



Stirling Stuff

Volume 56, No. 11

December 2012

Pastor's Letter

This month I am using my wife, Rev. Barbara Peters' newsletter article about Christmas. I hope it will help you to reflect on the real meaning of this season. Tom

T'is the season for... catalogs! The inundation has begun in earnest, right? Catalogs, fliers, and advertisements that invite us to enjoy "one day only" shopping specials fill our already over-stuffed mailboxes. What an amazing cultural phenomena!

According to the Natural Resources Defense Council:

- Each year, 19 billion catalogs are mailed to American consumers.
- Catalog production uses approximately 3.6 million tons of paper, derived from 8.3 million tons of wood.
- The wood needed for catalogs equals 53 million trees, which is equivalent to the number of trees in 2,000 Central Parks.



It is interesting to me that the reason catalogs came into existence in the first place was actually a fairly noble one. By the late 1800's, mail could be delivered to rural areas. Companies like Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck offered a way to link farm families to goods city folks enjoyed through their mail-order houses. This provided an equalizing factor to society. Because of catalogs, fashions weren't only available to upper and middle-class city dwellers any longer (those who had ready access to department stores). In addition, the convenience of mail-order was life changing for people in outlying areas. No longer did they have to defer purchases to the next trip into town. By the early 1900s, Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck catalogs were delivered twice a year. Eventually, kits could be bought to build your own home by ordering them from a Sears catalog. If you wanted to build a large, five-room cottage in 1911, you could order "Modern Home #106" for \$1,145, and everything you needed to build it would be delivered to your local train station. Some of these homes made from kits sold through Sears are actually still standing today! As a child of the 60's, I remember how much fun it was after Thanksgiving to get the big Sears "Wish Book" in the mail. I could spend hour pouring over the pages, as did all the other kids my age.

Well, times have certainly changed, and I don't think for the better in this regard. The treadmill of consumerism is alive and well. The following lyrics by Erica Avery, sung to the tune of Silver Bells, seem to say it all:

*City sidewalks, busy sidewalks, lined with advertising,
It's the big retail season of Christmas.
Children begging for each new thing
Toys for mile after mile
And the mood of the season is clear.*

*Buy and sell, Buy and sell,
It's Christmas time for consumers.
Ching-a-ching, Cash tills ring,
Must we spend Christmas this way?*



I know I'm preaching to the choir when I suggest we all take a step back and notice the spectacle Christmas has become when seen through the lens of commerce and materialism. I simply want to be one of those many voices which invite us to walk to a different drummer this time of year so that the spiritual significance of Christmas doesn't get lost in the shuffle. It can make such a difference, don't you think?

Blessings to you and yours at this beautiful time of year! Faithfully Yours,

Barbara & Tom

Worship Services and Scripture Passages for December

December 2, 2012

- *First Sunday of Advent / Heritage Sunday*
- *Sacrament of Holy Communion*
- *Non-Perishable Food Collection*
Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:1-10;
I Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36

December 9, 2012

- *Second Sunday of Advent*
Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79;
Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

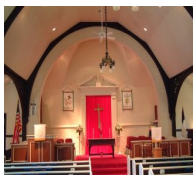
December 16, 2012

- *Third Sunday of Advent*
Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6;
Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

*Worship begins at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings,
followed by Fellowship Hour in Pollard Hall.*

Child Care is provided in the Nursery.

*Children join their families in church and then leave for
Christian Education classes after the Children's Talk.*



December 23, 2012

- *Fourth Sunday of Advent*
- *Children's Christmas Pageant*
Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:46b-55;
Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45
5:00 p.m. - Blue Christmas Service

December 24, 2012

- *Christmas Eve – 8:00 p.m.*
- *Service of Lessons and Carols*
Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96;
Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20

December 30, 2012

- *First Sunday after Christmas Day*
I Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148;
Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

**Scriptures that are listed after the first Gospel
reading are non-lectionary passages
that will be used in the sermon.
All the scriptures are provided here for
any weekly Bible reading you may do.**

Rev. Peters' sermons and the scripture readings
are posted on the church website.

Visit: www.fpcstirling.org, click on:

"Sermon Archive," then select the sermon
and/or scripture reading date you would like.

Confirmation Class

On Sat., December 1st the confirmation class and their sponsors and any other interested people will be going to the New Jersey Food Bank in Hillside to sort food. The following weekend they will make and deliver cookies to homebound people. There are no classes on Sundays during the month of December.

The Personnel Committee**- Chris Scott****Annual Staff Performance Reviews**

In the past, the Personnel Committee has provided church members with the opportunity to evaluate the performance of church employees. Various forms, including an on-line option, have been offered. Despite efforts to simplify the process, response has dwindled over recent years.

