



The First Presbyterian *Newsletter*

Volume 63 No 4

December 2008



Advent - "... to give light to those who sit in darkness ... to guide our feet into the way of peace" Luke 1:79

Advent and Christmas – 2008 Preparation and Celebration

Join us at First Pres as we journey toward Bethlehem during Advent, the season of waiting, and as we celebrate the birth of our Savior at Christmas.

Sunday, November 30, 1st Sunday of Advent

- 8:30 and 10:45 Worship Services
- 9:30 Education for all
- Gift list for Parsons Christmas Project available

Sunday, December 7, 2nd Sunday of Advent

- 8:30 and 10:45 Worship Services
 - 9:30 Education for all
 - 11:45 ADVENTure!
- Parsons Christmas Project gifts returned unwrapped

Sunday, December 14, 3rd Sunday of Advent

- 8:30 and 10:45 Worship Services
- 9:30 Education for all
- 11:45 Mayan crafts from Guatemala, fairly traded coffee and First Pres mugs on sale

Sunday, December 21, 4th Sunday of Advent

- 8:30 and 10:45 Worship Services
- Bell Choir ringing
- 9:30 Education for all

Wednesday, December 24, Christmas Eve

- 7:30 pm Worship Service
- A Service of Lessons and Carols

Thursday, December 25, Christmas Day

- 11:00 am Worship Service

Sunday, December 28, 4th day of Christmas

- 9:30 Worship Service
- No education classes

Sunday, January 4, 2009, Epiphany Celebration

- 8:30 and 10:45 Worship Services
- 9:30 Education for all ages
- 11:45 Indoor Picnic!



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First Presbyterian Church
Albany, NY
Founded in 1763

Miriam Lawrence Leupold

Glenn D. Leupold
Co-Pastors

Robert C. Lamar
Pastor Emeritus

Donald Ingram
Interim Director of Music

Nancy J. Frank
Organist

Elders

Gladys Crowder
Clerk of Session

Garrett DeGraff
Eric Eisenbraun
Freda Gardner
Sue Haney
Lee Helsby
Ray Henrikson
Judith Mark
Phillip Riddle
Leslie Roccario
Peggy Schalit
Irving Smith
William Storrs

Deacons

Leif Engstrom
Moderator

Rita Austin
Keith Barber
Bruce Brynolfson
Marc Boucher
Lewis Boxwell
Carol Green
Sue Holmes
Fran Kamp
Heidi Kite
Yousaf Mathias
Virginia Seelye
Rachel Smith
Linda Stevens
Judith Wing
Albert Wood
Esther Yomoah
Margaret Zettle

Consecration Sunday

A Report of Dedication and Commitment

By Garrett DeGraff, Stewardship Committee Chair

I am happy and grateful to report on the results of Consecration Sunday (October 26) and the status of this year's stewardship campaign to support the mission and ministry of First Presbyterian. I am also grateful for all those who helped make Consecration Sunday possible.

First, the results:

To date (I am writing this on November 12), a total of 123 giving units (individuals or families) have made commitments, with the total amount committed representing \$296,500. 111 of the 123 total are giving units that made pledges last year. In this group, the commitments for 2009 represent a 6% increase over what was pledged for 2008. I am very happy and very grateful for that outstanding generosity in these very trying times.

Our Co-Pastors report that based on the giving patterns of those 15 giving units who remain a part of the First Pres community and who made a pledge in 2008 but who have yet to submit an estimate of giving card for 2008, it is reasonable to assume additional commitments of at least \$15,500 assuming no increase from 2008.

Added to the commitments already received, this means we can reasonably expect to receive commitments (pledges) for 2009 totaling \$312,000, a \$2000 increase over the comparable number for 2008.

I was also very happy with the great gathering of First Presbyterians for Consecration Sunday worship and the 150 or so who enjoyed the fellowship and fine food at the Celebration Meal that followed.

Consecration Sunday and the celebration meal would not have been possible without the contributions of Bruce Brynolfson, Annette Johnson and Bob Westphal, who each made worship announcements on the Sunday's leading up to Consecration Sunday; Amy Robinson, who coordinated arrangements for the celebration meal; Peter Thomas, who helped organized a Consecration Sunday leadership meal and meeting; the Elders and Deacons (and some spouses of Elders or Deacons), who made calls inviting congregants to the Consecration Sunday service and meal; Carlie D'Annunzio, our church bookkeeper, who crunched the numbers during the celebration; Sandra Marr, our church secretary, for preparing all the mailings, and our maintenance supervisor, Derrick Jackson, who did yeoman's work setting up the Assembly Hall for the celebration meal.

