

December 16, 2011

Christ Congregational Church

e-NewsNotes for Christmas



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From the Senior Pastor

It was foretold long ago. Peace would come through the birth of a child. Travelers to the ancient city of Priene in modern-day Turkey could read all about it on an inscription in a temple. It read, "The good news about the birthday of a divine child who will save the world from destruction by establishing permanent peace." Who was this child? Who would bring peace and good will to all?

Caesar!

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Christmas Message

As we think about this Lord of Light, consider how each of us is made to shine. Think about our connections and interconnections. And think about making some commitments.

The inscription was written about Caesar Augustus. Roman theology regularly spoke of the emperor as "Lord," "Son of God," and "Savior." Caesar Augustus, it was claimed, was the son of Apollo, the god of light, and a virgin named Atia. Caesar Augustus was the son of a god who was coming to light up the world.

So, what happens if you are a gospel writer and you want to replace one son of God with another? You need to counter imperial theology. According to Luke, Jesus is the light in the darkness. It turns out that the peace of Rome did not end war. The peace of the Empire was based on fear, oppression and violence.

On the first Christmas night, the angels proclaim a different kind of peace. They give glad tidings of Jesus, a different Savior. The first ones to hear this message are shepherds -- a marginalized peasant class who experienced the oppression and exploitation of the Empire. The first delivery of good news comes to the poor and despised.

According to Luke, the light of Jesus is, among other things, political. The stories of the birth of Jesus are meant to give an intentional contrast the stories of Caesar. Christ is light, and the Empire is darkness; Christ gives liberation while the rulers of the world bring bondage; the justice of Christ confronts the injustice around him. The true Prince of Peace is born in a land of violence. Jesus is the true Lord of Light and Life.

As we think about this Lord of Light, consider how each of us is made to shine. Think about our connections and interconnections. And think about making some commitments.

Knowing how deeply our lives intertwine, I vow not to destroy the life or spirit of others.

Knowing how deeply our lives intertwine, I vow not to take what is not given.

Knowing how deeply our lives intertwine, I vow not to engage in abusive relationships.

Knowing how deeply our lives intertwine, I vow not to speak falsely or deceptively.

Knowing how deeply our lives intertwine, I vow not to harm self or others through poisonous thoughts, deeds, or substances.

Knowing how deeply our lives intertwine, I vow not to dwell on past errors.

Knowing how deeply our lives intertwine, I vow not to

*Speak of self separate from others.
Knowing how deeply our lives intertwine, I vow not to
possess any form of life selfishly.
Knowing how deeply our lives intertwine, I vow not to
harbor ill-will toward any human being.*

Advent and Christmas are seasons of new beginnings. It is time to destabilize our old habits with something new. It is a time to remember that the old order of things is slipping away. A new order has begun. It is a time to do something new: a time to forgive and forget; a time to throw away violence and hatreds; a time to fill your heart and your house with sunshine.

Wishing you great joy,
Pastor Matt Braddock

Recruiting Readers for Christmas Eve Services

Members of the congregation are invited to volunteer to read on Christmas Eve at either the 5:00 p.m. or the 9:00 p.m. service. If you are interested in participating, please e-mail Tim Carrigan at: tcarrigan@gmail.com. Volunteers will be assigned on a first come, first serve basis. Please contact Tim ***no later than Tuesday, December 20th***.

Musical Note: *Gloria in Excelsis Deo!*

On Sunday, December 18th, 2011, the Music Ministry will lead the congregation at CCC in two different -- but equally wonderful and meaningful -- services of worship. Much like last year, **our first service of the day (9:00 a.m.)** will be held in the sanctuary and will offer a celebration of familiar and traditional carols for the entire congregation. The Chancel and Chapel Choirs along with the Intergenerational Orchestra will lead us in this service. This CCC family celebration will focus on our commitment to honor and value the gifts of our children and youth as they participate in and lead our worship throughout the year, but especially in this festive season. Our first Intergenerational Orchestra rehearsal for the Christmas season hosted 20 plus young persons (and we're expecting more!) who came together to make music. We are blessed each month by the Chapel Choir and their musical offerings to us and again, they will offer their musical gifts and talents in this service. Everyone may share in the joy of the season with this worship service that will truly be a celebration of our best gifts and talents, so freely shared in expectation and anticipation of the birth of our Savior.