This year, in an attempt to generate a greater response, the committee has decided to eliminate the forms and simply request that members share their thoughts about the performance of each employee (minister, secretary, organist, sexton) in their own words. Please jot your comments on paper, and place your note in the collection box that will be available in Pollard Hall. You may also e-mail your evaluations to Chris Scott.

Please plan to submit your comments by December 9th. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

2013 Church Offering Envelopes

The 2013 Church Offering Envelopes have been prepared and will be available to be picked up in Pollard Hall. Thank you!

Christian Education Committee**- Lore Pateman****Christmas Pageant**

Please join us on Sunday morning, **Dec. 23rd**, for the Children's Christmas Pageant, which will be presented during morning worship.

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Adult Education**- Debra Sprague****Advent & Christmas Discussion**

On **Wed., Dec. 5th, 7:30 p.m.**, we will have the second of our two adult education programs on Advent & Christmas. The title of the program on Dec. 5th is *Christmas: The Gift of Presence*. Join Tom and reflect on what the season of Christmas really means.

Worship Committee**- Janet Parziale****Heritage Sunday**

On **Dec. 2nd**, the church will be celebrating Heritage Sunday with a “Kirkin’ of the Tartan” service (translation: Church blessing of the tartan). As in past years, we will have a guest bagpiper, Dave Paladino, play the tune Richard Streeton composed for our church entitled, “Stirling on the Hill.”



Following our worship service, there will be a special coffee hour with lots of Scottish goodies to enjoy. The Worship Committee invites anyone who enjoys baking to bake their favorite Scottish goodies to share. Also, bring along the recipe, as you’re sure to be asked for it. Some of the planned goodies include scones and shortbread. Of course, a fine pot of tea will also be served!



Please plan to celebrate our church’s Scottish heritage, and remember to wear a wee bit of plaid.

First Sunday of Advent

Dec. 2nd is also the first Sunday of Advent, and we will begin a special program of lighting the Advent Candles for the four Sundays in the season of Advent.

Non-Perishable Food Collection, Dec. 2nd

On the first Sunday of each month, we collect donations of non-perishable food during the worship service. The food is donated to the township food pantry at St. Vincent Church. Please keep your food items with you in church for the children to collect. We continue to collect non-perishable food in the baskets located in the entry-ways to the church during the rest of the month.

Greens for Decorating

As we look ahead to the holiday season and the decorating of the sanctuary on **Sat., Dec. 15th**, please keep in mind that we will need some fresh greens, berries, holly, etc.

Fourth Sunday Focus, Dec. 23rd**- Tom Parziale**

Just want to remind everyone about Fourth Sunday Focus gatherings. We meet at 8:45 a.m. and end at 9:45 a.m., but come and join us whenever you can. We have a Box o’ Joe, a Pot of Tea, some Munchkins, and some conversation. Tom Parziale facilitates the sessions, and we look forward to seeing you at one of the upcoming discussions. If you have a topic you’d like to discuss, please let Tom know.



Blue Christmas

On Sunday, **Dec. 23rd, at 5:00 p.m.**, we will offer our Blue Christmas service. This service is for those who are finding it difficult to get into the holiday spirit because of loss or suffering they have experienced in their lives. If you know of someone who is experiencing something like this, please invite them to this service and, as a friend, come with them so they can feel your support.

Family Promise of Morris County (formerly *Interfaith Hospitality Network*)**- Phyllis Clemson**

We have received our 2013 responsibility dates for *Family Promise* at the Shrine of St. Joseph. They are as follows: Tues., January 8th; Fri., February 8th (until noon Sat.); and, Tues., November 19th.

Watch for more information in the church bulletins and Stirling Stuff. Sign-up sheets will be posted in Pollard Hall as the dates approach. Please help with this important on-going mission of our church.

Deacons Corner**- Katherine Ihringer****Christmas Poinsettias**

The Christmas season is upon us, and the Deacons request that those who wish to purchase poinsettias to decorate the sanctuary complete the form that will be available in the church bulletin or contact Israel Sierra or the church office. The cost is \$15 each for a red, white, or pink plant, and the **deadline to order is Sunday, December 16th**. After the Christmas eve service, you may pick up your plant or designate that it can be donated.

Worship/Fellowship Hour Help

We need people to sign up for Liturgist, usher, and coffee hour for the upcoming weeks. Remember that Fellowship Hour does not have to be fancy. All you need is coffee, tea, juice, and cookies. Fellowship Hour is an excellent way for everybody to talk after church, and it tends to have more people if there is food.