I also want to thank the Rev. M. J. Pattison, Parish Associate at Hamilton Union Presbyterian Church, for preaching on Consecration Sunday and for all her spiritual and practical guidance, support and wisdom as we prepared for Consecration Sunday.

Lastly, I want to thank our co-pastors, Glenn and Miriam Lawrence Leupold, for their leadership, help, prayerful support, tolerance, understanding and good humor.



Garrett DeGraff delivers an initial report at Consecration Sunday.

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Sunday, December 7

An ADVENTure

We will celebrate the second Sunday of Advent, December 7, with a special program for all ages! It will be an ADVENTure.

Immediately after the 10:45 service, enjoy refreshments in the Assembly Hall and join our church family as we make holiday ornaments to keep or give away. We will learn the meaning behind some of the symbols we see represented in the ornaments and enjoy a time of fellowship.

Stay for a short while or a long while but don't miss the ADVENTure!

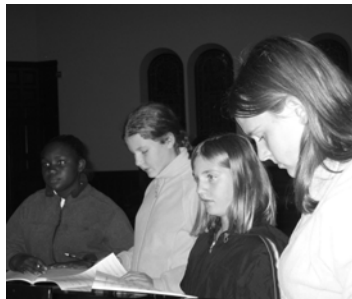
Adult Education in Advent

For the four Sundays in Advent the Adult Education class will look at Advent through the eyes of those who have waited for the coming of the Messiah, like the prophets of old, as well as those who awaited the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. As we wait for the Christ child to be born once again in our midst, don't miss this insightful time of looking at those whose waiting through history can be spiritually instructive to our waiting in 2008.



The cast of *Godspell* rehearses. Above, Helen Lewis, Mariah Rickard, Annabel Lewis, Ofu Takor, Elizabeth and Margaret Leupold.

A serious moment and a light moment characterize *Godspell*.



New Teachers, New Topic Advent: The Shepherds

Four new teachers begin a new rotation (November 30 through December 21) in **The Upper Rooms** (our Christian education program for children in kindergarten through 8th grade).

This rotation's theme is "Advent: The Shepherds." The children will be exploring Luke 2:8-20 through drama, art, computers, and games.

Teaching this time around will be Charlie Kite in Sinai Stage, Gloria Wood in Galilee Gallery, Brian Robinson in Memory on the Mount, and Freda Gardner in the Tower of Scrabble. If you are interested in teaching in one of the upcoming 4 or 3-week rotations, contact Pastor Miriam Lawrence Leupold.

World Premiere in March *Godspell* Cast Rehearses

By Christy D'Ambrosio

You may have seen our own First Pres cast of *Godspell* perform the most famous piece from the Broadway musical, *Godspell*, "Day by Day," in the sanctuary for both services on November 2. Ofu Takor and Helen Lewis sang solo, and the remainder of the cast joined them for a rousing, hand-clapping and hand-shaking, version, similar to what they will present in the Assembly Hall when *Godspell* premieres in early March 2009.

The *Godspell* Cast rehearses every Monday night. The cast also includes Annabel Lewis, Mariah Rickard, Margaret and Elizabeth Leupold, Mackenzie, Mia, and Maggie Robinson, and most recently Jenna Scarlett.

Any First Presbyterian youth interested in joining the cast, please contact Fiona McKinney, Musical Director, or Christy D'Ambrosio, Director, or just come to the next rehearsal, Monday, December 1, 6:30-8:00.

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Parsons Gift Giving

By Amy Robinson

The holiday season for most of us is a time of joy, family traditions, and celebrations, but for many children the holidays can be a very difficult time on many different levels. For the past few years First Pres has worked in partnership with Parsons Child and Family Center to help make a holiday possible for those who cannot provide for themselves or their family.

Parsons Child and Family Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping families and their children. Through this special gift-giving program, Parsons and the community reach out to more than 900 children and families each year.

On the first Sunday in Advent, November 30th, there will be a tree in the Assembly Hall with paper ornaments including a child's name and a gift from their wish list. Parsons has forwarded

the names and gift lists for several children of various ages. Please consider taking a paper ornament from the tree, replacing it with a "real" ornament and returning the unwrapped gift with the paper ornament taped on if possible to the box or bin marked "Parsons Christmas Project" located in the Assembly Hall near the tree.

This year, in an effort to afford a little extra shopping time, we are again providing the **children's wish lists before the tree is up. The deadline to drop gifts at the church is December 7.** If you choose from this list before the tree is up or even after, please contact Amy Robinson as soon as possible so that we are aware that particular wish is to be fulfilled and to avoid duplication. Amy can be reached by email at arobinson@hrbclaw.com or by telephone at 356-5714 (please leave a message).

Thank you for your care and compassion, generosity and thoughtfulness this Advent season.

