

COURIER

ADVENT/CHRISTMAS 2008

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

As I sit to write this piece for the Courier, my first thoughts are of gratitude for your gracious and generous welcome. You have been warm, friendly, and helpful. You have answered many questions and offered me with directions. And I've had the opportunity on several occasions to observe you treat each other in the same way. Surely, as you proceed through this interim period, you must count your support for one another and for your pastor as a great strength.

Over the next months we will no doubt engage in discussions about several structural and organization topics – doing so is one of the goals in an interim period. But using this time to nurture our corporate and individual spiritual growth is also essential. With Advent nearly upon us, I have prepared a daily meditation guide for any of you who wish to use it. It is available in the Courier, at the church, and on the website. The texts are primarily chosen from the Revised Common Lectionary from which our texts for Sunday morning worship are selected. The goal is to offer you a focus through which you can listen for God's word to you in your own meditation and contemplation.

We will also be offering two opportunities for families to participate in worship during Advent. Children learn about Jesus, the Bible, and church in Sunday School. But they learn faith because we share it with them. Surely all of you can remember someone whose faith has informed and strengthened your own.

On December 14 in a service entitled Hanging of the Greens, we will decorate the church for Christmas. The service is a worshipful one that brings young and old together to learn about our traditions as we share them with each other. It invites us to prepare not only the sanctuary of our church but also the sanctuary of our hearts for the coming of the Christ child.

The pageant will be on Sunday, December 21. At this writing, Sandy and I are completing our plans. Worship will follow the traditional pattern with an adult meditation, some special music, and participation from our children and young people. Our hope is to offer a second multi-generational experience in which we can proclaim and share our faith together.

As we enter this time of preparation, I pray that once again the spirit of Christ will be born among you and within you,

Mary Lou

TREASURER'S REPORT – November 2008

The Church's finances continue to be excellent through the third quarter of 2008. We finished the third quarter, which ended September 30, with a surplus of \$11,982! Income was \$128,890 versus expenses of (\$116,908). Collections account for \$114,906 of the total income, with the remainder coming from investment income, facility use and fund raising.

The year-to-date pledge and plate collection rates are both ahead of the budget amounts, as shown in the table below.

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Pledge Collection YTD	\$ 93,600	\$ 108,354	116 %
Plate Collection YTD	\$ 5,625	\$ 6,552	117 %

We also continue to manage the Church's expenses closely. See the table below for details.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Surplus / (Deficit)</u>
Pastoral Ministry	\$ 41,250	\$ 38,860	\$ 2,390
Worship and Service	\$ 26,115	\$ 25,451	\$ 664
Christian Education & Youth	\$ 14,138	\$ 11,642	\$ 2,496
Wider Mission	\$ 11,625	\$ 12,233	(\$ 608)
Properties & Maintenance	\$ 29,948	\$ 28,722	\$ 1,226

Looking ahead, we forecast that the Church will end the year with a *surplus*! Increased expenses during the fourth quarter will reduce the current surplus, but any surplus is welcomed. It will be of great help for the upcoming 2009 budget challenge. Thanks again to the Congregation for your generosity and your efforts in fund raising.

Yours in Christ,
Scott Shurtleff, Treasurer

P.S. You may also be wondering about our investment accounts based on the decimation of nearly every investment class other than US Treasury Notes. Thankfully, most of our investment assets were in cash equivalents during 2008. As of November 17, our overall investment return is a 5.4% loss versus a 41.0% loss for the S&P 500.

DEACONS CORNER

In October, Rev. Caroline Murphy officiated at the funerals of Hazel Hoppe and Johnson Parker.

The Rev. Mary Lou Howson started on Sunday, November 2nd as new Interim Pastor.

November's meeting will be Monday November 24th

The baptism of Lee Keck's grandson will be Sunday, December 7th.

The marriage of Lee Keck and Ann Childs will be on Wednesday, December 10th at 2:00pm. Everyone is invited and there will be refreshments to follow.

The service "Hanging of the Greens" will be on Sunday, December 14th.

The Longest Night Service will be on Friday, December 19th at 7:00pm

The Pageant will be on Sunday, December 21st during the service.

The Christmas Eve Service will be at 5:00 pm.

We need Ushers, Greeters and Coffee Hour Signups! !

Please remember to sign up on the usher and greeter volunteer lists now located in the Church Hall. There are several slots remaining open for the year. It is an easy and fun job to do. Also don't forget to signup for coffee hour. Don't be afraid to ask questions of any of the Deacons!

PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The charge of this committee is to support the relationship between the pastor and members of the congregation by serving as a liaison between the pastor and congregants, offering support to the pastor, and to provide a framework to deal with conflict. Pastoral Relations Committee members are also available to meet with church members and the pastor to discuss concerns upon request (and confidentially as needed).

The following members of the committee are available to church members should any concerns arise regarding the relationship between the pastor and the congregation: Doreen Fox – 393-1561, Beth Reilly-Roman – 393-2752, David Johnson – 393-3672, Les Rushworth – 393-1133, Nancy Grannis – 393-3433.

The Pastoral Relations Committee meets on a quarterly basis. The next meeting will be on Sunday, December 7th @ 11:30 am in the Pastor's office.

MISSION AND STEWARDSHIP

Fall was a busy time for Mission work.

Of particular note were projects lead by our Youth! Colby Plaskowitz collected blankets and coats for homeless shelters in New Haven. The Jr. Youth Group held a car wash for Unicef and collected supplies for the Animal Shelter.

Five Cleaning Buckets and \$100 were collected for U.S. Hurricane relief. Five Thanksgiving baskets were assembled for local neighbors. Our Neighbors in Need offering provided \$948 for our Church's Wider Mission.

The Christmas Fund Offering will be collected during Christmas week and the Angel Tree will appear in early December.

Our Fall Stewardship Campaign focused on "Owning our Faith". This year, the congregation was also asked to pledge Time and Talents. With our In-Gathering on November 16, 37 pledges of Time, Talent and Resources were received. When all pledges have been received, our financial secretary will report the monetary resources we have for 2009. The Time and Talents portion will also be collated and various Boards and Committees will have a roster of resources for church programs and projects for 2009.

AMITY CARES UPDATE

Dear Amity Cares Supporters,

- Great News**—We are getting closer to a location and a family for Amity Cares 3. Bill should have specific info for us soon, and it looks like this home will be “green construction”. We will update you as soon as we know. Habitat is pleased to announce that Adam Lasavage has returned to Habitat as the new construction supervisor. Adam brings many years of experience, and volunteers will love working with him.
- Scoozzi Wine Tasting** was a relaxing and successful evening. Over 40 Amity Cares supporters attended the wine tasting last week making a profit of around \$1000. It was a way to reconnect with Amity Cares friends; special thanks to Nancy Weber for making it happen. Please consider Scoozzi’s as a destination for a special meal and thank Jeff the manager for his long time support of Amity Cares and Habitat for Humanity.
- Update from Claire and Susan** After giving a presentation at the Orange Rotary, Claire was invited to submit a proposal for a grant to the Orange Rotary. We should find out soon the decision about some financial support for Amity Cares.
- Orange Chamber of Commerce** has decided to donate the proceeds from the 50/50 raffle at their December 18th Christmas party to Amity Cares. All are invited to attend this Chamber party. See attached flyer for details, or contact Claire for more information: crusowicz@hotmail.com
- Amity High School Habitat For Humanity Club** The club has already had two volunteer on site work days even though Amity Cares does not yet have a house! Over 10 high school volunteers and chaperone Cindy Frost gave up a “sleep in morning, off school day” to work all day on November 4th. The date for the **Battle of the Bands has been set for Friday December 19th at 7 pm at The Space in Hamden. Bushwhack** is the headliner, and Amanda and the club have solicited prizes for the winning bands and it looks to be a great evening of music for teens and the young at heart. Tickets are \$10.
- Third Annual Amity High School Benefit Concert will be Saturday May 9th.** Jocelyn Maminta from Channel 8 will be our master of ceremonies- thanks to Amanda Kaletsky. More info on the program later. Start thinking now about items for the silent auction.
- Lowe’s Gift Card Fundraiser** Amity Cares is lucky to be offered this fundraiser sponsored by Lowe’s Stores. We can raise up to \$5000 very easily. We will have the exact details at the meeting, but it works in 2 ways to make \$. **1.** Cards are pre-purchased and 100% of the cost of the card goes to Amity Cares. Habitat buys the cards for you but you must use them AFTER Jan 2, 2009. This is a no brainer-as we all go to Lowes for light bulbs etc. It would be great if you plan on buying some big ticket items and using the gift cards for those. Again it is 100% of the cost of the card goes to Habitat. **2.** Volunteers from Amity Cares will be stationed at the grand opening of the new Lowe’s in Derby and sell gift cards to folks going into the store the day of the grand opening (first week, Jan 09). Again, this \$ will also go to Amity Cares/Habitat for Humanity.
- Fair Haven Furniture in New Haven** is holding a promotion/fundraiser for Habitat the entire month of December. The deal is \$200 off a Stressless Recliner when the customer donates \$50 or more to Habitat. This is a fantastic chair and would make a wonderful gift. Fair Haven Furniture is a locally owned store worth a visit just to see their unique, high quality furniture close to downtown New Haven. They have a space called River Street Gallery where they feature area artists and hold receptions. The owners have become very supportive of Habitat. They are also planning a Support Habitat Day, tentatively scheduled for Sunday, December 7, when they will donate a percentage of their income that day to Habitat. Their website is: <http://www.fairhaven-furniture.com/> [Check out the picture of the chair!](#)
- Plans are under way to set a date in the winter for an evening at the Orange Ale House.**
- Finances-We have raised over \$31,000 in cash** -almost half way to the \$65,000. This does not include the in kind donations.
- Next meeting: Thursday December 18th at our new location at the First Church of Christ Church in Woodbridge.**

