



St. Peter's United Church of Christ
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www.stpetersucc.com



CONNECTIONS

December 2008



A Note from the Pastor

Dear Friends,

Even before Halloween is over, we see Christmas decorations for sale, stores gearing up for the season, people asking about lists and booking tickets. We see retailers gearing up for the season with sales, financial consultants on talk shows giving advice about when and what to buy for the holiday season . . . "in these tough economic times".

Tough times, it is said, make us stronger. Folks who have been through or raised by parents who have been through the toughest economic time of our country thus far, will tell you "we ain't seen nuthin' yet!" Everytime I get my statement from my retirement fund, I gulp hard. What will happen to me in the end? We are living longer and longer. There may be wonderful facilities around for older folks, but will my husband and/or I be able to afford them? My retirement fund has shrunken by half. My advisor says I will recover it eventually . . . there is an air of hope and optimism in his voice and occasional others . . . with the new election, there is a strong wind of economic hope. The economy is President-elect Obama's first priority. Phew! That's good . . . maybe we will get back on track. Can we stop worrying?

Maybe.

Maybe not . . . Who Knows??

Advent begins on November 30th . . . We begin again preparing our hearts, minds, and souls for Christ to be born into our world . . . so that no matter what happens, Christ will be here. Christ's presence helps us to know peace in an atmosphere of worry and anxiety. Christ's presence helps us to know love in the midst of hate and violence. Christ's presence brings us comfort when we are mourning our loved ones and missing them terribly.



Christ's presence is in the midst of us, all around us, in the past, in the present and in the future. Can we stop worrying?

Maybe . . . maybe you can feel Christ's presence and know that the newborn baby's birth into our

world will bring hope to those who are suffering. Maybe you have experienced Christ's presence in your own life as you've survived The Great Depression, a war, military service, child rearing, a serious illness or a great loss in your life. Maybe you can hear that baby's cooing when you need to feel that life will go on. Newborns do that to us. They help us to experience hope.

Maybe not . . . maybe you cannot stop worrying and fretting . . . you want to, but you can't. Maybe you're still in pain from mourning or wondering what this new year will bring to you and your loved ones. Maybe fear has a grip on you . . . and it's hard for you to trust others with your money, with your possessions, with your life. Maybe anxiety keeps you up at nights. Maybe loss of someone in your life has you feeling so low that you don't know where your next breath will come from sometimes.

Who knows?? I know. You know. Most importantly, God knows. You may be able to stop fear and worry . . . and you may not, but you know. You know whose you are. You know that when our hearts open to the cooing of a newborn baby into our world, that you can't resist smiling at Him . . . so cute, laying in that manger; a child so delicate in this harsh world, but still resilient to so much that will come His way. Maybe you can take the tiny hand of Christ and maybe you can't . . . but you know it's there . . . and you know it's there for you, and for the neighbor and for the stranger and for those who are ostracized and oppressed in our own community and in our own world and in our own family. I know. You know, too . . . you can celebrate Advent by getting ready to take that hand and hold onto it with all your strength.

Peace! Laurie

It's a Christmas Open House!



Open House

Don't miss the Tuesday Circle's All-Church Christmas Open House on December 16 at the home of JoAnn and George Malloch. Vegetable soup and light snacks will be ready to eat at 12 noon and 5:00 p.m. or anytime in between. Arrive at anytime and stay as long as you wish. Optional "gift giving" will be for St. Peter's Discretionary Fund. Please contact JoAnn at 356-8030 if you have any questions.

St. Peter's has a new email address!

office@stpetersucc.com

The old address becomes inactive at the end of the year.





Hey Drummer Boys!

And anyone else who would like to make an offering to the newborn king to see! If you have a talent to share with the newborn king and will be attending our Christmas Eve service at 7:00 p.m., please let Pastor Laurie know as soon as possible. Talents could be singing, playing an instrument, and/or reading a poem or Scripture. It can be as long or short as you'd like.

College Students!

If you are back for the holidays and will be attending worship, either on Christmas Eve or any other time, please let Pastor Laurie know (email is great) . . . I'd love for you to participate while you are here in a meaningful way so you can remember how much your church family loves and appreciates you!



March to the Manger

Once again this year we will be "marching to the manger" with gifts for the Christ Child which will be used to help others through mission. Marguerite Zahnd is organizing the March this year and she invites you to join the "cast" for their "unveiling" in the Lounge after worship.

As in other years, the Congregation is invited to decorate their gifts in keeping with the season.

Suggested missions to receive the gifts include: **Champaign County Christian Health Center** and **St. Peter's Stewardship Campaign** (to be used for campaign expenses).

"Tis the season to be generous!"

Christmas Fund

The Christmas Fund Offering (formerly Veterans of the Cross), one of four Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ, 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. In 2007 the Christmas Fund received \$1,571,050 and nearly 1,500 families were assisted. The goal is to be able to provide at least \$1,650,000 in assistance from the 2008 appeal.