The second service of the morning (11:00 a.m. -- please note the later start time), will also feature traditional carols for the congregation. These will be accompanied by our Advanced Orchestra and the CCC String Ensemble, and organ, under the direction of Sandra Brush, serving as assistant conductor and accompanist. The Chancel Choir will also present Antonio Vivaldi's Gloria during this service, along with our own soloists, Karen O'Steen, Joanne Barnett, Leslie Weyn, Rick Brush, and Rachel Green Cosgrove. We will be joined by trumpeter, Brandon Amalgro and oboist, Lazo Momchilovich. Dr. Nae Pearson will conduct this major choral work. The Gloria is a well-known and highly celebrated composition ushering in the joy of the Christmas season.

We are truly blessed with the talents and gifts of so many dedicated musicians who give of their time and energy to share in our musical abundance at CCC. As we celebrate this Advent season---a time in which we wait with hope, joy, and love, and with prayers for peace, may our voices be lifted in song, our hearts be nourished with the promise of grace, and our lives transformed again, by the beauty of music!

Music Connects Us to God...

Christmas Eve Nativity Service for All Ages 5:00 PM, December 24th, 2011

Come be a part of the Christmas Story. Please join us and bring your friends and family to the 5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service. Everyone is invited to worship and participate. We will celebrate with familiar carols and hymns and an unrehearsed Nativity Pageant.

Costumes: Costumes will be available in Room 207 after worship on December 18th on a first come, first served basis. Or you can make your own costume. We're looking for: Magi (wise men and women), Angels, Shepherds, and Animals -- cows, lambs, donkeys, and other stable animals. After the pageant, costumes can be returned to room 207 that evening or on December 25th or January 1st after worship.

Everyone can participate: If you have friends or family from out of town joining you for the service, invite them to bring their own costume or pick one up for them beforehand. All children will be invited forward during the pageant even if they do not wear a costume. There will be lots of adult volunteers to help you know what to do and when it is your turn to come forward and join the nativity.

Are You Interested In Learning More About CCC

Or In Joining the Church?

Are you interested in learning more about CCC and how to become a member of this faith community? The Outreach and Engagement Board will be hosting an information meeting Tuesday, January 3, at 7:30 pm in the church conference room. Members of the O&E Board and Pastor Matt will present information and answer questions on the church's theology, structure, organization, finances and membership expectations. New members will be received on Sunday, January 29th during the 10:30 am service of worship. If you would like attend the information meeting and/or join the Church, please contact Trish Esposito at 301-593-1858, trishespo@yahoo.com Please note: Attendance at the information meeting on January 3rd does not commit you to joining the church, nor are you required to attend the information meeting to join the church.

CCC Leadership Explores Conversations on Racism

"How to talk about racism?" was the topic two dozen members and friends of CCC explored on November 19. Led by Ronnie Galvin, Executive Director of IMPACT Silver Spring, the group used story telling as a resource for creating community and building relationships.

Reverend Matt Braddock introduced the purpose of the gathering as the first step in preparing for 2012 to be a year of intentional prayer and study in support of CCC's Covenant to Become an Anti-Racist, Multi-Racial/Multi-Cultural Church. Ronnie described CCC's covenant as "taking a prophetic stance" and being very unusual in doing so. Having a covenant, however, is not the same as living a covenant, and 2012 is the year in which CCC will work intentionally towards living its covenant.

Ronnie used a model adapted from the Fund for Theological Evaluation's "Notice, Name, and Nature Season of Vocation Care" curriculum. The curriculum helps communities transform their resources into goals through a five-step organizing process: Telling Our Stories, Building Relationships, Creating a Team, Devising Strategy, and Mobilizing Commitments.

The story-telling process is critical to building relationships because it involves TELLING, LISTENING, and revealing VALUES. The group had time to practice the first step in the process, the Story of Self. In small groups, we chose one personal story on the topic of a moment in our lives when we

recognized our own complicity with racism or a time when we took a stand against racism. Each story consisted of a challenge, a choice, and an outcome. One person from each group told his/her story in a "fishbowl" exercise in the large group.

In the fishbowl, the larger group had an opportunity to reflect on what they heard in each person's story. What emerged was the realization that individual stories, while differing in the details, are a reflection of the community at large. Recognizing shared challenges, choices and outcomes in each other led to a discussion of shared values.

As a process, the story of self leads to the story of us which leads to the story of now, and "now" evolves into movement toward a common goal formed out of shared values.

Acknowledging the agenda for the 2-hour gathering was ambitious, Ronnie indicated his willingness to return to CCC to continue studying and practicing story-telling as an essential resource for creating movement. All members and friends are invited and encouraged to participate in these conversations.

