

# The Good News Gazette

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

94--96 Main Street  
Chester, New York 10918  
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DECEMBER 2008



Since Pastor Karen has left, we've been privileged to be led in worship by the Rev. Dr. Susan Andrews (pictured above), Rev. Bruce Tischer, Rev. Diane Kennedy, and Rev. Chris Shelton. We're pleased that so many of the congregation have been able to attend weekly services in order to greet and enjoy these talented Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. It is interesting and rewarding to have the opportunity to hear from such a variety of clergy each week while an interim pastor is being sought, so we encourage all of you to continue to make joining together each Sunday a priority for you and your families.

## **TIME OF EXPECTATION**

Expect to go some place? Expect to do something special? Expect to see and greet an old friend or meet a new one? Expect to hear and sing beloved, familiar carols? Expect to listen to His Choir as they lift their voices in lovely harmony in praise? Expect to enjoy hearing the RVDM Memorial Handbell Choir ring to the glory of God? Expect to visualize a very pregnant, very beautiful young maiden making a very long journey on the back of a donkey? Of a large caravan of camels bearing richly dressed riders plodding through the desert sands? Of a brilliant star shining more brightly than any others guiding their way? Of a “no vacancy” at an inn, but the offering of a humble stable where animals were kept? Of a feeding trough filled with pungent hay – and a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in it? Of His mother crooning a lullaby softly to Him as He sleeps, and Joseph watching them both with love and wonder? Of shepherds arriving to worship and adore Him because a very great company of angels announced the birth of a Savior for all people?

You can expect all this during this Advent/Christmas season at our church. You can accept all this as you worship with us on Sunday mornings, and especially on Christmas Eve when the Rev. Cathy Surgenor shares a new insight into an old, old story. Oh, yes, old but ever new – God’s perfect gift to the world He loves so much – His Only Son, Jesus Christ, the Savior and Lord for all mankind. ***Please come and share in this joyous fellowship of worship with us this Christmastide!***

### **My Birthday -- An Invitation to My Party**

As you well know, we are getting closer to my birthday. Every year there is a celebration in my honor and I think that this year the celebration will be repeated. During this time there are many people shopping for gifts, there are many radio announcements, TV commercials, and in every part of the world everyone is talking that my birthday is getting closer and closer.

It is really very nice to know, that at least once a year, some people think of me. As you know, the celebration of my birthday began many years ago. At first people seemed to understand and be thankful of all that I did for them, but in these times, no one seems to know the reason for the celebration. Family and friends get together and have a lot of fun, but they don't know the meaning of the celebration.

I remember that last year there was a great feast in my honor. The dinner table was full of delicious foods, pastries, fruits, assorted nuts and chocolates. The decorations were exquisite and there were many, many beautifully wrapped gifts. But, do you want to know something? I wasn't invited. I was the guest of honor and they didn't remember to send me an invitation.

The party was for me, but when that great day came, I was left outside, they closed the door in my face..... and I wanted to be with them and share their table. In truth, that didn't surprise me because in the last few years all close their doors to me.

Since I was not invited, I decided to enter the party without making any noise. I went in and stood in a corner. They were all drinking; there were some who were drunk and telling jokes and laughing at everything. They were having a great time.

To top it all, this big fat man all dressed in red wearing a long white beard entered the room yelling Ho-Ho-Ho! He seemed drunk. He sat on the sofa and all the children ran to him, saying : "Santa Claus, Santa Claus"... as if the party were in his honor !

At 12 midnight all the people began to hug each other; I extended my arms waiting for someone to hug me and .... do you know .... no one hugged me.

Suddenly they all began to share gifts. They opened them one by one with great expectation. When all had been opened, I looked to see if, maybe, there was one for me.

How would you feel if on your birthday everybody shared gifts and you did not get one? I then understood that I was unwanted at that party and quietly left.

Every year it gets worse. People only remember to eat and drink, the gifts, the parties and nobody remembers me. I would like this Christmas that you allow me to enter into your life.

I would like you to recognize the fact that almost two thousand years ago I came into this world to give my life for you, on the cross, to save you. Today, I only want you to believe this with all your heart.

I want to share something with you. As many didn't invite me to their party, I will have my own celebration, a grandiose party that no one has ever imagined, a spectacular party.

I'm still making the final arrangements. Today I am sending out many invitations and there is an invitation for you. I want to know if you wish to attend and I will make a reservation for you and write your name with golden letters in my great guest book. Only those on the guest list will be invited to the party. Those who don't answer the invitation, will be left outside.

Do you know how you can answer this invitation? It is by extending it to others whom you care for... I'll be waiting for all of you to attend my party this year.

**See you soon.... I love you!**

**-Jesus-**

### **An Alternative Suggestion from your Church Family Committee:**

All of us do love to connect with family and friends with Christmas cards. They help us to focus on and thank and praise God for His unique gift to the world. We do so need each other; to be part of "The Family of God"; to share in the joy of trusting and knowing our Savior, Jesus Christ. To help achieve this fellowship, especially in this year of financial burdens, may we suggest that you place one Christmas card on the Christmas Tree holder on the back table for all whom you would otherwise remember individually. Perhaps what you do not spend for their cards could be used as an extra gift to our church. We plan to place ours, inscribed "To My Church Family" on the tree, and hope that you will help us to fill it with yours.