Gabriel (boy) age 2

Special underwear (toddler size 4T)
Shirts (longsleeve) "
Pants "
Sweatshirts "
Undershirts "
Big Trucks
Balls

Mar'isa (girl) age 1

Sweat suits (size 18 month)
Sweat pants (size 18 month)
Toys (age appropriate)
Toddler movies (DVDs)

Lisa (girl) age 4

Baby doll accessories
Baby dolls
Winter boots (size Youth 11)
Clothes (youth 4T)

Amber (girl) age 16

Jackets (jr. small)
Shirts (long sleeve) (jr. small)
Shoes (size 6)
Jean skirt (jr. Size 6)
CD player
CDs (Rodney Atkins/Country music)
Guitar strings

Rahsheim (boy) age 2

Slippers (any character) (youth size 10-1/2)
T-shirt (any character) (size 4T)
Snow boots (youth size 10-1/2)
Yo-yo ball
Play tent/tunnel (to crawl through)
Educational games
Board books (durable books especially about animals)

Tyrshawn (boy) age 11

skateboarders clothes
(pants,shirts,etc) (youth size 12)
hand held games (any popular type)

Richard (boy) age 12

Yugioh cards
Kynex sets
Erector sets
Batman action figures

Joshua (boy) age 15

Blue jeans (size Jr 16)
Flashdrive (2 Gigabyte)
Tamagotchi VS (virtual pet)
Superman Doomsday (DVD)
Pokemon tin (with cards)

Jonathan (boy) age 18

Hair Clippers (To edge up hair - straight lines)

Parsons asks that we do not wrap the gifts in order to respect the dignity of those they serve and consistent with their mission to empower families to be strong. The gifts are not given

from Parsons staff but from the child's parents/guardians. They do accept wrapping paper so the families may wrap the donated gifts.

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Carolyn Snyder Lemmon to Serve as Moderator of Albany Presbytery

At the stated meeting of Albany Presbytery on November 18, Carolyn Snyder Lemmon began her year-long term as Moderator of Albany Presbytery. For the year prior she has served as Vice-Moderator. She will preside at all the stated meetings for the next year and represent the presbytery at various functions, not only in the community but in actions of the presbytery, such as clergy ordinations. Be sure to offer Carolyn a hearty congratulations on her achievement.

2008 Christmas Joy Offering

Good news of great joy!

Don't forget to include the Presbyterian Church (USA) Christmas Joy Offering in your holiday giving. This year's offering will be received on Sunday, December 21. The Joy Offering supports Presbyterian Racial/Ethnic Schools as well as retired missionaries and church leaders. You can use the Christmas Joy Offering envelope in the pew and add a note to your check: "Christmas Joy Offering."

The history of the Christmas Joy Offering dates back to 1952 when the former Presbyterian Church in the U.S. began the Joy Gift Offering to supplement inadequate retirement income and supplemental medical insurance for former missionaries, ministers, church workers and their spouses. In 1974 minority education was added as a recipient.

Proclaim the "good news of great joy" this year by being generous, as God has been generous with all of us.

Welcome, New Members!

By Leslie Roccario

The congregation is delighted to welcome its two newest members who joined the church on November 23. Here is some information to help you get to know them better. If you have something in common, use it to strike up a conversation, but if not, welcome them warmly anyway!



Pamela Finch

Pamela Finch, a resident of Troy, was ordained as a deacon and elder in her previous church in Little Falls, NY, where she was a small group leader, youth group assistant, VBS teacher, participated in bell choir, choir, and more! She has already participated as a lay reader at First Pres, Albany.

Pam is a grass roots advocacy expert and public relations consultant. Her hobbies are reading, piano, cross-country skiing and golf. AND she has been skydiving!

She is the proud mother of Paul and Patrick, ages 5 and 2.



Willard McMorris

Willard McMorris lives on Chestnut Street in Albany. He is the office and pantry assistant for FOCUS Churches of Albany.

Will's hobbies include woodworking and being outdoors. He enjoys Bible study and is interested in getting involved here in teaching and missions.

Please meet, greet, and welcome these new members of our First Pres family.

More Light Celebration

By Keith Barber, More Light Committee

Half a dozen members of our church's More Light Committee joined in a Presbyterian Rainbow celebration of the efforts of Albany Presbytery's 21 Welcoming Churches that advocate and practice greater inclusion of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender brothers and sisters. About 50 people turned out for the celebration on a recent Sunday afternoon at the Presbyterian-New England Congregational Church in Saratoga Springs.

It was an afternoon of worship, laughter, encouragement, and affirmation. Nora Yates, the executive director of the Capital District Gay and Lesbian Community Council was the main speaker. We joined in celebrating how far we've come and reaffirmed our commitment to how far we have yet to go. Our More Light Committee and its members actively participate in the work of Presbyterian Rainbow, which seeks to advance LGBT matters in Albany Presbytery.

