in Mullica Hill, N. J. More happy family gatherings!

People having to travel the Parkway or Turnpike are very smart celebrating the holiday on Friday when there is less traffic.

Jayne Cocco will be very happy to entertain her son, Brian, wife, Meg and his daughter, Chloe, and Joe and Tracey with their new son, Cole, on Friday, when they will celebrate Thanksgiving. They will also visit Charles Lamont in the nursing home to make the day special for him also.

On Thursday, Jayne is invited to Tracey's father's home where they will celebrate the holiday with Tracey's family.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, please remember the following with your prayers:

Leona Parker	Dan Ajuka
Charles Lamont	Kime Smith
Mildred Ebert	Carolyn Franz
Mickey Kiely	Vivienne Merrill
Janet Pavlinic	Otts Snellenberger
Ethel Steiniger	Bill Heinaman
Frances Gunther	Barbara Hildebrant

WE NEED HELP!!

We were very pleased to have beautiful flowers on our altar during the summer from the Valdez family. Now it is winter and we need someone to make sure we have flowers every Sunday. Can you take care of this? Either order them from Addalia's or place a plant there. Contact Gertrude Baldwin for further information. She had charge of this for many years, and then Mildred Ebert took it over. We thank them both for years of service but they can no longer do it because of health reasons. Can you help?? We will appreciate it!

WHO TOOK THE FOLDING MACHINE IN THE CHURCH OFFICE APART?? PLEASE PUT IT BACK THE WAY IT WAS SO THE SECRETARY CAN DO HER JOB EFFICIENTLY.



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS

NOVEMBER 30 – 10:00 A.M.- PUT THE CHRISTMAS TREE UP. We have a new Christmas tree this year and it will require less work. We will also decorate the sanctuary and as much as we can to finish it on this day,

DECEMBER 3 – 11:30 A.M. – UNITED METHODIST WOMEN’S CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

This year, instead of having a Christmas luncheon at the church, we will be going out to a nice restaurant. Please call Doris Henel, 908-486-5571 if you plan to attend so we can arrange transportation. If you have not been attending the UMW meetings, but are interested in the organization, you are more than welcome to join us.

DECEMBER 24 – CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICE – 7:00 P.M.

Last year we changed the time from 11 p.m. to 10 p.m. and our attendance was better than meeting at 11:00 p.m. as we had been doing for many years. This year we have changed the time to 7:00 p.m. to make it easier for people to travel. Please try and join us for this very special Candlelight Service.

DECEMBER 22 – 10:30 A.M. WORSHIP SERVICE - CHRISTMAS SUNDAY

There will be no Sunday School. We hope the children will join their family in the sanctuary. We will meet at our regular time, 10:30 a.m. in the sanctuary for our Christmas Day worship service. Come join us!!

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF LINDEN
CHEISTMAS POINSETTIAS

On Christmas Sunday and Christmas Eve let us remember and honor the following loved ones.

Place **\$8.25 and this form in** the offering envelope found in the pew holder in the sanctuary. Mark the outside "Christmas Flowers" and put in the offering plate. You can also mail a check to Gertrude Baldwin, 609 West Elm St., Linden, N. J, 07036, Checks should be made out to the United Methodist Church of Linden.

IN HONOR OF GIVEN BY

IN MEMORY OF GIVEN BY

Please fill out the above information for ordering a Christmas poinsettia. They will be on the sanctuary altar for Christmas Sunday, December 22nd at 10:30 a.m. and Christmas Eve, December 24th at 7:00 p.m. You can take yours home following the Christmas Eve service. If you cannot put this slip and money in the collection plate on any **SUNDAY, BEFORE DECEMBER 15th**, please mail it to Gertrude Baldwin, 609 W. Elm Street, Linden 07036. **PLEASE NOTE THE DEADLINE. NO ORDERS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER DECEMBER 15TH.**

The list of those ordering poinsettias will be in the bulletin both dates – December 22nd and December 24th.

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CHRISTMAS CARDS

As we have done previously during the Christmas season, we ask you to send one Christmas card to the church instead of separate cards to church members. It will save time, money and writing and will express your Christmas wishes to all your friends here at the church.

All cards will be posted on the lovely stand at the rear of the sanctuary. In January, they will be listed in the Messenger so that all will know who sent them "best wishes" for the Christmas holidays.

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ADVENT BIBLE STUDIES

PLEASE MARK THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDER FOR THE ADVENT BIBLE STUDIES. THEY WILL BE FROM 10:30 TO 11:30 A.MON TUESDAYS IN TH YOUTH ROOM DOWNSTAIRS NEXT TO THE DAY CARE.

**DECEMBER 3
DECEMBER 10
DECEMBER 17**

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU!

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STEWARDSHIP

IF YOU HAVE NOT RETURNED YOUR PLEDGE CARD, PLEASE DO SO IMMEDIATELY! WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!

DECEMBER 2013

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 9:30 Choir 10:30 Worship Sunday School	2 7-BOARD OF TRUSTEES 4:30-Fencing School	3 10:30-Bible Study 11:30 AM-United Meth. Women Christmas Luncheon 4:30-Fencing School	4 4:30-Fencing sch.	5 Fencing Sch.	6 5:30-Champion Youth 4:30-Fencing Sch	7 9:30 1:30 Fencing School
8 9:30 Choir 10:30 Worship Sunday School	9 4:30-Fencing School	10 10:30-Bible Study 4:30 -9:30 Fencing Sch.	11 4:30-9:30 – Fencing School	12 4:30-9:30-Fencing School	13 5:30-Champion Youth	14 9:30-1:30 – Fencing School in gym
15 9:30 AM - Choir 10:30 – Worship Sunday School	16 4:30-9:30-Fencing School	17 10:30-Bible Study 4:30-9:30-Fencing Sch	18 4:30-Fencing School	19 4:30-Fencing School	20 5:30-Champion Youth	21 9:30-1:30-Fencing School
22 9:30 AM – Choir 10:30-Christmas Sunday Worship Service	23 4:30 – 9:30 Fencing School	24 10:30-Bible Study 4:30-9:30-Fencing Sch 7PM – Christmas Eve Worship Service – ALL ARE WELCOME!!!	25 Merry Christmas!!! Peace On Earth!!!	26 4:30-9:30-Fencing Sch	27 5:30-Champion Youth	28 9:30-1:30 Fencing Sch. in Gym
29 9:30 – Choir 10:30Worship Sunday School	30 4:30 – 9:30 Fencing School	31 New Year’s Eve 10:30-Bible Study 4:30-9:30-Fencing Sch.				.