This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care. The Christmas Fund Offering will be received December 14.

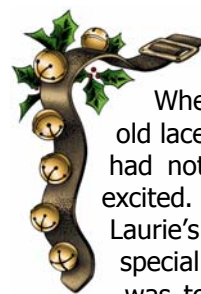


Consistory Highlights – November

Editor's Note: The following notes from the November meeting are for your information only. Minutes and actions of this meeting were approved at the December meeting.



- Amy Durukan will chair the new photo directory committee. LiAnne Kitchen will co-chair.
- The new railing for the Chancel stairs is on hold until next month.
- Because of the length of the contract on the current copier, no decision needs to be made on a new one until next September.
- Emmaus Home is doing an annual fundraiser in February. An invitation has been given to the congregation to participate by creating a basket of goodies to be auctioned at this event. The theme of St. Peter's basket will be baby goods. LiAnne Kitchen has volunteered to make a baby blanket for it. An announcement of other items needed for this basket will be made later.
- The City of Champaign sent the church information on nominating persons to be honored for service to the community. This is a January event. Information on this will be placed on the bulletin board so church members may make nominations if they so choose.
- \$1,773 was made on the craft fair.
- March to the Manger will be held on December 21.
- New Consistory members are invited to attend the December 16 meeting of the Consistory.



Thank you, Mrs. Durukan!

When Amy Durukan and I discovered the old lace tablecloths and silver which, I was told, had not been used for many years, we were excited. We wanted to use these pieces for Laurie's reception last April to make it really special and I believe it was appreciated by all. I was told that these items had formerly been used at the wedding receptions in Fellowship Hall. We pulled them out again for the installation supper, and some noticed there were holes in one of the tablecloths. When I wondered if it could be repaired, Amy offered to take it to her mother-in-law, Ayten Durukan, an accomplished seamstress. She repaired it quickly and beautifully. Thank you Mrs. Durukan, for mending this piece of St. Peter's history for us.

Gladys Hemp

Attention Committee Chairs . . .

It's time to begin putting together the Annual Report. Please submit your reports to Nick Voss via the Church and Ministry mailbox, in person, or by email at ncvoss@gmail.com. Report deadline is Sunday, January 18th, but earlier is better. Thanks for helping to make this year at St. Peter's so great!!

Women's Craft Fair Report



Holiday Bake Sale

Many thanks to Cleo Pelg and the Stitchers, Susie Kuhne and the cookie helpers, Rhonda and Al Shoudel of Attic Treasures for their hard work. Proceeds from the Craft Fair are as follows: Attic Treasures – \$90.80; Stitchers – x \$1,119.50; Cookies – \$563.50 for a total of \$1,773.80.

Flower Vases

Numerous flower vases in the flower/candle storage area are taking up lots of useful space and we have more than we can use. The Altar Committee has sorted them, will keep a few and would like to offer the rest to members and friends of St. Peter's before disposing of them. We will place the vases we do not need on a table in the chapel. Please feel free to take what you want. What is left on December 31 will be disposed of or donated to someone who can use them. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me or anyone on the Altar Committee.

Ann Swearingen

In Memoriam

The prayers and sympathy of the St. Peter's Congregation are with the family of longtime member, Evelyn Weber.

Evelyn J. Weber passed from this life to life eternal on October 19, 2008 at the age of 79. Mourning Evelyn's passing are sister-in-law, Mary Jane Weber of Urbana; nephew John Weber of Los Angeles, and niece Barbara Kelley of Tolono.

In 1965, Evelyn became the University of Illinois' first woman in the Agronomy Department. She was a professor of Plant Biochemistry from 1965 to 1987.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Evelyn's family as well as with Paul and Gladys Hemp. Paul's sister **Ruth Hemp** passed to life eternal on October 27, 2008 at the age of 88.

Many Thanks

∞ Gladys Hemp, Laurie Hill, LiAnne Kitchen, Nick and Jocelyn Voss, Stuart and Carolyn Yoos and the Stewardship Committee for coordinating Fellowship Time during November.

New Books in the Library



Two new bestsellers have been purchased for the church library. The first is *The Amish of Illinois' Heartland* by Rebecca Mabry of the *News-Gazette*. Her original book was written nearly twenty years ago and when she went back to work at the *Gazette*, she was encouraged to update this book. She spent another year working with the Amish to gain unprecedented access to more of the lives, homes and stories originating in "Amish Country". This is a remarkable book about our neighbors in central Illinois.

The other book is *The Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch. He was a professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon University. In his book he combined the humor, inspiration, and intelligence that made his lecture such a phenomenon and given it an indelible form. This final lecture was not about dying, it was about living. It was about the importance of overcoming obstacles, of enabling the dreams of others, of seizing every moment because "time is all you have . . . and you may find one day that you have less than you think." Mr. Pausch died of pancreatic cancer.