SEARCH COMMITTEE

The Search Committee has been meeting since the beginning of October. The first task is to complete the church profile. To that end the committee has been concentrating on putting questionnaires together for the congregation to fill out. These questionnaires will be sent by email and found on the ladies' parlor table and can be sent by mail if needed. They can be answered by email at info@bethanyfirstchurch.org. The ones from the parlor table can be dropped into a box provided, or mailed back to the church to the attention of the Search Committee.

All members of the Search Committee will wear name tags and will be available during coffee hour to answer any questions. There will be a table set up in the hall during coffee hour to help with questionnaires.

Please!! Everyone fill out the questionnaires, there will be three in total. These are very important in the completing of the church profile. They will be an indication of what we will be looking for in the future pastor and the direction the church will be heading in the coming year. If you wish to reply to the questionnaire anonymously there is an email to cover this.

An announcement will be made in church when the first questionnaire will be ready the time frame is the week after Thanksgiving.

A letter spelling out the process involved in finding a pastor is on the web site, on the board in the ladies parlor and going out by mail to those who request it.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
2008 – 2009 Sunday School Curriculum and Events Calendar

9/14 – Rally Day – Olympic Theme – Ice Cream Social

9/21 – 10/12 – Creation

10/19 - Family Day

10/26-11/23 - Plagues and Passover

11/30 – Family Day

12/7-12/14 - Pageant Preparation

12/21 – Pageant during Service

12/28 – Family Sunday

01/04 – 1/25 - Wandering in the Wilderness

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The following activities have been undertaken since the last Courier report:

- Blinking traffic light – repair of traffic light has been committed for repair by the Town of Bethany. Financial support for this action has been provided by our church.
- A major cleanup has been conducted of the upper room (above office area) and the basement furnace areas. Old furniture removed from basement classrooms.
- Outside cleanup day scheduled for November 22, 2008. Rain washed out our original plan for November 15.
- 2009 Budget is now being drafted by the board.

Open slots on the Board of Trustees are filled.

Continued attention is being paid to the physical needs of the church and parsonage; actions are being reviewed monthly by the Board of Trustees. Open actions are posted in the parlor bulletin board for signup by church members.

Rudolph W. Beckert

Chair, Board of Trustees

CHILDREN'S PAGE

DECEMBER

Yuletide GAMES

Enjoy the Christmas season with these games, centered around the theme of Jesus, our greatest gift.

JESUS' BIRTH FROM A-Z

What you need:

- Paper
- Pencils or pens
- Bibles (optional)



What you do:
Instruct players to think of as many Christmas-related words as they can that start with each letter of the alphabet. Start with A and give everyone a minute to brainstorm words for each letter. For example, M words include manger, Mary and miracle. If you get stuck, look at the Nativity accounts in Matthew 1 and 2, and also Luke 2. Players get a point for each word not repeated by others.