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Notes from the Choir

By Don Ingram

As we continue our journey through Advent, we will sing on December 7 American composer Paul Manz's beautiful "E'en so, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come" and "O Jesus, Grant Me Hope and Comfort" by the German composer J. W. Franck. Two English composers will be heard on December 14: "O Thou, the Central Orb" by Tudor composer Orlando Gibbons and "From the Rising of the Sun" by F. A. Gore Ouseley. December 21 the choir will sing "... And the Glory of the Lord" from *Messiah* and "Praise Ye the Lord of Hosts" from Saint-Saens' *Christmas Oratorio*.

Our handbell choir will play at the 10:45 am service on December 21.

The prelude for the Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols will begin at 7:20 pm. Nancy Frank and Albert Wood will repeat their piano and organ duet of Bach's "Sheep May Safely Graze". The featured choral work will be "Christmas Day" a medley of familiar carols by Gustav Holst.

The First Sunday after Christmas the choir will sing "Alleluia" from *Cantata 142*, which is attributed to J. S. Bach and the carol "Ding, Dong, Merrily on High".

Organ Update

The upkeep of the organ is an on-going process. Pipe organs, just like people, need to be regularly checked and maintained. In addition to the regular tunings, parts wear out and need replacing or fixing.

The First Pres organ went through several necessary repairs this past spring and summer amounting to \$26,000. In addition to using budgeted Property Committee funds and Guernsey funds, individual members contributed a total of \$12,000 to the cost of these repairs. We appreciate your generosity. First Pres is home to a truly magnificent organ, which with your generosity through the years has been well maintained.

Deacons' Doings

By Linda Stevens

December marks the beginning of a busy time for the Deacons. The Rensselaer Flock gathered for coffee at the home of Dwight and Rachel Smith. Look for continuing flock gatherings in the New Year!

Enclosed in the newsletter is an order form for Christmas poinsettias. Follow directions for filling out the form, enclose proper payment, and return to church by Sunday, December 7. Poinsettias will be on display from Sunday, December 14,

through Advent and the Christmas season.

Our next meeting, December 9 at 6 pm, will be a potluck supper to welcome new Deacons and honor departing Deacons. After supper, we will hold a joint meeting with Session followed by our regular December meeting.

There are still two unfilled Deacons' positions. If you feel able and willing to join the board, please contact the nominating committee (chairs, Irving Smith and Peggy Schalit) or Rev. Glenn Leupold.

Ushers and Greeters Schedule

Dec 7	8:30 10:45	Margaret and Elizabeth Leupold Team 3 - Bob Stevens, Linda Stevens, Lois Cameron, Bob Jackson,
Dec 14	8:30 am 10:45	Bruce Brynolfson Team 4 - Ray Henrikson, Bob Kamp, Fran Kamp, Rachel Smith, Roseline Takor
Dec 21	8:30 10:45	Peter Thomas Team 5 - Don Mark, Bob Seelye, Virginia Seelye, Adam Sperry, Sarah Sperry
Dec 24	7:30 pm	Christmas Eve Team 6 - J. Melvin Bostic, Fay Fairfax, Alice Schrade, Bill Westedt, Esther Yomoah
Dec 25	11:00 am	Christmas Day Team 7 - Marc Boucher, Carolyn Garvin, June Klimash, Amy Scarlett, Marc Scarlett
Dec 28	9:30 am	One service Team 8 - Heidi Elad, Sherry Hall, Elly Rice, Irving Smith, Bill Storrs, Margaret Zettle

Deacons' Flower Ministry

Dec 7	Schenectady: Fran Kamp
Dec 14	Menands, Loudonville: Linda Stevens, Esther Yomoah
Dec 21	Rensselaer and East: Sue Holmes, Rachel Smith
Dec 28	Delmar Area: Judith Wing, Margaret Zettle

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Lectionary

- Dec 7 2nd Sunday of Advent** - Isa. 40:1-11; *Ps. 85:1-2, 8-13*;
2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8
- Dec 14 3rd Sunday of Advent** - Isa. 61:1-4, 8-11; *Ps. 126* or
Luke 1:47-55; 1 Thess. 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28
- Dec 21 4th Sunday of Advent** - 2 Sam. 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:47-
55 or *Ps. 89:1-4, 19-26*; Rom. 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38
- Dec 28 1st Sunday after Christmas** - Isa. 61:10—62:3; *Ps. 148*;
Gal. 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

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Please notify the church office of
any change in address.

Recordings of the worship service
are available from the Church
Office.