All you need to do to check out these books is to sign the Check Out book with your name, book title and date. Please return in a reasonable time. They are found on the table by the bulletin board.

Gladys Hemp

Nursery Workers Needed

Volunteers are needed to provide care in the Church Nursery during worship. Please sign-up on the bulletin board or call Carolyn Hamrick if you'd like to help.

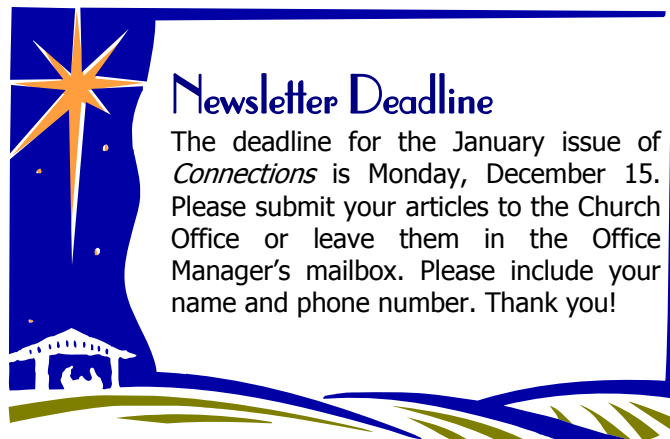


Holiday Office Hours

The Church Office will be closed December 25, 2008 through January 5, 2009.

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for the January issue of *Connections* is Monday, December 15. Please submit your articles to the Church Office or leave them in the Office Manager's mailbox. Please include your name and phone number. Thank you!



Great Idea!

When doing your Christmas cards this year, take one card and send it to this address. If we pass this on and everyone sends one card, think of how many cards these wonderful special people who have sacrificed so much would get.



A Recovering American Soldier
c/o Walter Reed Army Medical Center
6900 Georgia Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20307-5001



December Liturgists

December 7 – Al and Rhonda Shoudel, Carolina Barnhard

December 14 – Amy and Erin Durukan, Jim and Jill Acheson

December 21 – Nick Voss, Sam Schultz, Rhonda Shoudel, Carolina Barnhard, Amy and Erin Durukan

December 24 – Mark and Sandy Williams

December 28 – Mark Muller

Church Mailbag



Thank you, thank you, thank you for the many cards received and prayers offered on my behalf. I'm feeling much better and looking forward to complete recovery before long.

Pastor Betty Hornback

Thank you for joining with us to reach out to those who are at risk for hunger and for sharing our vision of a hunger-free central Illinois.

Jim Hires

Executive Director
Eastern Illinois Foodbank

December Greeters

December 7 – Emma Kidd, Eloise Heller

December 14 – Jim and Doris Hershbarger

December 21 – Ed and Carolyn Hamrick

December 28 – Bill and Susie Kuhne

December Ushers

Lee Eichhorst
Sandy Eichhorst

Gary Hollen
Jeff Jewett

George Malloch
Larry Zahnd



December Anniversaries

3 Jim and Jill Acheson (1955)

23 Howard and Felice Rhodes (1951)



December Birthdays

- 2 Violet McDuffee
Sean Taylor
- 10 Irene Van Rheeden
- 11 Jim Hershbarger
- 16 Vicky Welsler
- 17 Allison Wrobel
- 20 William O'Neill
Maura Healy
- 21 Kaitlyn Edwards
- 23 Meta Greeson
- 25 Jesus Christ
Sharon Jeter
Carole Vilchis
- 29 Lindsey Hallett
Jeff Taylor



Editor's Note: We apologize for omissions or errors. Information for the newsletter mailing list, birthday list and anniversary list is taken from Church records. Please report changes in writing to the Church Office. You may mail changes, place notes in the Office Manager's mailbox or send an email to office@stpetersucc.com. Thanks for your help!

C-U at the Virginia . . .

Make it a Date – with The Chorale!

Celebrate New Year's Eve! Spend the evening with The Chorale at the 18th annual "C-U at the Virginia". This year's celebration, "One of a Kind – Favorites", features The Chorale under the direction of Julie Beyler, singing songs of inspiration such as "Over the Rainbow", "The Impossible Dream", "You'll Never Walk Alone" and "Climb Every Mountain". In addition to The Chorale,

Guest baritone Todd Payne will sing "Favorite Songs of Favorite Singers" such as "If Ever I Would Leave You", "Some Enchanted Evening" and "Unforgettable" and Young Artist Scholarship Winner, pianist Derek Maninfiore will delight the audience. And of course, Dan Perrino will lead the sing-along accompanied by Warren York on the Mighty Wurlitzer. Proceeds help fund the Young Artist Scholarship Program. You won't want to miss a fun evening filled with great music – New Year's Eve, 7:00 p.m. at the Virginia Theatre. Tickets available at the theatre box office, 356-9063.



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*Have a safe and blessed
Merry Christmas!
from St. Peter's Staff*