PIN THE STAR ON THE MANGER

What you need:

- Butcher paper, poster board or plain wrapping paper
- Markers, paint or crayons
- Construction paper stars
- Tape
- Blindfold

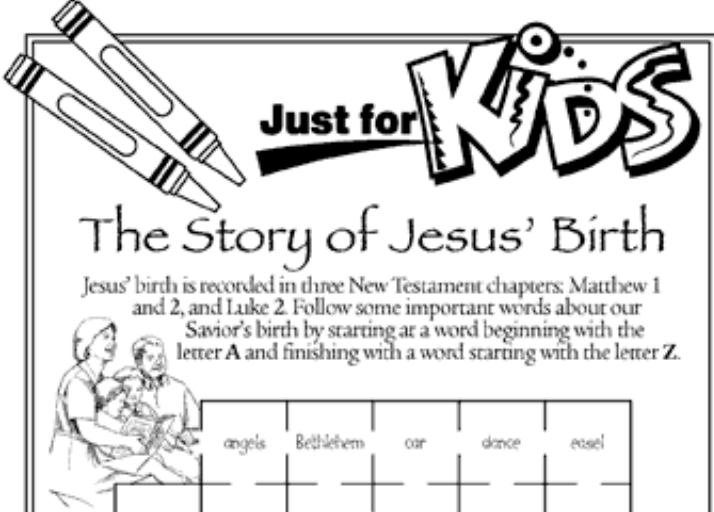


What you do:
On large paper, draw a picture of a stable. Give each player a star cutout. Put a small + above the manger where the star led the shepherds and wise men to baby Jesus. Like in Pin the Tail on the Donkey, the blindfolded person who puts his or her star closest to the + wins.

Just for KIDS

The Story of Jesus' Birth

Jesus' birth is recorded in three New Testament chapters: Matthew 1 and 2, and Luke 2. Follow some important words about our Savior's birth by starting at a word beginning with the letter A and finishing with a word starting with the letter Z.



angels	Bethlehem	car	dance	donkey	egg	fast
holy	glory	flocks	Earth	feathers	gap	
inn	jacket	grapes	peace	quiet	hat	
Joseph	King	Lord	only	righteous	shepherds	
keep	loop	Mary	night	unique	tidings	
last	maze	paper	wise men	virgin	water	
open	nest	word	excitement	young	zillions saved by this baby called Jesus	

Answer: angels, Bethlehem, child, donkey, Earth, flocks, glory, holy, inn, Joseph, King, Lord, Mary, night, only, peace, quiet, righteous, shepherds, tidings, unique, virgin, wise men, excitement, young, zillions saved by this baby called Jesus

Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath is a symbol of watchfulness and increasing joy as we anticipate Jesus' birth. The wreath's circular shape symbolizes eternity, or life without end. The candles remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World — he brought light and life to a dark world (see John 1:4-5). On each of the four Sundays of Advent, we light a new candle. As the light grows, so do our hope and joy.

JUNIOR YOUTH SCHEDULE

Sunday, November 23	No meeting	
Sunday, November 30	Meeting Hiking-Sleeping Giant?	Etkin
Friday, December 5	Yale Observatory 7:00	Meier
Sunday, December 14	Meeting-Caroling	Plaskowitz
Sunday, December 21	Pageant-No meeting	
Sunday, December 28	School Vacation-No meeting (Family Worship-consider ushering or hosting coffee hour!)	
Sunday, January 4	Lunch meeting-discuss Youth Group T-shirt designs and plans for 2009. Pass out 2009 calendars, discuss what charities we will support with proceeds from our car wash and coffee house	Swain
Sunday, January 11	T-shirt making	Tajmajer
Sunday, January 18	7:00 Movie Night (no school 1/19)	Austin
Sunday, January 25	Clothing Drive?	Dulko
Friday, January 30	Board Game Night-bring a friend! (Or invite youth from Christ Church?)	Errera
Sunday, February 8	Meeting-Valentine Cookie Baking	Etkin
Sunday, February 15	Bake sale after church to benefit World Vision	Meier
Friday, February 20	Saturday, February 21 30-Hour Famine	(Need parent volunteers!)
Sunday, February 22	No meeting	
Sunday, March 1	Collect items for Troops?	Plaskowitz
Sunday, March 8	Prime Climb	Swain
Sunday, March 15	Jr. Youth Retreat?	Tajmajer
Sunday, March 22	Coffee House preparation-sell tickets, make program, discuss set up, supplies, jobs	Austin
Saturday, March 28	Coffee House	All parents
Sunday, April 5	Church Spring Cleanup	Dulko
Sunday, April 12	Easter-No meeting	
Sunday, April 19	Spring yard work for congregation □s needy/elderly	Errera
Friday, April 24	Outdoor Game Night	Etkin
Sunday, May 3	Walk Against Hunger	Meier
Sunday, May 10	Car Wash	Plaskowitz
Sunday, May 17	Mining-Roxbury	Swain
Sunday, May 24	Prep for Memorial Day Parade	Tajmajer
Sunday, May 31	Mini Golf	Austin
Sunday, June 7	Old Newgate Prison trip	Dulko
Sunday, June 14	No meeting-Father's Day	
Sunday, June 21	Beach Day Picnic	Errera

Red = Mission/Service Blue = Fun time

Green = Fellowship/Awareness/Education

SENIOR YOUTH MINISTRY

Senior youth meet Sunday evening from 5:00 until 7:00 every week. Unless otherwise stated in the schedule.

