



Greensboro Gleanings

December 2015

From the pastor's desk ...

In our part of the world, Christmas comes at the darkest time of the year. The daylight hours are short and the nights are long. In my younger days, I used to be disdainful of the more excessive displays of Christmas lights on the houses I would pass, as I drove by in the December darkness. But, in more recent years, I've come to understand and appreciate them. They seem like a brave gesture of hope flung up against the black of the night sky.

When we listen to the news, it seems like a dark time in our world, as well. Terrorist attacks shake our security, and the terrible plight of the Syrian refugees has been called the greatest humanitarian crisis of our age. Wars continue, poverty is rampant, and children take up guns to shoot their classmates.

How, then, can we celebrate Christmas? How do we dare to reach out for Christmas joy? Perhaps we need to remember that, two thousand years ago, the world was just as dark, just as filled with oppression, violence and war as it is now. In the Greek plays of Jesus' time, playwrights used a device known as Deus ex Machina — which means "a god let down upon the stage from a machine." When the characters in a play had managed to get themselves into such a mess that it seemed nothing could save them, the deus ex machina would appear. A god would descend with smoke and mirrors and lots of noise, and all would be made right. This, I'm sure, was a reassuring image of what it means to have God intervene in human affairs. But we have been given a very different image of how God works — the image of an infant, born into poverty, in a stable in Bethlehem.

At Christmas time, we often use the image of Christ being born in us. Our celebration is not just about something that happened two thousand years ago. It's also about the newness of life that comes to us each time the spirit of Christ is born in our hearts. One of the most beautiful traditions of the Christmas season is the Christmas Eve candlelight service. We light candles to symbolize the light of Christ, reborn each year at Christmas. As we light the Christ candle, we remember what it means to have God come among us in this way — as a tiny baby, a small point of light against the darkness. Then we pass the light from the Christ candle to one another, until the whole sanctuary is filled with light. Each time I look around a sanctuary, on Christmas Eve, and see all the faces shining in the soft candlelight, I am reminded that the light of one candle may not seem like much, but what a bold and brave shining we make when we hold our lights together!

So how do we celebrate at this dark time? We remember the light that came into the world in the stable in Bethlehem— the light that still comes into the world, the light no darkness can overcome. And we make a decision to be a part of that light, to think and speak and act in ways that add to the light, and not to the darkness, in our world. And we look around at all the other bearers of the light and recognize that we are not alone, that we are never, ever alone. We are surrounded by friends, and by the "cloud of witnesses" of all who have gone before us, all bound together in the love of the One who came to be light for the world.

Rona

THANK YOU

December Ushers and Greeters

- Dec. 6 — Shelly Jungwirth & John Howard
- Dec.13 — Beth LeCours & Cathy Pollard
- Dec. 20 — Hal & BJ Gray
- Dec. 24 — Patti & Victoria Foster
Anne McPherson & Ellen Emers
- Dec. 27 — Cilla Bonney-Smith

December Coffee Hour Hosts

- Dec. 6 — Alden & Patty Launer
- Dec.13 — Gina Jenkins
- Dec.20 — Hal & BJ Gray
- Dec.27 — You're on your own

Christmas Poinsettias

Order Now! Deadline is 12/10/15.
Cost: 6.5", \$13.95; 8", \$29.95;
10", \$36.95. Colors: Red, White.
Call the Church Office or Sign-up Sheet in Fellowship Hall.

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December 2015

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Sundays 8:30am Choir Rehearsal Fellowship Hall 10:00am Worship Service Sanctuary	Mondays and Wednesdays 10-11am Growing Stronger Fellowship Hall	1	2 9:00am Forum on Health Care 4:30pm Pleasants Fund 7:00pm Advent Group	3 7:00pm NEK Rehearsal Fellowship Hall/ Sanctuary	4	5 12 NOON Ladies XMAS Lunch Fellowship Hall
6	7	8 7:00pm Church Council Church Library	9 7:00pm Advent Group Office/Library	10	11	12 7:30pm David Mallett In Concert GUCC
13 4:00pm NEK Concert GUCC	14	15	16 7:00pm Advent Group Office/Library	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 7:00pm Christmas Eve Service	25 XMAS	26
27	28	29	30	31	JAN 1 NEW YEAR'S	JAN 2

Milestones & Miscellany

Happy December Birthday to

Tom Collier, Victoria Foster, Sherral Lumsden, Alec Larabee, Lindsay Wheeler, Stephanie Whitten, Nathaniel Thompson, Joanna Beresford and Jack Gregory Durbin. ***And A Happy Anniversary To:*** Tom & Tracy Collier and Ken & Janney Johnston.

Is your birthday listed this month when it shouldn't be? Have we missed you in our celebrations? Contact the church office and let us know if your birthday is listed incorrectly or has been missed.

FROM THE MISSION BOARD

SERRV SALE 2015

The Mission Board is happy to announce that the Holiday Sale on November 21-22 was one of our most successful (and happiest) ever. As Cilla Smith remarked: *"To me, one of the most important outcomes of the sale was the community "visiting" that happens the day of the sale! There are so many neighbors we don't often see, so many conversations to have, not to mention hugs and news. The lunch is so important to slow us down to reconnect with those in the village and beyond, and having cheerful children serving was a delight."*

Many thanks to the young people and members of the Christian Ed Board, who cooked and served the delicious soups, chili, breads and desserts. And thanks to all the clever artisans, local and around the world, who brought us a multitude of useful and artistic items, including Christmas wreaths, tasty crepes, beautiful candles, lovely hats, clothes, paintings, and much more. A volunteer from the Help-Kids-India sold many Indian items to benefit their projects; and lots of coffee and chocolate disappeared from the Fair-Trade Table. The SERRV table itself was filled with an amazing selection of gift items and one of our church members displayed attractive note cards to benefit SERRV

Financially, the SERRV gross receipts were \$2,112 and we sent a very small box back to the SERRV folks who had sent them to us on consignment. Our local artisans told us that they, too, had successful sales, and they each contributed \$30 to our Mission Board funds, adding \$210 for our charitable projects.