**"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"**

2 Cor. 9:15

**THOUGHT FOR TODAY:** God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God's generosity can flow through you. 1 Peter 4:10 (NLT)

A teenager moved swiftly up the front steps of the church, then paused by the greeter at the open door. His eyes were on an older church member who required a brace and crutches to maneuver his slow and painful way up the stairs.

As the man reached the entry, he smiled before moving towards his pew. Still the teenager lingered, then spoke to a fellow church member. "You know," he said, "whenever I'm thinking about maybe skipping church, I remember how hard that man works to get here, and I just know that if he can make it every Sunday, so can I."

**PRAYER:** Lord, help me to get to church on Sunday. I want to be faithful to you and a good role model to others. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Grace O'Connor – Branford, Connecticut

The Secret Place

Devotions for Daily Worship

American Baptist Churches/USA, Publisher

## WOMEN'S COUNCIL NEWS

We had a very productive meeting in November starting with inspiring Patriotic readings by Catherine DeAngelis - very fitting for Veteran's Day. Following a short business meeting we began the program which consisted of discussing people who have donated their "time, talents and energy" to the life of our church this year. A card is sent to them by members and a Bible is donated in their name. This was such a lengthy list, we decided to make a large card which will be displayed in the church naming committees, organizations, church-goers, etc., and then handwritten cards would be mailed to friends of the church. Together they numbered over forty individuals, families or groups. Our meeting ended with dessert, homemade cheese ball and crackers provided by Rosemary Eckard.

While on the subject, we are so grateful to the people who bake for the food table at the dinners. This has been a very good money-maker for the council which enables us to support our missionaries, make donations to missions, buy Bibles, give to special collections, etc., and the people that attend the meal take home delicious baked items, jellies, etc..

The Saldubeheres, our missionary family, wrote and said that they are going to try to come a visit us again in the spring. What a joy that will be.

Our next meeting, which is always so special, will be held on Tuesday, the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, in the church library at 1 o'clock. The rumor is that we might even use the fireplace. We hope you will be blessed by our Christmas program, a movie about Mary, the mother of Jesus. Carol Ravert will do the devotions and Catherine DeAngelis will provide the refreshments. Please come and join us as we celebrate the birth of our Savior at this wonderful time of year.

## Christmas Joy Offering?

Like the Shepherds, we may not fully recognize the power of the angel's message: God's love is now among us, accompanying us, and working to transform us. As we open our hearts to that love, we find it will not be contained but yearns to be shared with others. One of the ways Presbyterians have traditionally responded to the news of this gift is by sharing our own gifts through the Christmas Joy Offering.

Those gifts support unmet needs of families who have given their lives to the mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), some of them after their retirement, others while they continue to serve. They also help students at racial ethnic schools and colleges to develop their gifts and find their calling. As we celebrate the love of Jesus that the angel heralds---overflowing into, through, and beyond our lives---may our gifts bear joyful witness to that uncontainable love.

Inserts will be placed in our church bulletins giving specific ways this offering helps others. Please, prayerfully, consider giving to this second offering on December 14. We would appreciate it if you would make checks payable to: *Chester Presbyterian Church* and write "Christmas Joy Offering" in the memo section. Thank you, in advance, for your generosity. May God bless you and your loved ones this Christmas and throughout the coming New Year!

## PLASTIC PROFITS

### (Free money for our church)

Since the ShopRite certificates are now under the auspices of the members of the Finance and Administration Committee, I thought it would be a good idea to explain about them to all of the church family. ShopRite enables us to purchase these certificates and gives us back \$5.00 for every \$100.00 sold. It is amazing how fast this has mounted up. In the past month, members and friends of the congregation have purchased over \$3000.00 in cards which provided an excess of \$150.00 as a fundraiser and a welcome addition to the treasury of the church.

It's an easy process. The cards come in \$50 or \$100 amounts and can be purchased in the church library at coffee hour. We are very grateful and are hoping that more and more people will try this new method of shopping.. Personally, it is a great way to budget and is more convenient when you get to the checkout. The cashier attaches a small slip to your card to tell you how much money remains. You don't have to use your credit cards, write a check, or search in your wallet for cash. One important note – don't let ShopRite refuel the card when it is finished - and they will ask. Just buy a new one from us.