Church Flowers

Don't forget to sign-up on the Flower Chart in Pollard Hall if you would like to place flowers on the chancel for Sunday morning worship in honor or memory of someone. Allow enough lead time to have them ordered for the date you would like. The cost is \$30, and cash or checks (made payable to Flowers on the Ridge) should be given to Israel Sierra.



When you sign up on the flower chart, please be specific, i.e. *in memory, honor, given by*, and print clearly.

Deacons' Fund Envelopes

Please remember to use the green *Deacons' Fund* envelopes for donations to help the Deacons with their Mission work. These envelopes are available in the pew racks or in the church office and may be placed in the offering plate. Thank you!



Mission Committee**- Yvonne Fletcher****Food Bank Volunteer Day, Sat., Dec 1st****- Kai Ihringer**

Our church is scheduled to volunteer at the NJ Community Food Bank in Hillside on the morning of Sat., December 1st. The food bank is always looking for assistance, and this effort is one of the best ways to make a positive difference in the lives of other people who need our help. And, in return for our hard work, we get to enjoy some fellowship and camaraderie with our church family and friends.

Please note that this event is part of the calendar of events for this year's confirmation class; therefore, all confirmands are expected to attend.

Here is the information:

Date: Sat., Dec. 1st

Departure: Meet at 8 a.m. in the church parking lot. Leave shortly thereafter.

Food Bank Slot: 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Return: Back at church parking lot between 11:30 a.m. and 12 noon

And don't forget to reach out to non-church members who may want to join our group.

Bridges Outreach Lunch Program**- Jean Hoffman, Coordinator**

Our next commitment date for preparing 40 lunches is: **Friday, Dec. 7th, 9:30 a.m.**, in Pollard Hall. We welcome donations of juice boxes, small water bottles, fruit/pudding cups, snacks of all kinds, fruit, and plastic spoons. You can drop these items off in Pollard Hall on Sunday mornings. We appreciate all the support you have given to this much-needed program.

Upcoming dates: Jan. 11th, Feb. 8th, March 8th

Thanksgiving Turkey Donations

A big thank you to all who participated in the turkey collection for Thanksgiving. Lynne & Bill Combs delivered 9 turkeys to the Market Street Mission in Morristown, which was very appreciative. Thanks again to Lynne, Bill, and everyone who helped make Thanksgiving a little better for several families.

**Fundraising Committee****- Jean Hoffman****On-Going Book Sale**

We have many new books, so please take a look at the "Book Table" in the hallway outside Pollard Hall. To date, we have raised \$115, which benefits the Church Roof Loan. For more information, please speak to Ellen Eastty or Jean Hoffman.

Church Website

Reminder: Our Church website, www.fpcstirling.org, is your source for Church news, the Church calendar, Stirling Stuff, upcoming services/events/programs, Pastor's sermons, Scripture readings, Church history, and more. Please make it a point to log on regularly and keep up-to-date with what's happening.

Ongoing Mission Programs

Mile of Pennies

Change (and more) collected during coffee hour supports scholarships for Kenyan students. Please help us reach our goal.

Food Pantry

Items can be left in baskets labeled "Food Pantry Donations" located in the Church narthex and on the table outside of Pollard Hall.

Toiletries

Full-sized and "courtesy" sized bars of soap, shampoo, conditioner, and shower caps are donated to various causes. Place on the pew inside Pollard Hall.

Sneaker Project

Place used pairs of sneakers (any size) on the pew inside Pollard Hall. They are sent to the Somerset Food Bank and other charities.

Eyeglasses, Sunglasses, Cell Phones

Place used glasses and cell phones on the pew inside Pollard Hall.

Yarn & Cotton Material

Yarn is used to make lap robes for wounded veterans; any color is acceptable. Fabric (with the exception of wool and stretchables) of about 1/2 yard is used to make small bears for children, totes for wheelchair patients, etc. Place on pew inside Pollard Hall.

Ongoing Fundraisers

ShopRite Gift Cards

- ✓ No additional cost to you to use
- ✓ Purchase cards at face value
- ✓ Church earns 5%
- ✓ Denominations available: \$20, \$50, \$100
- ✓ Cards are available each week during fellowship hour.

iGive

- ✓ No cost to you
- ✓ Log on / sign up / find out more at:
<http://www.igive.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-StirlingNJ>
- ✓ E-mail this link to your friends

*Please e-mail submissions for the
January issue of Stirling Stuff to:
jsomers17@hotmail.com
by December 23rd. Thank you!*

Why not invite a friend to church?



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