Last but not least, we are grateful to you shoppers who contributed not only the receipts, but the conversations, hugs, news, and fun.

***Nancy Hill
For the Mission Board***

Advent Reflection Group

Some of us love all the activity preceding Christmas; some of us hate it. Most of us are somewhere along the spectrum between those two extremes. Wherever you are on that spectrum, I invite you to join me for three Wednesday evenings during Advent for a time of reflection on the Advent themes of hope, peace, joy, and love.

We will have some conversation, some quiet time, and just a bit of ritual to mark the meaning of this special time. Depending on numbers, we will meet either in the Pastor's Study or the library. Please join me at 7 p.m., on Wednesdays, December 2nd, 9th, and 16th. (Come to any or all.)

Rona

ATTENTION!

The church kitchen is missing dinner forks, teaspoons and dinner knives. If you have borrowed any and have forgotten to return them, we would love to have them back in time for the Christmas Luncheon. And/or, if you have any extra silverware you would like to donate we would welcome any additional cutlery.

Christmas Americana

A concert featuring over 150 years of American Christmas Music with poetry and readings from the letters, diaries & journals of *Everyday American Citizens* performed by ***Thom Dutton, the Troubadour Harper***, Friday, December 4, at 7 pm at the United Church of Hardwick. There is no charge. A freewill offering will be taken.

Ladies' Christmas Luncheon

The holidays are a time for cherished traditions and festive occasions, one of which is the annual Ladies' Christmas Luncheon which will take place Dec 5, 12 noon at the Greensboro UCC. This event, hosted by the ladies of the church, is an opportunity for women from the entire area (Greensboro, Greensboro Bend, Hardwick, East Hardwick, Craftsbury, etc) to join together in fellowship and good cheer. Enjoy a delicious lunch, some holiday entertainment and a selection of Christmas Carols! Bring a friend, or invite a newcomer to come with you! Get yourself in a holiday state of mind, and help us celebrate the season!

NEWS FROM
THE GREENSBORO UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Upcoming Lectionary Readings

- Dec. 6 ~Malachi 3:1-4 or Baruch 5:1-9 ~Luke 1:68-79 ~
Philippians 1:3-11 ~Luke 3:1-6
- Dec. 13 ~Zephaniah 3:14-20 ~Isaiah 12:2-6 ~ Philippians
4:4-7~Luke 3:7-18
- Dec. 20 ~Micah 5:2-5a ~Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalms 80:1-7
~Hebrews 10:5-10 ~Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)
- Dec. 24 ~ Isaiah 9:2-7 ~ Psalm 96 ~ Titus 2:11-14 ~ Luke
2:1-14, (15-20)
- Dec. 27 ~ 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26 ~ Psalm 148 ~Colossians
3:12-17 ~ Luke 2:41-52

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

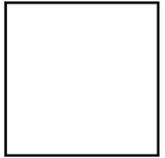
Big thanks to the children, youth, and parents who helped make our fundraising lunch at the Alternative Giving Fair a success!

December is always loaded with activities for the children, so please mark your calendars and let your children know that their friends are always welcome to join us at any of these events. First, there is the Santa Lucia procession during services on December 13. Santa Lucia, her girl attendants and the Star Boys will process with lights, streamers, the Santa Lucia buns and lots of joy! That will also be the day we decorate our Crismon Tree, so please come celebrate with us. I would love to have the children meet me in the church library at 9:40 a.m. that Sunday so we can get organized.

This year we will also present a puppet skit inspired by the children's Christmas hymn "The Friendly Beasts." There will be two puppet making and scenery building workshops to prepare for this: Saturday, December 12 from 10:00 until noon and Tuesday, December 15 from after school until 5:00 p.m., both in Fellowship Hall. We will send out an e-mail later this month with details on when and where the actual performance will take place. We will need some readers to help with the narration for the performance itself, so if you can't make the workshops (or can only make the workshops!) there's still a way you can participate.

May this season overflow with peace and joy for you and your children,

**Sonia and
the Christian Education Committee**



THE MUSIC CORNER
Choral Season

"To everything there is a season" it is written....in my family we have deer season, football season, baseball season. One of the most important seasons for me is now: Choral Season. Choral music is played in the stores, on the radio and TV, in downtown shopping areas and of course, church. We have some lovely Advent and Christmas music for our services this month:

Dec. 6th — *They that Wait Upon the Lord* contains the text of Isaiah 40:-1-2, 11-31. Cara Hill will help us tell the story as she offers us her beautiful mezzo-soprano voice as our soloist.

Dec. 13th — *Light the Advent Candle* is a fervently performed anthem that reminds us to keep the advent candle burning in our hearts. Hal will solo with the choir as we remind ourselves of the anticipation of Christmas.

Dec 20th — *Prepare!* This anthem joyfully and rhythmically speaks of the hope, peace and love of the upcoming birth of Jesus. It is fun to sing and has a surprise ending!

Dec. 24th — *Carol of the Little Angel* is a gentle, flowing lullaby by the great sacred composer Don Besig. It will be enhanced by a soloist and instrument, as we make our way to Christmas. The sanctuary will be filled with beautiful early music by our consort before and during the service. Cara will solo with the choir for a very special antiphonal prelude.

One of our anthems says: light the candles one by one.....which we will continue to do as we *serve God through music* during this very special season and all seasons upcoming.

Hal Parker, Music Director