Over 12 months this fundraising activity is capable of providing more than one dinner's worth of revenue, effortlessly. Please help us with your purchases at ShopRite. Thanks. ECR

## Here's What's Happening with Buildings & Grounds

### *You are invited to a Stairlift Presentation:*

We have invited a representative from the Acorn Stairlift Company to assess whether our Christian Education (C.E.) building would be conducive to their stair lifts in order to make it more handicapped accessible. Steve Greibrok (pronounced "Gree-brook") plans to be here **Wednesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>** to educate us on Acorn's stair lifts. He has requested that anyone in the church who is interested in hearing his presentation please feel free to attend. Another suggestion he had was if you have access to a computer, please research their website at [www.acornstairlifts.com](http://www.acornstairlifts.com) --- when you see the U.S.A. Flag, click on it, and you will be able to read about their technologies. We are asking people to **arrive at 5:45PM** and meet in the library. The presentation should only take an hour of your time. We welcome anyone to join us, especially if you feel this may benefit you or someone you know to access the sanctuary and/or the dining room/kitchen. If you have any questions about these arrangements, please speak to Okey Barrett or Marsha Seymour. Hope to see you **Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup> at 5:45PM in the C.E. library.**

### *Other B&G Activities:*

Okey Barrett has been researching estimates for the repairing of the stained glass windows. He will be scheduling visits to meet with the various representatives in the near future. The manse has been thoroughly cleaned. After an inspection of the manse, it has been determined there are certain repairs that are needed and possibly professional assessment/cleaning of the carpets. Arrangements for that will be forthcoming.

We try to cover the repairs and improvements of the sanctuary, C.E. building, manse and church grounds as best as we can. Sometimes the condition requires us to call in more experienced help and then we do so. If you have any concerns or suggestions for the B&G Committee, please feel free to contact chairperson Okey Barrett (651-4707), Jerry Sutherland (469-4166), or Jim Seymour (469-4311).

Respectfully submitted by:  
The Building & Grounds Committee

The **Deacons** would like to give a HUGE thank you to all who gave food or helped out with the pantry in anyway this month to be able to service such a LARGE number of needy families with food for Thanksgiving. Also available at the pantry were winter coats collected by the Girl Scouts to help keep the needy warm. A BIG thanks to Troop 325 for their wonderful idea.

## ROAST BEEF DINNER RESULTS

Now that the bills are paid and all the money has been collected, we can share the results of all the hard work that went into the Fall Roast Beef Dinner. This was the most successful dinner ever: total profit \$4,601.64. We sold 596 tickets -- 142 of them take-outs -- which means we served 454 people in the dining room.

We are grateful for whatever part you played in making this such a successful fund-raiser. Everyone is appreciated, however, we would like to extend a special “thank-you” to Matt VanDerMeulen for taking on the responsibility of roasting the beef and coordinating the rest of the cooking. Of course, Matt had a great “sous chef” working along side him, his Dad, Fred. The kitchen staff and servers did an incredible job considering the enormous crowd. We are still hearing comments on how delicious everything was. Once again, we thank you for the energy, time, and patience you gave to make this a record-breaking event. Remember, we couldn’t have spelled “S\_CCESS” without “U”!

submitted by:     Marsha Seymour & Jerry Sutherland  
November 2008 Roast Beef Dinner  
co-chairpersons

## Poinsettias for the Sanctuary for Advent & Christmas

Our poinsettias will be available this year for the same price, \$8.00, as last year. They are available in red, white, pink or marble. A sign-up sheet will be available in the library or you may call the church office to place your order. We also have the same ways to indicate your wishes as last year. They are: as a thank offering, in loving memory of, in honor of, or to the glory of God. All orders must be placed by Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup> to have your requests printed in the bulletin. Please make your checks payable to the Margaret Emody Flower Fund.

## 2008 Team Chairs and Co-Chairs

### Ministering to the People

**Church Family:** Jerry Sutherland (469-4166)

Meets monthly on the First Tuesday at 7:30

Other Teams of ministry within the Church Family Team:

**The Worship Team** (meets as needed)

**Worship Correspondence Team** (meets as needed)

**Extended Family:** Sara Green (469-2975)

Meets as needed & beginning to find regular meeting time

Other Teams of ministry within the Extended Family Team:

**New Membership** (meets monthly on the First Thursday at 7:30 p.m.)

**Shrove Tuesday Team** (meets as needed)

**Blood Drive Team** (meets as needed)

### Caring for God's House

**Buildings & Grounds:** Okey Barrett (651-4707)

Jerry Sutherland (469-4166)

Meets as needed

**Administration & Finance:** Janet Writer (469-2578)

John Ravert 469-1801

**Administrative Component:** (meets as needed)

**Finance Component:** (meets monthly on the first Thursday at 7:00 p.m.)

Other Teams of ministry within the Finance Team such as Half Chicken Sale Team

Meet as Needed

We are always looking for our brothers and sisters in Christ to help us serve the Lord. Want to join a team in our church? Please contact the team chair/co-chair. We look forward to working with you in the Lord's ministry

**Pastor:** For Pastoral Services while we are between Pastors,  
please call our Clerk of Session, Scott Vogt at 469-3068

**Clerk of Session:** Scott Vogt (469-3068)

**Moderator of Deacons:** James Peterson (610-3670, cell 325-1829)

**Church Office:** 469-4877

**Treasurer:** John Ravert

**Secretary:** Ruth Magyar (469-4078)