Jackie Walters for the Communications Officer

Volunteers' Stewardship Beautifies CCC's Building & Grounds

In October and November, Building & Grounds volunteers cleaned up existing flower beds, raked leaves, planted spring flowering tulip and daffodil bulbs, and planted pansies at various places around the grounds. Mary Pence regularly tends the garden to the left of the lobby entrance, and Bridgette Dougall has been busy tending to her pleasing landscape garden on the Indian Spring side of the Church. I was helped by Olen, Coby and Sean Stephens with bulb planting. Dick Meyer helped rake leaves and remove weeds at various flower beds. Chris Bublitz helped edge the Colesville Road sidewalk entrance and clear weeds on the Colesville sidewalk. And our Cub Scout Pack made bird houses which will be erected this winter or early spring at various locations on church grounds.

Building & Grounds co-chair Tony Ingram coordinated various indoor projects. Richard Ablard was a big help on prepping and painting the second floor restroom floors, and Paul Erickson provided valuable assistance in taping edges for painting, cleaning the floors, purchasing the paint and supplies, and final cleanup. Cory Gray tightened loose

handrails on the basement level stairs. Thanks to all of our volunteers.

Christopher Lewis, Building & Grounds Committee Co-Chair

25th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Prayer Breakfast on January 7th

This year United Black Christians - Region III, UCC, will hold its annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Prayer Breakfast (earlier than usual) on **Saturday, January 7th**, from 9:00 a.m. to Noon at Peoples Congregational Church, 4704 13th St., NW, DC. The breakfast is a very special event in which CCC has participated for many years. The guest speaker this time will be the Rev. Dr. Howard John Wesley, Pastor of Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, VA. And the food will be great!

Tickets are \$25.00 for adults. Watch for the sign-up sheet on the CCC bulletin board if you would like to be part of a group that shares transportation and the good time.

Flower Calendar for 2012

The Flower Calendar for 2012 is now posted on the bulletin board outside the Church Office. If you think you'd like to donate the altar flower one Sunday, please sign up for the Sunday of your choice. If you've never done it, please feel free to pick up a simple flyer of tips and guidance located near the Flower Calendar. Thank you in advance for your generous gift!

To CCC Members and Friends:

Thank you for your support, prayers, and comments that we received upon the death of our mother and my wife. Your cards have been read and reread and greatly appreciated.

Lauren, Patricia & Kristen and Dick

Christmas Eve Cookie Reception

Following the 9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service, the Board of Deacons and the Board for Outreach and Engagement invite you to a light reception of cookies and seasonal beverage with other members of the CCC community in the main lobby. This is a wonderful opportunity for young adults home from college to catch up with one another, and for all of us to share Christmas cheer.

Christmas Eve Young Adult Gathering

Young Adults and families of young adults, mark your calendars for a Young Adult Gathering amidst the festivities in the Lobby following the 9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service. With a growing young adult community at CCC, let's start off 2012 by reuniting with old friends and meeting new ones in developing a vision for the return of a Young Adult program at CCC. Let's meet in one corner of the Lobby to discuss it at the Christmas Eve party.

And join us on January 8th, 2012 for an interest and planning meeting for a Young Adult group at CCC. If you have any questions or comments, e-mail Jordan Johnson at: johnson.jordan@verizon.net.

Shaw Community Ministry Update

Thank you again to the boy scouts and everyone else from CCC who contributed food and cash for the Shaw Community Ministry Thanksgiving Food Drive. We contributed \$663 and 25 bags of food. It was much appreciated.

The next Shaw event is the Annual Christmas Party **tomorrow, Saturday, December 17th** at Lincoln Temple 1701 11th Street N.W. Washington, D.C. It is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about Shaw. There is a lunch and Santa Claus gives gifts to the children in the Shaw after-school program. The gifts are provided by individual members of the Congregational Churches that sponsor Shaw (such as you) who step forward to be the Secret Santa for a Shaw child. The Children put on a performance at the Party for their parents and guests. If you are willing to be the Secret Santa for a Shaw child or would like to come to the Shaw Christmas Party, please contact our CCC Shaw Board Member, Marjorie Hoffman at 301-588-4153 or e-mail her at marjoriehoffman31@comcast.net

Seniors Movie Afternoon

The Seniors group will hold another movie afternoon on Wednesday, December 21st with a brown bag lunch at noon in the Conference Room and the movie at 1:00 p.m. in the Nursery. We are planning to show "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" with Steve Martin and Michael Caine -- a deliberate attempt at a change of pace!

Sisters for Sisters Potluck Lunch & White Elephant Exchange

Sisters for Sisters will have our Christmas potluck lunch and white elephant exchange at the home of Joan Boyer on Saturday, December 17th at 1:00 p.m. Joan's address is: 12905 Buccaneer Road, Silver Spring. CCC women are invited to join us. RSVP to Joan Boyer, June Leonard or Ruth Haigh.

Wishing you all a Joyous Christmas!
The CCC Staff

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