December

- 12/7 Game
Discussion – Reconciling the commercialism of Christmas with the
Jesus message
Worship
- 12/14 Christmas caroling after church
- 12/20 Saturday, bake cookies as a fund raiser for Mission Trip
- 12/28 Christmas Vacation NO MEETING

BIRTHDAYS

December Birthdays

Eric Zamy	12/01
Ava Swain	12/03
David Calhoun	12/04
Cathy Rives	12/07
Gretchen Welker	12/09
Elsa Peat	12/11
Nancy Grannis	12/13
Ann Childs	12/16
Ben Connito	12/19
Michael Amici	12/19
Drew Zielinski	12/19
Kathryn Downs	12/19
Noah Deer	12/19
Beth Roman	12/30
Mackenzie Swain	12/31

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Karen & David Donnelly – 12-10
Rome & Jane Tedeschi 64 years

Meeting Dates

Christian Education	December 7th @ 8:45 am
Pastoral Relations	December 7th @ 11:30 am
Mission & Stewardship	December 3rd @ 7:00 pm
Church Committee	December 8th @ 7:30 pm
Trustees	December 18th @ 7:30 pm
Deacons	December 29th @ 7:30 pm

Sanctuary Choir-Every Wednesday @ 7:30 pm.

Cross Town Players Sunday mornings @ 11:30 am

Men's Club

The Men's Club meets the first Monday of every Month. The next meeting will be Monday, December 1st at 6:30 pm. All men of the church are welcome. Join us on the second Sunday of every month for our awesome pancake breakfast from 8:30 – 9:30 am.

Women's Club

The Women's Club meets on the fourth Thursday of every month.

The women are meeting on Monday, November 24th at 10:00 am to prepare candies for the Christmas Bazaar.

The Christmas party will be on Saturday, December 13th at 12 noon. See Eileen Ede for more information.

FIRST CHURCH EVENTS & FELLOWSHIP

CHRISTMAS IN NEW ENGLAND BAZAAR

The annual Christmas in New England Bazaar will take place on December 6th from 9 AM to 2 PM.

This very popular traditional bazaar will feature home baked goods, fudge and candy, jams and jellies, hand crafted and personalized ornaments, fresh made wreaths and greens, ivory elephants, jewelry, boutique items, wooden items, plants, gift baskets and much more.

Come early and snack down on donuts with cider, tea or coffee. Breakfast will be served from 9 – 11, the menu is assorted egg sandwiches. Lunch will be served from 12 – 2, the menu is assorted soups and Panini sandwiches.

Plan on coming out and joining us for a fun, festive day.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Contact person for this article is Jeanne DelVecchio (203) 393-2100 Ext. 124

Bethany Human Resources and Service Office Announces

Bethany Town Hall 40 Peck Road, Bethany CT.

Janice von Beren Senior Center Activities located on ground level
On Monday December 15th at 12Noon at the Bethany Senior activity center there will be the annual Holiday Party. The cost is \$3.00 this will include your meal and entertainment. Please call no later than December 11th; 393-2100 ext. 124. Please pay when you arrive on that day.

Free Smoke Detectors For Bethany Seniors

This will be an ongoing program until the supplies of smoke detectors are exhausted. With the assistance from the Bethany Volunteer Fire Department and the Fire Marshal and according to IFSTA (International Fire Service Training Association) guidelines and a waiver, smoke detectors will be available to seniors who request them.

You may call the Human Resources and Service office 393-2100 Ext. 124 to make the request or need further information.

In the event that the Bethany Community School is closed, the Bethany senior programs and luncheon and The Bethany Senior bus service will also be cancelled.

Do You Need Help Paying Your Heating Bills

You may be eligible for financial assistance, for more information or to make an appointment call the Bethany Human Resources and Service Office at 393-2100 ext. 124.

Home visits will be available for those with a driving constraint.

Yale Mammography Van Is Scheduled

On Monday December 1, the Yale Mammography van is scheduled. Appointments are available from 8:30am to 2:30pm. You must call (203) 688-6800 to schedule your appointment. Walk-ons will be welcomed. It's a vital step in a woman's overall preventative health care.